

and encourages his idealism. She says, "It's you young folks what's going to make the changes, Y'all's the ones, You got to lead and you got to fight and move us all on up a little higher. And I tell you something else, it's the ones from the South that's got to do it, them what knows the fire and ain't forgot how it burns. Up here too many forgits. They finds a place for themselves and forgits the ones on the bottom. Oh, heap of them talks about doing things, but they done really fergot. No, it's you young ones what has to remember and take the lead. ... And you have to take care of yourself, son. ... All right now, you looks to me like you might make something out of yourself, so you be careful." Mary could not have come along at a better time in the Invisible Man's life. She takes him in and nourishes his ego that has been rather completely destroyed by rejection from the world he sought and shock treatments.

The Invisible Man comes to an important realization of his identity shortly after moving into Mary's. One cold early winter's night he comes across a yam vendor. It is hard to think of a yam as a "reality instructor," but it is an item of black cuisine that brings the Invisible Man to his first concrete realization that he is a black man. The Invisible Man is in an exhilarated state as he relishes the sweetness and symbolic blackness of the yam. He has fantasies of confronting Bledsoe with accusations of being a secret yam and chitterling eater. He proclaims in joy, "They're my birthmark, I yam what I am!" The Invisible Man has started to come around to a realization of what old "Blue" was raving about. He has discarded the false sense of black dignity he acquired while he was a scholar. He is descending the stairs of his ivory tower.

That same night the Invisible Man starts to find himself a place in the voice of the community of Harlem. An old couple is being evicted and a crowd gathers. The Invisible Man looks at