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Women forget all those things they don’t want to remember, and remember everything they don’t want to forget. Then they act and do things according to the dead. But the dead is sick and ailing with friends at the window and at the feet. She had come back from the pool and floated the sudden death, and her eyes, flung wide open in judgment.

The people all saw her because it was sundown. She was gone, but they left their feet prints in the snow, it was the time for sitting on porches beside the road, it was the time to hear things and talk. Those sitters had been tongueless, wordless, eyeless, nameless, and the woman was gone. The spirits felt human and powerful. They sat in judgment, seeing her as she was made them remember the snow, the leafless wind and swallowed the breath of their questions. They made their statements with howling, toads out of shouts. It was like a song, racking without words: talking altogether like a song.

What she doin’ comin’ back here in dem overalls? Can’t she find no dress to put on? — which is dat blue saten dress she left here in? — what all dat money her husband died and left her? — what all dat foot year she woman down wid I have swingin’ down her back late done young gal? — where she left dat young boy she want to see her husband? — which she was going to marry when she left her — which he left her — what she done with all her money? — Bitches, he off wid some gal so you of he ain’t even got no money. — Bitches, he off wid some gal so you of he ain’t even got no money. — Bitches, he off wid some gal so you of he ain’t even got no money. — Bitches, he off wid some gal so you of he ain’t even got no money.

When she go to where — where they were turned her back on the back door. They scrambled a noisy good enough and left their tongues set ting open and this ear and that ear. Her speech was pleasant enough, but she was always straight on to her goal. The people couldn’t talk for looking.

The men noticed her firm buttocks ride she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great ropes of black hair swung to her waist and un- explaning in the wind like a phalanx through her perquisition, because trying to hide holes in her skirt they were saving with the mind of what they last with the eye. The women took the faced shirt and muddy one alls and laid them away for remembrance.

But nobody moved; nobody spoke; nobody even thought to swallow spit until after her gate slammed behind her.
Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some people they come in swim with the tide, for others, they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never never landing till the watcher forgets and turns his eyes away.

Just
Harley Zor Neile
P. I of, ass. of
Their's Eye wave looking
Gus
Pearl Stone opened her mouth and laughed real hard because she didn’t know what else to do. She fell all over Mrs. Lumpkin while she laughed. Mrs. Lumpkin smacked violently and sucked her teeth.

"Humph! Well, let her worry you. You ain’t like me, ah ain’t got her to study about. If she ain’t got manners enough to stop and let folks know how she been made, let her learn!"

"She ain’t ever worth talking to after," Lula Mose frowned then her nose. "She sits high, but she looks low. Daze what she say, don’t please the women runnin’ after young boys."

Phoebe Watson hitched her rocking chair forward before she spoke. "Well, nobody don’t know if it’s anything to tell or not, me and her best friend, and she don’t know."

"Maybe we don’t know into things like you do, ma’am."

"We all know how she went way from here and us who seen her come back. Tain’t no use in your tryin’ to close no old woman like Jamie Starks, Phoebe, young or no.”

"At dat she ain’t as she as some of y’ all dat talking."

"She’s way past forty to my knowledge, Phoebe."

"No, mercy forty-two at de outside."

"She’s way too old for a boy like Tea Cole."

"Tea Cole ain’t been no boy for some time. He’s round thirty, his ownself."

"Don’t know what it was, she could stop and say a few words with us. She act like we done done something to her.” Pearl Stone complained: "Ah de one been doin’ wrong."

(Lou) "What you ever know her to do so bad as y’ all make out. The worst thing she ever knowed her to do was taking a few years off her age and dat ain’t never harmed nobody, y’ all makes me tired, you. Ah have to ’sense me, cause Ah’m bound to go take her some supper." Phoebe stood up sharply.

"Don’t mind us,” Lula smiled, "just so right ahead, us. Come on. Mind yo’ house for you till you git back. Mah supper is done, you better go see how the feel."

"Said!” Pearl agreed. "Ah done searchin’ dat lil’ meat and bread too long to talk about. Ah kin stay way from home long as Ah please. Mah husband ain’t there."

"
you mean, you mad cause she didn't stop and tell us all her business. @how
Oh, yes, Pheoby! If you’re ready to go, ah could walk over dere with you.
Mrs. Lumpkin volunteered, it’s sort of duckin’ down dark. De hoofer man might catch yuh.

"Haw, ah thank you. Nothin’ couldn’t catch me down few steps away from you. Anyhow, my husband tell me say no first class hoofer would have me. If she got anything to tell you, you’ll hear it."

She hurried on off, with a lowered bustle in her hands. She left the porch holding her head with wrinkled questions, the tip of the annular ring glinting against it.

Pheoby Watson didn’t go on by the front gate and down the palm walks to the front door. She walked around the fence corner and went in the intimate gate with her keeping plate.

B. Mulatto rice. Janie must be round that side.

She found her sitting on the steps of the back porch with the lamps all filled and the chimneys cleaned.

"Hello, Janie, how you comin’?"

"Oh, pretty good. Chum tryin’ to scare some uh de tiredness and de dirt outa me feet." She laughed a little.

"Ah see you is. Gal, you sho looks good. You looks like you’s got a good one."

"Man wid dim overalls on, you shows you womanhood."

"Gwan! Gwan! You must think ah brought you somethin’ when ah ain’t brought home a thing but mahself."

"Dat’s a gracious plenty, yo’ friends wouldn’t want nothin’ better."

"Ah takes dat flattery offa you, Pheoby! Cause ah know its from de heart." Janie extended her hand. "Good friend, Pheoby! Aint you hear quirtuh quinno dat’l make things you thought me? Ah ain’t had a thing on mah stomach today except this rich hand. They both laugh easily. "Give it here and have a piece."

"Ah knowed you’d be hungry. No time to be huntin’ stone wood after dark. Wah mulatto rice ain’t so good hungry!"
“Gall, it’s too good! You swallows a mean funny sound in a kitchen!”

“Aw, dat ain’t nothing much to eat, Janie. But Chin habble
Janie ate heartily and said nothing. The dark-colored cloud
dust that the sun had stirred up in the sky was settling by

“Here, Phedy, take go ole plate. Ah ain’t got a bit 3 use for
a empty dish-dish who come in handy.”

Phedy laughed at her friend’s rough jokes. “You’re just as
crazy as you ever was.”

“Hand me dat towel on dat chair by your, honey, lemme dry
maw feet.” She took the towel and rubbed vigorously, laughter
Came to her from the big room.

“Well, ah see Mouth-Ahlright is still sittin’ in de same
place. If off reason they got me up in they mouth now.”

“Dat right. They know how I bust your head you do go self. Oh, dat
tell what they’s been done happenin’.”

“Dat God, don’t think no mo’ about ‘em than ah do that’s a
lost ball in de high grass.”

“Ais hears what they done, they jest will collect round mah face
cause it’s on de big road. Mah husband git so sick I’m somethin’
hes makes sure all of yer home.”

“Sam is right too, they jest wearin’ out yo’ sittin’ chairs.”

“Yeah, Sam say most 0’ em gone to church, so they’ll be sure to rise
in judgement. Dats de day dat every reek is supposed to be made known.
They want to hear us and hear if 1 all.”

“Sam is too crazy, you can’t stop laughin’ when you see somethin’
un-huh-huh. He say he aims to be there himself so he can find
out who stole his corn-cobs pipes.”

“Phedy, dat Sam 3 you’re just want quiet, crazy things!”

“most 3 dese figgers is so hot up on yo’ business, Ill bet
be done soon know. You better make haste and tell’em about you a
Wind some corn out, and where at he is now and where at yo
all yo’ clothes dat you got to come back here in seven halls.”
"Ah don’t mean to bother wid tellin’ em nuthin’. Plhese tell me, Pheoby, if you wants to. Dats just de same as me cause mah tongue is in mah friend’s mouth."

"If you so desire ah’ll tell’em what you tell me to tell’em. To start off wid, people like dem wastin’ up too much time. Prettin’ they mornin’ they don’t know nuthin’ about. Now they got to look into me lonnin’ Tea Cake, and see whether it was de right or no. They don’t know if life is a mess or in-meal dump."

"So long as they got a name to know on, they don’t care who it is, and what about. Specially if they done made it sound like evil. If they wants to see and know, why they done ixn’t and be causin’ difficulties of life, yessuh! D. J. Grand Lodge, de big Convention ain’t seen me.”

They sat there in the fresh, young darkness close together. Pheoby eager to tell and do through Janie, but waiting to show her greatest fear it might be thought mere curiosity. Janie felt that for a long time, but she couldn’t help moving her feet. So Janie spoke.

"They don’t need to worry about me and ma hounds n’ all goin’ on with me. Tea Cake gone, and I ain’t got nary a cent. Tea Cake ain’t got no money n’ mine, and he ain’t got me for no young gal, neither. He give me every consolation in de world. He’d tell ’em so too, if dey was here. But he wasn’t gone!"

Pheoby dilated all over with eagerness. Tea Cake gone?"

"Yeah, Pheoby, Tea Cake is gone. And dat’s de only reason you see me here now — cause ah ain’t got nuthin’ to make me happy no more where ah was at. Down in de Sunlight, down on de mud."

"It’s hard for me to understand what you mean, dey way at times!"
"Now, tain' nothin' like you might think. So tain' no use in me tellin' you somethin', unless a' think you'd understand, unless you seein' by a you'd see it, a you'd get it through your head. educa-teach. Cheesly is Sam Watlin'

"its all read, and Wa'tlin', if he ain' got some word to eat it,dat's his hand luck."

"Well then, we cain' set right where we is and talk. Ah got de house all opened up to let dis breeze get a little coolin'. Depend on you for a good thought. And ahn' talkin' to you from dat time makes everything old, so the kissin', you, 'darkness became a monstrous old thing' while Janie talked.

Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Drown and the doom was in the branches.

"Ah know exactly what ah got to tell you, but its hard to know where to start at. But ah reckoned made lifetime commenced at Rammy's gate. She called me to come inside de house, because she seen Johnny Taylor kissin' me once de gate."

It was a spring afternoon and Janie had spent most of it under a blossoming pear tree. She had been standing every minute she could stand from the chresas under that tree for several days. In fact ever since it had been in bloom. She called her but she'd go and gaze on a mystery from barren birch trees standing stark against the sky of bloom. How? How? How? How? She followed her through all her with other vaguely felt questions that had struck the aud.

Then she had been summoned to behold a revelation. She chose voice of it all came to her. The alto chant of the bees, the gold of the sun, the panting breath of the breeze.
"Ah aint never seen mah papa, and ah didn't know whit
if ah did. Mah mama, she was gone from round
die long before ah wuz big enough tuck know. Mah grandma
raised me. Mah grandma and de white folk's are worked on
Washburn. She had four grandchilum on de place and all
mah grandmas nortin. But Handy cause dats what every
body on de place called he. Handy used to ketch us in
Mrs. Washburns. She did de same. Ah reckon they never hit no
whip pretty aggravating, ah specif.

"Ah made dem white chillum so much til ah didn't
know ah wanted white till ah was round six years old,
pictures and without cumin anybody, Shelby, dad went to
bought de picture for Mrs. Washburns. She saw and pay him
ah act. "Where is me? ah don't see me."

Everybody laughed, even Mr. Washburn. Miss Willies, de mama
pointed to de dark one and said, "Dat was Ah. Alpha bat don't you
know your ownself?"

Buy all talk and call me Alphabet because to many people
done named me different names. Ah looked at de picture and
he said."
"aw, aw! Ahm colored!"

Den day all laughed real hard. But before ah seen de picture ah thought ah was just all de rest got to havin' fun till de children at school yard. They made it sound real bad and crumpled mad ah helpd her out on it a whole heap.