






I HAD PLANNED TO BREAK IT TO THEM GENTLY, SLOWLY, OVER TIME. GET THEM USED TO THE TERM, THEN WORK IN THE EYE COLOR, IN EVER-DARKENING STAGES. SO MEASURED WILL THE CHANGE BE, I'LL BE ACCEPTED AS BLACK BEFORE ANYONE EVEN REMEMBERS ME AS WHITE — AND MY LIFELONG HEARTACHE, A BLACK MAN A DOOZY. A RACE CHANGE WOULD BE HARDEST ON THE FAMILY, DR. LEMMIE CAUTIONED ME FROM THE OUTSET. BUT THE BOY TOOK IT REAL HARD. AND DR. LEMMIE TOLD ME TO BE READY FOR THAT, TOO. BUT I WAS ALSO ASSURED THAT THE PROCESS WOULD BE SO GRADUAL, THAT WEEKS AFTER THE INITIAL INJECTIONS MY CO-WORKERS MIGHT DO NO MORE THAN COMPLIMENT MY TAN. I'D BE ROUGHLY THE COLOR OF BEYONCÉ BY SUMMER, NO DARKER THAN BRYANT GUMBEL BY FALL. IN FACT, BRYANT GUMBEL WAS WHAT WE WERE SHOOTING FOR — AND WHY NOT? TALK ABOUT A ROLE MODEL. A CREDIT TO ~~THE~~ OUR RACE. I COULD EVEN RETAIN MY SPEAKING VOICE.


DR. LEMMIE CALCULATED THAT IT WOULD TAKE UP ⁶SIX INJECTIONS OVER A TEN-WEEK PERIOD TO ACHIEVE A GUMBELESQUE HUE BY LABOR DAY. I WAS TO RECORD MY PROGRESS BY TAKING A PICTURE OF MY HAND EVERY MORNING. THIS IS MY HAND, DAY 2 →  NOTHING. BUT DAY 3 GOT ME COMPLIMENTS AT WORK , DAY 4 GOT ME STARES , BY DAY 5 I WAS SMOKIN' JOE FRAZIER , BY SUNDAY I WAS IDI AMIN . I CALLED THAT QUACK LEMMIE AND GAVE HIS VOICE MAIL HELL. CAN YOU PICTURE SUNDAY DINNER?

[FOR PAPER TV]
4-6-07



TOMMY JUST BOLTED FOR THE DOOR SCREAMING. "WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?" SAID HELEN. "YOU GO AND GET THIS DONE

WITHOUT TELLING HIM? WITHOUT TELLING ME?" AND I CRY, "TELL YOU WHAT, HELEN? TELL YOU OF THE PAIN I'VE ENDURED FROM THE TIME I WAS BORN? OF A LIFETIME SPENT IN SUFFERING SILENCE? HOW I CRIED THRU EVERY MINUTE OF ROOTS? HOW THE O.J. VERDICT LIFTED ME LIKE WINGS OF AN EAGLE? HOW I GET THE DEF COMEDY JAM? WOULD YOU HAVE HEARD IT, HELEN? WOULD YOU HAVE HEARD THE CRY OF THE BLACK MAN CLAWING HIS WAY TO FREEDOM?" "BLACK MAN? WHERE DO YOU COME UP WITH THIS? YOU PAINT YOURSELF A DIFFERENT COLOR AND CALL YOURSELF A DIFFERENT RACE?" "IT'S NOT PAINT," I SAID IN A SOFT VOICE, "IT'S NE-GROW-

T450. YOU COULD TAKE THE TREATMENT, TOO, HELEN. **Esquire** IF YOU COULD FIND IT IN YOUR HEART." AND I HELD OUT MY HANDS IN THE MOST WELCOMING AND FORGIVING WAY. THAT'S WHEN SHE SHRIEKED WITH LAUGHTER: "YOUR HANDS! LOOKIT THE PALMS! THEY'RE AS DARK AS THE REST OF YOU! YOU'RE NOT A BLACK MAN — YOU'RE DAFFY DUCK!" AND OUT THE DOOR SHE FLEW. I STARED AT MY PALMS IN HORROR. I RIPPED OFF MY SHOE AND SOCK AND STARED AT MY SOLE.  THAT FUCKEN QUACK!!