

# 19. The Lowgods

In the chapter titled "The Lowgods," the setting unfolds on a rain-soaked evening in Hemlock Row, a rundown area west of Pottstown, Pennsylvania. The central character, Fatty, is apprehensive as he drives an old Packard with his companion, Paper, who is determined to visit the Lowgods, a secluded and self-reliant community of Black folks. The Lowgods, known for their distinct Gullah dialect and inner world, have always been viewed with suspicion by the more "upwardly mobile" Chicken Hill Black residents. Fatty's discomfort stems from their secretive nature and violent history.

The chapter reveals the dynamic between Fatty and Paper, where Fatty, hesitant and nervous, expresses fears about entering Lowgod territory, while Paper, confident and resolute, reassures him and insists on her mission to secure Dodo's freedom from a state psychiatric hospital. Dodo's troubling situation is tied to the death of a mutual acquaintance, Chona, which has stirred unrest among their circle. Despite his reservations, Fatty's feelings for Paper complicate his stance, illuminating his insecurities and sense of inadequacy.

Once Paper enters a nearby clapboard house, she finds herself amidst a gathering led by Miggy Fludd, a regal and formidable presence within the Lowgod community. Miggy's activities as a fortuneteller, now elevated to oracle status, affirm the Lowgods' spiritual connection and autonomy from the broader societal structure. Despite the disapproval from conventional society, Miggy manages to blend cultural practices with the streets' realities, resonating a powerful message about justice and survival.

Meanwhile, Fatty anxiously waits outside, contemplating his life choices and his unrequited love for Paper while worrying he will lose her to their more prosperous peers. When Paper returns, she holds a card marked "Son of Man," hinting at the potential assistance needed to liberate Dodo, thus intertwining their fates further into the fabric of the Lowgods' mysterious yet crucial world. The chapter encapsulates themes of cultural identity, resilience, and the intertwining of personal aspirations with communal ties, setting a compelling narrative for upcoming revelations.