The narrator’s first serious question into Sonny’s trouble and his answer(pp.95-96)

"What have you been, Sonny?" I asked.

He smiled-but sat sideways on the sofa, his elbow resting on the back, his fingers playing with his mouth and chin, not looking at me. "I've been something I didn't recognize, didn't know I could be. Didn't know anybody could be." He stopped, looking inward, looking helplessly young, looking old. "I'm not talking about it now because I feel guilty or anything like that-maybe it would be better if I did, I don't know. Anyway, I can't really talk about it. Not

to you, not to anybody," and now he turned and faced me. "Sometimes, you know, and it was actually when I was most out of the world, I felt that I was in it, that I was with it, really, and I could play or I didn't really have to play, it just came out of me, it was there. And I don't know how I played, thinking about it now, but I know I did awful things, those times, sometimes, to people. Or it wasn't that I did anything to them-it was that they weren't real." He picked up

the beer can; it was empty; he rolled it between his palms: "And other times-well, I needed a fix, I needed to find a place to lean, I needed to clear a space to listen-and I couldn't find it, and I-went crazy, I did terrible things to me, I was terrible for me." He began pressing the beer can between his hands, I watched the metal begin to give. It glittered, as he played with it like a knife, and I was afraid he would cut himself, but I said nothing. "Oh well. I can never tell you. I was all by myself at the bottom of something, stinking and sweating and crying and shaking, and I smelled it, you know? my stink, and I thought I'd die if I couldn't get away from it and yet, all the same, I knew that everything I was doing was just locking me in with it. And I didn't know," he paused, still flattening the beer can, "I didn't know, I still don't know, something kept telling me that maybe it was good to smell your own stink, but I didn't think that that was what I'd been trying to do- and-who can stand it?" and he abruptly dropped the ruined beer can, looking at me with a small, still smile, and then rose, walking to the window as though it were the lodestone rock. I watched his face, he watched the avenue. "I couldn't tell you when Mama died-but the reason I wanted to leave Harlem so bad was to get away from drugs. And then, when I ran away, that's what I was running from-really. When I came back, nothing had changed I hadn't changed I was just-older." And he stopped, drumming

with his fingers on the windowpane. The sun had vanished, soon darkness would fall. I watched his face. "It can come again," he said, almost as though speaking to himself. Then he turned to me. "It can come again," he repeated. "I just want you to know that."

-Sonny confessed that he was in fact struggling with the hopeless reality he was in sometimes resorting to the drugs and his enlistment in the Navy was in fact his desperate attempt to get away from the drugs. But he now realizes that the temporary escape like an enlistment could not be the solution. Later on, we come to find that Sonny’s success does come from Jazz music(and a real community in which he could be himself, he could communicate himself, he could share his suffering) not from simply running away from the problem. What matters in overcoming the hopeless reality of Harlem is to build a true sense of solidarity with the other members of the community with whom he could share the suffering from the inescapable “darkness” and its best recipe was their Jazz music.