





and it at home. <sup>It's right after Christmas</sup> <sup>and for their last class</sup> <sup>Teacher's</sup> <sup>whole class</sup> <sup>give her</sup> <sup>with a paddle</sup> <sup>the kind</sup> <sup>with a pocket</sup> <sup>round red ball</sup> <sup>to hit back</sup> <sup>to my</sup> <sup>old</sup> <sup>dog</sup> <sup>some</sup> <sup>sup</sup> <sup>thick</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>make</sup> <sup>his</sup> <sup>cry.</sup>

Lovie's off cold dirty head slips into mine and I let it go to keep her from feeling my shaking. <sup>(move)</sup> She's short & chunky with brown curly hair that feels good to ~~point together~~ <sup>press</sup> hush around my fingers.

When I play over these

at night while she sucks her thumb. <sup>(describe area - draw thru)</sup> "You going by the library?" she says, <sup>stuttering</sup> sucking a finger.

I don't say nothing. I ain't though cause I figure we ain't welcome there neither - in the court house, they got 2 water fountains, one for niggers and one for whites and I don't know which one we ~~sp~~ belonged to drink out of know. That makes me thirsty. "Come on," I say, I grab Lovie's hand and walk fast across the ~~road~~ the crossing under the blinking red light. Generally, I ~~start~~ stop look, and listen ~~like they are~~ at the side of one road then the other like they learned in at school to do for a train, which I ain't never laid eyes on, but this time I just rush on across, keeping my eyes on one little wood shack <sup>across from Mrs. Ratz's store</sup> and hear Lovie breathe hard behind me, her not knowing how come we been sent home but dreading like she'll do anything but of the ordinary. I be close we get to the house, kicking the cold pack dirt & clump of grass to the door, the more I can't wait to get inside and I can't stand the thought of ~~the~~ knowing the old man's



describe road - - going <sup>mine</sup> Lula's home  
where mama does  
her wash  
I pick up <sup>about</sup> ~~for information~~, how come we ain't in  
school. And I know he don't care, but it'll  
come out something or else for him to get up  
in the air over and make a point. I don't  
know what he'll do but I know his fudy  
out is what's had me chest in a bind  
since the teacher told me to go home and  
the principle got around to saying out loud  
what they been saying behind our back - - "Count  
Shore's young uns is got nigger blood." I go on.

(In the house - - mama playing juke box.  
While I did do supper - old man comes in drinking  
etc.)

At the door to the raggy screen porch, I can hear  
the wang, wang of Mama's juke box from the living room -  
I do hate that thing - - and we have to kick over  
the hairy rug where the dogs sleep to get to the  
wood door. Making up in my head what I'm gone say to  
Mama about how come we're home at dinner time early,  
I push open the door to ~~the~~ a puff of heat and  
the wang, wang of the juke box. I don't come up  
with nothing to say but that's OK cause I don't  
need to say nothing till the old man gets in - - Mama  
don't care - - and by then I'll come up with some



story or other. And it came to me that he ain't  
got no way of knowing unless he quits the  
job he just got in the post woods, like the one he  
quit last week ~~with~~ <sup>the</sup> turpentineing,

The ~~little~~ <sup>the living room</sup> room's dark, coming in out of the sun, with  
red rose curtains drawn across the wood-patched  
windend, pitch & junk ~~is~~ on ever wall. The  
Streaker of yellow fur cut like sunshine from the  
2 dirt-carpeted couches and the red ~~crack~~ fire show through  
the cracks of the ~~little~~ <sup>squatty</sup> wood stove. Man  
just ~~is~~ there, playing on her juke harp. Her  
green eyes wide like she's wearing magnifying glasses.  
Whang whang. She holds the juke harp to her mouth  
with one hand & plucks the little row of strings with  
the other. Whang, whang whang, no tune. She watches  
me go on to the kitchen door -- I don't say nothing, I just  
gaze at her -- and Lovie goes over & leans up against  
her chair, let keeps rocking.

Ever dish in the closet like broken is dirty, the  
old ~~white~~ <sup>white</sup> ~~stone~~ <sup>stone</sup> covered in grease from the feet ~~of~~  
~~from~~ ~~last~~ ~~night~~. The old man brought last night for me  
to fry. I open the slide back the red curtain on  
the stray rod over the dish pan & let in the  
sunny light that makes in from the scrub oak shaded  
yard on the side where ~~the~~ <sup>the tumbled</sup> wood pile meets the  
Junk bicycle & tire set that the old man either pilfered



Clair - I could ask her to send out library letters & promote articles of magazines & public relations - she thinks it's interesting - also to write about book sales

X address

the dump or stole one.

I say to myself, I'm gone just ready I straggle up around here from now ~~on~~, not leave all the chicken at night, but then I don't care cause I figger we been branded for good around Statesville and nigger ain't knowed for cleaning up nothing - ~~it~~

Whang Whang,

In a minute I <sup>make out</sup> pick up on the tune Mamma's pecky on the juce hang -- I didn't know God Made Honky-Tonk Angels -- and it makes me mad at myself for listening & tryin' to make something out of her sorriess. Miss Lula & two or three other women around Statesville is always coming up with somethin' for her to do and she let 'em them down. But, ~~to~~ to her credit, she's done just enough work to keep me & Lovie in handed down shoes & frocks. The old man drunk in money up, but he's a sight more industrious in my eyes, and if he had ~~no~~ ~~struck~~ some body to back him up, he might do ~~something~~ amount to something. What man's gone get up & go to work with a slab wife telling him it don't make no difference where he does or not. I ain't but ~~the~~ ~~often~~, but I know that.



"How come y'all ~~was~~ from school before the  
buses run?" Thana says to Lorie.

"I don't know un," Lorie says & the  
juice hasp picks up where it left off on Harley Turk  
Angels, right in the middle where it don't make  
no sense ad me a-wondering how come the  
sudden interest, Thana mine. Can she couldn't  
hear Miss Anne & the principle & then  
talky in the ~~the~~ hallway at school. Ad I  
realize right then, scrubby the rock stone, that  
what it'm really put out with Thana over is  
that she's the side the ~~black~~ nigger blood  
comes from, she's the one's ~~that~~  
~~the~~ ruined ~~my~~ me & Lorie's lives. How  
come her not to never tell us, I don't know,  
but I do know it wouldn't & made no  
difference. My face burns, I'm so scared,  
and I can't picture what'll come next, how  
we could get back in school and back to  
being white trash, which was bad enough, but  
better'n being niggers. ~~the~~ Lord in Heaven, help.

The old man comes in smelly like tar &  
sweat, his ~~the~~ green twill baggy patches  
rugged up like he's got tangled up in bamboo --  
they was rugged up before he set out that mornin'.



but they seem to make him look like he's  
suffered. Not that he's the suffering type,  
and most of the time his shrank rusty-  
colored face is all grins, especially when  
he's got a drink in him. Unless he's  
mad. He ain't today and look like he's  
gone go back to work tomorrow.

He sidles in and pukes over the  
little brown stripe of fat back I just got  
fried. "Babe ya gone make some  
~~more~~ fine wife." He hooks a long  
heavy arm around my waist & yanks  
me to him and muzzles my neck with  
him thorny bearded face. Then lets go &  
grabs another strip of fat back, sully  
off to the living room ahead of the dogs.

"My old lady's got a tune or jing  
huh?" He flops on ~~top~~ the  
junk Louis couch & ~~Lord~~ Mamma  
by the wood stove and Corie sets ~~right~~  
down & hugs on him, sucking her thumb.  
Her eyes look heavy, like she's going  
to sleep. Her ~~dark~~ face ~~is~~ warm &  
sleazy ~~thick~~ thick.

Mamma's ~~got~~ plunk out the tune with  
~~some~~ big knuckled fingers. Her ~~fat~~ ankles are  
crossed, and her ~~socks~~ <sup>black</sup> socks toes birtch.



Her ~~dark~~ ~~droop~~ drooping cheeks twitch like her  
tears. Her eyes are bright & feverish from  
the heat of the wood stove, and you can't  
tell <sup>where</sup> she's perturbed up to the old man  
watching with his sherry legs folded at the  
knees or cause she's finally got one  
time down pat. ~~But~~ But for once I  
thank the Lord above for that juice hang-  
keeps everybody from buying up an ~~golly~~  
run of from school. I know it's  
just a matter of time before <sup>the old man</sup> ~~the~~ ~~first~~  
out, came in a little place like Stateville  
nothing do & stay a secret, but I  
need time to work out in my heart what  
to do and I've about decided to ~~to~~  
pick up Mama's washing Goby make  
little change, then take Louise with me  
to catch the Trailways bus at Host's  
store & go to Valdosta, GA <sup>temporarily</sup> ~~the~~  
only real place I know of, though I  
read of Alabama & Mississippi, even England  
which I can't imagine. Another county like  
England would be better, but Valdosta seems  
far enough away & big enough to lose your  
shame in. But close enough I don't get  
re-bridly lost.



I put supper on the <sup>nearby</sup> table by the wood  
stove & set Thana's flowered plate where  
she can just turn around & go to eating.  
Her peachtree snuff can sits by her plate.

The cats & dogs, smelling catching a whiff  
of the bacon, start prowling & meowing  
around ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> table. I go to kick the  
old yellow ~~dog~~ <sup>pig</sup> with the mangle but he  
sits her legs down on one of my feet &  
~~scolds~~ snarls at his ~~red~~ <sup>red</sup> possum tail.  
I slide my foot out & finish putting  
the ~~forks~~ <sup>forks</sup> we ~~got~~ <sup>collected</sup> out of the flour  
by the plate, trying to put off ~~break~~  
cutlery in on Thana's playing till she  
gets to the end, and I can't remember  
the end, the way it's sung on the  
Grand Ole Opry. Nobody don't eat nothing  
much in our home nohow. So I set the  
~~But~~ <sup>But</sup> & saucers gravy set to gell like lard  
under the ~~base~~ <sup>base</sup> naked bulb hanging over the  
table. The ~~string~~ <sup>string</sup> is a dingy white speckled  
with fly mess.

"Sit & eat," I say and the old man unfolds  
his long skinny body from the couch. ~~Some~~ <sup>Some</sup> ~~come~~ <sup>come</sup> to the table.  
Torie lay over, sucking on her thumb with  
her finger pointed over her ~~flat~~ <sup>flat</sup> nose.



## Quality of voice

"Louise," I go, "wake up & eat, sugar."  
I go over & shake her by the shoulder  
& her body rolls ~~back~~, ~~thing to get~~  
stuff. The juice happens ~~what what~~, back to no  
time, ~~and~~ ~~there's~~ wild green eyes cut me down.  
"Let her sleep, ~~the~~ old man says, "good  
for her."

"She ain't eat today," I say before it starts.

"She eat at the school-house didn't she?"

He sets down.

"Wake up, Louise, sugar, let's eat." I  
shake her again & her eyes like peep on  
~~rolled back~~ brown eyes.

The ~~what~~, ~~what~~ steps. "They come  
in night at dinner time," ~~Man~~ says,  
her voice hoarse from not talking, she coughs  
& spits a brown ~~chunk~~ glob in the coffee  
cups on the stove, turning to the table  
& ~~pulling~~ the juice harp by her plate.

I feel mad at Louise & punch  
her shoulder & she grunts, says ah  
& ~~draw~~ draw her knee up with her sack  
drawers shining, I pull her down  
down & turn to go to the table.



"If on some of all yingales, come in before dinner. Government still feeds yingales up there, don't they?"

"Yessir," the edge of my face is a red I can see around my bushy brown hair.  
~~Some~~ Free lunch for white trash, <sup>nothing</sup> nothing for niggers.

~~Some say~~

Mama mumbles something, places her juice cup & snuff can around the flowered plate she's frowning at like ~~satisfied~~. She begrudges having to ~~eat~~ eat.

"What's that old lady?" the old man says.

And I think how they truly do seem old, close to 40, and can't get that picture out of my head. Maybe ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> ~~make~~ <sup>make</sup> you age fast.

"I say," Mama clears her throat, spitting again in the can at her right elbow, blistered from the stove. "I say, Louie says they her and Barbarann got sent home for something."

"By who?" The old man's gnawing on a piece of fat back with his long arm hooked on the back of the chair.



Count Trevor

"I can't."

"You can't?"

"Nossir."

"Can't never could," ~~he replied~~  
~~snorts~~ -- his only lesson in my 13 years  
~~broken~~ ~~in my 13 years~~  
the snorts.

"You want me to wake up Lorian  
& whisper back and tell she fallen?"

"No sir."

"Don't the old lady peep up <sup>halfhearted</sup>?" Don't  
~~you~~ come in here messing with me, Count  
Trevor."

"Shut up, old lady, hear me?"

Mama pull the pot of grouts to  
her, and spoon out a mouthful  
to her plate.

The old man gets up, stripping of  
his belt, going for Lorian with her legs  
drawed up.

"No, don't. Don't," I go, finging  
up 2 ~~knives~~ <sup>rolling</sup> ~~knives~~ <sup>padding</sup> the dog who bumps  
his head under the table. "I've don't  
know ~~nothing~~ <sup>nothing</sup> ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> They didn't tell her nothing to my  
beknowest."

He grins shine me a tooth less grin like  
he was just joking, but his eyes glitter with  
mischief & maybe baby for a reason to quit this  
job or move us to some other bonny home,



I start for the kitchen, my head swimming  
with their mumbled.

"Get back in here, girl!" the old  
man hollers and one of the dogs  
goes out to the front porch, left open  
course the old man's always hot &  
the old lady's always cold.

I go back and set down beside  
him with my feet on the back of the  
~~the~~ shaggy orange dog.

"Let me get the straight of this," the  
old man says, chewing up the bacon rind.  
"Y'all get sent home from school cause  
the government don't aim to feed  
poor youngsters no <sup>more</sup> ~~take~~. That right!"

"No sir." The soles of my feet feel  
warm & damp on the dog's ribby side.  
It twitches.

"Then ya want to tell me how come?"  
He sets up straight, something he  
don't never do lessin' he's fixing to  
get mad.

"No sir." I hang over my plate the  
rotten man's hanging over him to  
set up straight like the old man.

"Spit it out, gal!" he says.