Vagrants and Loiterers

By Kwame Dawes

_South Carolina, c.1950_

You got that clean waistcoat,
the bright white of a well-tailored
shirt, you got those loose-as-sacks
slacks and some spit-polished shoes,
and you know, whether you are looking
like money, or about to take a stroll,
to tilt that hat like you own
the world; yeah, smoke your pipe,
roll your tobacco, and hold loose
as authority, your muscles, lithe
and hard; and every so often, when
you feel the urge, you reach into the waist
pocket and pull out that watch on its
chain, then look in the sky and say
_Gonna be a cold one when it come,_
like God gave you that fancy clock
to tell the future. These are the easy
boys of the goodly South; waiting for
what is out of frame to happen:
the sheriff with his questions, the
paddy wagon, the chain gang, the weight
of the world. Waiting, with such delicate
dignity, fickle as the seasonal sky.

Source: _Poetry_ (April 2018)