



youngish gang, <sup>squarish</sup> children  
Grandmother, who is supposed to be minding the children  
for the mother to work, looks them out with  
sorrow. The reason the two older children are home  
and Lucy will be glad when school starts again  
so that ~~Sharon~~ <sup>10 year old girl</sup> won't be around the mother's  
boyfriend.

Sharon <sup>shy</sup> ~~pulls~~ <sup>climbs</sup> along side the car to the post,  
smiling at Lucy through the window. Her hair  
~~is~~ pig tails are braided with <sup>grape</sup> hair  
that worried Lucy.

The larger boy <sup>stands by the</sup> ~~heads~~ <sup>face</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>the</sup> street  
toward the shanty, wise now that he's <sup>(8)</sup>  
to white people <sup>to</sup> ~~white~~ people ways, the presence  
of their new car, his difference. A year  
ago Lucy couldn't keep him out of her flower  
beds. A year ago, when she'd decided  
that the children would either play on the  
street or in her yard. Now after had she  
dreamed that one of the low-slung cars  
passing to the quarter had smashed them  
like <sup>porcupine</sup> on the road? And now, last  
night she'd dreamed she had adopted them -  
just ~~Sharon~~ <sup>Sharon</sup> & the tot - and took them to live  
in the new home she & Linda were  
building across town in a what Essie calls the  
"upwardly mobile" subdivision.

Shadow (present tense)

Lucy stepped back into her duck chest board for  
Lucy to get out open to <sup>car</sup> door & hold out her arm to  
Lucy's books: Alpha 101 & English 200.  
In the fall Lucy will pack up a full load  
again. The baby will be ~~two~~ almost two  
then, the café she & Lunden jointly owned with  
Essie should be on former <sup>financial</sup> road. ~~The new~~  
house will be built. <sup>show... Lucy slipped up, kid puts</sup>  
~~the~~ <sup>the or ash about books etc</sup>

new  
black suede  
penny loafers  
with white  
socks

Lucy walked with her hand on Shadow's  
shoulder toward the ~~front~~ screen door back  
door, then reached out to take the books.  
"You bring Lila out to play with Gemahl?"  
Shadow  
Chrysipus.

"Later," ~~says~~ Lucy says lowly "Run on  
home." She can hear inside the baby's squeal laugh  
Chrysipus her mother-in-law <sup>cackle</sup> ~~rolling~~ <sup>voice</sup>,  
~~cackle~~ the muted murmur of the TV.

Shadow flashes her teeth, white <sup>in</sup> against her dark  
face & skips toward the shack which rattles  
inside. Sometimes the children cry <sup>inside the shack</sup>  
Lucy has to turn on the vacuum cleaner  
& go over to check, picking the loafers  
from ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~mother's~~ <sup>soft-soaped</sup> ~~feet~~ <sup>feet</sup>.

When Lucy looks up through the <sup>door</sup> window  
staring in, she sees the baby's <sup>radiant</sup> ~~beaming~~ face  
and Essie's ~~Red~~ <sup>Red</sup> lips & autumn curls.  
She is holding the baby's <sup>hand</sup> hand & wagging it.



←  
Essie will be staying for lunch, and as it turns out, so will Bobbie, who has finished her "program" on TV and ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> talking with Essie in the living room.

The baby is excited by all the company in the small house and squeals as she crawls from the kitchen to the living room to the kitchen. Each time she ~~appears~~ <sup>peeps</sup> from her ~~usual~~ <sup>usual</sup> ~~complexed~~ <sup>complexed</sup> face from the living room door, Essie ~~says~~ <sup>plays</sup> - sports her, and she ~~comes~~ <sup>goes</sup> back to the kitchen to squeal at her Mama. So

Lucy, checking ~~for~~ <sup>among</sup> the boxes of instant dinner in the cupboard over the stove, worries that the baby is really checking to be sure that Lucy hasn't left ~~after~~ <sup>after</sup> home gain. She should be home more, she thinks, she should ~~be~~ clean up and see to cooking something less - instant.

She takes a box of Jamaica and rattles it at the baby, reaching down to touch the ~~for~~ <sup>soft</sup> ~~brights~~ <sup>brights</sup> and the rattly box speaks Lucy's neglect.

What had Essie said about the ~~house~~ <sup>new</sup> house?

"How are you going to peep that by home her you can't even keep the little one? Not exactly, but close enough."

While Lucy brows hamburger in a Phillip  
for the baby, she listens to the baby in  
the living room and the two women talking  
low. She hear "snake" & know they're  
discussing the one in the corner of the  
caveport. The one Lucy would let  
Snake bite because it is harmless and  
then, around the baby's squeal & Essie  
booming at her, Lucy hear the word  
"nigger" & know they're also discussing the  
neighbors' ~~maybe~~

From Essie's attitude about the  
neighborhood you would think that  
Lucy - not Snake - had picked the  
home they live in. You would  
think that Lucy & Snake were long  
there to be near the cafe, behind  
the home, ~~front~~ HW #29, to be  
near the place that made all of them  
or living, if not a life, as well as  
Essie and Bud.

When the baby crawls back to  
~~squeal & laugh~~ at around Lucy's feet,  
the kitchen, she heads for the ~~door~~  
clawing at the seam. "Go, go," she  
squeals & laughs. And Lucy knows that  
she hear the child next door, playing

~~And~~ under the car port.

"Callie," she says to Lucy, and ~~shows~~ <sup>points</sup> the empty Garboja box on the floor. "Look! Come play with the box."

Toys -- mostly from Ebbie -- are scattered throughout the house & Callie refuses to play with them. But a box!

Callie sits back & looks at her mama & says "Go-go."

"Later," Lucy says & stores the dried ones & spices & runs in the kitchen & hamburger. "We'll go out later to play."

Lucy has how many times told Bebbie to take the baby out in the morning? How many times as the Bebbie eyed her & shook her bloody head, complaining ~~about~~ the "nigger" youngsters trying to associate with Callie?

Lucy hears the two women's voices rise and knows they're coming into the kitchen. In the hall, Essie stumbles over a roly-poly chime ball & starts picking up. "I guess they need more space," she taunts.

Bobbie heads for the baby & claps her hands and the baby says "Go-go" young her & gazes at the door. And

Can tell ~~that~~ by Bebbie's quick turn  
from the door that maybe that's the  
most attention she's given the baby all  
morning.

"Hear the little nigger yammer  
out there," she says to Essie, who  
has picked up toys in a trail to the  
kitchen, still picking up & placing them in  
another trail, first more to the  
side of the trail Lude & Lucy  
usually use.

"Essie stares open up the baby &  
stare out the door window. "I  
decide look like they'd put some  
bitch on that boy."

"What I say," says Bebbie.

"He don't know the difference,"  
says Lucy.

"Dogg" says the baby, slapping at  
Essie's arm cubs.

"Well," says Essie, "how's he  
gone lean?"

Bebbie snigger & sets at the  
antique oak table bought for the  
new house.



Lucy filled the glass with ice water  
Essie straps the baby in the high  
chair and then stirs a jar of creamed  
syrup to feed her. She places the  
wood plastic tray exactly, then  
stops when the spoon touches her lips  
and knits her smooth golden brow.

"She doesn't like syrupy Essie," Lucy  
says, placing glasses of tea & the  
casseroled dish of *Andalucia* on the  
table.

"Well she needs to be eating more  
than just junk."

"She does," says Lucy & hands  
Callie a couple of wheat crackers.  
For meanness? Maybe.

<sup>Before</sup> <sup>the three women</sup> get done eating, Lucy  
has shook out half a bag of chest curls  
on Callie's tray. Each time Essie  
eyes her. And a <sup>pile of</sup> ~~pile of~~ <sup>crumbs</sup> ~~crumbs~~  
on the dingy white tiles around the high chair legs.  
(Clean children at the door)

The table legs, beside it, <sup>whisper</sup> ~~pooped~~ in tea  
& crumb, even milk. (rice, hamburger, <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>apples in</sup> ~~apples in~~)  
The racket of the children <sup>under</sup> ~~under~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the  
carport <sup>peers</sup> ~~peers~~ <sup>up</sup> ~~up~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the baby near  
squawk "It's go!" One knock on the door.~~~~

Essie wallo her eye as Lucy gets up  
& talks through a crack in the door.

"Come out & play with Janah,"  
Shodan says.

Janahyl with her nose sticking  
live bunch of snit, stands behind her  
pumping her head little body.

"Not now," Lucy says low. "Take  
Janahy home, Shodan, and put her  
on some pants."

"Yes," Shodan says & slumps  
around the Honda with Janahyl. The  
older boy is drawing lines in the dust  
on the car, pulling & studying the interior.  
Lucy wonders if she should lock  
the car when she leaves her pocket-  
book. No. No, she won't get out of  
her car sad time & lock it. She'd  
never lost anything yet. She watches  
the boy, then turns back to Essie  
wrestling the baby from the high chair  
strap still hooked around her waist.

"Wait, Effie," Lucy says. "You  
forgot the straps."

Oh "Essie says & stuffs the  
baby back into the chair & she squeals

(more talk about the new home -  
decrease, etc) Essie's constant  
suggestions

When Lucy finally dis-entangle the  
strap from the baby's legs, picking her  
up, she sees Essie holding her head  
shaking her head with her hand over  
her face. She is crying, Lucy realizes,  
seeing red stains running the white face,  
brushed like her hair.

Bobbie sets shoddy her tea, watching  
Essie.

"Is something wrong?" says Lucy,  
standing before the door window for tea,  
only to stare out. "Go-go."

Essie shakes her head, then holds  
up one hand to signal wait a minute.

Lucy wonders if what she said  
her scolding Essie about the strap  
has caused this. She is sure  
even her mother-in-law cry, can  
hardly believe it. Always she is  
cocky & full of herself.

"It's Bud," says Essie, <sup>and squeeze</sup>  
another cry thru her fingers.

"Bud?" says Lucy. "Is it his blood pressure?"

"He's leaving me!" She cries a  
few minutes.

Bobbie sets down the glass, then  
takes more tea to the floor.

"Another woman?" says Bobbie.

Essie shakes her curly head fiercely, then nods. "Yes."

"I don't believe that," says Lucy. "Not Bud."

"Let me tell you something," Essie says, lowering her hands from her tear-scringed face. Her eyes look like a room.

"Bud ain't no angel, despite what y'all think. Jude knows. Ever since he was a little bit by by he 'a been knowing his daddy wasn't no angel."

"Jude 's crazy about his daddy," says Lucy, watching for the children now coming back to the airport. The baby squeals.

"Just cause they act close," says Essie, "don't mean they are."

Lucy wonders what that means. But what so Essie says don't have to mean anything.

The baby pokes the window; Essie cries.

"I been thinking," says Essie, who don't necessarily mean much either, "and I've decided to come stay with y'all when you get to the new

home. 4

Lucy feels her heart drain empty blood. She watches Shadow & Jonah, the biggest boy coming toward the car.

The new house. How stupid to think she could talk to Shadow & Jonah, how out of place & perfectly miserable they'd be in that neighborhood. And Lucy doesn't want to go either, especially now, especially into Effie Esie.

She turns to the other door & opens it & like the caramel cracker turtlet made with the baby squawling. ~~He~~ Like a vacuum cleaner. She turtles around the high chair, under the table, layers crumbs.

"That's how I keep from having to vacuum," says Lucy.