



## "some more and when his lady came to help..."

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some more and when his lady came to help, she got a rock thrown in her face. We got them back in the car, but the crowd kept the yelling up till we pulled away. Look," he said. "See that?" He pointed to egg yolks, not sliding now but stuck like phlegm to the window.

"Anybody report to the conductor?" Frank asked him.

"You crazy?"

"Probably."

The porter, whose name tag said Taylor, chuckled. "You want a shot? I got some Johnny Red in my case."

"Yeah. Oh, yeah."

Frank's taste buds, uninterested in cheese sandwiches or fruit, came alive at the mention of whiskey. Just a shot. Just enough to settle and sweeten the world. No more.

The wait seemed long and just when Frank was convinced the porter had forgotten, Taylor returned with a teacup, saucer and napkin. Johnny Red trembled invitingly in the thick white cup.

"Enjoy," said Taylor, then rocked along the aisle to the sway of the train.

The abused couple whispered to each other, she softly, pleadingly; he with urgency. He will beat her when they get home, thought Frank. And who wouldn't? It's one thing to be publically humiliated. A man could move on from that. What was intolerable was the witness of a woman, a wife, who not only saw it, but had dared to try to rescue, rescue! him. He couldn't protect himself and he couldn't protect her either, as the rock in her face proved. She would have to pay for that. Over and over again.



OF THE REDEEMER WAITING FOR A TIN PLATE OF DRY-HARD  
BISCUITS ALREADY SHOWING GREEN, AND PICKLED PIGS'  
FEET. IT WAS THERE THAT MAMA HEARD THE WOMAN AHEAD  
OF HER EXPLAIN TO THE VOLUNTEER HOW TO SPELL AND  
PRONOUNCE HER NAME. MAMA SAID IT WAS THE SWEETEST  
THING AND THE SOUND OF THE NAME WAS LIKE MUSIC  
AMIDST THE ARGUE AND HEAT OF THE CROWD. X WEEKS  
LATER WHEN HER BABY, DELIVERED ON A MATTRESS IN  
REVEREND BAILEY'S CHURCH BASEMENT, TURNED OUT TO BE  
MAMA WAS PREGNANT WHEN WE WALKED OUT OF TEXAS.  
A GIRL MAMA NAMED HER YCIDRA, TAKING CARE TO  
SOME FAMILIES HAD TRUCKS OR CARS AND LOADED ALL THEY  
PRONOUNCE ALL THREE SYLLABLES. EVERYBODY ELSE CALLS  
COULD. OTHERS, LIKE MINE, WALKED FOR MILES UNTIL MR.  
TK CAME BACK FOR US HAVING DROPPED HIS PEOPLE AT THE  
THOUGHT ABOUT THE NAME, TREASURED IT. AS FOR ME NO  
STATE LINE. MY SHOE SOLE FLAPPED UNTIL PAPA TIED IT UP  
SUCH MEMORIES. I AM NAMED FRANK AFTER MY FATHER'S  
WITH HIS OWN SHOE LACE. I HAVE EATEN TRASH IN JAIL,  
BROTHER. LUTHER IS MY FATHER'S NAME; IDA MY MOTHER'S.  
KOREA, HOSPITALS, AT TABLE AND FROM CERTAIN GARBAGE  
THE ONLY INTERESTING PART IS OUR LAST NAME. MONEY.  
CANS. NOTHING, HOWEVER, COMPARES TO THE FOOD  
OF WHICH WE HAD NONE.  
PANTRY IN TK . I REMEMBER STANDING IN LINE AT CHURCH

OF THE REDEEMER WAITING FOR A TIN PLATE OF DRY-HARD  
BISCUITS ALREADY SHOWING GREEN, AND PICKLED PIGS'  
FEET. IT WAS THERE THAT MAMA HEARD THE WOMAN AHEAD  
OF HER EXPLAIN TO THE VOLUNTEER HOW TO SPELL AND  
PRONOUNCE HER NAME. MAMA SAID IT WAS THE SWEETEST  
THING AND THE SOUND OF THE NAME WAS LIKE MUSIC  
AMIDST THE ARGUE AND HEAT OF THE CROWD. X WEEKS  
LATER WHEN HER BABY, DELIVERED ON A MATTRESS IN  
REVEREND BAILEY'S CHURCH BASEMENT, TURNED OUT TO BE  
A GIRL MAMA NAMED HER YCIDRA, TAKING CARE TO  
PRONOUNCE ALL THREE SYLLABLES. EVERYBODY ELSE CALLS  
HER 'SEE'. I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS NICE, HOW SHE  
THOUGHT ABOUT THE NAME, TREASURED IT. AS FOR ME NO  
SUCH MEMORIES. I AM NAMED FRANK AFTER MY FATHER'S  
BROTHER. LUTHER IS MY FATHER'S NAME; IDA MY MOTHER'S.  
THE ONLY INTERESTING PART IS OUR LAST NAME. MONEY.  
OF WHICH WE HAD NONE.



Ycidra

A mean grandmother is one of the worst things a girl could have. Mamas are supposed to spank and rule you so you grow up knowing right from wrong. Grandmothers, even when they've been hard on their own children, are forgiving and generous to the grandchildren.

See got out of the zinc tub and took a few dripping steps to the pot belly stove where a kettle of hot water hissed. She poured it into the cooling tub water and sat back down. She wanted to linger in the tub while a soft afternoon light encouraged thoughts to tumble. Regrets, excuses, righteousness, false memory and future plans mixed together or stood like soldiers in line. Well, that's the way grandmothers should be, she thought, but for little Ycidra Money it wasn't like that at all. Because Mama and Papa worked

from before sunrise til dark they never knew that Miss Noella poured water instead of milk over the shredded wheat See and her brother ate for breakfast. Nor that when they had stripes and welts on their legs they were cautioned to lie, to say they got them by playing out by the stream where brambles and huckleberry vines grew. Even grandfather Salem was silent. Frank said it was because he was scared Miss Noella would leave him the way his first two wives did. Noella was the third wife of Salem Money so he never made a sound when the salt pork was halved for the two of them and all the children got was its flavor. Well, yes, they were doing a big favor letting their homeless relatives live with them after they got run out of Texas. She herself was born on the road, which Noella took as a bad sign for the new baby's future.

The house was big enough for two, maybe three, but not for grandparents plus Papa, Mama, Uncle Frank, and two children. For a year See slept with her parents on a pallet on the floor; Uncle Frank in two chairs put together; little Frank slept on the back



porch, either in the hammock or the slanty wooden swing, even when it rained. Her parents, Luther and Ida, worked two jobs each—Ida picking cotton in the day and sweeping the lumber shacks in the evening. Luther and Uncle Frank were field workers and very happy to have jobs since most of the young men around there had enlisted in the war and when it was over didn't come back to work cotton or lumber. Then Uncle Frank enlisted too. He got in the navy as a cook and glad about that because he didn't have to handle explosives. But his ship sank anyway and Miss Noella hung the Gold star in the window as though she, and not a Salem ex-wife, was the honorable mother who had lost a son. Ida's job at the lumber yard gave her the asthma that finally killed her, but it paid off because at the end of that year they were able to rent a place from Old Man Shepherd who drove in from Jeffrey every Saturday morning to collect the rent money.

See remembered the relief and the pride they all took to be in their own house. There they could let Mr. Haywood put them on his



monthly list of people who needed supplies from the general store in Jeffrey. Sometimes he would bring back chewing gum and mint balls, free, for the children. Jeffrey had the sidewalks, running water, stores and a bank and a school. Lotus was separate with no sidewalks or indoor plumbing, just houses and two churches, one of which a teacher used for reading and arithmetic. See thought it would have been better if there were more books to read—just Grimm's Fairy Tales, a book of Bible passages for young people.

That, she mused, was the reason she married a rat. If she hadn't been so ignorant living in a no-count, not-even-a-town place with only chores, church, and nothing else to do, she would have known better. Watched, watched, watched by every grown up from sunrise to sunset, when she and a few other girls reached fourteen and started talking about boys, See was prevented from any real flirtation because of big brother, Frank. The boys knew she was off limits because of him. That's why when Frank reached

eighteen, enlisted and left town, she fell for what Noella called the first thing she saw wearing trousers instead of overalls.

His name was Principal but he called himself Prince. A visitor from Atlanta to his aunt's house, he was a good-looking new face with shiny, thin-sole shoes. All the girls were impressed with his big city accent and what they believed was his knowledge and experience. See most of all.

Splashing water on her shoulders, she wondered why she didn't at least ask the aunt he was visiting why he was sent to the backwoods instead of spending the winter in the big, bad city. But feeling the space where her brother had been, she had no defense. That's the bad thing, she thought, about having a smart, tough brother close at hand to take care of and protect you—you are slow to develop your own brain muscle. So if Prince said she was pretty, she believed him. If he said at fourteen she was a woman, she believed that too. And if he said I want you for myself, it was

Noella who said, Not unless y'all are legal. By the time she learned he had married her for an automobile, it was too late.



MAKING IT. HEY, MONEY! GOT SOME? MONEY, COME ON  
OVER HERE. YOU OWE ME.  
TRUTHFULLY, OTHER THAN A FEW QUICK OPPORTUNITIES,  
I'VE KNOWN ONLY FOUR WOMEN. THREE OF THEM WERE  
SERIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND I LIKED THE SMALL BREAKABLE  
WOMEN ARE EAGER TO TALK TO ME WHEN THEY HEAR MY  
LAST NAME. MONEY? THEY CHUCKLE AND ASK THE SAME  
QUESTION: WHO NAMED ME THAT OR IF ANYBODY DID. IF I  
MADE IT UP TO MAKE MYSELF FEEL IMPORTANT OR WAS I A  
GAMBLER OR THIEF OR SOME OTHER KIND OF CROOK THEY  
SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR? WHEN I TELL THEM MY WHOLE  
NAME, FIRST AND LAST, THEY SCREAM WITH LAUGHTER AND  
SAY: THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING. ALL MONEY IS FAKE. NO  
END OF PLEASANT TALK AFTER THAT AND IT'S ENOUGH TO  
KEEP OUR FRIENDSHIP GOING WAY AFTER IT'S DRIED UP JUST  
SO THEY CAN MAKE LAME JOKES: HEY, MONEY, HOW YOU

MAKING IT? HEY, MONEY! GOT SOME? MONEY, COME ON OVER HERE. YOU OWE ME.

TRUTHFULLY, OTHER THAN A FEW QUICK OPPORTUNITIES, I'VE KNOWN ONLY FOUR WOMEN. THREE OF THEM WERE SERIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND I LIKED THE SMALL BREAKABLE THING INSIDE EACH ONE. WHATEVER THEIR PERSONALITY, SMARTS OR LOOKS, SOMETHING SOFT LAY INSIDE EACH. LIKE THE BREAST OF A BIRD'S BONE, SHAPED AND CHOSEN TO WISH ON. A LITTLE V, THINNER THAN BONE AND BARELY HINGED, THAT I COULD BREAK WITH A FOREFINGER IF I WANTED TO, BUT NEVER DID. WANT TO, I MEAN. KNOWING IT WAS THERE, HIDING FROM ME, WAS ENOUGH.

IT WAS THE FOURTH WOMAN WHO CHANGED EVERYTHING. IN HER COMPANY THE LITTLE WISHBONE V TOOK UP RESIDENCE IN MY OWN CHEST AND MADE ITSELF AT HOME. IT WAS HER FOREFINGER THAT SCARED ME AND IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT LETTER, I'D STILL BE HANGING FROM HER



APRON STRINGS. SHE HAD NO COMPETITION EXCEPT FOR THE  
HORSES, A MAN'S FOOT AND YCIDRA TREMBLING UNDER MY  
ARM.