

A story in harlem slang essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ It must be Jelly, 'cause jam don't shake”, A Story in Harlem Slang, by Zora Neale Hurston. Sweet Back and Jelly are two wanna-be pimps that are lost in a world full of wants just struggling to get by. Though Jelly and Sweet Back claim they have game, the woman that walks by, schools them both, yet she is not the one with the most game. Jelly and Sweet Back do have some game they both assume that they are better than one another. When Jelly comments about a woman he was with the night before, “...You must of not seen , me, 'cause last night I was riding round in a Yellow Cab, with a yellow gal, drinking yellow likker and spending yellow money...” Sweet Back replies with saying, “ Git out of my face, Jelly! Dat broad I seen you with wasn't no pe-ola. She was one of them coal-scuttle blondes with hair just as close to her head as ninety-nine is to a hundred. She look-ted like she had seventy-five pounds of clear bosom, guts in her feet, and she look-ted like six months in front and nine months behind. Buy you a whiskey still! Dat broad couldn't make the down payment on a pair of sox.” Sweet Back is implying that Jelly is a liar and that he was with a beat and broke girl.

This was an excellent snap because Jelly did not have anything to retort with. As they continue talking Jelly claims, “ Know what my woman done? We hauled off and went to church last Sunday, and when they passed 'round the plate for the penny collection, I throwed in a dollar. De man looked at me real hard for dat. Dat made my woman mad, so she called him back and throwed in a twenty dollar bill! Told him to take dat and go! Dat's what he got for looking at me 'cause I throwed in a dollar.” When the man looked at Jelly for throwing dollar in the penny collection, his reaction was surprised; we know this because his “ woman” called the guy back to throw in \$20 to

prove that they could afford it. Sweet Back replies and only says that he is a liar. Both Jelly and Sweet Back have great snaps, but I believe that Sweet Back has more game than Jelly. Jelly does have snaps, but they are not as good as Sweet Back's. Jelly gets offended by things that Sweet Back says, yet Sweet Back has no emotion to what Jelly says. Soon the woman starts to walk by, Jelly and Sweet Back both see the date and notice it is pay day.

When Jelly and Sweet Back start to approach the woman, she plays along. They are complimenting on her looks and shape stating “ Dat shape you got on you! I bet the Coca Cola Company is paying you good money for the patent!” When Sweet Back asks to go inside and get have dinner, she says, “ You got any money?” the girl asked, and stiffened like a ramrod. “ Nobody ain't pimping on me. You dig me?” calling both Jelly and Sweet Back out, she knew that they were broke. Sweet Back repeated the question, the woman replies with, “ You skillets is trying to promote a meal on me. But it'll never happen, brother. You barking up the wrong tree. I wouldn't give you air if you was stopped up in a jug. I'm not putting out a thing. I'm just like the cemetery □ I'm not putting out, I'm taking in! Dig?”

The woman does not like pimps, and does not agree with what they believe, woman should provide for them, and she was not going to participate in their actions. Moments later, Sweet Back tried to take her pocketbook, he was so desperate to get a meal he tried to steal the money she earned, she immediately stepped away and said, “ How much split you want back here? If your feats don't hurry up and take you ' way from here, you'll ride away. I'll spread my lungs all over New York and call the law. Go ahead, Bedbug! Touch me! And I'll holler like a pretty white woman!” Instead of the woman

calling the cops like she said, she walked away, while insulting them calling them bedbugs, which no one really wants. The woman has more game than Jelly and Sweet Back because she left both of them speechless at moments, and she was just messing around with them.

The real pimp is in fact the story teller, Zora Neale Hurston. She is the one who is creating the whole story, which includes all of the snaps and characters. In the beginning when she describes Jelly, he does not sound like a bad guy, though she calls him a “ Zigaboo”, but as she continues the story, he starts to portray a character that many people do not like.