



"She did not mind when they called her Sorrow..."

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She did not mind when they called her Sorrow so long as Twin kept using her real name. 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 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 ^{naked} with a warm wet cloth on her forehead and cool fingers holding her hand. The smell of milled wood overwhelming. ^(over) Once 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? ^{ship's} is the name

She shakes her head.

Well, how did you get to land?

Where is your family?
Head shake.

Who else was on the ship,
Gulls

What people
Head shake

A tiny woman with gray hair was watching her.
"What a sight," she said. "What a pitiful sight
you are! But strong I think ^{for a girl}. Otherwise you would be
dead." That was good news, ^{because} Sorrow thought she was.
Then Twin appeared at the foot of the bed, ^{growing}
holding her face in her hands. Comforted, Sorrow slept
again, but easy now with Twin nestling. Near-

The next morning she woke to the grating of a million saws.
The ~~tiny woman~~, the Sawyer's wife, came ⁱⁿ ~~with~~ ^{holding} a man's
shirt and a boy's breeches. "These ^{here to} will do for now," she
said. "I'll borrow ^{more} ~~a dress~~, but a shawl."

Light-headed and wobbly, Sorrow dressed herself then
followed a scent of food.

We thought
you were male so

Mermaids.

Dolphins. I mean whales.

That was when the housewife named her. Next day she gave her clean ^a cap ^{for her head} ~~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 ^{on the way} 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 ^{water pouch} ~~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 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 ^{small} 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

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.

When Florens first arrived that bitter winter, Sorrow, curious and happy 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 the girl belonged to Lila. They slept together, bathed together, ate together. Lila made clothes for her and tiny shoes made from mole skin. Whenever Sorrow came near, Lila shooed her off or sent her on some task that needed doing right away, all the while making certain everyone else shared the distrust that sparkled in her own eyes. Sorrow remembered how they narrowed, gleamed, when Sir brought her to the farm and insisted that she sleep 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 came, the weather of the place changed. Forever. Twin noticed it first, saying Lila was afraid of the smithy and tried to warn^N Mistress about him. The warn^Ning was fruitless, however, ~~and~~^{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~~^{pleasure}; 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 welting. 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, the blacksmith heated a knife and slit open one of the swellings. They watched in silence as he tipped ^{Sorrow's} ~~her~~ own 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 tress^{es} as the women took turns fanning her. ^{attached} Mistress and Lila quarreled about whether she should be forced to eat or drink, but the ^{blacksmith} ~~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} ~~hed~~

as she sipped from a gourd. 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 smithy's care and Florens' nursing, her strength returned. Lila, however, became fierce in her efforts to keep Florens away from the patient and the healer, muttering that she had seen this sickness 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 was struck down with ^{another} sickness much longer lasting and far more dangerous.

It was while lying in the meadow at the forest's edge, listening to Twin tell a favorite story—the one about ^{a school of} 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 ^{the} 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.

It was natural, once Sir was buried and Mistress fell ill, to send for the blacksmith. And he came. Alone. Sorrow and Lila watched him from the door as he stood at the foot of the sickbed.

"Thank you for coming," ^{Mistress} she whispered. "Will you make me drink my own blood? I'm afraid there is none left."

He smiled.

"Am I dying?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No. The sickness is dead. Not you."

So it was [tk]

Resting in ^{← went's} each other's arms, ^{shaking her belly} Twin and Sorrow ^{they both} heard a tense exchange between the blacksmith and Lila.

Lila: Where is she? Is she all right?

He: Very all right.

Lila: When will she return? ^{Who will bring her?} ~~How?~~ ^

He: no answer.

Lila: You can't keep her against her will.

He: Why would I?

Lila: Then? Tell me!

He: When it suits her, she will come.

^{When Florens returned}
~~And she did.~~ But she was not the person Sorrow knew. The Florens who came back was hard, rough and mechanical where she had once been easy. ^{insert attached}
~~made~~ ^{ed} Sorrow wonder. Did something happen? For all his healing powers, ^{had been} ~~were~~ they wrong about the blacksmith? ^{was right?} Lila ^{she} thought so and was overly tender to Florens ^{when she returned} as though ^{Florens} she were bruised-inside. ^[TWIN] Twin said, No. She has done a bad thing. A very bad thing. But what, they wondered, could it be? One thing

Suckling Complete

they both knew for certain: Florens could never, would never, hurt a soul.

82-

98

33-46

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 ^{don't} hear your horse ^{only} ~~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 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 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 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.

I worry worry as the boy steps closer to you. How you offer and he owns your forefinger. I am not liking how his eyes go when you send him to play in the yard. But then you bathe my journey from my face and arms and give me soup. Bits of rabbit floating down there. It needs salt. We talk of many 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.

I am calm when you leave although you do not touch me because the boy Malaik is so near. He sleeps behind the door to where you do. I am calm, quiet, knowing you are very soon here again. I take off Sir's boots and lie on your cot trying to catch the ^{fire} smell of you. Slices of starlight cut through the shutters. Then a small creaking. In the dark I know he is there. Eyes big,

wondering and cold. I rise and come to him and ask what. What Malaik, what. He is silent but the hate in his eyes is loud. He wants my leaving. This will not happen. The pelt moves and I feel the itch of teeth. This will never happen again.

In the morning the boy is not there but I prepare food for the two of us. He is standing in the lane looking toward where you rode away holding tight the corn husk doll. Suddenly I am remembering the dog's profile rising from the widow's kettle. I could not read its meaning then. Now I know how. I am alert. Otherwise I am missing all understanding of how to protect myself. First I notice Sir's boots are ^{gone} ~~missing~~. I look all around, stepping through the hut's two rooms, the forge, in cinder and in pain. ~~Then~~ I see the curl of a garden snake edging up to the door saddle. I watch its slow crawl until it is dead in the sun.

I am clear.

The boy quits the lane. He comes in but will neither eat nor speak. We stare at each other across the table. He does not blink. Nor me. His fingers cling like claws the doll. I think that must be where his power is. I take it away and place it on a shelf too high for him to reach. He screams, screams. Tears

falling. I walk outside to keep from hearing. He is not stopping. Is not. A cart goes by. The couple in it glance but do not greet or pause. Finally the screaming boy is silent so I go in. The doll is not on the shelf. It is lying in a corner on the floor. ^{Porridge drops from the table edge} Seeing me he returns to screaming and that is when I grab him. That is why I pull his arm. And yes I do hear the shoulder crack but there is no blood. Never any blood. He drops into fainting just as I hear you shout. But not my name. Not me. Him. Malaik. Malaik.

Seeing him still and limp on the floor your face breaks down. You knock me away. With such tenderness you lift him, the boy. When you see the angle of his arm you cry out. The boy opens his eyes then faints once more when you twist it into its proper place. There is no blood. None. So how do you know I am the reason. Why do you knock me away without certainty of what is true. You see the boy down and believe bad about me without question. You are correct but why no question of it. I am the one to be knocked away first. The teeth itch. The pelt moves. *No questions. You choose the boy*

[tk]

You make —

I say why?
You are a slave.

What?

You heard me.

You know ^{my mistress} Sir is my master. *Sir makes me 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 one not because of Sir. Because of your
appetite(?)

I am loving you.

And a slave to that too.

Don't.

A slave is wilderness.

He: When it suits her, she will come.

At first light of the next day, he rode away leaving Mistress still weak but mightily relieved and Lila in ~~black~~ despair. In the silence that followed his leaving, Sorrow's water broke. First came panic. Mistress was not well enough to help deliver; Lila was not to be trusted. Forbidden to enter the village, Sorrow had no choice. Twin was strangely silent, even hostile, when Sorrow tried to discuss what to do, where to go. The weather was warming and as a result of the cancelled visit of a neighbor's bull, no cow foaled ^{IN (over)}. Sorrow took herself, a knife and a blanket to the river ^{bank} the moment the first pain hit. She stayed there, alone, screeching when she had to, sleeping in between, until the last brute tear of body and breath. She pulled, eased and turned the tiny form stuck between her legs. Blood and more swirled in the river, attracted ^{ING} young cod. When the baby, a boy, whimpered, she knifed the cord then rinsed him, dabbing his mouth, ears and unfocussed eyes. The expulsion of after birth surprised her. She wrapped the infant in the blanket and ^{rested a while before} squeezed ^{ING} her breasts til one delivered. It was the first time she had done anything, anything at all, by herself. Minus Captain or crew or anyone. Twin's absence was hardly noticed as she concentrated on her son. Instantly, she knew what to name him.

Acres needed turning, milk became clabber
in the pan. A fox pawed the hen ~~house~~ ^{not} yard
and — ate the eggs. Mistress would recover
soon enough to catch the heap the farm was
falling into. And without her pet, Lila, the
silent workhorse, ~~hadn't the strength to~~ ^{to} interest in
lost interest in feeding herself.

Collapse was everywhere, so

Complete.

^{of the following day}
In the quiet ^{of} noon, while ^{Suckling} nursing her baby, Florens returned, but she
was not the person Sorrow knew. The Florens who came back was hard, rough
and mechanical where she had once been easy. ^{she} Sorrow wondered. Did
something happen? For all his healing powers, had she been wrong about the
blacksmith? ^{Had} Was Lila right? ^{who tender} Overjoyed at Florens return, Lila was almost
servile, ^{to Florens} as tender ^{as though} to Florens as if she were irreparably bruised inside. ^{internally} ^{Patting} ^{Suckling}
Complete, with the insight new mothers claim, Sorrow ^{doubted it} believed Florens had
done a bad thing. A very bad thing. But what, ^{It was who} she wondered, could it be? ~~the~~
the blacksmith could change, so could she. Yet, knowing her all these years,
Sorrow was certain of one thing: Florens could never, would never, hurt a soul.

* had she been right all along →

a figure climb down from a cart. It wore
Florens shift and cap, but it moved
so slowly it took more than a moment
for Sorrow to be certain. ~~but~~ When she

lifted a hand in greeting, there was
no response. Not ~~even~~ a glance;
Not even a smile at the newborn.

It was as though she were seeing
the ghost of Florens - the real one
nowhere in sight. Yet the ghost
had substance for, with a shriek of

* relief and adoration, Lila rushed
forward and, once again exactly like
8 years ago, threw her shawl around
Florens and held her in her arms.

Sorrow lifted Complete over her shoulder
watched them disappear ~~while~~ patting her baby's back,
and ~~1~~ ~~patting his back.~~ ~~1~~

maybe he is not a son at all.

I worry worry as the boy steps closer to you. How you offer and he owns
your forefinger. I am not liking how his eyes go when you send him to play in
the yard. But then you bathe ~~me~~ ^{from my face and hands} of my journey and give me soup. Bits of
rabbit floating down there. ^{It needs salt. many} 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 are a slave.

What?

You heard me.

You know Sir is my master.

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 one not because of Sir. Because of your
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I am loving you.

And a slave to that too.

Don't.

A slave is wilderness.

only a little

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 don't hear your horse only 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 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 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 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.

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soup. Bits of rabbit floating down there. It needs salt. We talk of many 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.

I am calm when you leave although you do not touch me because the boy Malaik is so near. He sleeps behind the door to where you do. I am calm, quiet, knowing you are very soon here again. I take off Sir's boots and lie on your cot trying to catch the fire smell of you. Slices of starlight cut through the shutters. Then a small creaking. In the dark I know he is there. Eyes big, wondering and cold. I rise and come to him and ask what. What Malaik, what. He is silent but the hate in his eyes is loud. He wants my leaving. This will not happen. The pelt moves and I feel the itch of teeth. ^{Expel} This will never happen again.

In the morning the boy is not there but I prepare food for the two of us. He is standing in the lane looking toward where you rode away holding tight the corn husk doll. Suddenly I am remembering the dog's profile rising from the widow's kettle. I could not read its meaning then. Now I know how. I am alert. Otherwise I am missing all understanding of how to protect myself. First I notice Sir's boots are gone. I look all around, stepping through the hut's two rooms, the forge, in cinder and in pain. I see the curl of a garden snake edging up to the door saddle. I watch its slow crawl until it is dead in the sun.

I am clear.

The boy quits the lane. He comes in but will neither eat nor speak. We stare at each other across the table. He does not blink. Nor me. His fingers cling like claws the doll. I think that must be where his power is. I take it away and place it on a shelf too high for him to reach. He screams, screams. Tears falling. I walk outside to keep from hearing. He is not stopping. Is not. A cart goes by. The couple in it glance but do not greet or pause. Finally the screaming boy is silent so I go in. The doll is not on the shelf. It is lying in a corner on the floor. Porridge drips from the table's edge. ^{The stool is on its side} Seeing me he returns to screaming and that is when I grab him. That is why I pull his arm.

And yes I do hear the shoulder crack but there is no blood. ^{from it} ~~Never any blood.~~ (over)

He drops into fainting just as I hear you shout. But not my name. Not me.

Him. Malaik you shout. Malaik.

Seeing him still and limp on the floor your face breaks down. You knock me away. With such tenderness you lift him, the boy. When you see the angle of his arm you cry out. The boy opens his eyes then faints once more when you twist it into its proper place. There is ^{a little} ~~no~~ blood. ^{But are not there when it comes,} ~~None~~. So how do you know I am the reason. Why do you knock me away without certainty of what is true. You see the boy down and believe bad about me without question. You are correct but why no question of it. I am ^{with that tickle} the one to be knocked away first. The teeth itch. The pelt moves. No question. You choose the boy. You make him lie down with the doll and turn to me your broken face, eyes without glee, rope pumps in your neck. I am lost. No word of sorrow for knocking me away. No ^{you me} tender fingers to ~~touch~~ where ^{hurt}.

Your mistress recovers you say. You say you will hire someone to take me to her. Why are you killing me I ask you.

Because you are a slave.

What?

A little bit:
Comes from his mouth
hitting the table rim.

I want you to go
Why why

You heard.

Sir makes me 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 one not because of Sir. Because of your
appetite(?)

^{adoring}
I am ~~loving~~ you.

And a slave to that too.

Don't.

A slave is wilderness.

I have shock. I am feeling the dying inside. But no. The teeth itch and
itch until the hammer is in my hand.

It is hard without Sir's boots, ^{also} It is hard without Sir.
Wearing them I could walk a stony river bed. Move quickly
through forests and down hills of thorns.
It is alive is my ^{only} protection. My way of ~~protecting~~
fails. What I read or cipher is useless. Most
of all it is hard without you who I am thinking
always as my life and my safety. My safety from
~~the~~ harm, from any who throw me away. The one who
bought trades for me never throws me away.

I am thinking of ~~all~~ those who ^{have} ~~can~~ claim
and rule over me

~~You are wrong.~~
You say I am wilderness. I am ~~not~~
~~and you are~~
^ afraid?

Don't be. The hammer strikes air
many times before it gets to you

AND there it dies weakness
Our struggle ^{is long yet it} frees ME AND ices me both.

You tie me up. I settle. An ice floe
cut away from ^{one} home and at home in another,
When the drayman ^{comes here} is Afraid So- you ^{do not un-} bind
my wrists. I have NO shoes.

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: Mistress, scarred but well; hair growing. Lila, devoted. Leaving food at door. Sorrow. A woman now. Eagle-watching her baby. Loss 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

111

114



arms ache so but it is good to tell you this. I ^{could not tell} ~~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
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. See? You are wrong about me. I am ~~not~~ ^{but} ^{ALSO} ^{have} ^{only}
wilderness. ~~In this place~~ I am Florens. In full. Unforgiven. Unforgiving.
Without mercy.

Madre.

END