



## Going to Meet the Man

*James Baldwin*

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"There's no way not to suffer. But you try all kinds of ways to keep from drowning in it." The men and women in these eight short fictions grasp this truth on an elemental level, and their stories, as told by James Baldwin, detail the ingenious and often desperate ways in which they try to keep their head above water. It may be the heroin that a down-and-out jazz pianist uses to face the terror of pouring his life into an inanimate instrument. It may be the brittle piety of a father who can never forgive his son for his illegitimacy. Or it may be the screen of bigotry that a redneck deputy has raised to blunt the awful childhood memory of the day his parents took him to watch a black man being murdered by a gleeful mob.

By turns haunting, heartbreak, and horrifying--and informed throughout by Baldwin's uncanny knowledge of the wounds racism has left in both its victims and its perpetrators--*Going to Meet the Man* is a major work by one of our most important writers.

## Going to Meet the Man Details

Date : Published April 25th 1995 by Vintage Books a division of Random House (first published 1965)

ISBN : 9780679761792

Author : James Baldwin

Format : Paperback 249 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Cultural, African American, Classics, American, African American Literature

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### BlackOxford says

#### No Surrender

Whenever I'm in danger of feeling smugly self-satisfied or, on alternate days, resentfully dissatisfied about my place in the world, James Baldwin is always on hand as a corrective. His prose is hypnotic as it allows entry into the lives of people one does not know. His minimalist descriptions are perfect in their evocation of a timeless space. The relationships he characterizes are simply true; one can feel oneself part of them. And the real condition of being alive in the world is revealed for what it is: suffering, of which I have experienced slightly more than some but vastly less than most of the world.

In Baldwin, everyone suffers. They suffer because they are poor, because they are displaced, because of young mistakes, because of ambitions denied, but mostly because there is no hope. The world never gets any better from the moment his stories commence. Life is like the Manhattan schist boulder in the lot across the street from his starting location - eternally the same, immovable, dangerous for children and for the people who literally as well as figuratively work beneath it. A mountainous rock of despair.

The best possible outcome for everyone is a sort of tedious, grinding equilibrium that avoids imminent disaster or death. But the life that remains is one of constant fear, conflict, injustice and uncertainty. Only the will to survive sustains it - not family, not the community, not the 'authorities', certainly not the larger society that barely recognizes such a life. One lives in the midst of an undefined threat, an incessant hum of racial hatred ready to turn into a thunder-clap of annihilation at the slightest misstep. Yet those who suffer do not despair.

What is the secret? How do they persist? How much inherent strength does it take to reject both suicide and murder in response to the mountain of despair? One strategy seems to be a sort of immanent metaphysics expressed in the pentecostalist church and its customs. Pentecostalism is Christian in vocabulary, but it is gnostic in belief. It is a refuge for the thinking oppressed. The world is evil and must be resisted. Home is elsewhere and can be glimpsed only in ecstatic transport. While waiting for its indefinite arrival, preservation of the spark of special wisdom must be encouraged. The world must be destroyed entirely in order for it to be saved.

Gnosticism provides a solid explanation for the world and the suffering one experiences and sees in others. But it also fosters a fundamental suspicion of oneself - not just of one's motives, but of one's entire being. If all which is visible is evil, then the self, the most personally visible thing of all, is untrustworthy. Gnosticism demands the surrender of one's body to the malicious, malignant Demi-god who created this world of exile; and the surrender of one's intellect to the corruption of the original sin, committed so long ago no one remembers what it was, but which is passed on genetically and stops us from thinking right thoughts ever since.

Gnostic expression is stilted: 'Praise the Lord', 'Shout Amen', 'Feel the arms of Jesus'. It is formulaic in order to purify speech from its inherent flaws. It clears the mind of thought and reason which have no means to realize themselves even if they weren't already part of the evil that surrounds us. To be able to transport oneself into gnostic bliss is enough rational comfort. It is resistance without appearing to resist; it is escape while still behind the bars; it is the promised land without leaving home; it is intoxication without the hangover.

But Gnosticism is not good enough for Baldwin. He won't have it. And he won't take the other available ways to dull the pain of reality: booze, drugs, violence, sexual domination. Instead he writes. And what he writes shares the pain. It doesn't rationalize or reduce the pain, but it spreads it so we all can know about it. In order that, perhaps, something different may grow out of it.

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### **LindaJ^ says**

There are 8 short stories in this collection that was first published in 1965. The stories are very good. The concern much more than race relations. Characters come to life and you can feel their pain and their struggles.

THE ROCKPILE and THE OUTING involve the same family a few years apart. In the first story, the family consists of Father, Mother, baby, son Roy, and son John. John is the oldest and Father is his step-father. Roy goes out when he is not supposed to and gets hurt. Father punishes John. In the second story, the family is larger but the story is focused on John. It is the day of the church summer outing. David, John's friend, Roy, and John have bought a birthday gift for Sophie, who goes to the same church. David brings his mother and sister, who do not go to the church. David has been visiting with John. David introduces them to Father and Father acts like David is Roy's friend, ignoring John. David and John exchange looks. As the day goes on, John begins to feel that David is more interested in Sophie than in him.

THE MAN CHILD is one scary story about an 8-year old white boy. I wonder whether the boy's parents are the next target.

PREVIOUS CONDITION concerns a young, struggling African-American actor in NYC who wonders if he belongs anywhere.

SONNY'S BLUES concerns brothers whose parents are dead. They had a falling out, even though the elder brother had promised his mother he would always be there for Sonny. Sonny is a pianist. He gets busted for drugs and is set to rehab. Older brother finally reaches out to him when older brother's daughter dies of polio. They begin to reconnect.

THIS MORNING, THIS EVENING, TOO SOON is about an African-American singer-actor who is married to a Swedish woman and has a young son. He has been wooed back to America, where he has not been for quite awhile - not since his mother's funeral, which was before he became successful. He is worried about taking his son to a country where African-Americans are so badly treated.

COME OUT THE WILDERNESS tells about a young African-American woman from a small town in the south who came to NYC with a much older man, an artist. After a few years that relationship ends and she has been living with a white painter for a few years. She thinks the painter is about to end the relationship. She seems to have no friends. She works as a secretary at an insurance agency -- the only other black person there is an agent who is quite successful and has all the secretaries interested.

GOING TO MEET THE MAN concerns a young sheriff in the south during the 60's. He doesn't understand why the young blacks are creating a fuss, noting the whites can't burn them out because, unlike neighborhoods in the North, the blacks in his town are restricted to one area of town. He finds himself particularly upset by the gospel tunes that used to comfort him and remembers a horrid event from his childhood that likely played a huge role in his being as bigoted as this father.

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## Sofia says

If you look through my notes below, you might decide that it is better to stay safe and not read this scary, sad piece of life. Well the choice is yours of course, whether to choose to see, to taste a bit, to let the stories touch you and make you feel, to think, or you can stay safely away.

*"The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions which have been hidden by the answers." —*  
James A. Baldwin

**The Rockpile** The contrast between staying safe, innocent upstairs and living, hurting, laughing, sinning on the street and then upstairs is no longer so safe. So what to choose safety or life?

**The Outing** The conflict between accepting what is and wishing for different, for more. The result – anger, violence, despondency, despair.

**The Man Child** Chilling, the results of living a lie are scary - fullstop

**Previous Condition** Sad, tired, lost, angry and scared. Turing like a hurt dog and biting the hands that try to console.

**Sonny's Blues** Duty versus Self, who do we owe allegiance to? We all seek different methods to ease our suffering, to be able to continue, to take the next breath, next step. Sonny communicates beautifully with his blues. God let me see not only the words people say but all the other ways they communicate.

**This Morning, This Evening, So Soon** This was so this:

### *The City*

*You said, "I will go to another land, I will go to another sea.  
Another city will be found, a better one than this.  
Every effort of mine is a condemnation of fate;  
and my heart is -- like a corpse -- buried.  
How long will my mind remain in this wasteland.  
Wherever I turn my eyes, wherever I may look  
I see black ruins of my life here,  
where I spent so many years destroying and wasting."*

*You will find no new lands, you will find no other seas.  
The city will follow you. You will roam the same  
streets. And you will age in the same neighbourhoods;  
and you will grow gray in these same houses.  
Always you will arrive in this city. Do not hope for any other --  
There is no ship for you, there is no road.  
As you have destroyed your life here  
in this little corner, you have ruined it in the entire world.*

Constantine P. Cavafy

**Come Out of the Wilderness** No choice – Unrequited loves leaves you despairing, life without love leaves you despairing also. Oh why can't we choose whom to love?

**Going to Meet the Man** Tough, ugly, chilling to read. How can people live through that and not be marked by it and reap its effect through generations? And through all that hate, blood, violence, they are still linked, intertwined as if they can't live without each other.

Read with Maya - my steadfast companion in the Baldwin Journey

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### Mariel says

All they really knew were two darknesses, the darkness of their lives, which was now closing in on them, and the darkness of the movies, which had blinded them to that other darkness, and in which they now, vindictively dreamed, at once more together than they were at any other time, and more alone.

from 'Sonny's Blues'

I've been having that feeling of "I wish this guy was seeing what I see and we could compare notes" about James Baldwin. I'd read *The Fire Next Time* and *Giovanni's Room* already but it was an excerpt (until just now I thought it was a short story. Damn your eyes, Edmund White!) from "Just Above My Head" in "The Faber Book of Gay Short Fiction" (I haven't finished it still because White's own story bored me out of interest in reading for months) that did it to me. I would see something and it was James Baldwin I thought of. Maybe it is because of the kinds of things that get me going to the wondering about other people places. I saw this rough looking woman anxious to please this older lady with her (probably her mother or grandmother). She was doing it by laughing too hard when nothing funny had happened. I had this feeling like she felt that if the older lady laughed then she wouldn't be in trouble anymore. She was probably dependent on the woman and that is what that was all about. Maybe it was just buttering her up. Still, I had the thought that if Baldwin were there he'd know more about it than I did. Something elusive about safety in other people, the danger in past present butterfly effect of doing it all wrong. This has happened a few times, my "What would James Baldwin think". It's a weird place that bothers me all the damned time. When people want other people to have "private pain". If it always depends on someone else to invest all of the quiet there can be in the world then you would have to all be at the mercy of what the mirror ordained you. That makes me feel more hopelessly lonely than just about anything.

Sonny's brother reads about his incarceration in the papers. He was dyslexic in the walls writing sense a long time. Heroin shuffles to him now, again. His brother's friend from the old days, another corner zombie. When they need from you and then back into the turtle shell where the genie roommate takes everything. Not before he tells him that prison will dry him out for a time. It happens to enough of everyone else, so why not Sonny too? He hears his brother's laugh in the high school students he teaches. This was when Baldwin would be with me knowing what could be. *It was disenchanted, and in this, also, lay the authority of their curses. Perhaps I was listening to them because I was thinking about my brother and in them I heard my*

*brother. And myself.* The windows of the soul come out then. When his brother is who he used to be in a grin. He writes to his brother, finally, when his little girl dies. Sonny gets out of prison. All the while it is still happening, the past. I guess he'll always be in prison too, the little girl will not stop dying either. That it is impossible to know if he is right about Sonny is perfect to me. Sonny is a musician, a pianist. His brother suspects the instrument as a lack to be bent. He watches him playing for the first time since prison and was he truly leaving the shores, this time (it can only be momentary), for not just taking the pain. Sonny said no one just takes the pain, they find any way out. Living death (or the people who were born the right time and place who don't have to. I think these lucky people trick others into thinking the other kind, like them, don't exist). It is my favorite when it is back then, again, and a (the?) little boy is listening to the adults talking about the darkness outside. It is my favorite kind of mirror giving. What they have gone through, what there is to go through. The child hopes they will always be there to talk like this. And maybe there's a kid in someone's lap, and maybe a hand to stroke his forehead. In 'The Man Child' it happens just like that. The child pretends to be asleep and he hopes without belief that it will go on with the comforting mother's hand.

I'm not sure about 'The Man Child'. A little boy (eight years old) is investigating his land. His always been there is the color, when there was a time he could remember a not always been there suspicious shapes. His mother didn't always look dead inside. There had been a little sister who died. There had been a time when another baby was on the way and it might be okay again. His father, an old man at thirty-two and his always been there friend, Jamie, who is thirty-four. The kid returns to this thirty-fourth birthday party a lot. Dad and Jamie were always getting drunk and Jamie always had that dog of his. There had been a moment when he had looked into Jamie's old eyes, bloated with age or premature drink age. He was kicking his constant companion and the Dad is nailing him to the ground with I have won and you have lost. The kid doesn't see it this way but if I had been there that was what I would see. I guess it is like kids in my middle school class who changed who they "sided" with during various history courses. Whomever was "closest" to them every time. So the dad wins this fight. Jamie lost his farm to his friend. They had been in the war together, war buddies and drinking buddies. That's supposed to mean something in superficial terms but doesn't here, thankfully. I don't know what made him lay into him that day, smugness about his wife pregnant when Jamie lost his wife and never had a kid? There is something that bugs the shit out of me about James Baldwin, though. This women are things to lose, or things to protect. Jamie couldn't "keep" a woman. A man in another story feels protecting a wife is his right. It was like that in *Giovanni's Room*, too. The female lover was an obstacle, an expectation demanding and taking. I wish I could see the mother in 'The Man Child' without a husband or kids (dead or alive). It is narratively said that she didn't know when he captured her. I still don't think it is true that you have to be without a human relationship to be unchained. I have this idea that Baldwin at least kind of thought they did. The boy Johnnie in 'The Rockpile' and 'The Outing' is ensnared in those I'm in love headlights that obliterate everything else. He waits for his friend, his lover David. His mother married the father of his siblings, a tyrant in the name of religion. Private pain ruins everything in his path. People seem to know everything when they demonstrate being saved. The young men pit sexual awakening to the tirade of the path. David is moving away to where Johnnie will likely wait for him forever. Another lover, the girl Sylvia. Her worldly be good gnats watch her. I can imagine her wanting David to feel sexy time excitement, but beseeching his "better nature" to please the "be good" pulpits of their community when they succeed in wearing her down. I know it works that way but I don't know that it has to be that way. I didn't like 'The Man Child' as much as the other stories because the violence of Jamie to the son of his smug friend with so much (for now) wasn't inevitable. I think Baldwin is better than the little kid who thinks people in their thirties are old. Child blindness doesn't have to work that way, can hit other than the general. What Jamie does to take away, when he drunkenly cries that he loves his friend.... I don't know about this one. The kid was following his father's footsteps. He showed him his land. The kid's dying words are to Jamie that he will give him his land. One of Jamie's crimes was wandering the forests alone. I wonder what he looked like by himself. Better than the kid looking into his eyes, what would he see if he looked into is own eyes. The kid was doing this himself, this forest wandering. He wasn't thinking about it like looking

into his own eyes but the thoughtless version of it was there, in moving away from what memory says had always been there. Without anything to connect to Jamie's old look other than his own now death it didn't mean much to me.

I like it less connected to the story 'Going to Meet the Man'. The racist sheriff will take his son to a Ku Klux Klan meeting. They will tenderize their vicious traditions over the bloody corpse. I know it happens that this shit is passed down to progeny who share the dull thinking of well, I've been lucky to be born what I am in this time and place so I must deserve it. I can't connect the racist sheriff's fetish for coercing the colored girls he loathes into what gets his dick hard to anything but that there are people like this.

In the drinking hour people wait for the better nature of other's to win the war. Albatross bar stools, coyote devouring ugly on starved stomachs. Bedrooms in bottles littering the s.o.s shores beginning where horizons end. Empty arms are 'Come out of the Wilderness' Ruth's push, her pull not anywhere. It's low down before you fall anyway. Behind her a brother and father possessed her body with dirty judgement. Filthy whore, muddying tears. They still have their say in New York City. A white man lives off her clickety clack cha ching. She types in an office, he drinks and he sleeps. After work she drinks and sleeps to wait. Where is Paul, tears, waiting. He's almost out the door in the band aid or needle that takes all of the skin with it fast or slow. Maybe he will stay a little longer now she's making a little bit more than her little. Ruth lives in a doom cloud. Can't live with or without him skies. Maybe a lot of people live under this but I was wondering if there were any women in any of Baldwin's stories who ever breathed outside of it (if not crying over men then their children). Passing bar-stool orbits look like her old lover, another white boy. Everyone passes although no one really moves. This one wasn't like Paul because she has hopes that this time in Paul's arms it will be different. I don't know why it would be different in Paul's arms and not the other white boy. *"The sons of the masters were roaming the world, looking for arms to hold them. And the arms that might have held them- could not forgive."* Was it too late if it was too late before any of you ever got drunk every day and waited for the other one to come home? Whatever Ruth felt was the point I don't feel it was the point when she raged at the not-hope white boy that she wasn't the plantation girl the son of the master could do as he pleased. Turtle shell inhabitants meaning you aren't alone has to be it. Bringing back your own ghosts to kill you. Men remind her of her brother, men remind her of Paul. The band aid pulling won't do anything if it is like that.

I had this feeling a lot in many of these stories that it was too late for them because it had ever happened to another colored person. Streets where they would have been slaves. Famous in France, married in France to a Swedish woman. 'This Morning, This Evening, So Soon' he is afraid to return to New York City. He has reason to dread it. It is enough that the racist bullies will not be stopped. When it isn't socially acceptable they hide behind police brutality, statistical cheats. It feels closer to the truth to me that some people are just rotten and will do it because they can. Police will shoot dogs just because they can. It can't be true that all people in France accept him and all in America expect to be condescended to. It isn't important the acknowledgement that his French director lost his family in the holocaust, or the Algerian friend the American tourists have it better than. It annoyed the shit out of me, really, because if Europe was peaceful then it was because the people they would hate had already been killed or forced out during world war II. They weren't accepting of those different than them, not at all. It fit with something I felt about another story, 'Previous Condition'. This man is in too late purgatory. His father was broken and humiliated. He hates Harlem, it is his dirt. His doom cloud is related to Ruth's shame. It will always be too late if EVERYONE has to not be or ever have been a soul sucking dick. Anyway, his white girlfriend tells him some speech about the world, the kind that doesn't help. They say just go back to Harlem, go back to your kind. I don't believe that every white person is taken over by a pod life-form, guilt puppeting the checked out flesh. No fucking way was that true about everyone. But the ones that are are enough, and the rest won't always do anything when it is someone else, and how do you know which it is this time. That would go for people,

though. I loved it when it wasn't the point when that girlfriend makes her I don't want to hear this speech about other people suffering too.

I was aware of my body under the bathrobe; and it was as though I had done something wrong, something monstrous, years ago, which no one had forgotten and for which I would be killed.

from 'Previous Condition'

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### **Alessia Scurati says**

Potente, lucido, moderno.

Non so cosa altro dire.

Quanto cavolo è bravo James Baldwin.

Un maestro.

Ha tutto quello che amo in uno scrittore.

Bello, bello, bello.

E cattivo, violento, crudo.

Quello che non scrive è sempre più tremendo di quello che descrive, e quello che descrive è sempre abbastanza tremendo, perché tira fuori il lato razzista della società.

Tira fuori il peggio di tutti.

Per questo bisogna leggerlo: perché si fanno i conti con cose che molto spesso vorremmo ignorare, anche di noi stessi.

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### **Cindy says**

Everytime I read one of these short stories, in particular 'Going to meet the man', I found my jaw dropping open in amazement: the detail, the horror of human nature, Baldwin's ability and humanity through it all...completely awe-inspiring.

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### **tooliepanna says**

Zbiór przejmuj?cych i poruszaj?cych opowiada?. Nie jestem przyzwyczajona do czytania opowiada?, dlatego po sko?czeniu pierwszego tekstu, pierwsza myśl jako mnie nasz?a, byla "czemu ju?z? Chce wiecej!" M?dro?? wymowy z po??czeniu z genialnym stylem sprawiaj?, ?e uwa?am to za jedn? z najlepszych ksi??ek jak? przeczyta?am w ostatnich latach!

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### **Bobby Bermea says**

"Then it was over. Creole and Sonny let out their breath, both soaking wet, and grinning. There was a lot of applause and some of it was real. In the dark, the girl came by and I asked her to take drinks to the bandstand. There was a long pause, while they talked up there in the indigo light and after a while I saw the

girl put a scotch and milk on top of the piano for Sonny. He didn't seem to notice it, but just before they started playing again, he sipped from it and looked toward me, and nodded. Then he put it back on top of the piano. For me, then, as they began to play again, it glowed and shook above my brother's head, like the very cup of trembling."

--from "Sonny's Blues"

The brother can WRITE!

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### **Lydia says**

James Baldwin. James fucking Baldwin.

Love of my life. Master of prose. Destroyer of my heart.

Perfectly incredible selection of short stories that ripped me to pieces. Devastating and wonderful.

Goddammit, my love for Baldwin has only increased. What a perfect way to start 2015's reading.

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### **Joe says**

These eight short stories will leave you hungry for more writing by Baldwin. They are all powerful and each one a different perspective on the issue of race in America. Not beating a dead horse by any means they allow the reader to view first hand through the eyes of man, woman, child, black and white, what racial apartheid / hatred / apathy does to the doer, the recipient and the indifferent. Each story leaves an impression upon the psyche. Some more than others. Worth reading more than once.

- THE ROCKPILE: family dynamics abound when the eldest son lets his younger brother do what he wants.
- THE OUTING: a church outing in Bear Mountain and the relationships that surround it.
- THE MAN CHILD: the chilling life story of an eight year old white boy...
- PREVIOUS CONDITION: the dynamics involved with being a down and out black actor in apartheid America.
- SONNY'S BLUES: a musician returns from rehab to play the blues for his brother.
- THIS MORNING, THIS EVENING, TOO SOON: a black man plans to return to the US from France with a Swedish wife and their son to ...
- COME OUT THE WILDERNESS: a black woman comes to terms with life in Greenwich Village and her ghosts from the south.
- GOING TO MEET THE MAN: a white sheriff remembers a childhood event that made him become the sadistic and hypocritical bigot that he now is.

The ones that linger for me the most are: THE MAN CHILD, THIS MORNING, THIS EVENING, TOO SOON and GOING TO MEET THE MAN.

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### **Daniel says**

Amazing; my first exposure to James Baldwin was in my Modern American Literature class. The short story "Going to Meet the Man" lured me in, I resolved to read this whole book when I got the chance. It is a collection of several short stories by Baldwin, dissecting the ideas of love, hate, life, death, sexuality and race with his persistently poignant prose. The way he treats the subject of death is unlike any author I have

encountered. The death of a child in both "The Man-Child" and "Sonny's Blues" is so convincing--it becomes nauseating. The final story of the book, "Going to Meet the Man", is one of the most hideous, well-written, and arresting stories available in the English language. Baldwin proposes the possibility of racism being driven by this innate hunger for domination--something that is manifest within the story's redneck deputy sheriff Jesse--in the form of extreme sexual sadism. The fusion of sexuality and sadism--at an almost psychopathic level--suggests not only do we have predisposition as people to wish to dominate one another; it expresses our capacity for being callous and unimaginably cruel. The last story (flawlessly) links together sexuality, violence, sadism, racism, and religion to form this surreal and haunting chunk of short story fiction. This book is incredible.

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### **Richard says**

I was slightly disappointed with the first novel I read by the late great James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*. Although I found it difficult to empathize with the main character (who I found to be a little whiny and spoiled), I was really taken by how beautiful Baldwin's writing was. It was enough to keep me interested in reading more of his work and I'm glad I chose this book as the next one. This solid collection of 8 short stories is a great primer to his writing style and the themes that permeate most of his work, such as race, identity, sex, life in Harlem, and the influence of art, religion, and family.

Baldwin's writing is consistently sincere, although some stories kept my attention more than others. There are two stories that are the big standouts in this collection. The soulful "**Sonny's Blues**" is about a man struggling to understand and reconnect with his estranged, heroin-addicted, musician brother, and also happens to be a look at the liberating power of the blues. The following quote is one the best descriptions of what great music, especially "the blues" is supposed to do, and what it means to be a musician:

**"He and his boys up there were keeping it new, at the risk of ruin, destruction, madness, and death, in order to find new ways to make us listen. For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness."**

The title story, "**Going to Meet the Man**", floored me and haunted me, and might be one of my favorite short stories. It actually kept me up at night thinking about it afterward. It's a story written with pitch-perfect confidence by Baldwin, about a middle-aged, racist, deputy sheriff of a Southern town in the U.S. recalling the event in his childhood that might have made him the bigot he is. The story challenges you to see how an innocent 8-year-old boy, who's best friend is black, can somehow turn into something else. It also explores the uncomfortable relationship between prejudice and sexuality, and how one can profoundly affect the other. A great piece.

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### **Sophie says**

*I know everybody's in trouble and nothing is easy, but how can I explain to you what it feels*

*like to be black when I don't understand it and don't want to and spend all my time trying to forget it?*

Οι πρωταγωνιστ?ς κι οι πρωταγων?στριες των 8 μικρ?ν ιστορι?ν προσπαθο?ν με πολυμ?χανους κι απελπισμ?νους τρ?πους να κρατηθο?ν στην επιφ?νεια, αποτυγχ?νουν κι ?μως αγων?ζονται.

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### **Clara Biesel says**

I don't always love short stories, but dear goodness, these are magnificent. And brutal. And so easy enter into, even if the scenarios are wretched, even if you think "I can't imagine feeling that way" you listen for ten more minutes and find yourself thinking "of course he feels that way. How could he not?" Going to Meet the Man (the final story in the collection) is a graphic depiction of a lynching, as seen from the eyes of a white child, but I think my favorite story was of a musician who moved to Paris and was reluctant to move back to the US with his son and his Swedish wife. Or a story of two brothers, one of whom is just out of prison and hasn't played the piano in years. If you listen to audiobooks, Dion Graham is a stunning reader for this book.

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### **Maughn Gregory says**

This week one of my African-American students, 19 years old, told the class he is a racist. When I asked him to explain he only said, "Well, everyone's racist." I first started reading James Baldwin many years ago, before I understood and acknowledged the truth of what my student said. I loved his writing but didn't know what to do with his rage. Today, with my consciousness somewhat raised, I find Baldwin just as compelling and even more troubling. All of these stories were painful to read and I could almost not get through the final, title story. But Baldwin's artistry and, more importantly, his humanity, makes it possible for people like me to confront the myriad awful truths of American racism.

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