Your main commentary should be focused on auxiliaries. Other topics may also be addressed.

For weeks after that I could not believe in my feelings. My personality was numb, reduced to a lumpish, loose, dissolved state. I was a non-man, something that knew vaguely that it was human but felt that it was not. As time separated me from the experience, I could feel no hate for the men who had driven me from the job. They did not seem to be individual men, but part of a huge, implacable, elemental design towards which hate was futile. What I did feel was a longing to attack. How? And because I knew no way to grapple with this thing, I felt doubly cast out.

I went to bed tired and got up tired, though I was having no physical exercise. During the day I overreacted to each event, my banked emotions spilling around it. I refused to talk to anyone about my affairs, because I knew that I would only hear a justification of the ways of the white folks and I did not want to hear it. I lived carrying a huge wound, tender, festering, and I shrank when I came near anything that I thought would touch it. But I had to work because I had to eat. My next job was that of a helper in a drugstore, and the night before I reported for work I fought with myself, telling myself that I had to master this thing, that my life depended upon it. Other black people worked, got along somehow, then I must, must, MUST get along until I could get my hands on enough money to leave. I would make myself fit in. Others had done it. I would do it. I had to do it.

I went to the job apprehensive, resolving to watch my every move. I swept the sidewalk, pausing when a white person was twenty feet away. I mopped the store, cautiously waiting for the white people to move out of my way in their own good time. I cleaned acres of glass shelving, changing my tempo now to work faster, holding every nuance of reality within the focus of my consciousness. Noon came and the store was crowded; people jammed to the counters for food. A white man behind the counter ran up to me and shouted: “A jug of Coca-Cola, quick, boy!” My body jerked taut and I stared at him. He stared at me.


675 words