


They went to a party at an apartment on 110th and Broadway. Woody had never been to Harlem before. He looked around the street before they went in. Negroes in suits with musical walks greeted each other outside the doorways blaring jazz. On this Friday evening, they seemed more joyful, more full of life than any human beings he'd ever seen before.

The elevator was perpetually out and there were no inside stairs, so the partygoers mounted the steps of the fire escape in the cold. Before they knocked at the door, they took a moment to see if any friendly face was coming up the stairs behind them, a name to shout into the night; or if any raucous souls were perched atop the roof.

Inside the party, the music was the same way as what they'd passed on the street. A crackling intelligence, a sophistication of a kind he'd never known before, seemed to extend through the black skin and the black night through the gleaming horns and back out into the air. It landed in the dancers on the floor—hot and sweaty, shaking and grooving, smelling of glorious human bodies. He felt all the fear of the newspaper article and *Andiamo* melt away. It seemed that it had never been real anyway.

He danced with Maria. The world of paperwork and phone calls receded further into obscurity. This was a new language. No forms or memos. Just her body against his.

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