

For the next two years Lola's life, under the stabilizing influence of

first draft

...again clutching the open window she tried to keep her eyes averted from the stern personage. After many dusty miles of noise resulting from the burst muffler of the truck Lola saw more lights than she had ever seen in her life and knew that they were nearing Valdosta. Although she had never been there, she had experienced it vicariously through Miz June who had frequently caught the train from Seymore for a daily shopping trip. Miz June had cheerfully shared her adventures in the city with the reserved Lola many times in the past upon arrival at the commissary depot if Lola happened to be around. However, never having experienced it personally, Lola could never quite phathom the atmosphere of city life, and was unprepared for the experience. The driver slowed the truck as they came closer to the lights of the town. Turning onto mainstreet, Lola saw several other trucks and cars, and people standing in groups outside well-constructed wooden buildings, pedestrians crossing streets and walking to their destinations. The sounds of nature now replaced by the sounds of the city, Lola was intrigued but fearful of her future which seemed to lie in the seemingly incapable hands of the man seated next to her. "Abe says you a hiding from the law", the man finally spoke, still not looking at her. He shocked her from her thoughts and observations as she tried to focus on his blank eyes in the dimly lit truck for some indication of his intentions towards her. "Sho' is now,

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Cha. 10 Characters - Jack - Lola - Cleve - customer - bystander - clerk
Problems - fleeing from the law - fear - apprehension about a new way of life
in the city - alcohol - violence

Mattie's lon, was uneventful and relatively happy. She continued the hard work to which she was accustomed in the fields and also at home under the firm guiding hand of Mattie. The children thrived from the care and affection ~~and~~ heaped upon them by the bustling matron. Zeke and Jim still came and went ~~as~~ before with Mattie reprimanding the older children constantly and cuddling the younger ones. Zeke ~~at~~ ^{seventeen} ~~sixteen~~ was finally a man and seemed ~~to~~ to have laid aside pretenses of being chavenistic; he now was in reality. He had finally realized his full potential. He would walk heavily into the kitchen, plop himself down on the bench with ~~him~~ ^{Jim} following suit and order Lola and Mattie to "get his supper". Lola wasn't afraid of him at all but she believed Mattie to be, even though she ~~tried~~ ~~to~~ ~~hold~~ ~~her~~ ~~ground~~. His raucous protestations of "lazy women" and "pore food" didn't phase Lola who continued to go through the motions each time.

Lola now approximately 13 ~~xxxxxxx~~, because three years had passed since the party at the Lee's ~~xxxxxx~~, had developed into a beautiful, ripe, if unkept young woman. Her breast were large and full, her waist small in proportion to her rounded ^{fleshy} hips. Her face ^{was} churley, ^{and} round and healthy with enormous eyes that were her greatest asset. Her lips were ~~now~~ full ^{with the upper lip tilted} and ^{sensual} ~~her~~ ^{towards her nose. She} ~~had~~ ^{to time} ~~mirror,~~ which she still kept and looked in from time ~~to time~~ made her aware of the changes. Mattie had ~~became~~ more and more reserved towards her since the transition, and Lola did not understand the new attitude or the added chores to her already full load. One day ^{at the onset of menstrual blood} ~~her~~ period had started running down her legs onto the cleanly, scrubbed floor. Mattie had screamed at her that she was filthy and tossed a rag at her and told her to use them ^{"at once" "her legs"} until it stopped. Zeke had noticed the changes also and ^{was} constantly, pinching her on her rounded bottom or her full breast when Mattie wasn't looking. Lola just ignored him ^{as she} ~~had~~ ^{had} had conditioned her for these abuses on her much smaller body years ago.

Zeke came home more frequently now. He was a handsome fellow with a wide smile.

a.5 Character - Jim, Zeke, Lola, Mattie, ^{John} baby

Problem - chavenism - puberty - pregnancy - marriage - child birth - oppression -

He was quite tall with strong muscles ^{his} which he obviously was very proud of because he rarely wore a shirt even on the cool spring nights. One ~~spring~~ night as Lola was cleaning up the kitchen after supper and Mattie was rocking the children on the porch and singing them to sleep, Lola stood ^{washing dishes} enjoying the cool breeze ^{coming through the open window} caressing her face, she suddenly felt the ^{presence of someone behind her,} ~~unmistakable body of Zeke behind her~~ ^{turning she saw Zeke} tightly holding her with his massive arms around her waist and breathing on her neck. Now he was kissing her neck and she felt a completely new sensation like warm water washing over her from head to toe. He continued kissing her neck and she felt slightly faint. Neither spoke as he ^{turned} her around and kissed her mouth ~~causing~~ ^{completely arousing her now.} her to feel completely aroused now. He was mumbling something that she wasn't sure of but she didn't care. Still holding around her waist he began fondling her breast and walking her slowly to the back door. She was so caught up in the strange feelings in her body that she would ^{have} followed him anywhere. She didn't want it to stop. She felt so warm and good all over as they reached the back yard under the Mimosa tree. ~~In~~ the dirt they tumbled like animals until their passions were spent. Getting up and brushing off neither of them said anything. Another pinch from Zeke and he was off towards the road whistling in the dark. Lola still weak from the episode and confused but happy from the affectionate physical contact of another ^{to} ~~affection~~ walked the dark back porch and cleaned herself up as best she could. ~~Entering~~ she ^{went back to the kitchen and} emptied the dishwasher, then quickly laid out her pallet, hearing Mattie's quiet rocking on the porch. Lying down and covering up, she knew that as wonderful as the experience with Zeke had been, Mattie wouldn't approve. The young woman's body immediately gave into sleep.

^{here} Later she began to hate Zeke's snide remarks and smart attitude and tried to avoid him whenever Mattie was around. But he had only to touch her when they were alone ~~and~~ and they found some way to be together.

(meeting with Zeke)

A few months later the inevitable happened. Lola had forgotten the menstrual period which wasn't really important to her anyway because she had no idea what the absence of it meant. But under Mattie's close surveillance her condition soon became known. She was pregnant! Mattie approached her with a large wooden spoon and started hitting her over her head demanding to know "who ^{be} the papa ~~is~~"? Lola cowered back not daring to defend herself and screamed, "Zeke do it". Mattie enraged, now told her that she was a "slut like Jezebel". Lola had heard about Jezebel and wondered if she ^{Jezebel} ~~was~~ ^{is to} "gonna have a ~~bebe~~ ^{bebe}" also. Calming slightly, Mattie went on about her business with the frightened girls clinging to her. ^{later} Zeke entered in his usual devil-may-care ~~xxxxxxx~~ manner and Lola was subdued! Mattie lit into him, livid with rage again about "sech ^{carrying} ~~carrying~~ on right under my own roof". Zeke knew what she meant and for once was subdued himself. He sat on the bench while Mattie told him about the ^{baby} and how she "warn't gonna ^{in to} have no bastard grand-bebe". As Lola stood in the corner listening and watching, Mattie demanded that they get married. Lola didn't know exactly what that entailed but if it would calm Mattie it was fine with her. Zeke, given little choice in the matter, agreed.

The following day Preacher Bob came over after Mattie had gone to him and ~~Lola's~~ ^{dressed in her} best ~~clothes~~ ^{clothes} and shoes handed down from the Lee's again, they were legally wed. The brief ceremony at an end, none of which Lola understood, Preacher Bob kissed her cheek and shook hands with Zeke. He then left the small house and Mattie told them they'd have to move into Lola's old house across the road which was still vacant just as they had left it. In years past the houses were quickly occupied but now more people were leaving the quarters of Seymore, taking better paying jobs elsewhere. So Lola and Zeke took their few belongings and went across the road to begin their marital bliss. Entering the house Lola again thought about Mama with white flowers in her hands but

immediately lost the thought as Zeke roughly pushed her onto the mattress left as before and took her in his newly acquired rough manner. And so their marriage continued and Lola's housekeeping was resumed as before when she was a child in the same shanty. Zeke didn't mind ^{the clapping} because he hardly ever came home and when he did he was intoxicated wanting nothing more than physical release. Lola still worked in the fields and for Mrs. June who expressed concern for her. Lola was healthy and in truth never felt better. She never really considered the fact that a real life was growing in her womb. She lived as before, trying to avoid hunger, cold, heat or whatever other discomforts life tossed her way. She became quieter now. Gone were the days of laughter with her peers. Zeke was jealous, even in her impregnated state, and she kept mostly to herself. Sometimes she would go over to Mattie's and try to be civil in her quiet way but Mattie was cold and accusatory so she finally stopped going. She worked through the summer heat and into the winter cold in the fields seeing Zeke when he felt like coming home which was more and more rare now that she was ungainly and awkward. ^{June} As the Christmas season came again she helped Miz June, whose daughters now were near her own age but care-free and happy. They were both excited about having their friends over for dinner this Christmas. Lola woke that Christmas morning alone ~~and~~ cold, and her entire body ached from the exertion of the day before of helping Mrs. June clean. Mrs. June had been adamant about her resting periodically, giving her light tasks, explaining that her time was near. Lola wasn't sure but she thought that might mean the "baby" which she carried was almost ripe. Rolling off the mattress and onto her hands and knees, shivering, an enormous pain in her back and abdomen seized her. It soon passed and she rose to her feet, put on her dress and shoes which she had finally concented to wear but only with her heels resting on the backs in order to give her toes more freedom of movement ~~and~~ she started out the door. As she reached the icy steps, she was half way down when another pain immobilized her. She slipped and fell striking her back. She was ~~oblivious~~ oblivious to the cold now, the pain taking over.

She started screaming, drawing into a ball and rolling off the steps. She kept lying there screaming until someone bending over her spoke, "Come on gal let me get you back in the house and get some help for you." It was ~~Dark~~. She was so glad to see him. He lifted her, his small frame ~~facturing~~ and laid her on the porch, then went up the steps, lifted her again and carried her to the mattress. "Stay here, gal, and don't you ~~forget~~ ^{forget me}; I'll get help or help you myself", he ~~promised~~ ^{said}; Lola lost track of time. The pain ~~had~~ ^{had} totally engulfed her. She ~~thought she~~ ^{had} had been tired before and this had never happened ~~ed~~. She thought it must be because of the baby. She ~~had~~ ^{had} never really thought about how the baby would get here but now she knew. She felt a wetness between her legs and something slithering out of her body. The pain was so awful that she didn't speculate further on the reason. She just screamed. Someone was sneaking now. It was Mattie Lou. "It's a boy, a pore lil' ol' boy, may de Lawd have mercy", was Mattie's response to the birth. The infant was ~~was~~ squealing as Lola looked at the tiny, black ^{skinny} creature. She was glad it was over. She fell asleep for a short time and when she awoke Mattie Lou told her to "feed him". She started to rise and Mattie said, "you stupid de'bil, give him your tit". She did as instructed and the small screaming baby sucked and was quiet. She was cleaned up as well as Mattie could manage. The baby was wrapped in a clean soft, warm blanket. She slept again and when she woke again Miz June was kneeling beside her, "When you didn't come, I knew what had happened and I came right over." She ~~continued~~, "The baby's beautiful, just like you, Lola". "Yes 'um Miz June, sho' is now", Lola said as she glanced down at the infant beside her and didn't feel guilty for lying. Miz June rose and Mattie was complaining to her about the cold, un sanitary conditions of the cabin. Miz June made no reply but picked up a soft red ~~down~~ ^{flannel} comforter and spread it over the shivering new mother and left quietly. Lola ran her hands over the soft, flannel quilt and tears brimmed in her eyes. "Red's the De'bil's color", ~~said~~ ^{scolded} Mattie ~~flatly~~.

But Lola didn't care, it was the most beautiful color in the world. Mattie stayed with her through out the day going back accross the road ocassionally to check on the other children who were now able to be on their own and out growing her cuddling. ^{With} late ^{evening} came the ^{increasing cold & wind} wind increased and Mattie announced that they couldn't stay there and freeze and die of filth. Bundling the baby in her arms, she told Lola to get up and cover herself in the blanket and come home with her. ^{Mattie} Walking ahead, cradling the squalling infant, ^{Lola} trailed ^{behind} weak and hurting, but feeling quite beautiful as she looked down at the red coverlet in which she was wrapped.

For the next two weeks Lola remained under the impersonal but healing care of her mother-in-law. Mattie became totally absorbed in caring for the infant. Every waking moment was spent in meeting the needs of the child and rocking it and all during the night she arose to be sure it was fed, dry and loved. Lola was completely excluded from the care of the baby which didn't bother her at all because the instinct for mothering ^{had} never developed ~~in her~~. Most of her time was spent in cleaning and washing the baby's rags used for diapers, cooking, and avoiding Mattie who had grown to obviously despise her. Mattie seemed to have cast ~~the~~ Lola's sisters aside for the baby. They had been spoiled for so long, that they became despondent and whining. The first week Mattie had allowed her to stay in bed, but the second week Mattie set her to work. ^{Lola} Zeke finally made his appearance, being unable to find Lola at their shanty. Entering the house, he yelled, "Lola, you here"? Mattie, meeting him in the front room, answered the shout ^{a proudly reverent voice} "Hesh up your mouth, you want to wake ~~that~~ "po' bebe" ^{you} done deserted"? "What bebe"? asked Zeke, as if memory had failed him. "Your own flesh'n blood son ~~done~~ been born whilst you ^{was} gone off a keeping company with ~~the~~ debil", said Mattie. "Where 'bouts Lola"? asked Zeke. "~~That~~ lazy shif'less creature ^{be} out back", ^{said Mattie} ^{motioning towards} ^{the} ^{back} ^{of} ^{the} ^{house} ³ motioned Mattie, turning to check on her new charge. Zeke sauntered through the kitchen, opening the back screen door, hinges squeaking. Lola, scrubbing the porch with a corn shuck

scrubber met his gaze. ^{at the sound of the door opening,} "Ma says you ^{you done yourself} had a babe", Zeke said nonchalantly. Lola nodded affirmatively, "Sho' nuf' did now". He turned around and went back ^{de} inside with out another word and Lola continued scrubbing, her face expressionless. Zeke heard the baby crying and followed the sound of the shrill cry to the front room where his mama was cooing and shushing his son lying on the quilt covered cot. Zeke just stood watching the squirming baby which ^{he felt} was ^{surely} an extension of himself. A strong healthy baby, ^{he} naked, in the process of being changed. Suddenly Zeke was overcome with pride. The baby made him feel virile and masculine. He stared a few moments longer totally absorbed, then suddenly he yelled loudly, startling the mesmerized Mattie, ^{"Lola get the baby, we going home"} Lola dropped the scrubber and ambled into the house, grabbed her red quilt and took the baby from the speechless, fuming Mattie. Zeke was half way across the road when she reached the front porch. Holding the squalling baby in front of her with one arm around it's middle, it's little head dangling forward ^{and} her other hand dragging the quilt she followed her husband home.

For the next few months Zeke went to work and came home regularly, checking the infant for signs of growth to further assure his masculinity. He ordered Lola to clean up the house which she did with out question. Finally, with none of the luxuries of Mattie's ~~xx~~ house, it was none the less clean. Mattie had brought the remainder of the baby's things which she had made or saved from Zeke's childhood as keepsakes to remember his innocence in better days gone by. Zeke ran a tight ship from his post of command. Poor Lola was bordering on exhaustion. She not only split the wood which he brought home but kept a constant fire to warm the cold house. She was relieved when he left early in the mornings to go to work in the turpentine woods. It was nearly time for the gum to run and preparations were being made for the coming season. Lola was bored by the confinement and also with the baby. It never intrigued her. She fed it at her breast because she felt compelled to do so just as she had felt compelled to care for her younger siblings in the past. She certainly never enjoyed the suckling babe. To her it was merely an inconvenience. Zeke's

demands in the marital bed were also boring with only his pleasure in mind. The winter months were difficult enough to tolerate but as spring approached she longed for the out of doors work in the fields. She missed the merriment of the ^f fields hands. When she went out to plant her small gardens which she had done at Mattie and Zeke's insistance she would linger over the uneven rows, savoring the fresh spring air and the budding ^{crisp myrtle} ~~mimosas~~. She would lean on her hoe handle, shoes kicked off to feel the damp cool earth, and listen to songs of the mocking birds. She longed to go to the commissary and sit on the porch bench and observe the wonders around her and the chatter of the workers but Zeke's jealousy forbade it. No longer working for Miz June, she looked forward to her frequent visits. Her loyalty to her had grown since the gift ~~of~~ the red quilt which was now her prized possession. Miz June would comment on the healthy, growing baby but most of all on Lola's neat house keeping. It ~~was~~ this that really encouraged her endless hours of cleaning and not Zeke's and Mattie's demands. Her life time ~~of~~ fourteen years of misery had taught her to fear no one. She did what was expected of her, ^{expecting nothing} ~~nothing~~ expected in return. Lola ^{learned to} ~~could~~ enjoy the simple pleasures of her simple existence. Gorging herself on the vegetables from her garden and the meat which was plentifully supplied by Zeke and De ~~ke~~'s traditional ~~of~~ catfish offerings. ^{Lola} Summer claimed Spring in Lola's lonely world as the baby blossomed under the nourishing ~~ve~~getables mashed with a fork by Mattie who was constant visitor along with the jealous, well*scrubbed, ~~spoiled~~ girls. Mattie's attitude towards Lola now was indifferent. She couldn't call her slovenly, except in appearance, and so she said nothing. For the most ^{part,} she simply ignored her completely. Lola began to notice how cute the crawling baby was and even mildly, enjoyed him when Mattie and Zeke were not around. She began taking him out and playing in the black, sand. Sitting under the ~~relatively~~ cool shade of the chinaberry tree, she would make weird sounds to see his many expressions. Then she would laugh at his funny faces. Unsure about what to do with a child except feed and clothe him, this was about the extent of her expression of parental love. She was always carefull after the outings to clean him