



## Beloved Draft 1

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Beloved: I

Draft

124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom. <sup>Seth</sup> Rett knew it and so <sup>her daughter</sup> did Denver. They <sup>the two of them</sup> lived <sup>all</sup> alone there because the <sup>boys</sup> males had gone and left by the time they were thirteen years old. As soon as merely looking in <sup>a</sup> the mirror shattered it, <sup>f</sup> (That was the signal for Bugler); and as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake <sup>f</sup> (That was it for Howard). Neither boy waited to see more; another kettle-- full of chick peas smoking in a heap on the floor; soda crackers crumbled and strewn in a line next to the door sill. Nor did they wait for one of the relief periods. The weeks, months even, when nothing was disturbed. <sup>No.</sup> Each one fled at once--the moment the house committed what was for him the one insult not to be borne or witnessed a second time. Within two months, both Bugler and Howard had run off in the dead of winter, leaving their Grandmother, Baby Suggs, <sup>Seth</sup> Rett, their mother, and their little sister Denver all <sup>by themselves</sup> alone in the gray and white house on Bluestone Road. It didn't have a number then, because Cincinnati didn't stretch that far. In fact, Ohio had <sup>been calling itself a state only</sup> ~~survived only~~ seventy years ~~of a troubled statehood~~ when first one brother, and then the next stuffed quilt packing into his hat, snatched up his shoes and crept away from the lively spite the house felt for them.

Baby Suggs didn't even raise her head. From her sick bed she



heard them go but T.B. wasn't the reason she lay so still. It was a wonder to her that her grandsons took so long to realize that there were houses whose hatred of their inhabitants was not so conscientious <sup>as</sup> ~~as~~ 124. <sup>the one she lived in on Bluestone Road</sup> Suspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of the dead, she couldn't get interested in recuperation or expiration, let alone the fright of two creeping-off boys. Her past had been like the present--intolerable and since she knew death was anything but forgetfulness, she used the little energy God had left her for pondering color.

life or death?  
leaving life or living it

"Bring a little lavender in, if you got any. Pink, if you don't."

And ~~Rett~~ <sup>Sethe</sup> would oblige her with anything from fabric to her own tongue. Winter was especially rough if you had an appetite for color. Sky provided the only drama and counting on a Cincinnati horizon for life's principle joy was reckless indeed. So ~~Rett~~ <sup>Sethe</sup> and the girl Denver did what they could, and what the house permitted, for her.

Together they waged a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behavior of their home; against turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air. For they understood the source of the outrage as well as they knew the source of light.

When Baby Suggs died <sup>(over)</sup> with no interest in it whatsoever, <sup>and right after wards</sup> ~~the two~~ <sup>Sethe & Denver</sup> of them decided to end the persecution by calling forth the ghost that tried them so. Perhaps a conversation, they thought, an exchange of views <sup>or something</sup> could help. So they held hands and said "Come on. Come on. You may as well just come on."

Baby died right shortly after  
the brothers left with no interest  
~~whatsoever~~  
in ~~either~~ leave-taking  
in their leave-taking or hers, and right  
afterwards, Pitt & Denver —  
Sethe

Right after Baby Suggs went  
into death

Baby S. met her death  
without enthusiasm or  
interest

Baby S. ~~met~~ <sup>face</sup> death with  
no interest <sup>in it</sup>, whatsoever, and  
right after



The sideboard took a step forward but nothing else did.

"Grandma Baby must be stopping it," said Denver. She was ten and very respectful of older people.

*Sethe*  
Rett opened her eyes. ~~"I doubt that."~~ *"I doubt that."* ~~"Couldn't be,"~~ she said.

"Then why don't it come?"

"You forgetting how little it is," said her mother. "She wasn't even two years old when she died. Too little to understand. Too little to talk much even."

*don't*  
"Maybe she ~~doesn't~~ want to understand," said Denver.

*maybe*  
"That's ~~probably~~ it. But if she'd only come, I could make it clear to her." *Sethe*  
Rett released her daughter's hand and together they pushed the sideboard back against the wall. Outside a driver whipped his horse into the gallop local people felt necessary when they passed

124.

*the grey house on Bluestone Road Ret Garner's house*

"For a baby, she throws a powerful spell," said Denver.

*Sethe*  
"No more powerful than the way I loved her," ~~Rett~~ answered and there it was again. The welcoming cool of unchisled headstones; the one she selected to lean against on tip toe, her knees as wide open as any grave. Pink as a fingernail it was, and sprinkled with glittering chips. Ten minutes, he said. You got ten minutes I'll do it for free.

Ten minutes for seven letters. With another ten could she have gotten "Dearly" too? She had not thought to ask him and it bothered her still that it might have been possible--that for twenty minutes, a half hour, say, she could have had the whole thing, every word she heard the preacher say at the funeral (and all there was to say, really) engraved on her baby's headstone: Dearly Beloved. But what

she got, settled for, was the one word that mattered. She thought it would be enough, rutting among the stones with the engraver, his young son looking on, the anger in his face so old; the appetite in it <sup>quite</sup> new. That should certainly be enough. Enough to answer one more policeman, ~~face one more newspaperman~~, one more abolitionist speaker and a town full of disgust.

Counting on the stillness of her own soul, she had forgotten the other one: the soul of her baby girl. Who would have thought that a little old baby could harbor so much rage. Rutting among the stones under the eyes of the engraver's son was not enough. Not only did she have to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut, but, those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil.

"We could move," she suggested once to her mother-in-law.

"What'd be the point?" asked Baby Suggs. "Not a house in the country that ain't packed to its rafters with some dead nigger's grief. We lucky; this ghost is a baby. <sup>first</sup> My husband <sup>'s spirit</sup> was to come back in here? or yours? <sup>Don't talk to me.</sup> Good God! You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful <sup>why don't you.</sup> I had eight. Everyone of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil." Baby Suggs rubbed her <sup>eyebrows.</sup> eyes. "My <sup>first born.</sup> baby. All I can remember of <sup>her</sup> him is how <sup>she</sup> he loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that?



Eight children and that's all I remember."

"That's all you let yourself remember," <sup>Seth</sup> ~~Rett~~ told her, but she was down to one <sup>herself</sup> now--one alive that is--the boys chased off by the dead one and her memory of Bugler was fading fast. Howard at least had a head shape nobody could forget. As for the rest, she worked hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe. Unfortunately her brain was devious. She <sup>might</sup> ~~would~~ be hurrying across a field, running, practically, to get to the pump quickly and rinse the chamomile sap from her legs. Nothing else would be in her mind. The picture of the men coming to nurse her was as lifeless as the nerves in her back where the skin buckled like a washboard. Nor was there the faintest scent of ink or the cherry gum and oak bark from which it was made. Nothing. Just the breeze cooling her face as she rushed toward water. And then sopping the chamomile away with pump water and rags, her mind fixed on getting every last bit of sap off--on her carelessness in taking a shortcut across the field just to save a half mile, and not noticing how high the weeds had grown until the itching was all the way to her knees. Then something. The splash of water, the sight of her shoes and stockings awry on the path where she had flung them; or Here Boy lapping in the puddle near her feet and suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes and although there was not a leaf on that <sup>farm</sup> ~~plantation~~ that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in arrogant beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was <sup>probably</sup> ~~probably~~ a ~~very~~ pretty place too. Fire

and brimstone all right, but hidden in lacey groves. Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world.

It showed her--remembering the wonderful laughing trees rather than the boys. Try as she might to make it otherwise, the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that.

When the last of the chamberlains was gone, she went around to the front of the house collecting her shoes and stockings on the way. As if to punish her further for her terrible memory, sitting on the porch steps not forty feet in front of her, was Paul B.--the last of the Sweet Home men. And although she could never mistake his head for another's, she said "Is that you?"

"What's left," he stood up and smiled. "How you been, girl. Besides barefoot?"

When she laughed it came out loose and young. "Washed up my legs back yonder, Chamberlain."

He made a face as though tasting a teaspoon of something bitter. "I don't want to even hear about it. Always did hate that stuff."

She pulled up her stockings and jammed them into her pocket. "Come on in."

"Porch is fine, Mr. Paul. Don't get here." He sat back down and looked at the meadow on the opposite side of the road, knowing the sadness he felt would be in his eyes.

"Eighteen years," she said softly as though telling herself something new.

"Eighteen," he repeated. "And I swear I been waiting every



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When she laughed it came out loose and young. "Messed up my legs back yonder. Chamomille"

He made a face as though tasting a teaspoon of something bitter. "I don't want to even hear bout it. Always did hate that stuff."

<sup>Seth</sup> Ret balled up her stockings and jammed them into her pocket. "Come on in."

"Porch is fine, Ret. Cool out here." He sat back down and looked at the meadow on the <sup>other</sup> opposite side of the road, knowing the eagerness he felt would be in his eyes.

"Eighteen years," she said softly, as though telling herself something new.

"Eighteen," he repeated. "And I swear I been waiking every

one of them. Mind if I join you?" He nodded toward her feet and began unlacing his shoes.

"You want to <sup>Soak</sup> ~~sak~~ them? Let me get you a basin of water." She moved closer to him to enter the house.

"No, uh uh. Can't baby feet. A whole lot more tramping they got to do yet."

"You can't leave right away, Paul D. You got to stay a while."

"Well, long enough to see Baby Suggs, anyway. <sup>Where is she?</sup> ~~the home?~~"

~~I guess so.~~ She's <sup>"</sup>dead."

"Aw, no. When?"

"Seven years now. Almost eight."

"Was it hard? I hope she didn't die hard."

<sup>So the</sup> Ret shook her head. "Soft as cream. Being alive was the hard part. Sorry you missed her though. Is that what you came by for?"

"That's some of what I came for. The rest is you. But if all the truth be known, I go anywhere these days. Anywhere they let me sit down."

"You looking good."

"Devil's confusion. He lets me look good long as I feel bad."

MTK

(Desc. of Paul D.)

"I wouldn't have to ask about him, would I? You'd tell me if there was anything to tell, wouldn't you?"

"I'd tell you. Sure I'd tell you. I don't know anymore now than I did then. <sup>^</sup> You must think he's still alive."

"No. I think he's dead. It's not being sure that keeps him alive."

Tik  
(pawse)



He looked at her —

The word had took on another meaning.

She smiled. That's

the way they were. — had been. —

All of the Sweet Home men,

Before and after Halle, they

treated her ~~with~~ <sup>to</sup> "mild brotherly

flirtation

"What did Baby Suggs think?"

Same. But to listen to her all her children is dead.

Claimed she felt each one go the very day and hour."

"When did Halle go?"

March 14, 1855. The day my baby was born."

"You had that baby, did you? Never thought you'd make it."

He chuckled. "Run~~ning~~ off pregnant."

"Had to. Couldn't be no waiting." She lowered her head and thought, as he did, how unlikely it was that she <sup>had</sup> made it. And if it hadn't been for that girl looking for velvet, she never would have.

"All by yourself, too." He was proud of her and annoyed by her. Proud she had done it; annoyed that she had not needed Halle or him in the doing.

"Almost by myself. Not all by my self. A white girl helped me."

"Then she helped herself too, God bless her."

"You could stay the<sup>#</sup>night, Paul D."

"You don't sound too steady in the offer."

~~Ret~~ <sup>Seth</sup> glanced beyond his shoulder toward the screen door <sup>behind him</sup>. "Oh it's truly meant. I just hope you'll pardon my house. Come on in. Talk to Denver while I cook you up something."

Paul D. <sup>He</sup> ~~laced~~ his shoes together, hung them over his shoulder and followed her through the door <sup>straight</sup> into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood.

"You got company?" <sup>he</sup> ~~en~~ whispered.

Off and on," said ~~Ret~~ <sup>Seth</sup>.

"Good God," He backed out of the door, <sup>on</sup> ~~back~~ to the porch.

"What kind of evil you got in here?"

"It's not evil. Just sad. Come on. Just step through."



He looked at her then, closely. Closer than he ~~had~~ when she first rounded the house <sup>ON</sup> ~~and~~ wet and shining legs, holding her shoes and stockings up in one <sup>hand</sup> ~~hand~~; her skirts in the other. Halle's girl--the one with iron eyes and backbone (spine?) to match. He had never seen her hair in Kentucky. And though her face was 18 years older than when last he ~~saw~~ her, it was softer now. Because of the hair. A face too still for comfort; irises the same color <sup>of</sup> of her skin which, in that still face, used to make him think of a mask with punched out eyes. Halle's woman. Pregnant every year including the year she sat by the fire telling him she was going to run off. Her three children she ~~had~~ already packed into a wagon load of others in a caravan of Negroes crossing the Ohio River. They were to be left with Halle's mother near Cincinnati. Even in that tiny one-room shack, leaning so close to the fire you could smell the heat in her dress, those iron eyes did not pick up a flicker of light. They were like two holes of dead black into which he had had trouble gazing. So he looked instead at the fire while she told him, because her husband was not there for the telling. Mr. Garner was dead, and his wife had a lump in her <sup>neck</sup> ~~neck~~ the size of a sweet potato (yam) and refused to listen or speak to anyone who did. So she leaned as close to the fire as <sup>her</sup> ~~he~~ pregnant belly allowed and told him, ~~Paul D.~~ <sup>Paul D.</sup> the last of the Sweet Home <sup>men</sup> ~~men~~. There had been five of them who belonged to the farm, <sup>Seth</sup> ~~Ret~~ the only female. Mrs. Garner, crying like a baby, had sold his two brothers to pay off the debts that surfaced <sup>the minute she was widowed</sup> ~~after her husband's death~~. Then <sup>the school teacher</sup> ~~her nephews~~ arrived to put things in order. But what <sup>he</sup> ~~they~~ did broke two more Sweet Home men and punched the iron out of Ret's eyes leaving two holes of dead black that did not reflect firelight.



Now the iron was back but the face, softened by hair, made him trust her enough to ~~step~~<sup>SMACK</sup> inside her door straight into a pool of pulsing red light.

She was right. It was sad. Walking through it, a wave of grief soaked him so thoroughly he wanted to cry. It seemed a long way to the normal light surrounding the table, but he made it--dry-eyed and lucky.

"You said she died soft. Soft as cream," he reminded her.

"That's not Baby Suggs," she said.

"Who then?"

"My daughter. The one I sent ahead with the boys."

"She didn't live.?"

"No. The one I was carrying when I run away is all I got left. Boys ~~gone~~. Both of them walked off just before Baby Suggs died."

Paul D. looked at the spot where the grief had soaked him. There was gone but a sense of weeping clung to the air where it had been.

"Probably best," he thought. If a Negro got ~~feet~~<sup>legs</sup> he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody will figure out a way to tie them up. Still... If her boys were gone...

"No man? You here by yourself?"

"Me and Denver," she said.

"That all right by you?"

"That's all right by me."

She saw his scepticism<sup>CISM</sup> and continued. "I cook at a restaurant in town. And I sew a little on the ~~side~~<sup>side</sup>."

Paul D. smiled then, remembering the bedding dress.



~~Sethe~~  
~~Ret~~

was 13 when she came to Sweet Home and already

iron eyed. She was a timely present for Mrs. Garner who had lost Baby Suggs to her husband's high principles. The five Sweet Home men look<sup>ed</sup> at the new girl and decided to let her be. They were young and so sick with the absence of women, they had <sup>taken</sup> ~~been~~ to calves. Yet they let the iron eyed girl be, so she could choose <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ spite of the fact that each one would have beaten the others to mush to have her. It took her a year to choose--a long, tough year of thrashing on pallets eaten up with dreams of her. A year of yearning, when rape seemed the solitary gift of life. The restraint they had exercised possible only <sup>because</sup> ~~by~~ because they were the Sweet Home men--the ones Mr. Garner bragged about while other <sup>farmers</sup> ~~owners~~ shook their heads in warning at the phrase.

// "You all got boys," he told them.

"Young boys, old boys, picky boys, stropping boys. But at Sweet Home, my niggers is men, every one of em. Bought em that way, raised em that way. Men every <sup>one</sup> ~~one~~."

"Beg to differ with you, Garner. Ain't no nigger men."

"Not if you scared, they ain't" Garner's smile was wide.

"But if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too."

"I wouldn't have no nigger men around my wife."

It was the reaction Garner loved and waited for. "Neither would I," he <sup>said</sup> ~~said~~ "Neither would I" and there was always a pause before the neighbor, or stranger, or peddler, or brother-in-law or who ever it was got the meaning. Then a fierce argument, sometimes a fight and Garner came home bruised and pleased having demonstrated one more time what a real Kentuckian was: one tough enough and smart enough to make and call his own niggers men. And so they were: Paul D. Garner, Paul F. Garner, Paul

A. Garner, Halle Suggs and Sixo, the wild man. All in their twenties, minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape, thrashing on pallets, rubbing their thighs and waiting for the new girl — the one who took Baby Suggs' place after Halle bought her with five years of Sundays. Maybe that was why she chose him. A twenty-year old man so in love with his mother he gave up five years of Sabbaths just to see her sit down for a change was <sup>serious</sup> a recommendation, ~~to be reckoned with.~~

She waited a year. And the Sweet Home men abused cows while they waited with her. She chose Halle and for their first bedding she sewed herself a dress-on-the-sly.

"Won't you stay on a while? Can't nobody catch up on eighteen years in a day."



14  
TR

Out of the dimness of the room in which they sat a white staircase climbed toward the blue and white wallpaper of the second floor. ~~Paul~~ Paul D. could see just the beginning of the paper; discreet flecks of yellow sprinkled among a blizzard of snowdrops all backed by blue. The luminous white of the railing and steps kept him glancing toward it. Every sense he had told him the air above[the stairwell] ~~would be~~ <sup>was</sup> charmed and very thin. But the girl who walked down out of that air was round and brown with the face of an alert doll.

Paul D. looked at the girl and then at ~~Ret~~ <sup>Seth</sup> who smiled saying "Here she is my Denver. This is Paul D. honey, from Sweet Home."

"Good morning, Mr. D."

"Garner, baby. Paul D. Garner."

"Yes sir,"

"Glad to get a look at you. Last time I saw your mama, you were pushing out the front of her dress."

<sup>Seth smiled</sup>  
"Still is, " ~~said Ret~~ <sup>A</sup> "provided ~~she~~ she can get in it."

Denver stood on the bottom step and was suddenly hot and shy. It had been a long time since good-willed white women,

speakers  
preachers ~~public speakers~~ and police used to sit at  
their table, their sympathetic voices called liar by the revulsion  
in their eyes. For eight years, since Grandma Baby died, there  
were no visitors of any sort and certainly no friends. Certainly  
no hazel nut man with too long hair and no notebook, no <sup>lead pencil,</sup> charcoal,  
no ink pot, no questions. Someone her mother <sup>wanted</sup> ~~liked~~ to talk to  
and would even consider talking to while barefoot. Looking,  
in fact acting, like a girl instead of the quiet queenly woman  
she had known all her life. The one who never looked away, who when  
a man got stomped to death by a ~~terrified~~ mare right in front  
of Sawyer's restaurant did not look away; and when a sow  
began eating her own litter did not look away then either.  
And when the baby's spirit picked up Her Boy and slammed  
him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and  
dislocate his eye, so hard he went into convulsions and chewed  
up his tongue, still her mother had not looked away. She had  
taken a hammer, knocked the dog unconscious, wiped <sup>away</sup> the blood  
and saliva, pushed his eye back in his head and set his leg bones.  
He recovered, mute and off-balance, more because of his untrustworthy  
eye rather than his bent legs, and winter, summer, drizzle <sup>and</sup>  
or dry nothing could persuade him to enter the house again.



Now here was this woman with the presence of mind to repair a dog gone savage with pain rocking her crossed ankles and looking away from her own daughter's body. As though the size of it was more than vision could bear. ( See notes) And neither she nor he had on shoes. Hot, shy, now Denver was lonely ~~too~~. All that lea<sup>y</sup>ing: first her brothers, then her Grandmo<sup>h</sup>ter and before any of them, playmates who did not welcome her in their games. None of that had mattered as long as her mother did not look away as she was l<sup>d</sup>oing now, making Denver long, down right long, for a sign of spite from the baby ghost.

"She's a fine looking young lady," said Paul D. "Fine looking. Got her Daddy's sweet face."

"You know my father?"

"Knew him. Knew him well."

"Did he, ~~mama~~?" Denver fought an urge to re-align her affection.

"Of course he knew you <sup>h</sup>Daddy. I told you he's from Sweet Home"

Denver sat down on the bottom step. There was no where <sup>h</sup>else gracefully to go. They were a twosome, saying "You <sup>h</sup>Daddy" and "Sweet Home" in a way that made it clear both beloned <sup>h</sup> to them and not to her. That her own father's absence wasn't evern hers.

Once the absence had belonged to Grandma Baby: a son, deeply mourned because he was the one who had bought her out of there; ~~the~~ then it was her mother's absent husband. Now it was this hazel nut stranger's absent friend. Only those who knew him ("knew him well") could claim his absence for themselves. Just as only those who lived in Sweet Home could remember it, whisper it and glance sideways at one another while they did. Again she wished for the baby ghost--its anger thrilling her now where it used to waer her out. Wear her out.

"We have a ghost in here," she said, ~~and~~ <sup>#</sup>and it worked. They were not a twosome any more. Her mother left off swinging her feet and being girlish. Memory of Sweet Home dropped away from the man she was being girlish for's eyes. He looked quickly up the lightening white stairs behind her.

"So I hear," he said. "But sad, your mama said. Not evil."

"No sir," said Denver, "not evil. But not sad either."

"What then?"

"Rebuked. Lonely and rebuked."

"Is that right?" Paul D. turned to ~~Ret.~~ <sup>Seth</sup>

"I don't know about lonely," said ~~her~~ <sup>Denver's</sup> mother, "Mad, maybe but I don't see how it could be lonely spending every minute with us like it does,"



"Must be something you got it wants."

*Seth*  
Ret shrugged. "Just a baby."

"Whose baby?"

"Mine."

"My sister," said Denver. "She died in this house."

*Reminds me of*  
"Oh I see. Like that headless bride back behind

Sweet Home. Remember that, *Seth* Ret? Used to roam them woods regular."

"How could I forget. Worrisome--"

"How come every body run off from Sweet Home can't stop talking about it? Look like if it was so sweet you would have stayed."

"Girl who are you talking to?" *Seth*

Paul D. laughed. "True. True. She's right, Ret. It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home." He shook his head.

*ok*  
"But it's where we were," *said Ret Seth* "All together. Comes back whether we want it to or not." She shivered a little. A light ripple

*on her arm*  
of skin which she caressed as if to soothe nerve endings back into sleep. "Denver," she said "start up that stove. Can't

have a friend stop by and don't feed him."

*on my account*  
"Please don't go to any trouble," Paul D said.

"Bread aint trouble. The rest I brought back from where I work. Least I can do, cooking from six in the morning to

noon is bring *N* lunch home. You got any objection to pike?"

"If he don't object to me I don't object to him."

At it again, thought Denver, her back to the lm.  
She jabbed bits of paper into the kindlin laid out and ready  
for fire. "Why don't you spend the night Mr. Garner? You  
and Mama can talk about Sweet Home all night long "

Sethe  
Ret took two swift steps to the stove but before  
she could yank Denver's head back, the girl leaned forward and  
began to cry.

"What is the matter with you? I have never known you  
to behave this way!"

"leave her ber," said Paul D. "I'm a stranger to her."

"That's just it. She got no cause to act up with a  
stranger. O baby, what is it? Did something happen?"

But Denver was shaking now, the tears she had not shed for eight  
years wetting her far too womanly breasts. "I can't no more.  
I can't no more."

"Can't what? What can't you?"

~~doxhullixcanxkixlives here. INobody speakshe use to goNobodywhat to~~

"I can't live here. I don't know where to do or what to do, but  
I can't live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by.  
Boys don't like me. Girls don't either."

"honey. honey."

"What's she talking about nobody speaks to you?" asked Paul D.



"It's the house. People don't---"

"It is not! It's not the house. It's us! And it's you!"

"Denver!"

"Leave off, <sup>Seth</sup>Ret. It's hard for a young girl living in a haunted house. That can't be easy."

"It's easier than some other things."

"Think, <sup>Seth</sup>Ret. I'm a grown man with nothing new left to see or do and I'm <sup>to</sup>telling you it ain't easy. Maybe you all ought to move. Who owns this house?"

<sup>Seth</sup>Ret ~~turned~~ <sup>turned</sup> swiftly from Denver and shot Paul a look over Denver's shoulder. of snow. "I do now."

"Then sell it."

"No."

<sup>Seth</sup>"Ret."

"No moving. No selling. It's all right the way it is"

"You going to tell me <sup>(P)</sup>what it's all right with this child half out of her mind?"

Something in the house braced and in the listening quiet <sup>Seth</sup>that followed, Ret spoke. "I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house. And nothing in between but ~~teh~~ daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running--from nothing. I will never run from ~~another~~ other thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something,

*Garner*  
 Mr. Paul D. it cost too much. Doyou hear me? It cost too much. Now sit down and eat with us or leave us be.

tk tk (She persuades the weeping Denver to go to the keeping room which was Baby Suggs bedroom)

"What tree on your back?"

"huh."

"What tree on your back?"

*Sethe*  
 "That's what ~~she~~ <sup>that</sup> called it. I've never seen it and never ~~jk~~ will. But that's what she said it ~~lo~~ <sup>ok</sup>ed like. A choke cherry tree. Trunk, branches and even leaves. Little <sup>tin</sup>ey choke cherry leave<sup>s</sup>. But that <sup>a</sup> ~~ws~~ <sup>is</sup> eighteen years ago. Could have cherries too now for all I know."

"Is something growing on your back? I don't see anything growing on your back."

"It's there all the same."

*Sethe*  
 "You can't see. ~~I can't see it. so~~ <sup>that</sup> who told you?"

*Sethe*  
 Ret took a little spit from the tip of her tongue with her forefinger. Quickly, lightly she touched the stove. <sup>Then</sup> She trailed her fingefs through the flour, parting, separating small hills and ridges of it looking for mites. Finding none, she poured soda and salt into the crease of her folded hand and tossed both into the flour. Then she reached into a can and scooped half a handful of lard. Deftly she squeezed the flour through it, then



When she came back from the small table next to the stove. The look was of a man who had been to him & he could see all the hair he wanted without the friction of her face.

He fished in his vest for the bag little pouch of tobacco -  
 Concentrating on its contents  
 and the knot of its string while  
 Seth led Denver into the  
 Keeping room (that had been  
 Baby's bedroom)

that opened off the house  
 Room <sup>he</sup> ~~they were all~~ <sup>is</sup> was sitting in.  
 He had no cigarette paper. - so he fiddled

through the open door  
 with the pouch and listened, to let the junction  
 her daughter in the room beyond.

with her left hand sprinkling water, she formed the dough. "I had milk," she said. " I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk from my baby girl. I hadn't stopped nursing her when I sent her on head with the Howard and Bugler."

Now she rolled the dough out with a wooden pin. "Anybody could smell me long before he saw me. And when he saw me he'd see the drops of it on the front of my dress. Nothing I could do about that. All I knew was I had to get the milk in my breasts into my baby girl." Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn't know it. Nobody knew that she couldnt pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder. Only if she was lying on my knees. Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her milk but me. I told that to the women in the wagon. Told them to put milk in cloth to suck from so when I got there in a few days, she wouldn't have forgot to me. The milk would be there and I would be there with it."

"Men don't know anything much," said Paul D. "but they do know a suckling can't be away from its mother for long."

"Then they know what it's like to send your children off when your breasts are full."

Seths  
"We were talking about a tree."



Change desire in them had suddenly become enormous.  
"Those boys came to take my milk. ~~They~~<sup>up</sup> tied me and took  
it. I told Miss Garner on them. She had that lump and  
couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. The boys  
found out I told on them. ~~They~~<sup>School teacher</sup> opened up my back and when it  
closed, it made a tree. It grows there still."

"They used ~~leather~~<sup>cow hide</sup> on you?"

"And they took my milk."

"They beat you and you was pregnant?"

"And they took my milk."

The fat white circles of dough lined the pan in rows.  
Once more ~~she~~<sup>Seth</sup> touched a wet forefinger to the stove. She  
opened the oven door and slid the pan of biscuits in. As  
she ~~re~~<sup>re</sup>aised up from the heat she felt Paul D behind her and  
his hands under her breasts, . She straightened up and  
knew, but could not feel, that his cheek was pressing into the  
branches of her choke cherry tree.

Not even trying, he had become the kind of man who could  
walk into a house and make the women cry, ~~becasue~~<sup>there was</sup> with him, in his  
presence, they could. Something blessed in his manner. Women  
saw him and wanted to weep--to tell him that their ~~feet~~<sup>fingers</sup> hurt  
and their knees did too. Strong women and wise saw him and told  
him things they only ~~talk~~<sup>told</sup> each other: that once a month they  
cramped so bad they could barely stand; that way past the

Change desire in them had suddenly become enormous,  
<sup>greedy</sup> ~~carnivorous~~, more savage than when they were fifteen and <sup>that</sup> it  
embarrassed them and made them sad; that secretly they longed  
to die--to be quit of it--that sleep <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ ~~housand~~ ~~-leggers~~  
was bliss compared to any waking day.

tk tk tk

Therefore, although he did not understand why this was so, he  
was not surprised when Denver dripped tears into the ~~stone~~  
fire. Nor, fifteen minutes later, after telling him about her  
~~stonen~~ milk, her mother wept as well. Behind her, bending  
down, his body an arc of kindness, he held her breasts in the  
palms of his hand. He rubbed his cheek on (into) her back and  
learned <sup>that way</sup> the botany of her <sup>sorrow</sup> grief, the roots of it; its wide  
trunk and intricate branches. Raising his fingers to the buttons  
of her dress, he knew without seeing them or hearing  
any sigh that the tears were coming fast. And when the top of  
her dress was around her hips and he saw the sculpture her back had  
become, like the <sup>private</sup> ~~decorative~~ work of an ironsmith too passionate  
~~too decorative~~  
for display, he could think but not say "Aw Lord, girl," And  
he would tolerate no peach until he had touched every ridge and leaf  
of it with his mouth none of which <sup>Sethe</sup> ~~Ret~~ could feel because  
her back skin had been dead for years. What she knew was that  
the responsibility of her breasts, at ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> last, was in someone else's

~~anatomy?~~

the private  
work of an  
ironsmith  
too passionate  
for display



Thames and - diggers

in a muddy hole

... Any waking day

saddled up to him to  
the young girls / confer~~ed~~<sup>n</sup> ~~then~~ or  
and describe the stormous  
~~Associated with the~~

~~how well-dressed the~~  
~~the visitations they have~~

from } their dreams  
that followed }  
their dreams.

organizations

were  
that had  
followed them  
strayed from their dreams

Uch

1 The times of

hands. Would <sup>there</sup> ~~their~~ be a little space, she wondered, a little time, some way to hold off eventfulness, ~~busyness~~ <sup>to</sup> push it <sup>busyness</sup> into the corners of the room <sup>and</sup> ~~to~~ just stand there a minute or two, naked from shoulder blade to waist, relieved of the weight of her breasts, smelling the stolen milk again and the pleasure of baking bread? Maybe this one time she could stop dead still in the middle of a cooking meal--not even leave the stove--and feel the hurt her back ought to. <sup>things</sup> ~~To~~ trust <sup>things</sup> and remember because the last of the Sweet Home men was there to catch her if she sank.

tk tk tk

Paul D. had not <sup>tembled</sup> since 1860 and then for eighty-three days in a row. Locked up and <sup>Chained</sup> ~~chained~~ down, his hands shook so bad he couldn't smoke or even scratch properly. Now he was trembling <sup>again</sup> ~~again~~ but in the legs this time. It took him a while to realize that his legs were not shaking because of worry, but because the floor boards were and the grinding shoving floor was only part of it. The house was pitching.

TK: Ret got hurriedly back into her dress and on all fours, <sup>down</sup> ~~as though she were~~ <sup>her house down on the ground</sup> holding <sup>down</sup> ~~down~~ the floor. Denver bursting from the keeping room terror in her eyes, a <sup>vague</sup> smile on her <sup>lips</sup> kips. Paul D. shouting Hush, God damn it! <sup>Hush</sup> ~~Hush~~ up! Leave the place alone! Picks up a table

Change desl

TK



and, holding it by two legs, ~~swings and~~ <sup>rock</sup> bashed it about.

Wrecking everything, screaming back at the screaming house,

"You want to fight, come on. God damn it. She got enough without you. She got enough."

The quaking slowed to an occasional lurch, but Paul D. did not stop whipping the table around until everything was completely <sup>rock</sup> quiet.

<sup>Sethe</sup> still. Sweating and breathing hard, he leaned against the

wall. ~~Sethe~~ was still crouched next to the stove, ~~and having~~

<sup>ing her salvaged shoes</sup> ~~salvaged her shoes from the wreckage, clutched them to her chest.~~

It was gone. Denver wandered through the prestigious

silence to the stove. She ~~ashed~~ over the fire and pulled the

pan of biscuits from the oven. The jelly cupboard

was on its back, a few of its contents lying <sup>in a heap in the corner of</sup> on the bottom

shelf. She took out a jar, and, looking around for a plate,

found <sup>a</sup> half of one by the door. These things she ~~carræd~~ out to the porch <sup>#</sup> steps where she sat down.

The two of them had gone up there. Stepping lightly, easy-footed they climbed the white stairs. ~~Lea~~ding her down below.

Shge pried the wire from the top of the jar and then the lid.

Under it was cloth and under that a thin cake of wax. (parafin)

High silence  
greenish light  
as before  
tornado zone

TK

She removed it all and coaxed the jelly onto one half of the half a plate. She took a biscuit and pulled off its black top. Smoke curled from <sup>the</sup> its soft white insides.

She missed her brothers. Bugler and Howard. would be twenty two and twenty now. And Baby Suggs.

Her mother was upstairs with the man who had gotten rid of the only other company she had. ~~Denver dipped a bit of bread into the jelly. Slowly, methodically, miserably she ate.~~  
of the only other company she had. Denver dipped a bit of bread into the jelly. Slowly, methodically, miserably she ate.



11 24

Not quite in a hurry, but losing no time, <sup>Seth</sup>~~Ret~~ and Paul D. climbed the white stairs. Overwhelmed as much by the downright luck of finding her house and her in it, as by the certainty of giving her his sex, Paul D. dropped twenty-five years from his recent memory. A stair step before him was Baby Suggs replacement, the new girl they dreamed of at night and fucked cows for at dawn while waiting for her to choose. Merely kissing the wrought iron on her back had shook the house, had made it necessary for him to beat it to pieces and now he would do more.

She led him to the top of the stairs where light came straight from the sky because the second story windows of that house had been placed in the ceiling and not the walls. There were two rooms and she took him into one of them hoping he wouldn't mind the fact that she was not prepared, that though she could remember desire, she had forgotten how it worked; the clutch and helplessness [both] that resided in the palms; how blindness was altered so that what leaped to the eye were places to lie down, and all else: door knobs, straps, buttons and the passing of time, was interference.

MTK

It was over before they could get their clothes off. Half-dressed and short of breath, they lay side by side resentful of one another. His

dreaming [of her] had been too long and too long ago. Part of her deprivation had been not having any dreams at all of her own. Now they were sorry and too shy to make talk.

*Seth*  
Ret lay on her back, her head turned from him ~~and~~ <sup>out</sup> of the corner of his eye *Paul D.* he saw the float of her breasts and disliked it, the spread-away, flat, roundness of them that he could definitely ~~live~~ live without <sup>Nevermind that</sup> [although] down stairs he had held them as though they were the most expensive part of himself. And the wrought iron ~~mase~~ <sup>MAZE</sup> he had explored in the kitchen like a gold miner pawing through pay dirt <sup>clump</sup> was in fact a revolting [mass] of scars. Not a ~~tree~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ tree as she said. Maybe shaped like one, but nothing like any tree he knew because trees were inviting; things you could trust and be near, talk to if you wanted to as he frequently did since way back when he took the mid day meal in the fields. Always in the same place if he <sup>could</sup> ~~could~~ and choosing the place had been hard because Sweet Home had more pretty trees than any farm around. His choice he called Brother, and sat under it, alone sometimes, sometimes with Halle or the two other Pauls, but more often with Sixo who was gentle then and still speaking English. Indigo with a flame red tongue, Sixo experimented ~~k~~ with night-cooked potatoes, trying to pin down exactly when to put smoking hot rocks in a hole, potatoes on top and ~~the~~ cover the whole thing with twigs so that by the time they broke for the meal, hitched the animals, left the field



for gotten he had not taken off his shirt. <sup>peak</sup> and got to Brother, the potatoes would be at the ~~peak~~ of perfection. He might get up in the middle of the night, go all the way out there, start the earth oven by starlight; or he would make the stones less hot and put the next day's potatoes on <sup>l</sup>them right after the meal. He never got it right, but they ate those undercooked, over cooked, dried out or raw potatoes anyway, laughing, spitting and giving him advice. Time never workd the way Sixo thought <sup>So of course</sup> and he never got it right. Once he plotted down to the minute a 30 mile trip to see a woman. He left on a Saturday when the moon was in the place he wanted it to be, arrived at her cabin before <sup>c</sup> church on Sunday and had just enough time to say good morning before he had to start back again so he'd make the <sup>field</sup> ~~filed~~ call on time. <sup>Monday</sup> Monday morning. He had walked for seventeen hours, sat <sup>down</sup> ~~kdow~~ for one, turned around and walked seventeen more. Halle and the Pauls spent the whole day <sup>con</sup>verging Sixo's fatigue from Mr. Garner. They ate no potatoes that day, sweet or white. Sprawled near Brother, his flame red tongue hidden from them, his indigo face <sup>as</sup> closed <sup>as</sup> night <sup>Sixo</sup> he slept through dinner like a baby. Now <sup>there</sup> ~~there~~ was a man, and ~~that~~ <sup>7</sup> was a tree. Himself lying in the bed, and the "tree" lying next to him didn't compare.

Paul D. looked through the window <sup>above</sup> over his feet and folded his hands behind his head. An elbow grazed <sup>Seth's</sup> ~~Ret's~~ shoulder.

The touch of cloth on her skin startled her. She had



for gotten he had not taken off his shirt. Dog, she thought and then remembered that she had not allowed him the time for taking it off. Nor herself time to take off her petticoat and considering she had begun undressing before she saw him on the porch, that her shoes and stockings were already in her hand and she had never put them back on; that he had looked at her wet bare feet and asked to join her; that when she rose to cook he had undressed her further, considering how quickly they had started getting naked, you'd think by now they would be.

But maybe a man really was nothing but a man, which is what Baby Suggs always said. They encouraged you to put some of your weight in their hands and soon as you felt how light and lovely that was, they studied your scars and tribulations, after which they did what he had done: [ran her children out and] tore up her house. She needed to get up from there, go down stairs and piece it all back together. This house he told her to leave as though a house was a little thing--a blouse or a sewing basket you could walk off from or give away any old time. She who had never had one but this one; she who left a dirt floor to come to this one; she who had to bring a fistful of gentian into Mrs. Gerner's kitchen everyday just to be able to work in it, feel like some part of it was hers because she wanted to love the work she did, to take the ugly out of it and the only way she could feel

Shirt worst?



at home <sup>at?</sup> on Sweet HOme was if she picked something <sup>pretty</sup> growing and took it with her. The day she forgot was the day butter wouldn't

come <sup>or</sup> and the brine in the barrel blistered her arms. <sup>or</sup> at least it seemed so. A few gentians on the <sup>table</sup> ~~table~~, some myrtle

tied around the handle of the flat iron holding the door open for a breeze <sup>Y</sup>calmed her and when Mrs. Garner and she sat down <sup>N</sup>

to sort <sup>[pork]</sup> bristle, or make ink she felt fine. Fine. Not scared of the men beyond. The five who slept in quarters near

her, but never came in the night. Just touched their raggedy hats when they saw her and stared. And if she <sup>h</sup>bought food to

them in the fields, bacon and bread wrapped in a piece of <sup>#</sup>clean sheeting, they never took it from her hands. They stood back and

waited for her to put it on the ground (at the foot of a tree) and leave. Either they did not want to take anything from her,

or did not want her to see them eat. Twice or three times she lingered. Hidden behind \_\_\_\_\_ she watched them. How

<sup>Y</sup>different they were wihtout her, how they laughed and played and urinated <sup>[and sprawled]</sup> and sang. All but Six <sup>o</sup> who laughed once-at the

very end. Halle, of course, was the nicest. Baby Suggs' eighth and last child who rented himself out all over the county

to buy her away from there. But he too, as it turned out, was nothing but a man.

"A man ain't nothing but a man," said Baby Suggs, "But a son? Well now, that's somebody."

It made sense for a lot of reasons because in all of Baby's life <sup>as well as her own</sup> men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody <sup>Baby Suggs</sup> she knew, let alone <sup>q</sup> ~~aloved~~, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, <sup>t</sup> ~~morgaged~~, won, <sup>stolen</sup> ~~stolen~~ and seized. <sup>So Baby's</sup> ~~So~~ her eight children had six fathers. What she called the <sup>s</sup> ~~natiness~~ of life was the ~~shock~~ she received upon <sup>q</sup> ~~l~~earning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her <sup>i</sup> ~~children~~. Halle she was able to keep <sup>q</sup> ~~thel~~ongest. Twenty years. A life time. Given to her, no doubt, to make up for hearing that her two girls, neither of whom had their adult teeth, were sold and gone <sup>q</sup> and she had not been able to wave goodbye; <sup>to make up</sup> for giving sex for four months to a straw boss in exchange for keeping her <sup>third</sup> ~~third~~ child, a boy, <sup>with</sup> ~~wlith~~ her - only to have him traded for lumber in the spring of the next year and <sup>to</sup> ~~find~~ herself pregnant by the man who promised not <sup>q</sup> to and did. That child she could not love and the rest she would not, "God take what He would," she said. And He <sup>He</sup> ~~did~~, and <sup>He</sup> ~~did~~, and <sup>He</sup> ~~did~~ and then gave her Halle who gave her freedom when it didn't mean a thing.

<sup>Sethe</sup> ~~Ret~~ had the amazing luck of five whole years of marriage to that "somebody" son who had fathered every one of her children.



A blessing she was reckless enough to take for granted, lean on,  
as though Sweet Home really was one. As though a handful of  
<sup>myrtle</sup>gentian stuck in the handle of a pressing iron propped against  
the door in a white woman's kitchen could make it hers. As ~~xxxx~~  
though <sup>MINT SPRIG</sup>minty spring in the mouth changed the breath as well as its  
odor. A bigger fool never lived.

<sup>Sethe</sup>~~Red~~ started to turn over on her stomach but changed her  
mind. She did not want to call Paul D.'s attention back to her.  
so she settled for crossing her ankles. Paul D. noticed the movement  
as well as the change in her breathing. He felt obliged to try  
again, slower this time, but the appetite was gone. Actually  
it was a good feeling--not wanting her. Twenty five years and  
blip! The kind of thing Sixo would do--like the time he arranged  
a meeting with Ella, the 30-mile woman. It took three months  
and two thrity-four mile round trips to do it. To persuade her  
to <sup>walk</sup>~~to~~ ~~talk~~ one third of the way toward him, to a place he knew.

A deserted stone structure that Redmen used a long time ago  
when they thought the land was theirs. <sup>ON</sup> One ~~of~~ of Sixo's night  
~~creeps he had discovered it, just off the~~

"Stand there," he shouted. "Breathe hard and I will find you."  
He did. She believed she was at the meeting place and was  
crying because she thought he had not kept his promise. But it  
was too late for the rendezvous to happen at the Redman's house.

just off the ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Road  
creeps he had discovered it, ~~just off the \_\_\_\_\_ Road~~

and asked its permission to enter. Inside, having felt what it  
felt like, he asked the long ago Redmen if he could bring his

woman there. They said yes and Sixo painstakingly instructed  
her how to get there, Exactly when to start out, how his wel-

coming or warning whistles would sound. Since neither could

go anywhere on business of their own, and since the 30 Mile

Woman was already 15 and scheduled for somebody's arms, there was

real danger. When he arrived, she had not. He whistled and got

no answer. He went into the Redmen's deserted lodge, She was not

there. He returned to the meeting spot. She was not there. He

waited longer. She still did not come. He grew frightened for her

and walked down the road in the direction she should be taking.

Three or four miles, and he stopped. It was hopeless to go on

that way, so he stood in the wind and asked for help. Listening

close for some sign he heard a whimper. He turned toward it,

waited and heard it again. Uncautious now, he ~~shouted~~ <sup>hollered?</sup> her name

She answered in a voice that sounded like life to him--not death.

"Stand there," he shouted. "Breathe hard and I <sup>CAN</sup> will find you."

He did. She believed she was <sup>already</sup> at the meeting place and was

crying because she thought he had not kept his promise. Now it

was too late for the rendezvous to happen at the Redmen's house.



so they dropped ~~where~~ they were. Later he punctured her calf to simulate ~~snake~~ bite so she could use it in some way ~~as~~ an excuse for ~~not~~ being on time to ~~shake~~ <sup>worms</sup> from tobacco leaves. He gave her detailed directions about following the stream as a short <sup>cut</sup> uct back, and saw her off. When he got to the road ~~he saw~~ <sup>if very</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>from</sup> ~~iw~~ was light and ~~that~~ he had his clothes in his hands. Suddenl<sup>y</sup> <sup>wide-eyed</sup> around a bend a ~~wagon~~ trundled toward him, ~~and~~ its driver raised a whip while the woman ~~seated~~ beside him covered her face. But Six<sup>o</sup> had already melted into the woods before the lash could unfurl itself on his ~~indigo~~ behind.

He told the story to Paul F<sup>i</sup>, Halle and Paul D. in the peculiar way which made them cry-laugh. He described permanent things as though each appearance of it was new: not the ~~moon~~, but the white moon, <sup>or</sup> orange moon, or sycthe moon.

MTK ( language and perception minus deduction)

But that was before he stopped speaking English because there was no future in it. Becuase <sup>of</sup> the 30 Mile Woman, Sixo was the only one not paralyzed by yearning for <sup>Seth</sup> Ret. Nothing could be as good as the sex Paul D. had been imagining off and on for 25 years. His foolishness made him smile and think fondly of himself and in this creamy self-amusement he turned over on his side. <sup>Seth's</sup> Ret's eyes were closed, her hair a mess. Looked at this way, minus the iron eyes, her face was not ~~so~~ attractive. So it must have been her eyes that both terrified him and stirred him up. Without them her face was manageable--a face ~~he~~ could handle, Maybe if she would keep them closed like that... Hey, ~~what~~ a nice mouth. Halle never knew ~~what~~ he had.



Although her eyes were closed, <sup>Seth</sup> Bet knew his gaze was on her face. A <sup>L paper</sup> photograph of just how bad she must look quickly raised itself up before her mind's eye. Still, the absence of derision coming from his gaze was marked. Soft. It felt soft. He was not judging her--or rather he was judging, but not comparing her. Not since Halle had a man looked at her that way: not loving or passionate but interested as though ~~he~~ they were examining an ear of corn for its quality.

Halle was more like a brother than a husband. His care suggested a relative (family relationship) rather than a stranger's (man's) possession (laying claim). For years they saw each other in full daylight only on Sundays. The rest of the time they spoke ~~or~~ touched <sup>OR</sup> ate in darkness. Pre-dawn darkness and the afterlight of sunset. So looking at each other intently was <sup>a</sup> the Sunday morning pleasure and Halle examined her as though storing up what he saw in <sup>SUN</sup> daylight for the shadow he saw the rest of the week. And he had so little time ~~because~~ after his Sweet Home work and on Sunday afternoons was the debt work he owed for his mother.

When he asked her to be his wife, <sup>Seth</sup> she happily agreed and then was stuck not knowing the next step. <sup>There</sup> There should be a ceremony shouldn't there? A preacher, a party, a something.

MTK

She and Mrs. Garner were the only women there, so she decided to ask her.

"Halle and me want to be married, Mrs. Garner."

<sup>"She smiled."</sup>  
"So I heard." <sup>He</sup> "He talked to Mr. Garner about it. Are you already

~~ex~~



expecting?

"No, Ma'am."

"Well you will be. You know that don't you?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Halle's nice, <sup>Seth</sup> Margaret. He'll be good to you."

MTK

"But, I mean we want to get married."

~~"Touxxxixskxxxxxxsoxxx~~  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

' You just said so. <sup>Seth</sup> And I said all right."

"Is there a wedding?"

Mrs. Garner ~~smiled,~~ and put down her cooking spoon. Laughing a little she touched <sup>Seth</sup> Margaret on the head saying "You are one sweet child." And then no more.

<sup>Seth</sup> ~~He~~ made a dress <sup>on the sly</sup> and Halle hung his hitching rope from a nail on the wall of her cabin.

max 5  
(over)

was rather about the union  
Mrs. Garner pleased - because,

although Baby Suggs had been  
a jewel, Margaret could &  
this girl would give them  
~~the laboring children~~  
~~more help with the~~

who would  
even ~~and even~~ up the work

shortage Baby's  
departure had  
caused

lost to her

because of

~~her husband's~~

the 'life beyond

reproach' Mr.

Garner chose to

live



And there on the floor they had sex for the third time, the first two having been in the tiny cornfield Mr. Garner kept because<sup>s</sup> it was a crop animals could use as well as humans. Both<sup>were</sup> under the impression that they were hidden, scrunched down among the stalks, they couldn't see anything, including the corn tops waving over their heads and visible to everybody else.

Sethe smiled at her and Halle's stupidity. Even the crows knew and came to look.

Uncrossing her ankles, she managed not to laugh aloud.

The jump, thought Paul D., from a calf to a girl wasn't all that mighty. Not the leap Halle believed it would be. And taking her in the corn rather than her quarters, a yard away from the cabins of the others who had lost out, was a gesture of tenderness. He wanted privacy for her and got public display. Who could miss a ripple in a cornfield on a quiet cloudless day? He, Sixo and both of ~~the Pauls~~ <sup>the Pauls</sup> sat under Brother pouring water from a guord over their heads, and ~~through~~ through eyes streaming with well water, watched the confusion of tassles in the field below. It had been hard, hard, hard sitting there erect as dogs, watching corn stalks dance at noon. ~~the~~ the water running over their heads ~~making~~ <sup>made</sup> it worse.

Paul D. sighed and turned over on his other side. Sethe took the opportunity afforded by his movement to shift as well. Looking at <sup>Paul D's</sup> his back, she remembered that some of the corn stalks broke, folded down over Halle's back and among the things her

dirt of the cabins

Halle & Sethe



corn silk  
fingers clutched were husk and hair.

How loose the silk. How jailed down the juice.

Their jealous admiration was assuaged a bit by the feast of new corn they allowed themselves that night. Plucked from the broken stalks that Mr. Garner could not doubt was the fault of raccoon. Paul F. wanted his roasted; Paul A. wanted his boiled and now Paul D. couldn't remember how finally they'd cooked those ears too young to eat. What he did remember was parting the hair to get to the tip, the edge of his fingernail just under, so as not to graze a single kernel.

Pulling down the tight sheath, the ripping sound always convinced her it hurt.

As soon as one leaf of the husk was down, the rest obeyed and the ear yeilded up to him its shy rows, exposed at last.

How loose the silk. How quick the jailed up flavor ran free.

MTK



~~And~~ no matter what you did  
with <sup>tearing ex.</sup> teeth and <sup>met</sup> slippery  
fingers, or what your  
expectations were there  
was no accounting for  
the <sup>teapening</sup> [wash] so simple

~~the~~  
teeth and  
met fingers  
searched for  
anticipated  
there was no  
accounting for  
the way

that simple  
joy could shake you