

Austin Clarke  
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4 am 25 December 1971: My brother! I am here in my study, sitting down among books, papers, manuscripts, informed thoughts, with some beautiful \_\_\_\_\_ and a cup of tea, smoking my favorite pipe, thinking of you; waiting for the dribbling bath tap to run itself into a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ death and full up, thinking about you in that cold motherland, myself in this cold motherland, early early one Christmas morning...How are you, man? And how is your Christmas?

I eventually met Toni Morrison!!! We talked about books and contracts, all very delightfully immersing; I returned home to find a letter from my \_\_\_\_\_ saying much the same thing. I shall not bother you with this literary financial problem at this time; in a day or two, I shall tell you the details of my problem.

It is good to be home in the yard again: among family, children, friends and books and pipes. You know what I am talking about. Betty is downstairs rolling some **artistic touches** to a "Smithfield" ham, I bought in transit through Virginia. I look forward to the day when you and yours can be houseguests in this yard, when we can talk until daybreak which I see coming through the bay window of this second floor room. For the first time in fifteen years, there's no snow on this Christmas morning. Must be the astronauts and the Americans! The bath is ready, the tea is finished, the pipe is out. I shall see you. In the meantime, pour one-two drops in the red cawk for our ancestors on this spiritual morning. Salaam and love; and thanks for your letters, Austin.