



JChap 3A

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Notes: Jchap 3 ~~or~~?; Dec. 3

Armed black women were all over the country That, at least, they had learned. Didn't everthing ^{else} on God's earth have or ^{acquire} ~~invent~~ a defense ~~for itself~~? Speed, some poison in the leaf, the tongue, the tail? A mask, flight, numbers in the millions producing numbers in the millions? A thorn here, a spike there. Natural prey? Easy pickings? "I don't think so." Aloud she said it. "I don't think so."

Alice was waiting with less hesitation than before and none of the scarey ^{anger} ~~angry feelings~~ she had the first two times a woman saying she was Violet Trace had tried to see her, talk or something. Knocked on her door so early in the morning Alice thought it was the law.

"I don't have a thing to say to you. Not one thing." She had said it in a loud whisper through the ^{narrow} ~~small~~ chained opening in the door and slammed it shut. She didn't need the name to be afraid or to ^{know} ~~know~~ who she was: the star of her neice's funeral. The woman who ^{violated} ~~ruined~~ ^{ruined} the service, changed the whole point and meaning of it and was practically all anybody talked about when they talked about Dorcus's death.* Alice, sitting in the first seat in the first aisle ^{had} ~~watched~~ the commotion stunned. Later, and little by little, ^(over) ~~like~~ ^{strange and recognizable} ~~feelings~~, ~~contrary and~~ stark and murky, return. Chief among them was fear. ^{Something she did not feel} Not for Joe who had been the one who did it: seduced her neice right under her nose in her very own house. The nice one. The man who sold ~~x~~ on the side; a

~~Now he~~
~~Ha~~
 *And in the process had
 Changed the woman's name, Violent, they called her now. No wonder

facial
products

(fx)

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familiar figure in just about every building ^{up} in town. A man store owners and landlords liked because he set the children's toys in a neat row when they left them scattered on the sidewalk. Who the children liked because he never minded them. And liked among men because he never cheated in a game, egged a stupid fight on, or carried tales, and he left thier women alone. Liked among the women because he made them feel like girls; like by girls because he made them feel like women--which, she thought, was what Dorcus was looking for. Murderer. But ^Alice didn't fear him the way she did his wife. For Joe she felt trembling fury at his snake-in-the grass stealing of the girl in her charge; and embarrassment that the grass he had snaked through was her own--the watched and guarded environment where unmarried and unmarriagable pregnancy was the end and close of livable life. After that--zip. Just a wait until the baby that came was old enough to warrant its own watched, guarded environment.

Waiting for Violet, with less hesitation than before, Alice wonderd why it was so. At fifty-eight with no children of her own, and the one she had access to and responsibility for dead, she wondered about the hysteria, the ~~violence~~, the damnation of pregnancy without marriageability. It had ^{occupied} ~~colored~~ her own parents ^{completely for as long as she could remember them, and increased to outright resentment} mind. ^{her parents} They ~~resented~~ her the moment she got b'reasts, and never stopped until she married Manfred when suddenly it was the opposite. Even before the wedding ^{her parents} ~~the two of them~~ were ^{murmuring} ~~making~~ ~~noises~~ about grandchildren they could see and hold, while at the

a resentment that increased to outright hatred terror of pregnant possibilities.

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same time and ⁱⁿturn resenting the tips showing and growing ^{up} under the chemises of Alice's younger sisters. Resenting the blood spots, the new hips, the hair. That and the necessity for new clothes. "Oh, Lord, girl!" The frown when the hem could not be taken down further, ^{the} waist refused another stitch. Growing up under that heated control, Alice swore she wouldn't, but she did, pass it on. She passed it on to her sister's only child. And wondered now would she have done so, had her husband lived or if she had had children of her own. If he had been there maybe she would not ^{have} spent her life thinking war thoughts. ^hAlthough war was what it was. Which is why she had chosen surrender and made Dorcus her own prisoner of war.

Other women had not ^{surrendered}. All over the country they were armed. Alice worked once with a Swedish tailor who had a scar from his ear lobe to the corner of his mouth. "Negress," he said. "She cut me to the teeth, to the teeth." He smiled his wonder and shook his head. "To the teeth." The ^{German} ~~x~~ in Springfield had four evenly spaced holes in the side of his neck from four evenly spaced jabs by something thin, round and sharp. Men ran through the streets of Springfield, East St. Louis, and the City holding a red wet hand in the other, a flap of skin on the face. ^{*}Sometimes they got to a hospital safely alive only because they left the razor where it had been ^{lodged} ~~placed~~. ^{black}The women were armed; the ^{black} ~~women~~ were dangerous and the less money they had the deadlier the weapon they chose.

Who were the unarmed one? ^sThose who found protection in

* cupping
an outraged groin,
a disturbed eye.

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church and ^{at the side of} the judging, angry God whose wrath ~~on~~ ^{do} thier behalf was too terrible to bear contemplation. He was not just on His way, coming, coming to right the wrongs done to them, He was here. ^{See?} Already. ^{See?} What the world had done to them, it was now doing to itself. Did the world shit on them? yes but look where the shit came from. Were they berated and cursed? O yes but how the [fx all this] world cursed and berated itself, ~~and how their children cursed them in their turn.~~ Were the women fondled in kitchens and the back of stores? Uh uh. ^{(over) The Beast} They did not ^{do} what was done to ~~them~~, but what ~~they~~ ^{it} wished done to ~~them~~ ^{itself}: raped because ~~they~~ ^{it} wanted to be raped ~~themselves.~~ ^{itself} Slaughtered children because ~~they~~ ^{it} were slaughtered ~~children.~~ ^{it yearned to be} Built jails to dwell on and hold on to ~~the~~ ^{its own.} private decay. God's wrath, so beautiful, so simple. Their ~~enemies~~ ^{yes} got what ~~they~~ ^{it} wanted? became what ~~they~~ ^{it} visited on ~~others.~~ ^{them.}

Who else were the unarmed ones? The ones who thought they did not need folded blades, bottles of poison, shards of glass taped to their hands? Those who bought houses and hoarded money as protection and the means to purchase it. ^T Those attached to armed men. ^T Those who did not carry pistols because they became pistols; did not carry switchblades because they were switchblades cutting through meetings, shooting down statutes and pointing out the blood and abused flesh. Those who swelled their little unarmed strength into the reckoning one of leagues, clubs, societies, sisterhoods designed to hold or withhold, move or stay put, make a way, solicit, comfort and ease. Bail out, dress the dead, pay the rent,

Did police put their fists

in ~~the faces~~ of women's faces

so their husbands' spirits
would break? uh huh.

along with the woman's jaw

(those who knew them ^{as well as} the stranger's ^{sitting} ~~passing~~ in cars)
Did men call them out of their
names every single day of their
lives (bitch, whore, cunt, meat Tk)? uh huh.

But in God's eyes and theirs every ^{hateful} ^{word} and ^{gesture}
was the Beast's desire for ^{its own} filth.

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find new rooms, start a school, storm an office, take up collections, rout the block and keep their eyes on all the children. Any other kind of unarmed black woman in 1926 was silent or crazy or dead.

Alice waited this time for the woman with the knife. ^{The woman people now called violent because she} ~~The one~~ who had tried to kill what lay in a coffin, ^{She} ~~and who~~ had left notes under ^{Alice's} her door every day beginning in February--a month after the funeral. But Alice was not frightened of her now as she had been before. ^{At first} ~~once~~ she'd thought the woman would end up in jail one day--~~they~~ all did eventually. But easy pickings? Natural prey? "I don't think so. I don't think so."