

12-30-97

Dear Ginger,

Here is a story I wrote over  
the holidays with Lois Rosenthal <sup>(STORY)</sup> in mind -  
as you know, she is eager for another story  
from me. I started to send it on myself,  
but I was afraid that both of us sending  
stories would get a bit confused. But, on  
the other hand, I fear it's overloading you -  
just let me know.

I don't make much money for you, that's  
a fact, ~~and I would~~ <sup>and I would</sup> understand if you'd  
rather not bother with my stories. Another  
fact is, I need money: ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> 28 year old daughter  
has cervical cancer - - in remission, thank God -  
and she has no medical insurance. I have  
taken over her medical bills. <sup>She's a single-mother.</sup> ~~and therefore~~  
~~goes~~ Her doctor charges \$500 every time she walks  
in his office thru his door. I am telling you  
this only ~~because~~ <sup>to</sup> explain one reason why  
I write so much. Another reason is, I just love  
writing.

Consider getting rid of so many two syllable  
words

Sudden Money

F7 - where

It is all happening so fast it feels slow, runny as the midday heat in the alley, and for a fact Knot can see the sun beaming down from the ~~center~~ <sup>top</sup> of the world, through the cut-out of blue overhead. A block of ~~it~~ <sup>blue</sup> and the short blocky man with a warped boogery face at the other end of the alley, hugging a brown papersack and running Knot's way. Coming to rob him maybe of his <sup>play-</sup>cousin Lee's bicycle. Panting like a dog to the strumming of haywire on the front wheel spokes.

No brakes and Knot has to drag his hurt foot over the hot cobblestones to stop, eyes on the man likewise stopping before the green dumpster midway the alley between Patterson and Ashley street. Shucking off what looks like one of Aunt Sister's stockings from his head. Yes, a stocking. Black face, stung lips, teeth white as his eyes. Running again, a big man, big as Winston Riley, back home, making straight for Knot but keeping close to the rear walls of the street-front stores.

Knot starts to drop the bicycle and run the other way, back toward Patterson Street where he had been cruising, cool and easy, but he can tell the man isn't after him by the way he kind of slinks along the wall, slow now, cool and easy, with his left hand in the pocket of his bluejeans and <sup>his</sup> right arm <sup>encircling</sup> the stuffed brown

✓  
brown jeans

papersack with the top neatly folded. He looks scared, maybe afraid of Knot because Knot is so ugly--buck teeth, ball head, skinny as a tobacco-stick scarecrow.

Sudden sirens along Patterson Street, all around, like peepers before a rain, and the man loops around on the cobblestones and heads back the way he came, running hard, and the papersack slips from his arm and skidders to the no-color wall on the left side of the alley.

"Hey, mister," says Knot, "you drop yo sack." He just says it because he should say it, to be polite like his rich pretend-kin he's been visiting all summer, but doesn't yell it out and anyway the man knows and the man is turning the corner <sup>out</sup> to Ashley Street, gone, and Knot is glad he's gone.

Still straddled the bicycle, Knots walks over to the spot where the sack landed--top still folded down. The kind of sack Aunt Sister carries her groceries in from Harveys downtown all the way over to Troupe Street.

Sirens blaring now to the machine-like clicking of haywire on the spokes. "I ain't into this," Knot mumbles, "I ain't into this." And Knot is pedaling fast up the alley, good foot bare and nail-jabbed foot in a white sock, then north along Ashley Street, past the stalled cars with horns beeping and shoppers dodging his bike. One block away from the screaming of sirens that makes his gums itch.

So hot, and he would like to be on Troupe Street, where he belongs, in the shady quiet of row houses whose front yards spill children onto the gravel street. But at the next intersection, he steers the bicycle left, rather than right, and pedals west along the sidewalk toward Patterson Street where not ten minutes before, which seems more like an hour, he had been minding his own business:

cruising over spilled cola steeping on hot concrete and exploding pigeons the color of courtyard statues.

"I ain't into this," he says to a stout blue-haired woman weighted down with shopping bags. She is scurrying toward a parked car the color of her hair, trying to unlock it while gazing off across the street at the train of black and white police cars with lights flashing and sirens wailing. People gathered around the door of the bank--FIRST NATIONAL BANK, according to the sign on the white stone frieze atop the building at the corner of Patterson and Hill.

✓ One more turn down the alley and Knot is braking with his socked foot, stopping next to the ~~rel-stopped~~ papersack and scooping it up, packing it into the bicycle basket, then pedaling again, up the alley again, onto the sidewalk running parallel to Ashley Street, turning right this time and flying away from the sirens and car horns with pigeons the color of courtyard statues.

###

LOOK  
He should look, he should look in the sack, but he is afraid he will find money, afraid he will not find money. Looks like old magazines, the squared-off corners of the sack do. "How you?" he says to the brittle old black man seated on the store-front bench, corner of Troupe and Ann. Hieing south, toward Aunt Sister's house. He knows that the man was a bank robber, that what is in the sack has to be money. He doesn't have to look, can't wait to look. Instead he looks behind, pedaling regular and sure, south along Troupe Street, and his looking behind causes the bicycle to veer left where three black children are playing with a litter of black puppies. The happy kind, regardless of their station in life.

A tiny girl stands with a puppy hugged up to her bowed belly, hard tail switching at her stubby brown legs.

"Go on, Knot," says her brother, an eight year old with square hair. "This our dogs."

"What I want with no old dogs?" Knot pedals straight up the street to prove he can drive this bicycle right.

"What I want with no old dogs?" he repeats to himself and laughs. Then cries. What he wants is to stay at Aunt Sister's house. He doesn't really belong to Marge, so why can't he belong to her sister?

An old auntie is sitting on one of the row house porches, fanning with a hand fan. Her stockings are rolled at the knees. High floors, up and down the street, so high that a boy can play underneath and hear the grownups walking around and talking inside--  
*keep* somebody older over him to protect him from the police, mad dogs and himself. Big square houses with peeling paint and metal gliders on spacey front porches where people sit out in the sunshine after  
✓ supper. Scraggly crepe ~~myrtle~~ *tree* bushes with frilly cerise flowers that decorate the order of things that Knot can't name. Just summer on Troupe Street.

Again he checks behind him, for the black and white cars downtown, stretching the distance between them <sup>and him</sup> and the opening street <sup>up</sup> ahead, and checks too for anybody who <sup>might</sup> happens to be listening--he has  
✓ to keep talking to himself so that the words won't bank in his ~~over~~ <sup>overloaded</sup> head.

"I ain't ask for no money, don't want no money. What business a lil ole knot like me got with money?" All lies ticking off in his mind to the tempo of the haywire on the wheel spokes.

✓ He can see Marge's ~~old~~ celery green and rust car parked in front of Aunt Sister's roomy old house, waiting to take him back to the one-room shack in the quarters of Cornerville, twenty-five miles east of Valdosta. Where Marge has to live till she gets cured of drinking and cussing. All of Knot's rich pretend-kin are on the front porch: Aunt Sister sitting in one of the high-back rockers, taking the hem on Cousin Judy Beth's white baptism dress; the old granddaddy in the next rocker with his puffed pinkish lips and white hair; Lee on the end of the porch, watching for Knot and his bicycle around the twine trellis of nooning purple morning glory. Marge, rawboned and tall, is standing on a baluster of the doorsteps in her ~~walked-down~~ <sup>keep</sup> black shoes and the black-and-navy striped dress that looks all-black, which she always wears to town. Won't wear color, Marge won't.

The women are laughing, hooting, and Aunt Sister play-spanks the seat of Judy Beth's pouffy <sup>white</sup> dress. She scoots forward with her bony shoulders slumped and arms limp alongside, play-mad, and stomps through the front screen door, slamming it.

Knot swerves the bike onto the sloped dirt drive, north of the house, and coasts on toward the backyard.

"What you got in the basket?" calls Lee.

✓ "Books," says Knot, passing the red brick chimney with sifting mortar <sup>sifting like how glass sand from between the red bricks</sup> Bunch of old books." Say books, Knot has found out, and nobody will look inside a box or bag.

"That boy do love his books," says Marge and hums a laugh. She tells everybody that, and though she doesn't read herself, she is proud he does read, proud of this lil ole knot, as she calls him, who somebody fished out of a trash can twelve years ago and took to her to raise. "Get yo stuff, Knot," she yells, "we gotta go."

"A nail job Knot in the foot yesterday," says Lee, who figures Marge might care *for a change.*

*JP*  
*CS* Knot is in the back yard, at the back stoop, standing straddled the bicycle. The uneven boards of the hip-roofed house used to be painted either green or red; you can't tell which because the paint is scaling, blending, and the effect is a rich tapestry. The fact that Knot is long-gone, hiding out from the po-lice with his stolen money, makes no difference to his ~~family~~ *after* family out front. They are still mouthing at him as if he is right there with them. Get Aunt Sister and Marge together and they'll talk. ~~What~~ *What* all them sireens about?" yells Aunt Sister.

"Ain't seen no sireens." Knot wipes his eyes on the sleeves of his brown striped shirt, then lifts the papersack from the basket and lets the bicycle drop on its side. Wheels spinning and haywire clicking on the spokes.

Up the tall wood doorsteps, past the daisywheel of yellow cats eating oatmeal from a bowl and through the door to the sunny yellow kitchen. Toasted bread smells--one more thing Knot loves about city living, about being at his rich pretend-kin's house. Money buys the smell of toast and money buys color. He will buy Marge a toaster and some color for her shack.

✓ He is still holding the sack full of money, or maybe books--now that he has said it he wonders and wouldn't be surprised or even disappointed if it were books. He stands on the curb next to the old car that reeks of mildew and burnt motor oil. Aunt Sister and Marge are loading brown papersacks of Lee's hand-me-down clothes into the trunk. "Be enough clothes to start him back to school," says Aunt Sister and rubs his head hard. "Put a brick on that head, Marge, if he keep growing."

✓ Mourning doves purl, locusts hum. Way-off rumble and toot of a freight train Knot has seen with his own two eyes. The three black children with the black puppies linger along the street. A slow car passes. Their mother steps to the edge of her wide front porch with her hands on her hips. "Git to the house this minute," she hollers.

"You gone nuss them books all the way home, or put em back here?" Marge asks Knot. She has one hand on the raised trunk with a long brown finger hooked through her key ring. Bunch of keys. Though only one serves a purpose. She slams the trunk, hugs and hums over Aunt Sister, Granddaddy and Judy Beth, then goes around to her side of the car.

"Kiss em all bye, Knot," she says.

He hugs the books and kisses Aunt Sister and Judy Beth on the cheeks as they pass along the curb before him. "You behave yourself," says Aunt Sister. "I'm gone miss yo ugly mug," says Judy Beth. "That boy be a fool bout them books," hums Marge over the car roof.



Knot is truly ugly, and he likes Judy Beth--maybe loves her-- because unlike everybody else she never pretends that he's easy to look at.

The old granddaddy pokes over with his cane and slaps Knot on the shoulder. He wears a suit of gray twill workclothes, starched and ironed. His skin is the gray of his clothes. "You be back here fore you know it. Mind Marge, you hear?"

✓ Yessir." Knot likes him too--no; loves him--wishes he were his real granddaddy.

Lee is inside, outside, somewhere. The fact that he doesn't come to say good-bye says how sorry he is to see Knot go. All summer they have quarreled over the bicycle, drove Aunt Sister crazy, but now that Knot is leaving, Lee is sorry to see him go. May be crying right this very minute. Knot grins, shining his great white teeth.

###

Knot is almost safe, almost free, perched on the front seat with only his eyes moving. But Marge has to run by the drugstore downtown to get her blood pressure medicine. Knot cannot believe that he is downtown again, traveling along Patterson Street again. Light traffic slow-motoring along all four lanes of the one-way street and not a cop in sight.

It has to be books in the sack. Old magazines, probably.

Marge is changing lanes, merging left, turning the celery and rust car onto West Hill, pulling up and backing into the corner parking space with the bank on the northwest corner behind them.

"You coming in with me?" she says. "Too hot out here in the car."

"I'll just sit here."

"You ain't sick?" She feels his forehead with the backside of her hand.

"You just sad," she says. "Hating to leave everybody, right?"

"Right."

"Cause they rich, right?" She hums a laugh because she doubts that.

*me*  
"Right."

"Well, read you one of them books while I'm gone." She opens the door, checks for traffic, lumbers out and around the rear of the car.

He watches her pass through the glass side door of Bel-Lile Drugs next to the stairs that lead up to the closed doctor's office where Marge used to take Knot when he had the earache, and where there were two waiting rooms--one for blacks and one for whites. Long time ago, and now he goes to school with the whites who treat him okay because he is clean and makes good grades, *because he never says po-lice, cost way* *and never says* *copy* which cause him to stand out among the other blacks.

Now he can look in the sack; he has to look. Is afraid to look. He stays stiff, unblinking, as he unfolds the brown paper cuffs, peeps inside.

He looks up and blows. "Ain't books," he says and bites back a grin.

Stacks of dirty-green hundred-dollar bills with bands marked "1000" in red print.

He blows at his forehead again. Folds the tops of the sack down, grips it tighter. Stares straight ahead. He wonders how much money he has. Starts to get out and leave the sack with the loot on the dead

doctor's stairs. Waves of high tight happiness and terror pass over him like hot and cold water.

Suddenly, the driver's door swings wide, and Marge is getting into the car with a white cup of *fountain cola* in one hand and a white sack of rattly pills in the other.

"Here," she says and hands him the cup. "Perk you up."

"Thank you," he says. ~~Just drive.~~

"Say somebody rob the bank this afternoon, get 50,000 dollar."

He is sipping the fizzy *iced* cola and has to bite down on the cup lip to keep from gurking. Sinks his buck teeth into the *S*tyrofoam leaving horseshoe impressions he can see with the tip of his tongue.

Almost out of town, *guddering* motoring south past the ABC Liquor Store on his right and checking Marge's long brown hands on the steering wheel to see if they will turn the wheel right. Then over the railroad overpass, from which point he can almost see Aunt Sister's fine house and can see her church with the fancy white steeple and cross.

He will buy a house like that, he might even buy a church like that, but knows he probably never will--even with all this money--when Marge stops at the Dixie *S*tation and has to count out her dollars and dimes for gas and he cannot so much as hand her one of the hundred-dollar bills from the sack for fear of getting caught.

###

Knot dozes with his left hand on the papersack of worthless money between his cot and the unpainted wall and window of Marge's shack in the quarters.

Marge, in the next bed, is snoring--sounds like a small engine

sputtering--and next door, in the shack on the right, Winston Riley is beating up his wife Boots. Children scream, flesh splats, a chair overturns, Boots yelps. In a minute, she will be over here. In a minute, Marge will be doctoring her battered head while preaching to her about leaving Winston.

A door slams. Knot sits up, swings his feet over the edge of the cot and waits for Boots, waits for the heat to let up. Dim light through the screened window facing the woods--starlight thick with the ringing of katydids and the hulled whine of mosquitoes. Rooty smell of hogs in the pen out back, or maybe it's the rotting potatoes in the bag by the front door. Ask Marge why she doesn't clean up the combination kitchen-livingroom-bedroom and she'll tell you quick she gets enough of cleaning other people's houses. Besides, she adds, my own dirt, me and mine, don't bother me. Knot feels good when she says the part about "me and mine," because then and only then does he feel he belongs. She's never even hugged him. He slaps a mosquito on his arm and scratches the itch till it smarts. Marge has quit snoring, is waiting too.

Feet bound on the porch floor, shaking the entire shack and rattling the windows. Bap bap bap on the door. Ragged breathing, mewling. A baby stifles crying.

✓ Marge moans, stands, pulls the cord on the overhead light. White showers down on her broomed peroxidized hair. She is almost <sup>fifty</sup> ~~fifty~~ but looks younger because she is skinny, all legs in her man's <sup>fatty</sup> ~~fatty~~ white T-shirt (Knot cannot remember which man, only that once upon a time there was a man), except for her belly, which is bloated and tight from what the doctor calls liver trouble.

Long bare feet in motion, Marge lumbers over to the <sup>front</sup> left corner and picks up her old rabbit-eared shotgun, then goes to the vertical-board door and flips the metal latch. Boots with her antennae braids and wild eyes, and a baby on one hip, shoves past Marge and into the room. Three guinea children <sup>are drafted</sup> clinging to her legs. Boots's nose is leaking blood to her <sup>blue-~~plaid~~ dinky white smock</sup> with red neckerchief trim, her broad flat nose looks flatter, spattered. Rotten potatoes scatter and roll across the filthy wide floorboards and out the door where Marge is standing with her shotgun pointed barrel-up to the night sky. She breeches the shotgun and fires. A flashette of orange, then smoke curling back into the room with her. <sup>Marge:</sup> "Come on over here, Winston," she yells in her braying night voice. "I'm waiting on you." Much cussing. Then quiet outside as she slams the door and <sup>sets</sup> picks the latch <sup>in</sup> into its hook.

<sup>at</sup> Inside, the children are sniffing, whining, drying up. And Boots has one forearm pressed over her nose, blood leaking over and around it and drip drip drip on the floorboards.

Marge ambles over to the corner and leans the shotgun against the unceiled wall, then grabs a <sup>thick white washrag</sup> ~~holly green towel~~ from the <sup>table</sup> soaked white kerosene stove next <sup>by</sup> to the door and tosses it to Boots.

"He oughta break your neck for you staying with him."

"I got younguns to feed," Boots says, <sup>burbling</sup> ~~blubbering~~ blood. Then presses the <sup>rag</sup> towel to her nose.

Marge takes the baby from Boots. He wraps his <sup>sore-cruste</sup> ~~scrawny~~ legs about her waist and rests his curly head on her bosom, sucking his thumb.

"You babies climb on up there in my bed," she says to the other children, who are variously wandering, gnawing on fingers and <sup>staring</sup> ~~gazing~~

rick  
rack  
on  
blue  
plaid  
smock

fix-eyed at their mother. "Boots, you sit here." Marge points to <sup>one of</sup> the straight chair ~~with a cowhide bottom along the wall at the foot of~~ <sup>at the table</sup> both beds. "Let Doc Marge see to that nose," she adds in a kinder tone.

Boots sits, tilting her horsy face up and holding the towel under her chin to catch the drooling blood. "Yeah, look like he break it this time," Marge says to her. Then to Knot, "Here, buddy, come take this baby ~~here~~ <sup>at</sup>."

Knot crawls across his cot in his underwear, <sup>sober</sup> and takes the baby, <sup>his</sup> wet diaper ~~blistering his~~ <sup>is hot on Knot's</sup> left arm. The baby cuddles close as Knot pats his warm brown back. There is a living wreath of night beetles and moths around the light.

"Hold still now," Marge says to Boots and stands straddle-legged before her knees, sighting the nose-bone alignment with the precise center of the wide bridge between Boot's inky eyes. Marge yanks hard, Boots grunts. Marge holds the nose between both hands like a caught bird, then steps away. Sighting again.

"I ain't taking it no more," says Boots, <sup>and sprawls in the chair</sup>

"Yeah, you will," brays Marge. "You gone take it till the undertaker take you."

"You a hateful old thing," says Boots, dobbing blood from her precious fixed nose.

"How come I ain't beat black and blue and you are."

The baby is limp, heavier asleep in Knot's arms; he lays the leggy boy on his wallowed-out cot and lies down beside him. Bony knees and elbows in his back as he turns facing the black window and the papersack of money. He listens to the two women talking low and

the children in the next bed breathing regular, safe. All but one who is snoring: bad adenoids, according to Marge, who would know, because she used to work for a baby doctor in Valdosta before she got fired for drinking on the job. Then, she lived in the house with the old granddaddy and Aunt Sister and was welcome as the flowers in May, they said, as long as she didn't drink and raise sand. It has been at least six months since she's pitched her last drunk, but the fact that she stays on in the quarters of Cornerville means she <sup>couldn't</sup> very well ~~might~~ pitch another drunk at anytime.

Knot lulls himself to sleep with thoughts of moving in with Aunt Sister and her family and how to use the money without getting caught.

###

✓ When <sup>he</sup> Knot wakes the next morning, everybody is gone, his bed is wet, and sunlight is streaming through the single east window around a cardboard patch, a blank square in the five-pane window stencil on the wide <sup>for</sup> boards. Smells of blood and urine, like orange Kool-aid and ammonia.

Beyond the wall at the head of Knot's bed, Boots is fussing with the children--back to normal. Winston has gone to work in the pulpwoods, and for two or three days they will get along, then BOOM! all over again.

✓ But life is good now: dogs bark, children play, women hang out their ~~bits~~ <sup>bits</sup> ~~at the week~~ wash, and Knot has finally come up with a way to use the money.

Wearing the same brown shorts and brown-striped shirt he wore yesterday, same white sock on his injured foot, he limps to the door, out the door, with one of the stiff bundles of hundred-dollar bills

*Left*  
✓ in his pockets, plus chiming coins from Marge's change jar for postage.

It is about ten o'clock and already the sun is heating up the quarters, shining through rags of moss in the oaks. Flocked shadows on the packed gray dirt that hatches broken glass and trash like fleas. Locusts hum and bandy-legged children scamp yard to yard of the unpainted, close-set cabins. Old women on porches rock and fan and wait.

Knot takes the gravel horseshoe road along the west curve where the yellow buses will soon circle the school grounds. The softball field on his right is grown up in red bitter weeds, looks like tilled clay. Hands in his pockets, he limps along, past the giant oak that divides the road at the side entrance to the schoolyard. A checkmark breezeway hooks the old portwine brick building to the new red brick building that still smells of wet cement.

At the end of the road, he turns left along the sidewalk, passing the row of white people's white houses, where Marge works now but won't have to work after tomorrow. He doesn't cross Highway 94 to the other side till he gets to the red brick, flat-topped courthouse, directly across from the red-brick, flat-topped post office.

###

Just as he'd expected, on Friday evening when Marge gets home from work, she is scooting in her black shoes with the walked-down heels and saying "Hoo-oo-oo!" and *hum*-laughing. Around the rear of the parked car, across the yard, and onto the porch *and* calling "Knot, Knot...hoo-oo-oo!" Through the open door with the envelope Knot sent *✓* yesterday *loved-up* clutched to her *flattened* breasts.



It is ~~late evening~~ <sup>sunset</sup> in the quarters and the sun is streaking ~~out~~ <sup>outshines</sup> the ~~smoky~~ trash fires ~~and~~ <sup>Smells of smoke & supper cooking and the</sup> men hopping from the beds of pickup trucks and wandering through the greeting committees of children and dogs.

"Honey, <sup>you may do Knot</sup> you ain't gone believe what's in here," Marge <sup>she keeps her voice</sup> ~~speaks~~ <sup>secretive and low.</sup> ~~dancing~~ <sup>He dances</sup> in a circle with the envelope in the air. Shuffling her big feet to an imaginary beat. "Hoo-oo-oo!" An old-timey dance shuffle that used to embarrass Knot, but now with only the two of them around makes him proud. He feels like Santa Claus.

How many times has he daydreamed about finding money, giving Marge money to make up for her sacrifices ~~for him~~: all those cold nights when ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> he'd be sick and she would get bundled up like a witch in her black coat and head scarf and go out to find wood to feed to the hungry black heater.

"What is it, Marge? What?" "Money, baby, that's what!"  
"Where you get it, Marge?" he says, ~~now~~. "How much?"

"Five hundred dollars, baby. Five hundred ~~and~~ <sup>italics</sup> dollars!" She takes the five bills from the envelope and kisses one and then the other. Then fans them at him. Has forgotten the first part of his question.

She dips up and down <sup>like a carnival duck</sup> and holds her knees. "We in the money, honey," she says. "Gone get you some new shoes, gone get me a lady-like hairdo--gone get it <sup>curled</sup> ~~ironed~~ baby." Her broomed hair stands out, looks gnawed or singed, for a fact. "Gone get us a TV, baby. Gone get us some new tires on that old jalopy out there."

"And a bicycle," says Knot.

"And a bicycle," she shouts, then shushes herself.

He doubts that five-hundred dollars will buy all that, figures he'll have to mail more to her--if all goes well.

~~golden light the sky~~ (orange)  
~~the~~  
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"Why you act like I ain't yours then?" He kneels on the floor beside her. "Why you make up that story bout me belonging to somebody else? Say how sorry my real mama be."

"You know me..." She moans, cries, chugs crying, then, "Know me like my ownself, and know I ain't never want to be tied down to nobody. Be easier, better, to make you think you don't belong to me."

She rolls over, facing away from him, sobbing. "At first, I don't tell you you mine cause I don't want you to know I stoop so low. Then, I don't want you to know for the same reason I chunk you in the trash in the first place." Her hot hoarse voice goes suddenly cold: "Now go on. Go on and stay up yonder with Sister and them. I ain't have no claim on you."

"You just sorry for yourself, Marge." He is the one crying now. "You just looking for a excuse to get drunk and stay drunk."

For a fact, she always blows up at him when she is drunk, and for a fact, the next day all is forgiven and forgotten, but this time is different.

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When the train of yellow school buses begin circling the quarters, after school starts, the children and the bus drivers see red tricycles and blue bicycles and <sup>rainbow clothes on the line</sup> vari-colored plastic flowers in pots on the shack porches. All except one. But that's okay.

It's okay and even better than okay, as far as Knot is concerned. Two months and Marge hasn't had a drink--not even a beer! And soon Knot will be with his new family on Troupe Street, in Valdosta. And if there is any money left over--barring more unforeseen needs popping up in the quarters--he will take the sack of

money back to the alley. He will borrow his true-cousin Lee's bicycle and take the money back and leave it there. Though, for a fact, he is tempted to buy himself a new bicycle first, *But* he won't cave in. He won't be even tempted to *cave in* spend the money on himself because he won't need to. He will be rich then.