



Iceberg Slim

**Night
Train
To
Sugar
Hill**

**Introduction by
Justin Gifford**





Night Train To Sugar Hill

A Novel
by Iceberg Slim

Introduction
by Justin Gifford



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Night Train to Sugar Hill

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Introduction

In 1990, an aging pimp-turned-novelist named Robert “Iceberg Slim” Beck steadily worked away at one of his last novels, *Night Train to Sugar Hill*. His eyesight was poor from the effects of diabetes, but he was still able to write in longhand. His wife Diane Millman Beck typed up his manuscripts as he wrote them. For twenty-five years, Beck had been a player in the sex trafficking business in industrial Chicago & throughout the Midwest. During the 1940s and ’50s, he had pimped hundreds of women. He drove custom “hogs” (Cadillacs) and wore tailored “vines” (suits). When he wasn’t living this life of “phony glamour,” as he later called it in interviews, he was in and out of state and federal penitentiaries or running from the FBI.

In 1967, he published his autobiography, *Pimp: The Story of My Life*, a gritty urban picaresque of his rise and fall as a pimp. It mimicked the confessional storytelling of Malcolm X, but with a more explicit focus on the hidden underworld of pimps and sex workers. It was so infused with slang that at the request of his publisher Beck had to include a glossary at the end of the book so readers not familiar with the milieu could decrypt the street vernacular. It was an instant bestseller, and it became standard reading in prisons & inner-city neighborhoods across the country. Beck went on to write

essays, short stories, and novels, and he helped establish a new genre of black American literature known as “street fiction.” Black writers like Chester Himes had popularized African-American detective fiction a decade earlier, but Beck’s experience as a pimp brought a new on-the-ground perspective to the urban literature genre. His work inspired Blaxploitation films like *Superfly* and *The Mack*, as well as gangsta rappers Ice Cube & Ice T, who both named themselves after Iceberg.

In the early ’90s, toward the end of his life, Beck lived in a small studio on Crenshaw Boulevard in the middle of South Central L.A. His publisher at Holloway House had cheated him out of most of his royalties, so he lived modestly. When he was working on a novel, he spread his books and papers out on his bed so that he could visualize the project as a whole. Diane had given him an exercise bike, but ever since his diabetes had gotten worse, he had stopped riding it. Beck kept framed pictures of his three daughters on the headboard above his bed.

His years as a pimp had hardened him, and he preferred to live alone. Diane came down from her home in Silver Lake to visit three times a week. She helped him prepare his manuscripts and took him to his dialysis treatments. He wore a silk shirt and slacks, and he sported a black leather Kangol cap to cover his bald spot. Sometimes Diane drove him around the neighborhood in his 1948 Lincoln Continental. The majestic car was

Night Train to Sugar Hill

Prologue

Baptiste Landreau O'Leary is the author's alter ego. Certain people cast in this fictionalized social drama are composite characterizations of real people who have been given pseudonyms. The events depicted have been drawn from general public media sources and from the personal experience of the author. Because of story material that includes drug abuse, graphic murder, and bizarre sexual peccadillos, parents are advised that this book should not be made available to minors.

Chapter 1

It was past midnight in Long Island, New York. A violent June rain and thunderstorm bombed the enclave of posh homes. Baptiste Landreau O'Leary, the 10-year-old son of an interracial couple, lie sleepless in his weeping mother's arms on a bed in a guest room of the two-story family mansion.

After a brutal beating, Iris Landreau O'Leary had fled from the master bedroom that she shared with her alcoholic husband Frank. A flash of lightning revealed the awful effect of Frank's fists on Iris's puffed and battered face. Baptiste blurted, "I usta love Daddy when he usta play funny games and stuff with me and make us laugh. Now I hate him! I hate him!"

She caressed his mop of curly black hair. "Bap, don't hate him or anybody, ever... You will love him again after I convince him to get help to stop his drinking."

"But why does Daddy beat you up all the time?" he whispered as he clung to her.

She heaved a sigh. "His whiskey is driving him crazy. And also, because he hates me, blames me for things that happened to him after we got married... Your Uncle Chester warned me not to marry him."

Baptiste raised his head from her bosom to exclaim, "Mom, I wish you had listened to Unc."

She said softly, "Bap, love can make you deaf, dumb, and blind."

Baptiste whispered, "Why does Daddy hate you? And what does he blame you for?"

She reached across him to a bedside table for tissues to blot her tears. "Bap, I was just a dancer in a Broadway musical when your father and I started meeting and falling in love in secret, hidden places. You see, Bap, all of his high society friends and relatives, even his mother and father, cast him out of their lives. His stock brokerage business went broke when his racist customers heard of his marriage to a poor Haitian dancer. His whiskey makes him blame me for everything bad that happened to him." She squeezed herself close. "Bap, don't worry about me... I've got you and that's all I need to make me happy."

Baptiste sat up in the bed. "But Mom, we gonna have to leave here. Let's go live with Unc Chester in Harlem. We can..." The little boy's face froze in terror as he stared at his father's fearsome 6'6" frame standing in the doorway of the bedroom.

Frank switched on a ceiling light as he moved to the bedside. His bloodshot pale blue eyes glared down at her for a long moment. "Iris, get your ass back in my bed. Now!" he shouted as his fists banged his thighs.

Mother and son scrambled away to the far side of the bed. Iris said coldly, "Frank, I'm not sleeping with you again until you keep your promise and go to A.A. for your drinking problem. Get out and leave me alone."

Frank hollered, “No black bitch orders Frank Phineas O’Leary the Third to do a goddamn thing!” He lunged across the bed to seize her right wrist. He jerked her across Baptiste to the floor and kicked her buttocks with a house-slipped foot.

Baptiste screamed, “Stop! Leave her alone!”

Frank grabbed her arms and pulled her to her feet. She clawed at his face and missed his crotch with a knee smash. He punched her in the belly. She vomited and crashed against the bedside table, shattering a porcelain lamp on the table against the wall.

Baptiste leaped from the bed to hook his hands around his father’s neck. He rode his father’s back. He bit his father’s neck and shoulders with the ferocity of a rabid wolf.

Frank howled in pain as he tore Baptiste’s arms away and hurled him against the wall. Frank stooped to hammer his fists against the head of the boy.

Baptiste rolled away and got to his feet. He ran to his room down the hall to get his baseball bat.

Iris snatched up a dagger-like shard of the broken lamp. She gouged a spring of scarlet from Frank’s neck. He backhanded her to the carpet. He rubbed his hands on his wounded neck and stared slack-jawed at his bloody palm.

“I’ll kill you!” he yelled as he vised his hands around her throat.

She fell to the carpet as he straddled her and tightened his stranglehold. She was dead when Baptiste rushed back into the bedroom with the bat. He held it high above his head to strike the back of his father's head. Frank caught a flicker of motion in the corner of his eye. He tilted his torso and took the crunching blow to the top of his shoulder.

Baptiste dropped the bat and ran for the doorway. Frank scooped up the bat and pursued Baptiste into the hallway. He caught him and swung the bat against the side of the boy's head as he was about to enter his bedroom. Baptiste fell into a bottomless chasm of nothingness.

Chapter 2

Now 75 years old, Baptiste Landreau O'Leary was awakened from the nightmare that had recurred to stomp his sleep for decades. He closed his eyes against the dazzling lasers of the Beverly Hills, California sun firing through a bedroom window.

He lay motionless, depressed in his great white oak bed as he started his daily visualization therapy for his several life-threatening medical problems. As if watching a video tape playing inside his head, he saw the lump of cancer in his prostate dying in a freezing blizzard, cracking, dissolving into tiny fragments that would leave his body when he urinated. For his defective heart, he visualized a gargantuan clock glowing in the heavens, regulated by the master of the Universe to tick thunderously, with celestial precision compelling his ailing heart to beat in sync with the same strong perfection. He visualized his kidneys, on the brink of dialysis, awash in a blessed healing waterfall that burst rainbow colors.

As always, he felt physically better, energized after the visualization ritual. But he was still depressed. He swung his long lean frame from the satin-quilted nest onto the white carpet. He mounted an exercycle across the room. Pajama clad, his long legs were a gold silk blur as he furiously pedaled for 10 minutes.

He was still depressed after showering and dressing in a black mohair suit. He shoved a compact disc of Ellington into a player. But not even the "A" Train could haul away his pain. He was going to the funeral of a friend today.

He closed his eyes, his knees quivered. He remembered the funeral of his mother Iris after his father had strangled her to death and fractured Baptiste's skull. He remembered how sweet and funny and lovable Frank had been before whiskey changed him into a monster. Shadowy black wings of guilt flapped inside his head. Perhaps if he, in his childish rage and panic, had not brought his bat into the bedroom... A ghost of remorse for his father's murder haunted him for an instant.

He looked at his impeccably dressed image in a floor to ceiling mirror. He studied his face, which always reminded him of his father. It was almost a perfect replica of his square-jawed handsome Irish father's face, except for the coffee tint of his mother's face and her dreamy sable eyes.

He felt painful remorse when he remembered how, at 16, had ambushed his father in Long Island and shot him to death with one of Uncle Chester's hand guns. He had been sorry an instant after he pulled the trigger.

Frank's money & political clout had gotten him off with a year in prison for involuntary manslaughter for the murder of Iris. After all, Iris had been just a nothing black dancer to the judge and prosecutor. But Frank

had stolen the life of the most precious person on earth from Baptiste.

Yes, he had served 5 years in prison, until he was 21, for killing Frank, and it had been worth it. At that time in his youthful rage & pain he would have been happy with a life sentence to make Frank dead.

As he turned away from the mirror, he shivered. He remembered that he had asked his daughter Opal to bury him in the suit he was wearing. He pressed a button on a console to alert his live-in maid and cook, Helene, to start breakfast. He left the bedroom and went down a winding staircase to the sunken living room. He walked through the beige and gold living room onto a red tile patio. Pale blue fiberglass roofing tinted his silver hair as he sat down at a marble-topped table for breakfast.

Zephyrs of fragrances wafted from a flower garden ablaze with colors in the sunshine.

“Good morning, Mr. Landreau,” Helene, his Haitian housekeeper said as she placed his breakfast from a silver tray before him.

He smiled. “Good morning Helene... Please look out for Isaiah’s car and buzz him through the gate.”

The statuesque young beauty’s radiant dark eyes sparkled. “Oh! That will be a pleasure, Mr. Landreau. He’s so tall and strong and handsome.” She fingered a lacquered, dried walnut-sized Haitian seduction root dangling from a gold chain around her neck.

Baptiste said, "Watch yourself, Helene. That root around your neck can't catch Isaiah. He's married and in love."

The lavender silk of her uniform shimmered in an elaborate shrug. "So, I catch another man that I want who is not married and in love." She smiled mischievously and pranced away.

He made a mental note to watch for any voodoo paraphernalia in the house and especially in his personal effects. The necklace was not conclusive evidence that Helene was a voodoo fanatic, he thought as he ate the Wheaties with mocha mix and salt-free rye toast.

Voodoo fanatics made him uncomfortable. He'd gotten a bellyful of them when he lived with his Uncle Chester in Harlem. Chester had lived in an apartment above his voodoo accessories shop. Unlike Chester, he had never believed in any of the store's products to empower customers to win love or to achieve the insanity or death of one's enemies.

Ironically, Chester had dropped dead behind the store's counter while packaging for a customer a powder guaranteed to ward off death.

Baptiste stared at his face reflected in a silver water pitcher. "Jesus!" He looked so old and worn. His once bright and vibrant eyes looked dull and fearful of sudden visitation of the grim reaper. Despite the fact that his face had no major wrinkles, he shuddered. He remembered how fresh looking his face had been at 20 when Chester died.

Isaiah Jones came onto the patio. “Hiya, Pops,” the 6'5"-giant said as he sat down at the table. He placed a large manila envelope fat with checks and cash from the scores of tenants in the dozen apartment buildings and homes he managed.

“Oh, I’m still kickin’, but not that high.”

Isaiah finger-stroked a lapel of his midnight blue silk suit. “Like my new suit?” Isaiah asked with mock anxiety in his voice.

Baptiste played the game. “Hell no! You look like a Harlem pimp.”

They laughed. Baptiste looked at his watch. “Even though you were 20 minutes late, you have time for a cup of your black poison before we leave for the funeral.”

A bell on the tabletop brought Helene to the patio.

“Baby doll, please bring Isaiah a cup of black coffee,” Baptiste said sweetly. She smiled. “Be back in a flash. I just made some.”

Baptiste leaned toward Isaiah and lowered his voice. “Helene has the hots for you.”

Isaiah chuckled, “She’s gorgeous all right but Haitian women are too intense for this Georgia boy... but I’ll put her on my list...” Isaiah paused when Helene brought his coffee. When she left, his handsomely boyish face hardened. “I’m seriously thinkin’ about cuttin’ Sabina loose.”

Baptiste tried to remember how many times he had heard him say he would during the two years of their marriage.

Baptiste said irritably, "Nigger, you can't dump your alcoholic goddess. She's kicked your emotional ass a thousand times and you're still rooting your nose in her pussy like a hog in a bucket of slop. Don't tell me any more you're gonna kick her out. Nigger, do it and then tell me."

Isaiah flinched under the verbal barrage. "Damn, Pops, lighten up. I'm not the only sucker to fall in love with a tramp."

Baptiste studied him with slitted eyes for a long moment. He knew and loved Isaiah like a son. Isaiah's weakness and mistaken notion that lust was love infuriated Baptiste. "Love, Nigger? What is there to love about a lyin', dog-ass alcoholic blue-eyed blond piece of garbage? Love, Nigger? Unless you get strong and learn the difference between lust and love, you're gonna have the alabaster blues till you die." He placed his hand on Isaiah's wrist. "Son, you know I love you, but..."

Helene appeared in the doorway to interrupt him. "Opal is on the living room phone," she said.

Baptiste affectionately patted Isaiah's back as he got to his feet. He said, "Come on, pal, I'll only be a minute on the phone with Opal."

Isaiah picked up the manila folder and followed him into the living room. He was so relieved that the old man's anger had vanished quickly as always.

Isaiah dropped the manila folder on the living room sofa beside Baptiste. Isaiah went out the front door and sat on a lawn chair in the late June sunshine.

Shortly, Baptiste finished his conversation with Opal, calling from Sugar Hill in an upscale section of Harlem. He placed the manila envelope in his bedroom safe before he joined Isaiah.

Baptiste nodded toward a monstrous 1938 black Rolls, sparkling in an open garage. Because of eye problems, Baptiste drove it infrequently.

“How about you drivin’ ol’ Betsy to South Central?” Baptiste said.

Isaiah opened a door of his Thunderbird in the driveway. He shook his head. “Not me, Pops. I might get side-swiped and give you a heart attack.”

Helene stood at the open front door of the house watching them as Baptiste got in Isaiah’s car. Isaiah drove down the long driveway to the steel gate. Baptiste buzzed it open with a genie device from his coat pocket.

They drove through an affluent colony of spectacular homes and perfectly manicured jade lawns into Hollywood.

“Say, man, why are you taking the long way to South Central?” Baptiste asked.

Isaiah chuckled. “You keep me so busy, Pops. I haven’t seen Hollywood in a long time... Don’t worry, we’ll make the funeral on time.

They cruised down Hollywood Boulevard. Panhandlers with gimmicks and pitches galore played on tourist suckers. A tall black man in jeans scored repeatedly after he pitched his tale of woe. He pointed out his female accomplice, teetering nearby on prop crutches.

He begged for bus fare to take his ailing, crippled wife to County Hospital.

A variety of sweaty hicks in cheap clothing moved along the sleazy boulevard, searching for the fantasy hoax called Hollywood. They wandered in confused flabbergast among the moil of five buck cuties, brute-faced men in mini-skirts.

Some of the tourists snailed along the sidewalk gazing down at the implant of stars honoring their past and present movie idols. Some of them, like bumpkin cattle, crowded into tour buses. They would gape at the homes of stars in Beverly Hills and Bel Air. Perhaps they would get lucky and spot a star to get an orgasm of the eye. But their idols would be hiding from murderous fanatics in their luxurious prisons.

Baptiste said, "Turn off this nightmare alley at the next corner."

They headed to South Central. Driving down Crenshaw Boulevard, the racket from high decibel car radios pummeled their eardrums. Fast food joints, gas stations, bars and liquor stores marred the scenery.

They parked beside Angelus Funeral Home. They entered the quiet ambience of the elegantly furnished foyer. They were directed by a flashy high yellow woman behind an ornate desk to the chapel where the services would be held for the slain young gang member. Baptiste had known Leroy Wilson from babyhood when

his mother had been a tenant in one of his apartment buildings.

The chapel was packed with mourners and spectators, drawn to see and hear preacher Eli Brown. Baptiste and Isaiah sat in the last two vacant seats in the rear of the chapel. An obese black woman, wearing a polka-dot dress, sat at an organ playing “Amazing Grace.”

The open coffin of Leroy Wilson sat in front of the empty pulpit. Leroy’s grief-ravaged mother sat with seven staircase brothers and sisters of Leroy’s only a few feet from the casket.

The room was graveyard quiet when the organist concluded the piece. The outrageously candid and fearless black activist minister would soon make his appearance.

Baptiste said, “Reverend Eli is gonna be hotter than hellfire today. Leroy was his nephew.”

The flamboyant old soldier of God suddenly materialized through a curtained door behind the pulpit. As usual, for the funerals of young gang murder victims, he wore a blood red ankle length red smock over his street clothes.

He stood motionless in the pulpit for a full half-minute to achieve his favorite effects: drama and divine mystique. His long-shaved skull was tilted skyward like a blueblack missile ready to fire. The whites of his large, light brown eyes flashed like white flame as he gazed at the image of his master painted on the chapel ceiling.

His leathery, savage face would be perfect casting as a Zulu warrior in a Hollywood film.

He lowered his head and swept the crowd with his compelling amber eyes. His *basso profundo* voice amplified by the pulpit microphone exploded like a cannon shot in the hushed chapel. "My nephew, Leroy Wilson, died a gangster. He and his kind are hated and feared by many across America. But I baptized him when he was an innocent baby in his mother's arms. I loved him then and I love him now, lying there in his coffin. Today, God has directed me to fill your hearts and minds with the truth about Leroy and all of our black youth like him, dead and condemned to die on the streets of America. Perhaps with God's truth and wisdom delivered through me, you can learn how the generation of Leroy's in this country were psychologically brutalized and satanized by the indifference and cruel neglect of the symbolic political father of our country, Ronald Reagan. He cut and sabotaged many of the government programs necessary for the stability of Black underclass families and other minorities. He created a climate, a cult of greed and corruption in America."

"The coroner's report was that Leroy Wilson died from multiple gunshot wounds from an automatic weapon. Police have the triggerman in custody."

He paused to vigorously shake his bullet head. His voice quavered a bit as he went on.

"The racist policies of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and the Republican party must share the blame with the

killer of Leroy and all of the others. It pains my soul that some of us are so politically naive. Some of us helped to vote George Bush into the White House. Yes, voted for the enemy of black people, even though he had publicly vowed during his campaign for the Presidency, to continue the policies of Ronald Reagan. I'm aware that all Americans have the right to vote for any candidate or party of their choice."

He leaned and thrust his ancient face across the pulpit. "But any nigger in America who votes for the enemy Republican party is stupid, misinformed, or afflicted with the Uncle Tom need to be punished and to kiss the ass of his master. Wake up to the truth!" The crowd gasped. Eli boomed on.

"Needless to say, the clique of social climbing nigger money junkies who seek and grovel for so-called important positions in the present Bush administration are beneath contempt."

"Do you really believe that a president who vowed to perpetuate Ronald Reagan's racist policies would appoint blacks he couldn't control that would oppose or challenge such policies? I ask you, what has the present black Secretary of Health done to improve the health care of blacks and other minorities? Bush's black Army Chief of Staff did not dare to strongly oppose the decision to ship thousands of our young men to that potential death trap in Saudi Arabia. Instead, he timidly suggested that our boys would suffer in the oven heat

of the desert. Believe, friends, that a black man of Jesse Jackson's principle and courage would have resigned the so-called lofty position. Black men like Jesse would not have put their principles and righteous conviction on hold to please a boss. But then, a black man of Jesse's stature could not have been Chief of Staff anyway, and certainly not a fall guy."

"My friends, high level black lackeys rationalize that if they join the enemy, they can change things for the better. But they never do. I know from personal experience that the Democratic Party is also tainted with racism and the need to recruit black men that they can control. But at least many of its white members have compassion and concern for our plight. Racism, as even a fool should know, exists on every corner in America. Thirty years ago, I was offered a chance by a group of powerful white Democrats to prepare for a run for State Assemblyman. My present white wife, Ida and I, were engaged to be married the week following the offer."

He paused to smile down at silver-haired Ida seated in the front row. Time had ruined her dollish face.

He went on. "Many of you here today know Ida and love her as I do. The political bosses gave me a choice. Postpone the wedding until after the election or I would be unacceptable as a candidate for the office."

His eyes were on fire as he smashed his fist down on the pulpit. He roared, "I told them that only God controls

this nigger! So, barricade your souls from the Satan that controls Bush and his black lackeys. Learn to love Leroy, the political victim lying there. Don't hate the enemy. Pray for Bush, and especially for old insensitive Reagan and his wife Nancy."

He leaned and gazed down at the corpse of his nephew. Tears spilled down his wrinkled cheeks. "Goodbye, Lil Leroy. God told me we'll meet again in Heaven."

The string-bean dynamo turned away to disappear into the curtained area behind the pulpit. The crowd sat in utter silence when the fat lady finished playing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" on the organ.

Baptiste and Isaiah left the chapel to wait in the parking lot for Laura Wilson, Leroy's mother. On the lot, a funeral director and his female assistant were lining up cars and placing funeral stickers on windshields for the trip to the cemetery.

Laura staggered into the sunshine like a sleepwalker, followed by her children. Baptiste embraced her for a long moment. He said softly, "Laura dear, my heart is almost bursting with pain and sympathy for your loss."

She tiptoed to kiss his face as they disengaged. She walked away to a black limousine. Baptiste and Isaiah watched the procession of cars move from the lot, led by tan uniformed men on motorcycles. Baptiste and Isaiah went to the Thunderbird.

As Isaiah started the car, he asked, "Pops, is there anybody you want to visit over here before I take you home?"

Baptiste loosened his tie. "Yeah, since this is Sunday, a lot of my kid pals will be at the Center."

Isaiah turned into heavy Crenshaw Boulevard traffic and drove south for a mile or so. On the way Isaiah said, "What did you think about Reverend Eli's rap?"

Baptiste hesitated. Finally, he replied, "Eli's rap was pretty much on the money... except that he should have excluded Mayor Dinkins in New York and Assembly Leader Willie Brown here in California, along with Jesse from that category of so-called black political lackeys."

Isaiah said, "How about Tom Bradley here in LA?"

Baptiste shook his head. "No comment to that, pal."

Isaiah reached an imposing five-story apartment building. He opened the garage gate beneath it with a genie device. A large red lettered sign on the gate read "Garage for Tenants Only." Isaiah pulled into a vacant space marked "Manager" in white paint. The spacious garage, as usual, on a balmy Sunday, had only several of its spaces filled. As they walked toward an exit at the rear of the gloomy expanse of concrete, a melon-red Excalibur caught Baptiste's eye. "Hey, son, you didn't mention to me that I had a tenant who could afford a 150 G crate like that red convertible."

Isaiah jerked open the door of the security building. "Pops, Sabina drives it... She, uh, said a girlfriend in Malibu loaned it to her until she gets back from France."

Baptiste grunted as they went down a hallway to a walled section behind the apartment building.



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With bookstores and presses around the world struggling to survive, and many actually closing, we are forming this patronage project as a means for establishing a continuous & stable foundation to safeguard our longevity. Through this patronage project we would be able to remain free of having to rely upon government support &/or other official funding bodies, not to speak of their timelines & impositions. It would also free CMP from suffering the vagaries of the publishing industry, as well as the risk of submitting to commercial pressures in order to persist, thereby potentially compromising the integrity of our catalog.

CAN YOU SACRIFICE \$10 A WEEK FOR KULCHUR?

For the equivalent of merely 2–3 coffees a week, you can help sustain CMP and contribute to the future of kulchur. To participate in our patronage program we are asking individuals to donate \$500 per year, which amounts to \$42/month, or \$10/week. Larger donations are of course welcome and beneficial. All donations are tax-deductible through our fiscal sponsor Fractured Atlas. If preferred, donations can be made in two installments. We are seeking a minimum of 300 patrons per year and would like for them to commit to giving the above amount for a period of three years.

WHAT WE OFFER

Part tax-deductible donation, part exchange, for your contribution you will receive every CMP book published during the patronage period as well as 20 books from our back catalog. When possible, signed or limited editions of books will be offered as well.

WHAT WILL CMP DO WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS?

Your contribution will help with basic general operating expenses, yearly production expenses (book printing, warehouse & catalog fees, etc.), advertising & outreach, and editorial, proofreading, translation, typography, design and copyright fees. Funds may also be used for participating in book fairs and staging events. Additionally, we hope to rebuild the *Hyperion* section of the website in order to modernize it.

From Pericles to Mæcenās & the Renaissance patrons, it is the magnanimity of such individuals that have helped the arts to flourish. Be a part of helping your kulchur flourish; be a part of history.

HOW

To lend your support & become a patron, please visit the subscription page of our website: contramundum.net/subscription

For any questions, write us at: info@contramundum.net



1980s Los Angeles. The crack epidemic has hit hard.

Innocent & damned alike fall victim to the artificial allure of the drug — a teenager accidentally overdoses, junkies smoke crack laced with cyanide, a gang member is shot down in the streets, a mother is murdered by her alcoholic husband, and a major drug dealer is killed by an ordinary man fed up with the drug game.

Set on L.A.'s meanest, toughest streets and never published until now, *Night Train to Sugar Hill* is one of Iceberg Slim's two final novels. It is his most personal work of political fiction, an epic tragedy where no one escapes from the deadly orbit of the drug crisis and the police repression that follows. Baptiste O'Leary, an old ex-con who is Slim's alter ego, calls for political action against the militarized police raiding black communities and greater compassion for those caught in the drug's web, like his own daughter Opal.

Iceberg Slim's novels have never been easily digestible, but they have always been true. *Night Train to Sugar Hill* is no exception, offering us Slim's end-of-life vision, with him looking back over his abusive childhood, his career as a criminal, & his later years as a family man. Set against the backdrop of an America where its so-called dream is more of a nightmare & its underclass is deliberately preyed upon, *Night Train* is ultimately a hybrid novel, a mix of hardcore crime fiction, mysticism, L.A. noir, literary naturalism, and street literature.



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