**POKER!**

**Zora Neale Hurston**

**1931**

**Time**--Present

**Place**--New York

**Cast of characters**--

 Nunkie

 Too-Sweet

 Peckerwood

 Black Baby

 Sack Daddy

 Tush Hawg

 Aunt Dilsey

**SCENE**--

 A shabby front room in a shotgun house.

 A door covered by dingy portieres upstage C. Small panel

 window in side Wall L. Plain centre table with chairs drawn up

 about it. Gaudy calendars on wall. Battered piano against wall

 R. Kerosene lamp with reflector against wall on either side of

 room.

 At rise of curtain NUNKIE is at piano playing.... Others at

 table with small stacks of chips before each man. TUSH HAWG is

 seated at table so that he faces audience. He is expertly

 riffing the cards ... looks over his shoulder and speaks to

 NUNKIE.

TUSH HAWG

Come on here, Nunkie--and take a hand! You're holding up the game. You

been woofin' round here about the poker you can play--now do it!

NUNKIE

Yeah, I plays poker. I plays the piano and Gawd knows I plays the devil.

I'm Uncle Bob with a wooden leg!\*[Handwritten: Last sentence crossed out

in pencil in manuscript.]

BLACK BABY

Aw, you can be had! Come on and get in the game! My

britches is cryin' for your money! Come on, don't give

the healer no trouble!\*[Handwritten: last sentence crossed out in pencil]

NUNKIE

Soon as I play the deck I'm comin' and take you alls money! Don' rush

me.

 Ace means the first time that I met you

 Duece means there was nobody there but us two

 Trey means the third party--Charlie was his name

 Four spot means the fourth time you tried that same old game--

Five spot means five years you played me for a clown

Six spot means six feet of earth when the deal goes down

Now I'm holding the seven spot for each day of the week

Eight means eight hours that she Sheba-ed with your Sheik--

Nine spot means nine hours that I work hard every day--

Ten spot means tenth of every month I brought you home my pay--

The Jack is three-card Charlie who played me for a goat

The Queen, that's my pretty Mama, also trying to cut my throat--

The King stands for Sweet Papa Nunkie and he's goin' to wear the crown,

So be careful you all ain't broke when the deal goes down!

 (He laughs--X'es to table, bringing

 piano stool for seat)

TUSH HAWG

Aw now, brother, two dollars for your seat before you try to sit in this

game.

NUNKIE

 (Laughs sheepishly--puts money

 down--TUSH HAWG pushes stack of chips

 toward him. Bus.)

I didn't put it down because I knew you all goin' to be puttin' it right

back in my pocket.

BECKERWOOD

Aw, Y'all go ahead and play.

 (to TUSH HAWG)

Deal!

 (TUSH HAWG begins to deal for draw

 poker. The game gets tense. SACK

 DADDY is first man at TUSH's left--he

 throws back three cards and is dealt

 three more)

SACK DADDY

My luck sure is rotten! My gal must be cheatin' on me. I ain't had a

pair since John Henry had a hammer!

BLACK BABY

 (Drawing three new cards)

You might be fooling the rest with the cryin' you're doin' but I'm

squattin' for you! You're cryin' worse than cryin' Emma!

TOO-SWEET

 (Studying his three new cards)

 (Sings)

When yo' cards gets lucky, oh Partner, you oughter be in a rollin' game.

\*[Handwritten: get you foot offa my chair etc]

AUNT DILSEY

 (Enters through portieres--stands and

 looks disapprovingly)

You all oughter be ashamed of yourself, gamblin' and carryin' on like

this!

BLACK BABY

Aw, this ain't no harm, Aunt Dilsey! You go on back to bed and git your

night's rest.

AUNT DILSEY

No harm! I know all about these no-harm sins! If you don't stop this

card playin', all of you all goin' to die and go to Hell.

 (Shakes warning finger--exits through

 portieres--while she is talking the

 men have been hiding cards out of

 their hands and pulling aces out of

 sleeves and vest pockets and

 shoes--it is done quickly, one does

 not see the other do it)

NUNKIE

 (Shoving a chip forward)

A dollar!

SACK DADDY

Raise you two!

BLACK BABY

I don't like to strain with nobody but it's goin' to cost you five. Come

on, you shag-nags! This hand I got is enough to pull a country man into

town. \*[Handwritten: Last sentence crossed through in pencil.]

TOO-SWEET

You all act like you're spuddin'! Bet some money! Put your money where

your mouth is \*[Handwritten: els my fist where yo mouf is.]

TUSH HAWG

Twenty-five dollars to keep my company! Dog-gone, I'm spreadin' my

knots!

SACK DADDY

And I bet you a fat man I'll take your money--I call you.

 (Turns up his cards--he has four aces

 and king)

TUSH HAWG

 (showing his cards)

Youse a liar! I ain't dealt you no aces. Don't try to carry the Pam-Pam

to me 'cause I'll gently chain-gang for you!

SACK DADDY

Oh yeah! I ain't goin' to fit no jail for you and nobody else. I'm to

get me a green club and season it over your head. Then I'll give my case

to Miss Bush and let Mother Green stand my bond! I got deal them aces!

NUNKIE

That's a lie! Both of you is lyin'! Lyin' like the cross-ties from New

York to Key West! How can you all hold aces when I got four? Somebody is

goin' to West hell before midnight!

BECKERWOOD

Don't you woof at Tush Hawg. If you do I'm goin' to bust hell wide open

with a man!

BLACK BABY

 (Pulls out razor--Bus.)

My chop-axe tells me I got the only clean aces they is on this table!

Before I'll leave you all rob me outa my money, I'm goin' to die it off!

TOO-SWEET

I promised the devil one man and I'm goin' to give him five!

 (Draws gun)

TUSH HAWG

Don't draw your bosom on me! God sent me a pistol and I'm goin' to send

him a man!

 (FIRES. Bus. for all)

AUNT DILSEY

 (Enters after shooting bus. Stands.

 Bus. drops to chair)

They wouldn't lissen--

 (Looks men over--Bus.)

It sure is goin' to be a whole lot tougher in hell now!

CURTAIN