

Uncle Mose's dream

by [Philip C. Kolin](#) in the [January 9, 2013](#) issue

What if that brave Emmett  
had somehow managed to escape,  
my boy who had done all that talking,  
a word or maybe two before those  
thirsty fists demanding  
to be quenched in his blood  
slammed my door down looking for him.

Say he heard their pickup truck.  
Say he jumped out the window  
of my clapboard house and ran through row  
after row of burly-cheeked cotton  
until even the lily-white moon  
could not follow him.

Say he made it to that line  
of loblolly pines and hid  
in the colored cemetery; no whites allowed  
their children or their womenfolk to go there  
where the haints of lynched men lurk,  
hate messages singed into their chests.

Say he made for the river  
seeking safety in the bulrushes,  
the final resting place of so many slaves  
who ran for freedom, hoping his battered  
breath might last long enough under  
the cesspooling water, stringy-fingered  
weeds and copperheads  
grabbing for his ankles.

Say the Tallahatchie had not turned  
vengeful, angry that some black boy  
would pollute the waters where white men  
feed their families and their lusts.

Say, too, from the river he searched  
for a ditch to lie in, confining him  
from the burlap-hooded vigilantes  
swooping over the countryside.

Say a thunderstorm struck that night,  
as they screamed to God  
to let them catch the boy before  
the lightning or the buzzards did.  
Say, too, they scattered black  
and white posters all over  
Mississippi vowing to bury him.

Then say, just say, how he almost  
found the train tracks which might have  
led him out of the Delta,  
out of Egypt, I called my son.