



"Jacob Vaark galloped along..."

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1682

Jacob Vaark galloped along, sweating so heavily it salted his eyes.

Already October and his horse, Regine, was drenched and panting. ^{(over)*} Mist, hot

and rife with gnats, ^{ought to} could have dampened his spirit, but didn't. ^{Even after the long sail down 3 rivers} As usual, the

^{and now the hard} ride ^{over} down the tk trail was hard, but he always took delight in the journey.

Breathing the air of a world so new, so modern, so open to life never failed to invigorate him. Forests untouched since Noah; shorelines beautiful enough to bring tears. ^{** (over)} He knew the landscape intimately from years ago when it was still

the old Swedish Nation, and he was an agent for the ^{its} New Sweden Company.

^{For x years he had South. Southern Chirstina} He traveled down the ~~tk~~ river into the bay, disembarked ^{at} tk, and negotiated

Lenape trails on horseback, mindful of their fields of maize, careful through their hunting grounds, politely asking permission to enter a ^{small} certain village here, a

* Did winter ever arrive down here, he wondered
He might as well have been in Barbados - which
once he had seriously considered - although ^{it's} the
heat down there was rumored to be lethal.
~~Fortunately~~ ^{But} the decision was null before he
made it when an uncle he'd never met
from ^{the paternal} side of his family he had no contact with,
died ~~up North~~ and left him 120 acres of
(a dormant patroonship
~~freezing~~) woodland in a climate he much
preferred. Yet this.

In spite of the Company's lies ^{about the easy}
^{profit} awaiting ^{all comers} him,
** Most of all he enjoyed the excitement,

I never knowing what precisely lay in
^{his} your path, who might approach with
what intention ^{there was flush with TK} when a crisis, large
or small, needed ^{the hostler's pony made} invention and quick
action. ^{white} Rocking in a saddle, ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~he~~ ^{he} faced
forward ^{swept the} his eyes
swept the
surroundings.

it was the hardship
that attracted him, ~~being~~
able to ~~face~~ ^{confronting} the unknown
and defying it, placating it.
Making a place out of no
place, ^{temperate} a living in the midst of

larger one there, watered his horse ^{at a certain} as ~~this particular~~ stream and avoided ^{treacherous} marshland ^{that fronted (over)} the pines. ^{During and after} Following the contest between New Sweden and New
the Netherland^s, there had never been any point in knowing who claimed this or that
terrain. ^{this or another outpost} Other than the Lenape, to whom it all belonged, ^{from one year to another} any stretch might be
claimed by a church, ^{controlled by} a Company or ^{be the property of} some aristocrat's gift to a son, or a
favorite. ^{such} In ^{that ad hoc geography} that ^{royals' s} Vaark simply knew that when he came out of that forest of pine
skirting the marshes, he was, at last, in Maryland, ^{at the moment} all of which belonged to the
king. ^{Entirely} Upon entering, his feelings fought one another to a draw. Unlike a
colony, disputed, fought over and regularly re-named, its ^{profit transferred only} ~~trade~~ confined to the
^{victorious country} victor, the province of Maryland could trade to foreign markets, good for
planters, better for merchants, best for brokers. But the palatinate was Romish
to the core. ^(over) ^{a bad thing} Vaark's sensibilities were offended by the lax, flashy,
cunning of the papists. "Abhor that arrant whore of Rome." His entire school
had memorized those lines from their primer. "And all her blasphemies; Drink
not of her cursed cup; Obey not her decrees." Which did not mean you could
not do business with them and he had out dealt them many times, especially
here where tobacco and slaves were married, each currency clutching its
partner's elbow. Disdain, however, was difficult to cloak. All of his previous

the slope of hills
oak
FHC
Familiarity with ~~natural landscape~~ a capoe of FHC
a beavers dam, the sudden odor of pine sap
~~were~~^{was} more than valuable; it was essential.

Prists ^{strode about} ~~rode~~ openly in its towns; ^{their sinister} missions
cropped up on the edge of herape villages.
Law, courts ^{and trade} ~~FHC~~ were their exclusive domain
And Over dressed women in raised heels rode in
carts driven by twelve year old negroes.

dealing with the owner had been with his representatives while sitting on tavern stools. Now, for some reason, he had been given an invitation to the planter's estate—a plantation called Bliss. A merchant asked to dine with a gentleman. *On a Sunday.* So there must be trouble, he thought. Finally, swatting mosquitoes and on the watch for mud snakes that startled the horse, he glimpsed the wide iron gates of Bliss and guided Regina through them. He had heard how grand it was, but was not prepared for what lay before him. The house, honey-colored stone, was in truth more like a place where one held court. Far away to the right, beyond the iron fences enclosing the property and almost hidden by the mist, he saw rows of quarters, quiet, empty. In the fields, he reckoned, trying to limit the damage sopping weather had wrought on the crop. The comfortable smell of tobacco leaves, like fireplaces and good women serving ale, cloaked Bliss like balm. The path ended at a small brick plaza, announcing a prideful entrance to the house. He stopped. A boy appeared and, dismounting in some pain, Jacob Vaark handed over the reins, cautioning the boy.

"Water. No feed."

"Yes, sir," said the boy and turned the horse around, murmuring, "nice lady, nice lady," as he led her away.

Jacob Vaark climbed three wide steps, then retraced them to stand back from the house and appraise it. Two wide windows, at least two dozen panes in each, flanked the door. Five more windows above on a wide second story resting on six pillars. He had never seen a house like it. The wealthiest men he knew built in wood, not brick, riven clapboards and no need for the grand pillars suitable for a House of Parliament.

Grandiose, he thought, but easy, easy to build such a house in that climate. Soft wood, creamy brick, no caulking needed, everything designed for breeze, not freeze. Long hall, probably, parlors, chambers.... Easy living, but Lord, the heat.

He removed his hat and wiped the sweat from his hair line with his sleeve. Then, fingering his soaking collar, he re-mounted the steps and tested the boot scraper. Before he could knock, the door was opened by a small, contradictory man: aged and ageless, deferential and mocking, white hair black face.

"Afternoon, Sir."

"Mr. Ortega is expecting me." Vaark surveyed the room over the old man's head.

"Yes, Sir. Your hat, Sir? Thank you, Sir. This way, Sir."

Footfalls, loud and aggressive, were followed by Ortega's call.

"Well timed! Come, Jacob. The table waits."

Seated at a small table in the parlor, surrounded by graven idols, the windows closed to the boiling air, Jacob Vaark drank sassafras beer and studied his host, a Mr. Michael D'Ortega. Disaster had doubled, according to D'Ortega. Jacob Vaark knew all about it, but listened politely to the version this here client/debtor recounted. D'Ortega's ship had been anchored two hundred feet from shore for a month waiting for a vessel, due any day, to replenish what he had lost. A third of his cargo had died of ship fever. Fined five thousand pounds of tobacco by the Lord proprietary's magistrate for throwing their bodies too close to the Bay; forced to scoop up the corpses—what they could find—(they used pikes and nets, D'Ortega said, a purchase which itself cost two pounds, six) and ordered to burn or bury them. He had to pile them in two drays (sixteen s.), cart them out to low land where saltweed and crocodiles would finish the work.

Does he cut his losses and let his ship sail on to Barbados? No, thought Vaark. A sloven man, stubborn in his wrong headedness like all of the Roman faith, he waits in port for a month for a phantom ship from Portugal carrying enough cargo to replenish the heads he has lost. While waiting to fill his ship's hold to capacity, it sinks and he has lost not only the vessel, not only the original third, but all, except the crew who were unchained, of course, and four unsalable Africans red-eyed with anger. Now he wanted more credit and six additional months to pay what he had borrowed.

Dinner was a tedious affair. It began with a prayer whispered in a language that he did not understand and cross signing before and after. Varrk's considerable hunger shrank when confronted with the heavily seasoned food: everything, except pickles and radishes, was fried or over-cooked. The wine, watered and too sweet for his taste, annoyed him and the company was worse. D'Ortega's wife was a chattering magpie, asking pointless questions—How do you manage living in snow?—and making sense-defying observations, as though her judgment was equal to a man's. Nothing transpired in the conversation that had footing in the real world. They had six children, two of whom were old enough to sit at table. Silent boys, thirteen and

fourteen, wearing peri wigs as though they were at a ball or a court of law. His bitterness, he understood, was unworthy, the result of having himself no survivors—male or otherwise. Now that Patrician had followed her dead brothers, there was no one yet to reap the fortune he was amassing. Thus, restraining envy as best he could, Vaark entertained himself by imagining the couple's relationship. They seemed well suited to each other—vain, voluptuous, prouder of their pewter and porcelain than their sons. It was very clear why D'Ortega was in serious debt. Turning profit into useless baubles, unembarrassed by prettification, silk stockings and an over-dressed wife, he would remain in debt, unable to ride out any set back, whether it be lost ship or ruined crop, and thereby honor his debts. Watching the couple, he noticed that neither husband nor wife looked at each other—except for a stolen glance when the other looked away. He could not tell what was in those surreptitious peeks, but it amused him to divine their meaning while he endured the foolish talk and the inedible food brought to table by a woman who smelled of cloves.

Tk

His own Rebekka seemed more valuable to him each time he was in the company of these rich men's wives. From the moment he saw her struggling

down the gang plank with two boxes and a heavy satchel, he knew his good fortune. Plump, comely and capable, she had been worth the long search made necessary because ^(over) he wanted a certain kind of mate—an unchurched woman of child bearing age, obedient but not groveling, literate but not proud, independent but nurturing. And he would accept no less. Rebekka was ideal. There was not a shrewish bone in her body. She never raised her voice in anger. Saw to his needs, made the tenderest dumplings, took to chores in a land completely strange to her with enthusiasm and invention, cheerful as a canary. Or used to be. Three dead infants in a row, followed by the accidental death of Patrician, their eight year old, had un-leavened her. A kind of invisible ash had settled over her which vigils at the small graves in the meadow did nothing to wipe away. Yet she neither complained nor shirked her duties. If anything, she threw herself more vigorously into the farm work and when he traveled, as now, on business, trading, collecting, lending, he had no doubts about how his home was being managed. Rebekka and her two helpers were as reliable as sunrise and strong as posts. Besides, time and health were on their side. She would bear more children and at least one—a boy— would survive.

taking over the patroonships
required a wife and because

Dessert, fruit and pecans, was an improvement and when he accompanied D'Ortega on the impossible-to-refuse tour of the place, his mood had lifted slightly, enough to admire the estate honestly. The tobacco sheds, wagons, row after row of barrels—orderly and nicely kept—the well made meat house, milk house, laundry, cook house. All but the latter white washed plaster, a jot smaller than the slave quarters but, unlike them, in excellent repair. The subject, the purpose, of his visit had not been resolved. D'Ortega had described with great attention to detail the accidents beyond his control that made him unable to pay what he owed. But how Vaark would be re-imbursed had not been broached. Examining the spotted, bug ridden leaves of tobacco, it became clear to him what D'Ortega had left to offer. Vaark refused. His farm was small, his trade needed only himself. Besides having no place to put them, there was nothing to occupy them.

"But you can sell them, easily." said D'Ortega.

Vaark winced. Flesh was not his commodity.

Still, at his host's insistence, he accompanied him to the little sheds where some two dozen or more had been assembled to stand in a line, including the boy who had watered Regina. The two men walked the row, inspecting.

*interrupting
their half day's rest*

D'Ortega identifying virtues, weaknesses and possibilities, but silent about the scars, the wounds like misplaced veins tracing their skin. One even had the facial brand required by local law when a slave assaulted a white man a second time. The women's eyes looked shot-proof, gazing beyond place and time as though they were not actually there. The men looked at the ground. Except, every now and then, when possible, when they thought they were not being evaluated, Vaark could see their quick glances, sideways, wary but, most of all, judging the men who judged them.

Suddenly Vaark felt his stomach seize. The tobacco odor, so welcoming when he arrived, now nauseated him. Or was it the sugared rice, the hog cuts fried and dripping with molasses, the cocoa Mrs. D'Ortega was giddy about? In any case, he couldn't stay there surrounded by a passel of slaves whose silence made him imagine an avalanche seen from a great distance. No sound just the knowledge of a roar he could not hear. He begged off, saying the exchange was not acceptable—too much trouble to transport, auction; his solitary, unencumbered proficiency was what he liked about trade. Specie, bills of credit, quit claims were portable. One satchel carried all he needed. They walked back toward the house and through the side gate in the ornate fence,

D'Ortega pontificating all the while: he would do the selling, ten pounds? Spanish sovereigns? arrange transportation, hire the handler .

Vaark, stomach turning, nostrils assailed, grew angry. This is a calamity, he thought, that will lead to years in a law suit in a province ruled by the King's judges disinclined to favor a tradesman over a Catholic gentleman. The loss, while not unmanageable, struck him as unforgivable. And to such a man.

D'Ortega's strut as they had walked the property offended him. Moreover, he believed the set of that jaw, the drooping lids hid something soft, like his hands that, accustomed to reins, whips and silver plate, had never held a plow or felled a tree. Oh, there was something beyond Catholic in him, something sordid and overripe. He felt the shame of his weakened position in status and power. No wonder they had been excluded from parliament back home and, although he did not believe they should be hunted down like vermin, other than on business he would never choose to mingle or socialize with them. Barely listening to Ortega's patter, sly, indirect instead of straight and manly, they neared the cook house where Vaark saw a woman standing in the doorway with two children. One on her hip, one hiding behind her skirts. She looked healthy enough, better fed than the others. On a whim, mostly to silence him,

knowing D'Ortega would refuse, he said, "Her. That one. I'll take her."

D'Ortega stopped short, a startled look on his face. "Ah, no. It is impossible. My wife won't allow it. She can't live without her. She is our main cook."

Vaark drew closer, recognizing the clove-laced sweat. "You said 'any.' I could choose any. If your word is worthless, there is only the law."

He could see how D'Ortega lifted his eyebrows at this threat from an inferior, but must have thought better of returning the insult with another. He wanted this business over quickly and he wanted his way.

"Well, yes," said D'Ortega, "but there are other women here. You've seen them and this one here is nursing."

"Then the law it is."

D'Ortega smiled. A law suit would certainly be decided in his favor, and the time wasted in pursuing it would be to his advantage.

"You astound me," said D'Ortega.

Vaark refused to back down. "Perhaps another lender would be more to your liking." And he enjoyed seeing the nostril flare that meant he had struck home. D'Ortega was notorious for unpaid debts and had to search far outside

Maryland for a broker, since local ones refused ^{what they knew would be} certain default. The air between them tightened.

"You don't seem to comprehend my offer. I am not disowning my debt. I am paying it. The value of a seasoned ^{slave} ~~Negrita~~ is beyond adequate."

"Not if I can't use her."

"Use her? Sell her!"

"My trade is goods and gold."

D'Ortega's hand moved to his hip. Vaark's eyes followed the movement as the ringed fingers curled around a scabbard. Would he, wondered Vaark. Would this curdled, arrogant fop really assault his creditor, murder him and claiming self defense, prerogative, rid himself of both debt and social insult even though it would mean a complete financial disaster considering his coffers were as empty as his scabbard. The soft fingers fumbled for the absent haft. Vaark raised his eyes to D'Ortega's, noticing the cowardice of unarmed aristocracy in the company of a commoner. Out here in wilderness dependent ^{this Sunday.} on an overseer not in sight. Where else but in this disorganized world would such an encounter be possible. Vaark turned away, letting his exposed back convey his scorn. It was a curious moment for him. Along with his contempt,

paid guards
nowhere

Where else could clan
status tremble before TK ?

Th^{strange} felt a ~~strong~~ wave of exhilaration. An inside shift from careful negotiator to confident, liberated manhood. He could not help chuckling as he approached the cook house and glanced at the woman standing in its door.

Just then the little girl stepped from behind the mother. On her feet were a pair of way too big woman's shoes. Perhaps it was that feeling of personal liberty, a newly found recklessness and the sight of those little legs, rising like two bramble sticks from the bashed and broken shoes that made him laugh. A loud, chest-heaving laugh that confirmed his victory. His laughter had not subsided when the woman clutching the child on her hip, came forward. Her voice is barely above a whisper but there is no mistaking its urgency.

"Please, sir. Not me. I am still breast feeding. Take her. Take my daughter."

Vaark looked up at her, away from the child's feet, his mouth still open with laughter, and was struck by the terror in her eyes. His laughter creaking to a close, he shook his head, thinking God help me if this is not the most wretched business.

"Why yes. Of course," said D'Ortega, trying to shake his earlier embarrassment and re-establish his dignity. "I'll send her to you. Immediately."

His eyes widened as did his condescending smile, yet to Vaark he seemed agitated.

"I decline the favor," said Vaark, thinking, I've got to get away from this place before I lose my dinner and my temper; but thinking also, maybe Rebekka would welcome a child around the place. This one, here, swimming in shoes, appeared to be about the same age as Patrician, and if she got kicked in the head by a mare as Patrician had, the loss would not rock Rebekka so.

"There is a priest here," D'Ortega went on. "He can bring her to you. I'll have him board a sloop to any port on the coast you desire...."

"I think, no."

Suddenly the woman smelling of cloves knelt and closed her eyes.

They wrote new papers. Agreeing the girl was worth ^{twenty pieces of eight} ~~ten pounds~~ considering the number of years ahead of her and reducing the balance by three hogshead of tobacco or fifteen English pounds—the latter preferred. The tension lifted, visibly so on D'Ortega's face. Eager to get away and re-nourish ^{his} ~~he~~ good opinion of himself, Vaark said hurried goodbyes to Mrs. D'Ortega, the two boys and their father. On his way to the narrow track, he turned Regina

around, waved at the couple and once again, in spite of himself, envied the house, the gate, the fence. For the first time he had bested—face to face—a nobleman. Out-nobled his in face^T and realized, not for the first time, that *only* things, not bloodlines or character, separated them. So mighten it be nice to have such a fence to enclose the headstones in his own meadow? And one day, not too far away, to build a house that size on his own property? On that rise, in back with a better prospect of the hills. Not as ornate, as D'Ortega's. None of that pagan excess¹, *of course*. But fair. Nor would it be compromised as was Bliss. Access to free labor made D'Ortega's leisurely life possible. Without the blacks he would not be simply in debt; he would be eating from a trough instead of ~~a~~ silver plate and sleeping in the wild rather than a four post bed. Jacob Vaark sneered at wealth dependent on a captured work force that required more force to maintain. The dregs of his kind of Protestantism—church of England rather than the brutal Mather ^{*vague as they were*} recoiled at whips, metal, and armed overseers. He was determined to prove that his own industry and skill could amass the fortune, the station D'Ortega claimed, without trading his conscience for coin.

He tapped Regina to a faster pace. The sun was low; the air cooler. He

was in a hurry to get back ⁱⁿ to ^{Virginia, its} the shore and to Pursey's tavern before night, sleep in a bed if they weren't all packed three or four abreast, otherwise he would join the other patrons and curl on any surface. But first he would have one, perhaps two, drafts of ale, its bitter, clear taste critical to eliminating the sweetish rot of sin and ruined tobacco that seemed to coat his tongue. (over)

Tk [approach to town/public house laws in colony]

Seated at last, he listened to the talk around him, which was all sugar—which was to say rum—its price and demand becoming greater than tobacco's. The man who seemed to know most about kill-devil [tk]

Vaark decided he would look into it.

A fiddler entered for their merriment and their money and, having played less well than himself, raised Vaark's spirits enough for him to join in the singing. [tk the song]

After a leisurely meal of oysters, veal, pigeon, parsnips and suet pudding, he secured bed space with just one man in it and thought about the disappointing day and the disgust of having accepted the girl as part payment. Once again a Stuart had lost the throne and another barred from it. To everyone's relief, a protestant couple ruled and one day, thought Vaark, a suit

He returned the horse to the hostler.
Paid him and strolled to the wharf
and Pursey's Tavern.

On the way he ^{Saw} ~~watched~~ ~~a~~
~~man~~ - a man beating a horse to its knees
Sailors, disgusted and X, pulled the man away
and threatened to repeat

against D'Ortega would succeed and he would not be forced to settle for a child as a percentage of what was due him. He knew he had rationalized the bargain by thinking Rebekka would welcome her, but what was truer than that was another thing. There was no good place in the world for waifs and whelps other than the generosity of strangers. Even if bartered, given, apprenticed, sold, tricked for food, labored for shelter or stolen, they were less doomed under adult control. He felt a pulse of pity for them knowing well their wretched lot back home and found it hard to refuse if called on to rescue an unmoored, unwanted child. When a decade ago the sawyer asked ^{Vaark} if he would take off his hands the sullen, curly headed girl he found half dead on a river bank, Vaark said "Yes," if he would forbear the cost of the lumber. Knowing, as now, that his farm certainly could use her. It was ^{cultivated out of 120} sixty acres, after all, and belonged to a traveling man. ^{who knew} ~~So~~ it was not wise to have male labor all over the place during his long absences. That was as true now with this black child that the mother was throwing away, as it had been a decade earlier with the curly haired, goose girl, the one they called Sorrow. Only Lila had he purchased outright, but she was a woman, not a child.

Tk inherited inland ^{patrilineal} land/ solitary/ unchurched

Narrow as the bed space was and despite the heat, he slept well enough. Probably because his dreams were of a grand house of many rooms rising on a hill above the fog.

Lila could not bear to enter or go near it. It was to be the third and final house. The first one Sir built was weaker than the bark covered one she herself was born in. The second was strong—four rooms large enough for a modest family. Yet at the very moment when there were no children to occupy or inherit it, he meant to build another, bigger, double storied, fenced and gated like the one he saw on a business trip. Mistress had sighed and confided to Lila that at the least the doing of it would keep him more on the land. "Trading and traveling fill his pockets," she'd said, "but he had been content to be a planter when we married. Now...." Her voice had trailed off as she yanked away at the swan's feathers.

But it turned out bad. When the house was close to completion he fell

sick with nothing else on his mind.

Sir mystified Lila. All whites did. Once they had terrified her, then they had rescued her. Now they simply puzzled her. Why, she wondered, had Mistress sent a love sick girl to find the smithy. If she is not stolen or killed, if she finds him safe she would not return. Why should she? Lila had watched with mild envy and ~~constant amusement~~ ^{increasing alarm} the courtship that began the morning the ~~smithy~~ ^{blacksmith} came to work on Sir's foolish house. The girl had stood still, a startled doe, when he dismounted his horse, doffed his hat and asked if this was the Vaark place. Lila had shifted the milk bucket to her left hand and pointed up the hill. Mistress, leading the heifer, had come around the corner of the barn and asked him his business, sucking her teeth when he answered.

"Dear Lord," she murmured and, pushing out her bottom lip, blew hair away from her forehead. Then, "Wait here."

As she led the cow to pasture the smithy locked eyes with Lila before returning his hat to his head. He never once looked at the girl standing nearby, not breathing, holding the milking stool with both hands as though to help gravity keep her earthbound. ^(over) When Mistress returned, rubbing her hands on her apron, ^{and} he removed his hat once more ^{then} and did something Lila had never

always
an easy
harvest

She should
have known then
what the consequences
would be, but ^{thought} ~~believed~~
Sorrow would quickly
draw his attention
and thwart the girl's
doting.

Warning ~~from~~ ^{from} Mishan
that he was
a free man

doubled
her anxiety.

He had rights, then,
and privileges,
like Sam's.

He could
marry a boy, ~~and~~
sell his own labor.

She should have recognized the danger at once - ^{his} arrogance
was clear when

seen an African do: he looked directly at Mistress, lowering his glance, for he was very tall, never blinking. ^{Lila ~~She~~^{had} once heard that,} For them, only children and loved ones could be

looked in the eye; for all others it was disrespect or a threat. In the town Lila had been taken to, after the conflagration had erased her village, that kind of ^{from the free or indentured blacks} boldness was legitimate cause for a whip. An unfathomable puzzle. Whites could calmly cut children down, blast old men in the face with muskets louder than moose calls, but were enraged if a not-white looked a white in the eye.

On the one hand they would torch your home; on the other they would feed, nurse and bless you. ^{Best to judge them one at a time since} And one, at least, could become your friend, which is why she slept on the floor beside Mistress's bed and kept watch in case Sorrow interfered or Mistress needed soothing.

Once, long ago, had Lila been older or tutored in healing she might have eased the pain of her family and all the other Abenaki dying around her: on mats of rush, lapping at the lake's shore, curled in paths within the village and in the forest beyond, but most tearing at blankets they could neither abide nor abandon. Infants fell silent first, and even as their mothers heaped earth over their bones, they too were pouring sweat and limp as ^{maize hair} ~~wet rope~~. At first they fought off the crows, she and two other children, but they were no match

for the birds or the smell and when the wolves arrived, all three climbed as high (over) into a chestnut as they could. They stayed there all night. By noon ~~the next day~~, just as they had decided to make a run for one of the canoes in the lake, men in uniforms came, their faces wrapped in rags. News of the deaths that had swept her village had reached out. Lila's joy at being rescued turned to ice as the soldiers, having taken one look at the birds feeding on the corpses strewn about, shot the wolves then circled the whole village with fire. The children screamed from the trees until the men heard them and caught each in their arms as they jumped.

She was taken to tk, where she lived among kindly Presbyterians. They were pleased to have her, they said, because they admired native women who, they said, worked at least as hard as they themselves did, but scorned their men who simply fished and hunted like gentry all day. Impoverished gentry, that is, since they owned nothing, certainly not the land they slept on, preferring to live as entitled paupers. And since some of the church elders had heard horrible tales of, or witnessed themselves, God's wrath toward the idle and profane—flinging black death followed by raging fire on the proud and blasphemous city of their birth—they could only pray that Lila's people

Listening to gnawing, baying, growling
and worst of all, the quiet of
~~sated~~ animals sated at last.

At dawn none ~~dared~~ ^{dared} to apply a name
to the pieces hauled away. or left
behind.

understood before they died that what had felled them was ^{the first} ~~another clear~~ sign of
His displeasure. ^(over) Afraid of losing another family, Lila let herself be improved by
these worthies. ^(over) So it took a long time for her to notice the difference between
property and earth, and even longer before she was strong enough to piece
together scraps of what her mother taught before dying in agony. [Neglected
rites, hidden meanings, a way to be in the world.] ^{TK plus bathing}

Lila had placed magic pebbles under Mistress's pillow; kept the room
fresh with mint and forced angelica root in her patient's festering mouth to pull
bad spirits out of the sickroom. She prepared the most powerful remedy she
knew: devil's bit, mugwort, St. John's wort, maiden hair, and periwinkle; boiled
it, strained it and spooned it into Mistress's mouth. She considered repeating
some of the prayers she learned as among the Presbyterians, but since none
had saved Sir, she abandoned the notion. He went quickly. Begging to be
taken to his third house. The big one, useless now that there were no children
or children's children to live in it. No one to stand in awe at ^{its} ~~its~~ size or to admire
the wrought gate that the smithy took two months to make. ^{TK description of gate} But if the smithy's
work was a frivolous waste of a grown man's time, his presence was not. He
brought one girl to womanhood and saved the life of another. Sorrow. Vixen-

a pouring out
one of the
The first of seven vials.
The final one of which would announce
the end to the arrival
and the birth of young Jesus
of Jerusalem

that
** She learned bathing
Naked in the river was a sin;
That plucking ^{cherries} an apple
from ^{a tree} ~~even~~ a burdened tree was
theft. And God hated
So Staring off into space to weep ^{for} most of all,
for a mother a friend
was to court damnation.

TK.

eyed Sorrow with black teeth and a head of wild, [?]wooly hair the color of a setting sun. Accepted, not bought, by Sir, she joined the household after Lila but before the girl and still had no memory of her past life except being dragged ashore by whales.

"Not whales," Mistress had said. "Of course not. She was treading water in the North River in Mohawk country, near to drowning when two young sawyers trawled her in, wrapped her in a blanket and brought their father to the river bank where she lay. It is said she had been living alone on a foundered ship."

Not then, not ever had she spoken of how she got there or where she had been. The sawyer's wife named her Sorrow and following a winter of feeding the daft girl who kept wandering off getting lost, who knew nothing and worked less, a strange, melancholy girl to whom her sons were paying very close attention, the wife asked her husband to get quit of her. He obliged and offered her to the care of a customer he trusted to do her no harm. Sir. When Sorrow arrived, Mistress barely hid her annoyance but admitted the place could use the help. If Sir was bent on travel, two female farmers were not enough. Lila was a tall fourteen year old when Sir bought her. He had searched the

advertisements posted at the printer's in tk. "A likely woman who has had small pox and meazles....A likely Negro about 9 years....Girl or woman that is handy in the kitchen sensible, speaks good English, complexion between yellow and black....Five years time of a white woman that understands Country work, with a child upwards of two years old....Mulatto Fellow very much pitted with small pox, honest and sober...White lad fit to serve...Wanted a servant able to drive a carriage, white or black...Sober woman who.... Likely wench, 29 years with child....stout healthy, healthy strong, strong healthy likely, sober, sober, sober, until he got to "Hardy female, sober and prudent, available for exchange of goods or specie, Christianized and capable in all matters domestic." Expecting the arrival of his new wife, he required precisely that kind of female on his land.

By then Lila's swollen eye had calmed and the lash bruises on her face and arms barely noticeable. The Presbyterians never asked her what had happened to her and there was no point in telling them. She had no standing in law^{, No last name} and no one would take her word against a white. What they did was consult with the printer about the wording of an advertisement. "Hardy female..."

Lila watched while Mistress trained Sorrow to sewing, the one task she

liked and was good at, and said nothing when, to stop her roaming, he said, Sir made the girl sleep by the fireplace all seasons. A comfort Lila did not envy even in bad weather. Her people had understood shelter for a thousand years and, except for the deathfeet of Europeans, might have understood it for a thousand more. As it turned out the sachem had been dead wrong. Hard company, was Sorrow, needing constant attention. As at this very daybreak when, out of necessity, she had been trusted with the milking. The cow, Sorrow said, had kicked when she touched her. Lila left the sickroom to mind the heifer—talk to her first, hum a little then slowly cradle the tender teats with a palm of cream. The spurts were sporadic, worthless, except for the cow's relief, and after she had oiled her into comfort, Lila rushed back into the house. No good could come of leaving Mistress alone with Sorrow. The girl dragged misery like a tail. There was a man in Lila's village like that. His name she had forgotten along with the rest of her language, but it meant "trees fall behind him," suggesting his influence on the surroundings. In Sorrow's presence, eggs would not allow themselves to be beaten into foam, nor yeast bread rise. Now, more than unreliable, more than wandering off to talk to grass and grapevines, she was pregnant and soon there would be another virgin birth and, perhaps,

§ Now that her stomach was low, she was ~~even~~
less reliable + in the best of times -

The Europeans neither fled nor died out. In fact
however many collapsed ^{from ignorance or disease}, more came. With
languages that sounded like dog^s bark; with their
childish hunger for animal fur. They fenced
land, ^{shipped} felled trees over oceans, took ^{any} women
for ^{quick} pleasure and worshipped a dull unimaginative
God. Wrang on ^{almost} every score (except the last)
When they ^{chewed} ate the world ^{they} spit out gobs of
change(?)

this one would not die. But if Mistress died, what then? To whom could she turn? Although the Baptists once freely helped Sir build the second house, the barn and happily joined him in felling pine for the post fence, a cooling had risen between them and his family. Partly because Mistress cursed them for shutting her children out of heaven, but also, thought Lila, because Sorrow's lurking frightened them. Now, of course, nobody, Baptist or any other would come to a poxed house. Don't die, Miss. Don't. Herself, Sorrow, a new born and Florens—three ^{unmastered} ~~unspoken~~ for women and an infant out here, alone, belonging to no one, became wild game for anyone. None of them could inherit; none was attached to a church or recorded in its books. Female and illegal they would be interlopers, squatters if they stayed on after Mistress died, subject to purchase, hire, assault, abduction, exile. The farm could be claimed by or auctioned off to the Baptists. Lila had relished her place in this small, tight family but now saw its folly. Sir and Mistress believed they could have honest, free-thinking lives but, without heirs, all their work meant less than a swallow's nest. Their drift toward independence produced a self-centered privacy and they had lost the refuge and the consolation of a ^{clan.} ~~community~~. TK [Lila's dreams/memory of home]

Her mistress is mumbling now, telling Lila or herself some tale, some

matter of grave importance as the dart of her eyes showed. What was so vital, Lila wondered, that she uses an unworkable tongue in a mouth lined with sores? Her wrapped hands lift and wave. Lila turned to look where the eyes focused. A trunk where Mistress kept pretty things—treasured unused gifts from Sir. A lace collar, a hat no decent woman would be seen in, its peacock feather already broken in the press. On top of a few yards of silk lay a small mirror set in an elaborate frame, its silver tarnished to soot.

“Uhhh,” said Mistress.

Lila picked up the mirror thinking, No! Don’t look! Never seek out your own face even when well, lest the reflection ^{swallow} ~~drink up~~ your soul.

“Uhhh,” moaned her mistress. Her tone pleading like a child’s.

Helpless, Lila brought it to the lady. She placed it between the mittened hands, certain now that her mistress will die. And the certainty was a kind of death for herself as well since her ^{own} ~~life~~, everything, depended on Mistress’s survival which depended on Floren’s success.

Lila had fallen in love with her right away, as soon as she saw her shivering in the snow. A frightened six year old who did not speak for a long time but when she did her light, sing song voice was a delight to hear. Some

how, some way, the child assuaged the tiny yet eternal yearning for the home

Lila once knew where everyone had anything and no one had everything. *

There was hunger in ^{Flora's} the child's eyes that Lila ^{recognized as one} thought was like her own. ¹⁴ A quiet,

easy companion, ^{As a} the child ^{she} learned quickly, was eager to know more and

would have been the perfect one to find the blacksmith if only she had not been

^(warped, disabled) sickened with love of him.

** a bleating
desire beyond
sense, without
conscience. The young
body speaking ^{in its} ^{only} language its
reason ^{for} life on earth.

She had been

* As she grew, ^{so did} Lila's
devotion. Most of all
she wanted to protect
her - keep her ^{away}
from the ^{corruption} ^{so} ^{Natural} ^{to}
but mostly to ^{dissuade}
her from the blacksmith's
company.

How long will it take will she get lost will he be there will he come will someone steal her? She liked shoes when she first came, and only when Lila noticed and made her some, did she say a word.

Rebekka's thoughts bled into one another, confusing events and time but not people. The need to swallow, the pain of doing so, the unbearable urge to tear her skin from the bones underneath stopped only when she was unconscious—not asleep because as far as the dreams were concerned it was the same as being awake.

"I shat in a tub for four weeks to get to this land."

She has told this to Lila over and over. Lila being the only one she has ever talked to without restraint. The only one whose understanding she trusted and whose judgement she valued. Even now, in the dark of a spring night, with

less sleep than her mistress, Lila was burning something to soothe her patient, put her to sleep. Whispering and shaking a doll around the bed.

"Among strangers," said Rebekka. "There was no other way for us women packed like cod between decks."

There was nothing in the world to prepare her for a life of water, on water, about water, sickened by it and desperate for it. Mesmerized and bored by the look of it especially at night when the women were allowed another hour on deck. Then she talked to the sea. "Stay still, don't hurt me. No, move, move, excite me. Give me something I can eat. Here is my spit, my peelings, my waste. Keep my secrets way down below and I will keep yours: the smell of you is like fresh monthly blood; you guzzle moonlight like Pa guzzles ale; you own this place and land is afterthought to entertain you; the world in and beneath you is your heaven and, if truth be told, maybe ours as well."

They had warned her that savages or non-conformists would slaughter them all as soon as they landed, so when she found Lila already there, waiting outside the one room log house her new husband had built for them, she bolted the door at night and would not let the raven-haired girl with impossible skin sleep anywhere near. Fourteen or so, stone faced she was, and it took a

while for trust between them. Perhaps because both were alone without family, or because both had to please one man they became what was for each a kind of friend. A pair, anyway, the result of the mute alliance that comes of sharing tasks, of depending on the rhythm of one to hold the head while the other one tied the trotters. Or one turning the soil while, trailing behind, the other marked open the row. And then, when the first infant was born Lila handled it so tenderly, with such knowing, Rebekka was ashamed of her early fears and pretended she'd never had them. Now, lying in bed, her hands wrapped and bound against self-mutilation, her lips drawn back from her teeth, she remembered everything, in no particular order. The first hangings she saw in the square amid a happy crowd attending. She was barely two years old, and the death faces would have frightened her if the crowd had not mocked and enjoyed them so. With the rest of her family and most of her neighbors, she was present at a drawing and quartering but, although too young to remember every detail, the dreams of it were made permanently vivid by years of re-telling and re-describing by family members. She did not know what a 'fifth monarchist' was—then or now— but it was clear in her household that execution was a festivity as exciting as a king's parade. Brawls, knifings and kidnaps

were so common in the city of her birth, that the warnings of slaughter in a new, unseen world were like threats of bad weather. The violent squabbles between local tribes or with militia that peppered this region seemed a distant, manageable back drop in a land of such space and perfume. Trees taller than a cathedral, wood for warmth so plentiful it made you laugh then weep for the children freezing in the city she had left behind. She had never seen birds like these, or tasted fresh water that ran over visible white stones. There was adventure in learning to cook game and acquiring a taste for roast swan. Well, yes, there were monstrous storms here with snow piled higher than the sill of a shutter. And summer insects swarmed with a song louder than church bells. Yet the thought of what her life would be had she stayed crushed into those reeking streets, spat on by Lords and prostitutes, curtsying, curtsying, curtsying still repelled her. Here she answered to her husband alone and paid polite attendance (time and weather permitting) to the only meeting house in the area. Anabaptists who were not the satanists her parents called them—as they did all non-conformists—but sweet, generous people for all their confounding views. Views that got them and the horrible Quakers beaten bloody in their own meeting house back home. Rebekka had no bone deep hostility. Even the

king had pardoned a dozen of them on their way to the gallows. Still she remembered her parents' disappointment when the festivities were cancelled. Her discomfort in a garret full of constant argument, bursts of rage made her impatient for some kind of escape. Any kind.

There had been an early rescue, however, and the possibility of better things in Church School where she was chosen as one of four to be trained and educated for domestic service. Then the big rescue when her father got notice of a man overseas looking for a strong wife rather than a dowry. Between the warning of immediate slaughter and the promise of married bliss, she believed in neither. Yet, without money, her prospects were servant, prostitute, convent, wife—the last one the safest. [Tk] The intermittent skirmishes of men against men, arrows against powder, fire against hatchet that she heard about from neighbors could not match the gore of what she had seen since childhood. The pile of frisky, still living human entrails held before the felon's eyes then thrown into a bucket and tossed into the Thames; fingers trembling for a lost torso; the hair of a woman guilty of mayhem bright with flame. Compared to that, death by shipwreck or tomahawk paled. She did not know what the settler families nearby once knew of routine dismemberment

and violence, but she did not share their alarm when, three months after the fact, news came of a pitched battle or a peace gone awry. Among her neighbors she was soft spoken; in the meeting house she was accommodating and when they explained their beliefs she did not roll her eyes. It was when they refused to baptize her first born that Rebekka turned away. More and more it was in Lila's company that she let misery seep out.

"I chastised her for a torn shift, Lila, and next thing I know she is lying in the snow. Her little head cracked like an egg."

It would have embarrassed her to mention personal sorrow in prayer; to be other than stalwart in grief; to let God know she was less than thankful for His watch. She had delivered four healthy babies, watched three surrender at a different age to one or another illness, and then watched Patrician, the first born, who reached the age of eight and provided a happiness Rebekka could not believe, die in her arms with a broken crown. And then to bury her twice. First under branches because the frozen ground could not accept the coffin so they had to leave her to freeze in it, and second in late spring when they could place her among her brothers with the Anabaptists attending. Weak, pustulate, her own death was what she should be trying to concentrate on. She

could hear its hooves clacking on the roof, could see the cloaked figure on horseback. But whenever the immediate torment subsided, her thoughts traveled to Patrician's matted hair, the soap cake she used to clean it, the rinses over and over to free every honey-brown strand from the awful blood darkening like her mind to black. Rebekka never looked at the coffin waiting under branches for thaw. But when finally the earth softened, when Jacob could get traction with the spade and they let the coffin down, she sat on the ground holding on to her elbows oblivious of the damp and watched every clod and clump fall. She stayed there all day and through the night. No one, not Jacob, Sorrow or Lila could get her up. And not ~~Pastor~~ ^{the Minister} either since he and his flock had been the ones whose beliefs would not let them baptize her newborns. She growled when they touched her; threw the blanket from her shoulders. They left her alone then, shaking their heads, muttering prayers. At dawn in a light snowfall Lila came and arranged jewelry and food on the grave, along with scented leaves, telling her that her children, the boys and Patrician, were stars now, or something equally lovely, yellow and green birds, playful foxes, or the rose tinted clouds collecting at the edge of the sky. Pagan stuff, true, but more satisfying than the I- accept- and- will-see- you- at- Judgment Day prayers

Rebekka had been taught and heard repeated by Pastor. There had been a summer day once, when she sat in front of the house sewing and talking profanely while Lila stirred boiling linen at her side.

I don't think God knows who we are. I think He would like us, if He knew us, but I don't think He knows about us.

But He made us, Miss, no?

He did. But He made the tails of peacocks too. That must have been harder.

We sing and talk. Peacocks do not.

We need to; peacocks don't. What else do we have?

Thoughts. Hands to make things.

All well and good. But that's our business. Not God's. He is doing something else in the world. We are not on His mind.

What is He doing, then, if not watching us?

God knows.

Then they sputtered with laughter, like little girls hiding behind the stable loving the danger of their talk. She could not decide if Patrician's accident by a cloven hoof was rebuke or proof of the pudding.

Now here, in bed, her deft, industrious hands wrapped in linen lest she claw her self bloody, she could not tell if she was speaking aloud or simply thinking.

"I shat in a tub...strangers..."

Some times they circled her bed, these strangers who ^{had} become ^{the} a kind of family. ^{Sea Journeys create} Delirium or Lila's medicine she supposed. But they came and offered her advice, laughed or simply stared at her with pity.

There were seven other women boarding the Angelus. Their backs turned against the breeze that cut from sea to port, they huddled among boxes, bailiffs, carts, family, horses, guards, satchels and weeping children. Finally, when called to board, their name, home county and occupation were recorded. Four or more, thought Rebekka, were servants—or said so. One tk, had been sent away by her family. Two were prostitutes ordered to choose between prison or exile. Tk was the daughter of a Company agent. Another, tk, was quickly transferred to the Captain's cabin and one was a cutpurse whose sentence was the same as the prostitutes. Rebekka alone, her passage prepaid, was to be married. The others were being met by relatives or craftsmen who would pay their passage—except the cutpurse and the whores whose costs were

to be borne by their indentured labor. Only Rebekka was none of these. It was later, after each had crafted a tiny personal space 'tween decks—walls made of trunks, blankets hanging from hammocks—that Rebekka learned just how many of the servants were in fact felons: pubescent girl thieves, mature prostitutes, ex-communicated fallen women, most of whom lightened the journey; made it less hideous than ^Nit surely would have been without them. Their wit, their know-how laced with low expectations of others and high levels of self-approval. ^(over) Dorothea, the cut-purse that she grew ^{most} friendly with was especially helpful.

"A virgin?" Dorothea laughed and announced the find to everyone in ear shot.

[tk]

He was bigger than she imagined. All the men she had known were small, hardened but small. Mr. Vaark (it took some time before she could say, Jacob) picked up all three of her boxes after touching her face and smiling.

"He took off his hat and smiled. Smiled and smiled." Rebekka thought she was answering the grin of her new husband, but her parched lips barely moved as she recalled their first meeting. She had the impression, then, that

If ever she had feared - her own
female vulnerability - Journeying alone
to a — country to meet a man unseen -
these women corrected it (?)

this was his whole life had been about: meeting her at long last. At long long last. Following him, feeling the ^{disabling} ~~strange~~ resilience of land after weeks at sea, she tripped on the wooden walk and tore the hem of her gown. He did not turn around, so she grabbed a fistful of skirt and trotted along to the wagon, refusing the hand he offered to help her mount. It was seal and deal. He would offer her no pampering. She would not accept it if he did. A perfect equation for the work that lay ahead. And the sorrow.

He seemed shy, at first, so she thought he had not lived with nine people in a garret; had not grown so familiar with small cries of passion at dawn they were like the songs of peddlers. Tk

As the years passed she noticed how the gifts he brought her from his travels had become less practical, had become whimsical. Silver tea service which was put away immediately; a porcelain chamber pot quickly broken by a crawling baby; a heavily worked hair brush for hair he only saw in bed. Rebekka hid her wonder with a smile. Where was this money coming from? "New arrangements," he said, handing her a mirror framed in silver, but nothing more. Having seen come and go a glint in his eye as he unpacked these treasures so useless on a farm, she should have anticipated the day he

hired men to help clear trees from a wide swath of land at the foot of a rise. A new house; something befitting...

We are good, common people, she thought, in a place where that claim is not merely enough, but prized, even a boast.

"We don't need another house," she told him. He lifted his chin for the razor she held just under.

"Need is not the reason, Wife."

"What, pray?" Rebekka cleared off the last of the lather.

"What a man leaves behind is what a man is."

"Jacob, a man is only his reputation."

"Understand me." He snatched the cloth and wiped his face. "I will have it."

And so it was. Men, barrows, a smithy, lumber, twine, pots of caulk, hammers and pull horses, one of which had already kicked her daughter in the head. The fever of building was so intense she missed the real fever, the one that put him in the grave. As soon as he collapsed, word went out to the Baptists and even Sorrow was no longer allowed among them. The men left with their horses and tools. The smithy was long gone, his ironwork a glitter

like gates to heaven. Rebekka did as he had bid: gathered the women and struggled with them to lift him from the bed and lower him on to a blanket. All the while he croaked, hurry, hurry. Unable to summon muscle strength to aid them, he was dead weight before he was dead. They hauled him through a cold spring rain. Skirts dragging in mud, shawls asunder, the caps on their head drenched through to the scalp. There was trouble at the gate. They had to lay him in mud while two undid the hinges and then unbolted the door to the house. As rain poured over his face, Rebekka tried to shelter it with her own. Using the driest part of her underskirt, she blotted carefully lest she disturb the boles into pain. At last they entered the hall and situated him far way from the window space waiting for a glazer. Rebekka leaned in close to ask if he would take a little ale. He moved his lips but no answer came. His eyes shifted to something or someone over her shoulder and remained so till she closed them. All four, herself, Lila, Sorrow and Florens, sat down on the floor planks. One or ^{or else those were} all thought the others were crying, ~~unless it was~~ rain drops on their cheeks.

Rebekka doubted that she would be infected. None of her family had died during the pestilence; no red cross was painted on their door. So to have sailed to this clean world, this fresh and new England, marry a stout, robust

man, and then, soon after, to lie mattering on a perfect spring night felt like a jest. Congratulations, Satan. That was what the cutpurse used to say whenever the ship rose and threw their bodies helter-skelter. Tk

The moon stared back like a worried friend. Lila, snored lightly at the foot of the bed. Rebekka once thought loneliness would be her worst enemy when Jacob was away. When neither Patrican nor Lila was enough. When the villagers beyond tired her out with talk that never extended beyond their fences unless it was all the way to heaven. ^(over) She would be bending in a patch of radishes, tossing weeds with the skill of [^] ~~pub~~ ^{tavern} ~~matron~~ ^{mistress} into her apron. Later she would feed them to the stock. ^{Then} ~~Suddenly~~, as she ^{stood in molten sunlight} ~~rose up~~ pulling the corners of her apron together, the comfortable sounds of the farm would drop. Silence fell like snow floating around her head and shoulders, spreading outward to quiet the moving leaves, dangling cowbells, the whack of Lila's ax chopping firewood nearby. Her skin would flush then chill. Sound would return, ^{eventually} but the loneliness might remain for days. But then, in the middle of it, he would ride up and toss a bolt of calico at her feet or hand her a packet of needles. Along with the smile. Best of all were the times, not many but often enough, when he would

they seemed flat to her.

~~Convinced~~ ~~believed~~ they were
innocent and therefore
free; safe because
churched; tough
because ~~not~~ ~~troubled~~

they had survived!

A new people re-made in
~~old~~ vessels old as time.

Children, in other words,

without the joy, ^{or} the
curiosity of a child. They were ^{poor company and} of no help
with ~~that~~ solitude ^{so} close to dread, that could
rise up ^{without warning} and take her prisoner.

take out his fiddle and embarrass the songbirds who believed they owned twilight. Patrican would be on the floor, mouth agape, eyes aglow, as he summoned rose gardens and shepherds neither had seen or would ever know. With him, the cost of an independent, unchurched life was not so high after all.

"You have never known a man, have you?"

They were sitting in the stream, Lila holding the baby, splashing its back to hear it laugh. In frying August heat they had gone down to a part of the stream that swarming flies ignored. Unless a light canoe sailed by, no one would see them. Patrician knelt nearby watching how her bloomers stirred in the ripples. Rebekka sat in her underwear rinsing her neck and arms. Lila, naked as the baby she held in her arms, lifted him up and down watching his hair re-shape ^{itself in the water}. Then she held him over her shoulder and sent cascades of clear water over his back.

"Known, Miss?"

"You understand me, Lila."

"I do."

"Well?"

"Look," squealed Patrician pointing.

"you frighten them"

"Shhh," whispered Lila, but the fox and ^{her} its kits sped away to drink elsewhere.

"Well?" Rebekka repeated. "Have you?"

"Once."

"And?"

"Not good. Not good, Miss."

"Why was that?"

"I will walk behind. I will clean up after. I will not be thrashed. No."

Handing the baby to its mother, Lila stood and walked to the bush where her shift hung. Dressed, she held out a hand to Patrician who clambered up the bank.

Left alone with ^{the who more than any of her children favored their father} her infant, Rebekka was reminded on that day of her good fortune. Wife beating was common, she knew, but the restrictions—not after nine at night, with cause and not anger—were for wives and only wives. Had he been a ^{Native} ~~rich man~~, Lila's lover? ^{Probably not. A rich white?} Or a common soldier? Rebekka suspected the former since she had known ^{kind} ~~noble~~ sailors but, like a chamber maid, had only seen the underside of gentry. Other than her mother, no one had ever struck her. Fourteen years and she still didn't know if Mum was alive. She once

received a message from a captain Jacob knew who moored often at Swansea. Eighteen months after he was charged to make inquiries, he reported that her family had moved. Where no one could say. Rebekka wondered what her Mum might look like now. Gray, stooped, wrinkled? Would the sharp ^{pale} eyes still contain the shrewdness, the suspicion Rebekka hated? Or maybe age, illness had softened her to benign, toothless malice.

And me? She wondered. What lies in my eyes now? All at once she wanted it—the mirror Jacob had given her which she quietly re-wrapped and tucked in her press. It took a while to convince her, but when Lila finally understood and fixed it between her palms, ^{Rebekka} she winced.

"Sorry," she murmured. "I'm so sorry." And she traveled her face gently ^{slowly,} apologizing. "Eyes, dear eyes, forgive me. Nose, poor mouth. Poor, poor mouth, I'm so sorry. Believe me, skin, I do apologize. Have mercy. Please."

Lila pried the mirror away.

"Miss. Enough. Enough."

(over)

Tr

Now, she thought, there is no one except servants. Jacob gone and

she at first found troubling.

She had been so happy. Jacob ^{home} busy with plans for the new house. The pall of childlessness coupled with solitude had disappeared, melted like the snow showers that signalled it. His ambition, his determination to rise up in the world - no longer alarmed her. Perhaps the acquisition of ^{more &} ~~more~~ was not the thing ^{themselves} ~~itself~~ but the pleasure, the satisfaction of the process. Whatever the truth Jacob was ^{there.} ~~home~~. With her. Breathing next to her in bed.

Were the Anabaptists right? Was happiness Satan's lure, his tantalizing deceit? * At the height of her contentedness death turned to look their way. And smiled,

* Was her devotion so meek it was
merely bait
Her stubborn self sufficiency

outright
blasphemy?

buried by the women he left behind; children rose-tinted clouds in the sky.

Sorrow frightened for her own future if I die, as she should be—a slow-witted girl warped from living on a ghost ship. Only Lila was steady, unmoved by any catastrophe as though she has seen and survived everything. And Florens?

How long will it take will he be there will she get lost will someone steal her will he return?

I sit on a rock and eat the last of my bread. Night is coming fast and I am happy to find a hollow log but it is wavy with ants. I break away twigs and small branches, pile them and crawl under. The ground is damp, chill. Night voles come close, sniff me then dart away. I am watchful for snakes because Lila says they ease down tree branches but do not prefer to bite us or swallow us whole. I lie still trying not to think of water. Thinking instead of another night, another place of wet ground. But it is summer then and the damp is from dew not snow. You are telling me about the making of iron things. Your father doing it and his father before him. And you know they approve when two owls appear at the very instant you say their names, so you understand they are showing themselves to bless you. See, you say, see how they swivel their heads. They approve you also, you tell me. Do they bless me too I ask. Wait, you say.

Wait and see. I think they do because I am coming now. I am coming to you.

I sleep and wake to every sound. [tk] Once I am dreaming trees walking toward me. I know it is dreaming because ^{they} ~~the moving ones~~ are full in leaves and blossoms. I don't know what they want. To look? To touch? One bends down and I wake with a little scream in my mouth. Nothing is different. The trees are not in leaf nor nearer to me. My next sleeping is deep.

Not birdsong but sunlight wakes me. Relieving myself is troublesome. Then I am going north I think but maybe west also. No, north until I come to where the brush won't let me through without grabbing hold. Brambles spread among saplings are wide and tall to my waist. I press through and through which is good since in front of me sudden is a wide open meadow wild with sunshine and smelling of fire. This is a place that remembers the burning of itself. New grass is underfoot, tender as lamb fuzz. I think it is hours I walk this sunny field, my thirst so loud I am faint. Beyond I see a light wood of birch and apple trees. [tk] I am eager to enter because water may be there. I stop. I hear hoof beats. From among the trees a group of riders clop toward me. They are all male, all natives, all young. Some look younger than me. None have saddles on their horses. None. I marvel at that but I have fear of them too.

They circle. They smile. I am weak and shaking. One pokes his fingers toward his mouth, in and out, in and out. Others laugh. Him too. Then he lifts his head high, opens wide his mouth and directs his thumb to his lips. I drop to my knees in weakness and fear. He dismounts and walks up close. His eyes are slant not big and round like Lila's. He grins all the while removing a bladder strapped around his shoulder. He holds it out to me but I am trembling too frightened to reach so he drinks from it and offers it again. I want it but I can not move. All I am able to do is make my mouth wide. He steps close and pours the water as I gulp it. One of the others say baa baa baa like a goat kid and they all laugh and slap their legs. The one pouring closes his water sack and after watching me wipe my chin returns it to his shoulder. Then he reaches into a pouch hanging from his waist and draws out a dark strip and hands it to me, chomping his teeth. It looks like leather but I take it. As soon as I do he runs and leaps on his horse. I am shock. Can you believe this. He runs on grass and flies up to sit astride his horse. I blink and they all disappear. Where they once are is nothing. Just bare trees aching to bud and an echo of laughing boys.

I put the dark strip on my tongue and I am correct. It is leather. Yet salty

and spicy giving much comfort to your girl.

Once more I aim north, following the hoof prints at a distance. The day is warm and becoming warmer. Now I am thinking not of dew on the ground but of tall dry grass under starlight. You hold your hand over my mouth so no one can hear my pleasure startling hens from their sleep. Quiet. No one should know but Lila does. Beware she tells me. We are lying in hammocks between trees beneath stars. I am just come from you aching with sin and looking forward to more. I ask her meaning. She says there is only one fool in this place and she is not it, so beware. I am too sleepy to answer and not wanting to. I prefer thoughts of that place under your jaw where your neck meets bone, a small curve deep enough for a tongue tip but no bigger than a quail's egg. I am sinking into sleep when I hear her say I told myself it was rum. Only rum the first time because a man of his learning and position in the town would never dishonor himself so if sober. I understood^{and}, she is saying, and obeyed~~ed~~ the need for secrecy. When he^{comes} came to the house I never looked~~ed~~ him in the eye. I only looked~~ed~~ for the straw he^s would place in the gate hinge as the sign of our meeting that night. Sleepiness is leaving me. I sit up and dangle my legs over the hammock. There is something new in her voice that pricks me to fear.

I look at her. Brightness of stars, moon glow, both are enough to see her face but neither is enough to know her expression. Her hair is loose, strands of it escaping the hammock's weave. She is saying that she is without clan and under a white man's rule. There ^{is} ~~was~~ no rum the second time nor the next, she is saying, but those times he uses the flat of his hand when he is displeased, when she spills lamp oil on his breeches or he finds a tiny worm in the stew. Then comes a time when he uses first his fist and then a whip. The Spanish coin is lost through a worn place in her apron pocket and is never found. I am already fourteen and ought to know better, she is saying. And now, she is saying, I do. She tells me how it is to walk through town lanes wiping blood from her nose with her fingers, that because her eyes are closing she stumbles and people believe she is drunk like so many natives and tell her so. The Presbyterians stare at her but say nothing. They visit the printer to offer her up for sale. Sir makes the purchase but not before she breaks the neck of two roosters and places a head in each of her lover's shoes. Every step he takes from then on will take him closer to ruin.

Listen to me, she is saying. I ^{am} ~~was~~ your age when flesh ^{is} ~~was~~ my only hunger. Men have two hungers. The beak that grooms also bites. Tell me, she

says, what will it be when his work here is done. Will he take you with him?

I am not wondering this. Not then, not ever. I know you can not steal me nor marry me. Neither one is lawful. What I know is that I am wilted when you go and straightened when Mistress sends me to you. Being sent is not running away.

Thinking these things keeps me ^{walking and not} from [^]lying down on the ground and letting myself sleep. I am very tired and long for water.

I come into a part where cows are grazing among the trees and I know if cows are in the woods a farm or village is near. Neither Sir nor Mistress will let their few heads loose like that. They fence the meadow because they want the manure and not a quarrel with neighbors. Mistress says Sir says grazing will soon die in the meadow so he has other business because farming will never be enough in these parts. Black flies alone will kill all hope for it if marauding wild life does not.

I walk down the path and over a narrow bridge past a mill wheel turning in a stream. The creaking wheel and rushing water are what shape the quiet. Hens sleep and dogs forbidden. I am so thirsty. I climb down the bank and lap from the stream. It tastes like candle wax. Heavy with water I make my way

back to the path. I need shelter. The sun is setting itself. Two cottages have windows but no lamp shines through. The others resemble small barns that can accept the day's light only through open doors. None is open. There is no cooksmoke in the air. I am thinking everybody has gone away. Then I see a steeple on a hill beyond the village and am certain the people are at evening prayer. Rather than go there, I decide to knock on the door of the largest house, the one most likely to have a servant on watch. Moving toward it, I look over my shoulder and see a light further away. It is the single lit house in the village so I choose to go there. Rocks interfere at each step rubbing the sealing wax hard into my sole. Rain starts. Soft. It should smell sweet with the flavor of the pines and sycamores it has crossed, but it has a burn smell, like pin feathers singed before the boiling.

Before I can knock, a woman opens the door. She is much bigger than Lila and has green eyes. The rest of her is a brown frock and a white cap. Red hair edges it. She is suspicious and holds up her hand, palm out, as though I might force my way in. Who hath sent you she asks. I say please. I say I am alone. No one sends me. Shelter calls me here. She looks behind me left and right and asks if I have no protection, no companion? I say No madam. She is

not persuaded and asks am I of this earth or elsewhere? Her face is hard. I say this earth madam I know no other. Christian or heathen, she asks. Never heathen I say. I say although I am told my father was. And where does he abide, she asks. The rain is getting bigger. Hunger wobbles me. I say I never knew him and my mother is dead. Her face softens and she nods saying orphan, step in.

She tells me her name, Widow Ealing, but does not ask mine. You must excuse me, she says, but there is some danger about. What danger I ask. Evil, she says, but you must never mind.

I try to eat slowly and fail. Sopping hard bread into lovely, warm barley porridge, I don't lift my head except to say "thank you" when she ladles more into my bowl. She places a handful of raisins next to it. We are in a good sized room with fireplace, table, stools and two sleeping places—a box bed and a pallet. There are two closed doors to other places and a kind of closet, dim with a partial wall at the rear where jugs and bowls are kept.

Then I notice a girl lying in the narrow box of straw. Under her head is a blanket roll. One of her eyes looks away; the other is as straight and

unwavering as a she wolf. I don't think I should begin any words so I wait for the girl or the Widow to say something. At the foot of the bed of straw is another very small one. A kid lies there, too sick to raise its head or make a sound. When I finish the food down to the last raisin, the Widow asks what is my purpose traveling alone. I tell her my mistress has sent me on an errand. She turns her lips down saying it must be vital to risk a female's life in these parts. My Mistress is dying, I say. My errand can save her. She smiles then and looks either toward the fireplace or the kid. Not from the first death, she says. Perhaps from the second.

I don't understand her meaning. I know there is only one death, not two and many lives beyond it. Remember the owls in daylight? We know right away who they are. You know the pale one is your father. I think I know who the other ones may be.

The girl lying in straw raises up on her elbow. This be the death we have come here to die, she says. Her voice is deep, like a man's though she looks to be younger than me. Widow Ealing doesn't reply and I do not want to look at those eyes anymore. The girl speaks again. No thrashing, she says, can change it though my flesh is cut to ribbons. She stands then and limps to the

table where the lamp burns. Holding it waist high, she lifts her skirts. I see dark blood beetling down her legs. In the light pouring over her pale skin her wounds look like living jewelry.

This is my daughter Jane, the Widow says. Those lashes may save her life.

It is late, Widow Ealing is saying. They will not come til morning. She closes the shutters, turns off the lamp and stretches on the pallet. Daughter Jane returns to her straw. The dark in here is greater than the cowshed, thicker than the forest. No moonlight seeps through a single crack. I lie between the sick kid and the fireplace and my sleep is broken into pieces by their voices. Silence is long and then they talk. I can tell who it is not only by the direction of the sound but because the Widow says words in a way different from her daughter. A more singing way. So I know it is Daughter Jane who says how can I prove I am not a demon, and it is the Widow who says sssst it is they who will decide. Silence, silence, then back and forth they go. It is the pasture they crave, Mother. Then why not me? You may be next. Two say they have seen the Black Man and that he—the Widow does not say more for a while and then, she says we will know comes the morning. They will allow that I am, says

Daughter Jane. They talk over each other: The knowing is theirs, the truth is mine, truth is God's, then what mortal can judge me, you talk like a Spaniard, listen, please listen, be still lest He hear you, He will not abandon me, nor will I, yet you bloodied my flesh, how many times do you have to hear it demons do not bleed.

You never told me that and it's a good thing to know. If my mother is not dead she can be teaching me these things.

I believe I am the only one who falls asleep , and I wake in shame because the animals are already lowing. Tinny baas come from the kid as the Widow picks it up in her arms and takes it outside to nurse the dam. When she returns, she un-shutters both windows and leaves the door wide open. Two hens strut in, another flies through a window, joining the others in their search for scraps. I ask permission to use the commode behind a heavy hempen curtain hanging in the closet. When I finish and step around the wall I see Daughter Jane holding her face in her hands while the Widow freshens the leg wounds. New strips of blood gleam among the dried ones

At table for a breakfast of clabber and bread, the Widow and Daughter Jane put their palms together, bow their heads and murmur. I do likewise,

whispering the prayer Reverend Father taught me to say at night, Madre repeating with me. Pater Noster... At the end I raise my hand to touch my forehead and catch Daughter Jane's frown. She shakes her head meaning no. So I pretend I am adjusting my head cloth. The Widow spoons jam onto the clabber and we two eat. Daughter Jane refuses so we eat what she cannot. Afterwards the Widow goes to the fireplace and swings the kettle over the fire. I take the bowls and spoons from the table to the back where a basin of water sits on a narrow table. I rinse and wipe each piece carefully. The air is tight. Water rises to a boil in the fireplace kettle. I turn to see steam forming shapes as it curls against the stone. One looks like the head of a dog.

All of us hear footsteps climbing the path. I am in the back behind the wall cleaning up and although I can not see them, I hear their talk. The Widow offers the visitors seating, they refuse, a man's voice saying this is preliminary yet witnesses are several. Widow interrupts him saying, her daughter's eye is askew as God made it; it has no special power. And look, look at her wounds. God's Son bled. We bleed. Demons, never.

I step away from the wall and into the room. Standing there are a man, three women and a little girl who reminds me of myself when my mother sent

me on. Each turn to look at me as the little girl screams and hides behind the skirts of one of the gasping women. The man's walking stick clatters to the floor causing a hen to flutter out the door. He retrieves it, points it at me saying who be this? One of the women covers her eyes, saying God help us. The little girl wails and rocks back and forth. The Widow waves both hands saying, she is a guest seeking shelter from the night. We took her in –how could we not–and fed her. Which night? the man asks. This one past, she answers. One woman speaks saying I have never seen any human this black. I have seen some says another, this one is as black as others I have seen. She is Afric. No, says another. Just look at this child, says the first woman. She points to the little girl shaking and moaning by her side. Hear her. Hear her. It is true then, says the man. The Black Man is among us. This is his minion. The little girl is inconsolable, sobbing, trembling. The woman whose skirts she clings to takes her outside where she is quickly quiet. I am not understanding anything except that I am in danger as the dog's head shows and Mistress is my only defense. I shout, wait. I shout, please sir. I think they have shock that I can talk. Let me show you my letter, I say, quieter. It proves I am nobody's minion but my Mistress. As quick as I can, I remove my boot and roll down my stocking. The

women stretch their mouths, the man looks away then slowly back. I pull out Mistress's letter and offer it but no one will touch it. The man orders me to place it on the table but he is afraid to break the seal. He tells the Widow to do it. She picks at the wax with her finger nails. When it falls away she unfolds the paper. It is too thick to stay flat by itself. Everyone, including Daughter Jane, who rises from her bed, stares at the markings upside down and it is clear only the man is lettered. Holding the tip of his walking stick down on the paper, he turns it right side up and holds it there as if the letter can fly away or turn to ash minus flame before his eyes. He leans low and examines it closely. Then he picks it up and reads aloud.

The signatory of this letter, Mistress Rebekka Vaark of Milton, vouches for the girl person into whose hands it has been placed. She is owned by me and can be identified by a burn mark in the palm of her left hand. Allow her the courtesy of safe passage and witherall she may need to complete her errand. Our life, my life, on this earth depends on her speedy return.

Signed Rebekka Vaark

Other than a small sound from Daughter Jane, all is quiet. The man looks at me, looks again at the letter, back at me, back at the letter. You see,

says the Widow. He ignores her, turns to the two women and whispers. They point me toward a door that opens onto a store room and there, standing among carriage boxes, and a spinning wheel, they tell me to take off my clothes. Without touching, they tell me what to do. To show them my teeth, my tongue. They peer at the candle burn on my palm, the one you kissed to cool, they look under my arms, between my legs, they walk around me, lean down to inspect my feet. Naked under their curiosity I watch for what is in their eyes. No hatred is there or fear or even disgust, but looking at me, my body, across distances without recognition. Cows look at me with more connection when they raise their heads from the water trough. The women look away from my eyes the way you say I am to do with the bears so they will not come close to love and play. Finally they tell me to dress and leave the room shutting the door behind them. I put my clothes back on. I hear them quarrel. The little girl is back, not sobbing now but saying, she pinches me, here and here. A woman's voice asks would Satan write a letter. Lucifer is all deceit and trickery, says another. But a woman's life may be at stake, says the Widow. Who will be punished then? The man's voice booms, we will tell the others, we will study on this , pray on it and return with our answer. It is not clear, it seems, whether

or no I am the Black Man's minion. Dressed I step into the room and the little girl screams and flails her arms. The women rush out. I am instructed by the man not to leave the house. He takes the letter with him. The Widow follows him down the path pleading, pleading.

Then she returns to say they need time to discuss more among themselves. She has hope because of the letter. Daughter Jane laughs. Widow Ealing kneels to pray. She prays a long time then stands saying I have to see someone. I need his witness and help.

Who, asks Daughter Jane.

The sheriff says the Widow.

Daughter Jane curls her mouth behind her mother's back as she leaves.

I am tight with fear and watch Daughter Jane attend her wounds. The sun is slowing down.

Daughter Jane boils duck eggs and when cool wraps them in a piece of cloth. She folds a blanket and hands it to me, motioning with two fingers to follow. We leave the house, scurrying around to the back yard. All manner of fowl cluck and fly from our feet. We run through the pasture. One goat turns to look. The billy does not. A bad omen. We squeeze between the fence slats

and enter the trees. Now we walk, softly, Daughter Jane leading the way. The sun empties itself, pouring what is left through tree shadow. Birds and small animals are still eating and calling to one another.

We come to a stream, dry mostly, muddy elsewhere. Daughter Jane tells me how to go, where the trail will be that takes me to the post road that takes me to the hamlet where you are. I say thank you and lift her hand to kiss it. She says no, I thank you. They look at you and forget about me. She watches as I step down into the stream's dry bed. I turn and look up at her. Are you a demon I ask her. Her wayward eye is steady. She smiles. Yes, she says. Oh, yes. Go now.

I walk on alone except for the eyes that join me on my journey. Eyes that do not recognize me, eyes that examine me for a tail, an extra teat, a man's whip between my legs. Wondering eyes that stare and decide if my navel is in the right place, if my knees bend backward like the foreleg of a dog. They want to see if my tongue is split like a snake's, if my teeth are filed to points to eat them with. To know if I can spring out of the darkness and bite. Inside I am shrinking. I walk though the dry bed shaded by watching trees and know I am not the same. I am losing something with every step I take. I can feel the drain.

Something alive is leaving me. I am a thing apart. With the letter I belong and am lawful. Without it I am a shivering rabbit, a crow without wings, a minion with no tell tale signs but a darkness I am born with, outside, yes, but inside as well and the inside dark, is small pelted and toothy. Is that what my mother knows? why she chooses me to live without? Not the outside dark we share, Madre and me, but the inside one we don't. Is this dying mine alone? Suddenly it is not like before when I am always in fear. I am not afraid of anything now. The sun's going leaves darkness behind and the dark is me. I am at home.

She did not mind when they called her Sorrow so long as Twin kept using her real ^{name} ~~one~~. It was easy to be confused. Sometimes it was the housewife or the sawyer who needed her; other times Twin wanted company to talk or walk or play. Having two names was convenient since Twin couldn't be seen by anybody else. So if she were ^{scrubbing clothes} ~~weeding the radish patch~~ or herding geese and heard the name Captain used, she knew it was Twin. But if any voice called 'Sorrow,' she would know what to expect. Preferable, of course, was when Twin called from the doorstep or whispered in her ear. Then she would quit any

chore and follow her identical self.

They had met beneath the surgeon's hammock in the empty ship, looted of rice, cloth, ammunition—everything. All people were gone or killed and she might have been too had she not been deep in an opium sleep in the surgery. Taken there to have the boils removed from her neck, she drank the mixture the surgeon said would cut off the pain. So when the ship foundered she did not know it, and when all the un-murdered hands and officers and passengers escaped, she didn't know that either. What she remembered was waking up after falling to the floor under the hammock all alone. Captain, her father—nowhere.

Before coming to the sawyer's house, Sorrow had no memories of living on land and now the ship, the only home she knew, was erased as well. Except for a dim trace of Captain. After days searching for others and food; nights listening to wind and lapping sea, Twin joined her under the hammock and they have been together ever since. Both skinned down the broken mast and started walking the shoreline. The bits of dead fish they ate intensified their thirst but it was the sight of two bodies rocking in the surf that made them incautious enough to wade away from the rocks into a lagoon just when the tide was

coming in. Both were swept out to deep water, both treaded as long as they could until the cold over came their senses and they swam not landward, but toward the horizon. Very good luck, for they entered a neap rushing headlong toward shore and into a river beyond.

Sorrow woke up with a warm wet cloth on her forehead and cool fingers holding her hand. The smell of milled wood overwhelming. Fed an extravagant breakfast, she was alert enough to say things but not to recall things. When they asked her name, Twin whispered NO, so she shook her head and found that a convenient gesture for the other information she couldn't remember.

Where do you live?

A ship.

Yes but not always?

Always.

What ship?

She shakes her head.

Well, how did you get to land?

Dolphins. I mean whales.

That was when the housewife named her. Next day she gave her clean clothes and told her to mind the geese: toss their grain, herd them together and keep them from waddling off. When two goslings were attacked by a fox, chaos followed and it took forever to regroup the flock. Sorrow kept at it until the housewife threw up her hands and put her to simple cleaning tasks, none of which were satisfactory. But the pleasure of upbraiding an incompetent servant outweighed any satisfaction of a chore well done. Sorrow concentrated on meal times and the art of escape for short walks with Twin, play times between or instead of weeding, sweeping, scouring and scrubbing. On occasion she had secret company other than Twin, but not better than Twin—her safety, her entertainment, her guide.

The housewife told her it was monthly blood; that all females suffered it and Sorrow believed her until the next month and the next and the next when it did not show. Twin and she talked about it, about whether it was instead the going that took place behind the stack of clapboard, both brothers attending, instead of what the housewife said. Because the pain was outside between her legs, not inside where the housewife said was natural. The hurt was still there when the sawyer asked Sir to take her away, saying his wife could not keep her.

Sir said, Where is she? And Sorrow was called into the mill.

"How old?" asked Sir.

When the sawyer shook his head, Sorrow said "I believe I have eleven years now."

Sir grunted.

"Don't mind her name," said the sawyer. "My wife calls her Sorrow only because she was abandoned. She is a bit mongrelized as you can see. However be that, she will work well without complaint."

As he spoke Sorrow saw the side smile on his face.

She rode in the saddle behind Sir tk miles with one stop. Since it was her first time astride a horse, the burning brought her to tears. Rocking, bumping, clinging to Sir's waistcoat, finally she threw up on it. He reined in, then, and lifted her down, letting her rest while he wiped his coat with leaves. She accepted his canteen, but the first gulp spewed out along with whatever was left in her stomach.

"Sorrow, indeed," mumbled Sir.

She was grateful when they got close to his farm and he took her out of the saddle so she could walk the rest of the way. He looked around every few

yards to make sure she had not fallen or sickened again.

Twin smiled and clapped her hands when they glimpsed the farm. All along the trail riding behind Sir, Sorrow had looked around with a fear she knew would be even deeper had she not been suffering nausea as well as pain. Miles of hemlock towered like black ship masts and when they fell away Cathedral pine, thick as the horse was long, threw shadows over their heads. No matter how she tried, she never saw their tops which, for all she knew, broke open the sky. Every now and again, a hulking pelted shape standing deep in the trees watched them pass. Once when an elk crossed their path, Sir had to swerve and turn the frightened horse around four times before it would go forward again. So when she followed Sir into a sun drenched clearing and heard the cackle of ducks neither she nor Twin could have been more relieved. Unlike the housewife, Mistress and Lila both had straight noses. Before anything, food or rest, Lila insisted on washing Sorrow's hair. Not only the twigs and leaf bits stuck in it bothered her, she feared lice. It was a fear that surprised Sorrow who thought lice, like ticks, fleas or any of the other occupants of the body were more nuisance than danger. Lila thought otherwise and after the hair washing, scrubbed the girl down twice before letting her in the house.

Then, shaking her head from side to side, she gave her a salted rag to clean her teeth.

In the darkness of that first night, scrunched on a mat near the fireplace, Sorrow slept and woke, slept and woke lulled continuously by Twin's voice describing the thousandfold men walking the waves, singing wordlessly. How their teeth glittered more than the whitecaps under their feet. How, as the sky darkened and the moon rose, the edges of their night black skin silvered. How the smell of land, ripe and loamy, brightened the eyes of the crew. Soothed by Twin's voice and the animal fat Lila had spread on her lower part, Sorrow fell into the first sweet sleep she had had in years.

Still, that first morning, she threw her breakfast up as soon as she swallowed. Mistress gave her yarrow tea and put her to work in the vegetable garden before leaving to fodder the stock, Patrican skipping along behind her. It was Lila who told her she was pregnant. If Mistress knew, she never said, perhaps because she was pregnant herself. Sorrow's birthing came too soon for the infant to survive, but Mistress delivered a fat boy who cheered everybody up—for six months anyway. They put him with his brother at the bottom of the rise behind the house and said prayers. Lila wrapped Sorrow's tiny delivery in a

insert p. 86

Draft for inserts

[Sorrow..."Then came Florens. Then same the smithy. Twice.]

When Florens first arrived that bitter winter, Sorrow, curious and pleased to see a newcomer, was about to step forward and touch one of the braids on the little girl's head. But Twin stopped her—leaning close to Sorrow's face, crying "Wait! Wait!" Sorrow waved Twin's face away, but not quickly enough. Lila, having taken off her shawl and wrapped it around the child's shoulders, picked her up in her arms and carried her into the house. Thereafter she belonged to Lila. They slept together, bathed together, ate together. Lila made clothes for her and tiny shoes made of mole skin. When Sorrow came near, Lila shooed her away or sent her on some task that needed doing, all the while making certain everyone else shared the distrust that sparkled in her own narrowed eyes. Sorrow remembered that narrowing, that gleam, when Sir brought her to the farm and insisted that she slept inside. Kept distant from the little girl, she behaved thereafter the way she always had—with indifferent submission to any one, except Twin.

Years later when the smithy arrived, the weather of the place changed forever. Twin noticed it first, saying Lila was afraid of the smithy and tried to

warn Mistress about him. The warming was fruitless, however and Mistress paid it no attention. She was too happy for guardedness because Sir was not traveling anymore. He was always there, working on the new house, managing deliveries, laying string from angle to angle and in close conversation with the smithy about the gate's design. Lila alarmed; Mistress humming with contentment; Sir in high spirits. Florens, of course, was the most distracted.

Neither Sorrow nor Twin had settled on exactly what to think of the blacksmith. He seemed complete, unaware of his effect. Was he the danger Lila saw in him or was her fear mere jealousy? Was he simply Sir's perfect building partner or a curse on Florens, altering her behavior from open to furtive? They had yet to make up their minds when Sorrow collapsed, burning and shaking just outside the tk. It was pure luck that the smithy was near. He picked her up and lay her down on the pallet where he slept. Sorrow's face and arms were whelping. The smithy shouted. Sir poked his head out of the door frame and Florens came running. Mistress arrived and the smithy called for vinegar. Lila went to fetch it and when it came he doused Sorrow's skin, sending her into spasms of pain. While the women groaned and Sir frowned, he heated a knife and slit open one of the swellings. Then they watched in silence as he tipped the blood drops between her lips. All of them thought it

better not to have her in the house, so Sorrow lay sweltering all day, all night—permitted no food or water—in a hammock under the trees as the women took turns fanning her. Mistress and Lila quarreled about whether she should be forced to eat or drink, but the smithy ruled. Riveted by the memory of that hot knife and blood medicine, they deferred. At the close of the third day Sorrow came out of her daze and begged for water. The smithy held her head as she sipped from a tin cup. Raising her eyes she saw Twin seated in the branches above. Rocking, smiling with relief. Now their judgment was clear: the blacksmith was a savior. Shortly afterwards, Sorrow said she was hungry. Bit by bit, under the smith's care and Florens' nursing, her weakness drained away. Lila, however, became fierce in her efforts to keep Florens away from the patient and the healer, muttering that she had seen this illness before when she was a child, and that it would spread like mold to them all. But she lost the battle with Florens. By the time Sorrow recovered, Florens had succumbed to a sickness longer lasting and far more dangerous.

piece of sacking and set it a-sail in the brook out of the way and far above the beavers' dam. It had no name.

For three years life among them was contented. With Twin, Sorrow never wanted for company. Even if they made her sleep inside, there were stories to listen to and they could steal away during the day for strolls or larks in the forest. There were cherries, too, and walnuts from the deacon. But she had to be quiet. Once he brought her a neckerchief which she filled with stones and threw in the brook, knowing such finery would raise Lila's alarm as well as Mistress'. And although another of Mistress' baby boys perished, Patrician seemed saved. For a while Lila was persuaded that the boys' deaths were not Sorrow's fault but when Patrician broke her neck she changed her mind.

Then came Florens.

Then came the smithy. *Twice.*

~~TK~~ *insert attached*

It was while lying in the meadow at the forest's edge, listening to Twin tell a favorite story—the one about mermaids, fish girls, with pearls for eyes and dark green locks of seaweed hair racing one another, riding the backs of whales—that

Sorrow first saw the smithy and Florens coiled around each other. Twin had just gotten to the part where seabirds, excited by the foam trailing the fleet like shooting stars, were joining the race when Sorrow put one finger to her lips and pointed with another. Twin stopped speaking and looked. The smithy and the girl were rocking and, unlike female farm animals in heat, she was not standing quietly under the weight and thrust of the male. What Sorrow saw yonder in the grass under a hickory tree was not the silent submission to a slow going behind a pile of clap wood or a hurried one in a church pew that Sorrow knew. This here female stretched, kicked her heels and whipped her head left, right, to, fro. It was a dancing. Florens rolled and twisted from her back to his. He hoisted her up against the hickory; she bent her head into his shoulder. A dancing. Horizontal one minute, another minute vertical.

Sorrow watched until it was over; until stumbling like tired old people, they dressed themselves. It all ended when the smithy grabbed Florens' hair, yanked her head back to put his mouth on hers. Then they went off in different directions. It amazed her to see that. In all of the goings she knew, no one had ever kissed her mouth. Ever.

Tk
insert attached

"Ever"
insert p. 87

It was natural once Sir ~~died~~^{was buried} and Mistress fell ill to send for the smith. He came.

Alone.

(over)

[Sorrow over hears conversation between smith and Lila]

Lila: Where is she? Is she all right?

He: Very all right.

Lila: When will she return? How?"

He: no answer.

Lila: You can't keep her against her will

He: ~~Certainly not~~ ^{Why would I?}

Lila: Then?

He: When it suits. She will come

And she did. But she was not the person Sorrow knew. This Florens was

hard, rough and mechanical where she had ~~one~~^{once} been tk. It made Sorrow
wonder ~~about the smith~~. Did something happen? Lila thought so and was

For all his healing were they wrong about the smith?

↑

Sorrow, Lila ~~st~~^{him} watched from the door as

the foot of
the sick bed.
He stood at ~~Mistress~~

Thank you. For coming.

Will you make me drink my own blood. I'm afraid
I have none left.

He smiled. ~~and~~ ^{the} shook his head.

Am I dying? No.
~~You don't need me.~~ The sick is dead.

Not You.

So it was. tk

overly tender and though she were bruised—inside. Twin said, No, She has
done a bad thing. A very bad thing. But what, they wondered, could it be?

One thing they both knew: Florens could never, would never hurt a soul.

There is no blood and the sound is light, no more than the crack a wing
of roast grouse makes when you tear it, warm and tender, from its breast. He
screams and screams then faints. I hear your horse before your shout and know
I am lost. That I will never again in this world know the sight of your welcoming
smile or taste the sugar of your ^{Shoulder}~~neck~~ as you take me in your arms when I arrive.
My walking to you is hard and long and the hurt of it is gone as soon as I see
the yard, the forge, the little ^{cabin}~~house~~ where you are. The smell of fire and ash
trembles me but it is the glee in your eyes that kicks my heart over. You are
asking me how and how long and laughing at my ^{clothes}~~dress~~ and the scratches
everywhere. But when I answer your why you frown. We settle, you do, and I
agree because there is no other way. You will ride to Mistress alone. I am to
wait at the forge, you say. I can not join you because it is faster without me.

And there is another reason, you say. You turn your head. My eyes follow where you look.

This happens twice before. The first time it is me peering around my madre's dress reaching for her hand. The second time it is a pointing screaming little girl hiding behind her mother and clinging to her skirts. Both times are full of danger and I am expelled. Now I am seeing a little boy come into the forge holding a corn husk doll. He is younger than everybody I know. You reach out your forefinger toward him and he takes hold of it. You say this is why I can not travel with you. The child you call Maliak is not to be left alone. He is a foundling and that his father is leaning over the reins and the horse is continuing until it stops and eats grass in the lane. People from the village come, learn he is dead and find the boy sitting quietly in the cart. No one knows who the dead man is and nothing in his belongings can tell. You accept him until a future when a townsman or magistrate places him which may be never because although the dead man's skin is rosy the boy's is not. So maybe he is not a son at all.

^{worry, worry}
I am ~~worrying~~ as the boy steps ~~away~~. How ~~you give~~ and he owns your forefinger. But then you bathe me of my journey and give me soup. Bits of

*I am not liking
How his eyes go when you send
him to play in the yard,
closer to you.*

rabbit floating down there. We talk of things and I don't say what I am
thinking. ^{that} I will stay. ^{that} When you return from healing Mistress whether she is live
or no I am here with you always. Never never without you. Here I am not
forbidden. No one handles my backside. No one whinnies like sheep or a
goat because I drop in fear and weakness. No one screams at the sight of me.
No one watches my body for how it is unseemly. With you my body is pleasure
is safe is belonging. I can never not have you.

[tk]

You slave.

What?

You heard.

~~But you know that.~~

~~Yes, Sir is my owner. How can I change that?~~

I don't mean him.

Then who?

You.

What is your meaning? I am a slave
because Sir trades for me.

No, you have become a slave. Not
because of Sir Because of your (appetite?)

I am loving you.

And a slave to that too

Don't

A slave is wilderness. (not control)

Neither one will want your brother. I know their tastes. Breasts provide the pleasure more than simpler things. Yours will rise soon enough and become irritated by the cloth covering your little girl chest. And they will see and I will see them see. No good follows even if I offered you to one of the boys in the quarter. Figo. You remember him. He was the gentle one with the horses and played with you in the yard. I saved the rinds for him and sweet bread to take away for the others. Bess, his mother, knew my mind and did not disagree. She watched over her son like a hawk as I did over you. But it never does any lasting good, my love. There was no protection. None. Certainly not with your appetite for shoes. It was as though you were hurrying up your breasts and hurrying also the lips of an old married couple.

Understand me. There was no protection and nothing in the catechism to

tell them no. I tried to tell Reverend Father. I hoped if we could learn our letters somehow some day you could make your way. Reverend Father was full of bravery and said it was what God wanted no matter if they imprisoned him or hunted him down with gunfire for it as they did others who taught us to read. He believed we would love God more if we knew the letters to read. I don't know that. What I know is there is magic in knowing.

When the tall man came again, I saw he hated the food and I saw things in his eyes that said he did not trust Senor, Senora or their sons. His way, I thought, is another way. His country away from here. There was no animal in his heart. He never looked at me the way Senor looked. He did not want.

[ship]

I don't know who is your father. It was too dark to see any of them. They came and took three of us including Bess. They said they were told to break us in. There is no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below.

One chance, I thought. A miracle is required. There is no protection but there is difference. You stood there in the shoes and the tall man laughed and offered to take us to close the debt. I knew Senor would not allow it. I said

you. Take you, my love. The tall one was sweating, laughing, restless. I knelt before him. He said yes.

It was not a miracle. It was mercy. I stayed on my knees.

You will kneel to read this, squat, perhaps in a few places. I apologize for the discomfort. Sometimes the tip of the nail skates away and the forming of words is disorderly. Reverend Father never likes that. He raps our fingers and makes us do it over. I stop my telling only when the lamp burns down. Then I sleep among my words. The telling goes on as dream and when I wake it takes a while to pull away, leave this room and do chores.

Tk [re: ^①Mistress, ^②Lila, ^③Sorrow. ^④Loss of the smithy]

There is no more room in this room. The floor is covered. From now you will stand to hear me. The walls make trouble because lamp light is too small to see by. I am holding light in one hand and carving letters with the other. My arms ache so but it is good to tell you this. I did not know it when I hurt the child. I am near the door and at the closing now. What will I do with my nights when the telling stops? All of a sudden I am remembering. You won't

- ① Mistress scarred but well. Hair growing again.
Baptists visit. (One eyes the horse?)
- ② Lila devoted. Leaves breakfast door of new house for 7.
- ③ Sorrow. Has become a woman. Eagle-watching
her baby (strapped to her back as she works)
- ④ You are wrong. I am not wilderness

read my telling. You don't know how to. Don't laugh. Maybe one day you will learn. If so, come to this farm again, open the gate you made, enter the new house, climb the stairs and enter this room in daylight. If you don't read this no one will. These careful words, closed up and wide open, will talk to themselves. Round and round, side to side, bottom to top, top to bottom all across the world that is this room. ^{*} Only here am I Florens. In full. ~~And~~ forgiven. Mercy.

~~END~~

See?

* You are wrong about me. I am not wilderness.

corner of her eye she saw Twin
12 the branches above.
Rackery smiling the
under the nursing of the smithy's care.
The Smithy had her head tilted
Be Smithy had her head tilted
meat was hungry, meat was hungry
Shortly after she said she was hungry, meat was hungry

it first. (over)

Twin noticed Lila's new jealousy, Mistress's guardedness, Sir's intense

Twin and Sorrow

happiness, Florens' distraction and they both would have paid more attention to
and answered these question

all of the changes the smithy brought if Sorrow had not collapsed, burning ^{and shaking} into

just outside
the tk.

It was pure luck that the smithy was near. He picked her up and lay her down

on the pallet where he slept. Sorrow's face and arms were whelping. The

shouted. Sir poked his head out of tk and Florens came running. ^{Mistress arrived and the smithy}
smithy called for vinegar ^{When it came he} dousing her flesh with it sending her into spasms of

While the women — and Sorrow's ^{Sorrow's}
pain. Then he heated a knife and slit open one of the swellings. ^{The blood}

^{The blood drops} drops he tipped between her lips. ^{They watched in silence when} She lay sweltering all day, all night — permitted

^{in a hammock under the trees, as the women took turns fanning her. *}
no food or water. ^{But} Lila was fierce in her efforts to keep Florens away from the

patient and the healer, muttering that she had seen this ^{illness} before when she was a
^{(and that it would spread.} child. But she ^{lost} the battle with Florens. By the time Sorrow recovered,

Florens had succumbed to another ^{more dangerous} sickness — one longer lasting and equally

tethal.

[love scene]

* They would not have her in the house, so Sorrow lay

* They quarreled about whether she should eat or drink, but ^{be forced to}
The Smithy ruled and they deferred — the hot knife and blood medicine having

Said Lila was afraid of the smithy. TK they both saw that
And ^{tried to} warn ~~ed~~ Mistress about him. But ^{such a} ~~such a~~ ^{she was happy & always unguarded}
[^] warning was further. ^{Mistress paid no attention because} ~~since~~ [^] Sir was there,
working on the house, managing deliveries, laying
sting from angle to angle and ~~supervising~~ in close
conversation with the smithy about ~~the~~ ^{the} horse
the gate's design.
~~It was~~ ^{of course} Florens ^{was} the
most distracted.

(^{was} not traveling anymore). He

Neither Sorron nor Twin
~~know~~ had settled on what to
think of the smithy. He seemed complete
unaware of his effect. Was he the ~~the~~ danger
Lila saw in him or ^{was her former jealousy?}
^{simply Sir's} perfect partner ^{building} ~~for~~ ^{or} ~~and the cause of~~
~~directed~~ ^{altering her} on Florens' behavior
(from ^{open} to furtive?)

Draft for inserts

Sorrow. [Then came Florens. Then came the smithy. Twice.]

When Florens arrived that winter, Sorrow was about to step forward and touch one the braids on the little girl's head. But Twin stopped her—leaning close ~~to~~ to

Sorrow's face, crying "Wait! Wait!" Sorrow ~~waved~~ ^{took off her shawl and, wrapping it around the child's shoulders,} Twin's face away, but not quickly enough. Lila ^{her} picked ~~the girl~~ up in her arms and carried her into tk.

Thereafter she belonged to Lila. They slept together, bathed together. ^{ate together} Lila

made clothes for her and tiny shoes made of tk skin. Whenever Sorrow came

near, Lila shooed her away and made ^{certain} ~~sure~~ ^{else} everyone [^] shared the distrust that

sparkled in her ^{own} ~~narrowed~~ eyes. Sorrow remembered that narrowing, that gleam

when Sir brought her to the farm and insisted on Sorrow's sleeping inside. She

behaved, thereafter, the way she always had: with indifferent submission to

every one, except Twin.

Ten years later when the smithy arrived ^{the weather changed forever.} ~~everything seemed to change.~~

L - alarmed
M. ~~in high spirits~~ humming with
S. ↓ content most