

Chapter 3

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The cotton harvesting season came to an end and with it came winter in south east Georgia. Increasing cold temperatures brought ~~additional~~ ^{increasing} responsibilities for Lola because Rose had moved "on the hill" with George, and Lola was given the ~~added~~ ^{it's} chores of cooking and caring for her ~~three~~ ^{two} younger sisters and brother; Mattie 2, Nollie 4, and Abraham 5 years old. ^{para} The weekly washing for the family was particularly difficult for Lola because she had to draw and carry water from the caving, brick well in the back yard under the chinaberry tree to the iron wash pot in the front yard; build a fire under it to heat the water, after chopping and carrying wood from the woodpile near the well. ^{para} She stirred the clothes, almost buckling under the weight of the heavy paddles tangling in them. Her small frame many times barely escaping boiling itself as she nearly tumbled into the boiling brime. However, wash day was one of the few times that Lola was warm enough during the cold winter. The smaller children were an added burden ^{also} because drawn by the warmth of the fire, they would often wander dangerously close to be shoved back by Lola with the paddle.

Food was not only a problem to cook in the old wood stove which belched smoke so thick that the shanty was practically opaque at times and quickly devoured the small armloads of heavy wood brought in by Lola, but it was also, for the most part, her responsibility to find it. ^{para frequently} Many times Lola would sneak next door to the neighbor, Deke, ^{to garden} steal some scraggly, buggy turnips from his garden, ^h hastily returning to a pot of already boiling water and plop them in as

they had been pulled. Many times she was caught and scolded by his daughter, Lucy, who was sixteen years old. If Mr. Deke caught her it was no problem, he would just give her a firm shaking of his finger but feeling sorry for her he would do nothing more.

Nicknamed Deke because he had been a deacon of the church in good standing for nine years. He was a kind man, small in stature, with light colored skin. *His toothless, friendly smile and shiny bald head gave him the appearance of a baby.* His greatest delights in life were his daughter and languishing on the dapple-shaded banks of the river waiting for a fish to grab his hook.

Lucy's skin was even lighter than her fathers, emphasized by her full-bodied hair worn severely drawn into a bun on the back of her finely sculpted head as if to eliminate any misconception of untidiness. Her finely shaped body was concealed in a starched print shift, the crispness seeming to have been applied likewise to her full but drawn mouth. To Lola she was quite lovely, and to everyone else, ~~in Seymore~~, although she was never quite accepted by the residents of Seymore because of her lofty attitude.

Lucy was employed as a maid for a white lady in Valdosta, traveling daily ~~back and forth~~ by train from the commissary depot. Her mother having died when she was seven years old, she and Deke had moved to Seymore because he could no longer find work in North Georgia. *and because Lucy was so grief stricken in her mother's surroundings* Lucy was the product of a staunch ~~but~~ *departed* loving home. Even as a small child, Lucy refused to participate in the uninhibited play of her black peers and secretly resented being a member of the negro race. *para* Deke was painfully aware of his daughters resentment and

"Honey Child, why'n't you ~~go~~ *go on* out and play with those chilluns," her mother asked, *gently parting Lucy's tightly bound braids, pointing to the open door at the children rolling in the red clay ditch ~~backing~~ beyond.*

"I don't want to play with them, they stink!"

"Now child, that ain't no way to be. You ain't never playing. Just *sitting around with an old woman ain't no way for a little girl.*" *Sides you*

can be
ain't going to smell them out ^{there} in the ^{sparkling} clean ^{air} ~~air~~.
You ain't got to sociate with them, just play.

"Mama, I ain't playing with them."

"O.K., baby, but you sure missing some fun."

Then she would go on about her business of bleaching
and cooking in the kept cabin, while Lucy would

watch the children playing and feel only a sense

of revulsion for the clay-crusted black hoodies,

^{para} ~~para~~ at times she even felt revulsion for her own ^{brown} ~~off~~
tinted skin. She longed to be white and have straight
hair like the white girls she saw at school whom she
would not have dared to approach for fear of rejection.

^{para} ~~para~~ She caught the lost stitch on ~~her~~ ~~socket~~ the doily
she was crocheting, preferring the emptiness of
~~not~~ being alone to the company of the
black children; feeling that she belonged to
neither side but somewhere in between - alone
in her own race.

after years of trying to draw her out of her inhibitions, had finally decided to accept her as the dour but beautiful person that she was. Her mother's teachings of dignity had been well intentioned but had some how had been perceived as stringent warnings of integrating with her own race. Therefore, Lucy chose a life of solitude. ^{para} Lucy became the epitome of efficiency, and when she was not working in town, she was cleaning her own house and planting her garden. Consequently, her surroundings were impeccable as was her appearance, even though her clothes were old and worn. The fact that her immediate surroundings and austere ^{image} ~~appearance~~ were ~~beyond~~ reproach emphasized even more her uniqueness and isolated her from their neighbors.

One cold night as Lola was outside gathering firewood, she heard a car stop. Few cars passed through Seymore, particularly at night, and Lola was curious as she heard the car doors slam and ~~the~~ loud voices of ~~two boys~~, laughing mischievously. Frightened at first, she hid close by the house and watched as Lucy's front door opened and the light from the kerosene lamps casted a glow on ~~their~~ white faces of ^{TWO YOUNG BOYS.} One was holding a whiskey bottle and leering at her standing in the door, while the other nearest her reached out and ^{GRABBED AT HER} ~~grasped~~ ~~one of her breast~~. Lucy tried to move her rigid body backwards as her face remained unresponsive.

"Where's your old man? asked the other boy.

"He be out trapping," she said, trying to remain calm. Both boys laughed as they stepped bravely inside, slamming the door, cutting off Lola's view. However, she could still hear bits of the conversation from her ^{hiding} place as she stood shivering from fear and cold.

11 "We been watching you prissing around Miss Martha's, cleaning and fixing High falutin and snooty so we figured ~~to~~ to teach you some manners and take you down a notch or two, nigger gal," said one of them. ^{then} the sound of breaking glass. ^{them.} The sound of breaking glass followed and a ^{muffled} scream.

"Now that ^{just} ain't ~~so~~ friendly, gal. If you don't want your old man hurt, you'll give us what we want ^{confer} and we'll be on our way before he gets back. ^{And he won't be missing none nohow."} ^{Frispish laughter} ~~fitted~~ ^{filled} ~~and~~ ^{filtered} through the shovel walls ^{causing Lola to press in closer} to the ^{familiar} ~~boards~~ Silence and much scuffling followed, then familiar grunting sounds began and Lola knew from having heard them from Big Mo what was happening. ^{para of trying to blot out the licentious} ^{in progress next door} Turning the corner of the house, still holding the fire wood, ^{she} went inside, ^{and} a short while later ^{she} heard the car drive quietly away. After that night Lucy became even more aloof, and Lola was to ^{witness} hear much of the same from ~~the house next door~~ in the months to come.

Mama continued to work for Miz June even though her drinking increased and Big Mo still made his presence known with his loud guffaws and occasional ^{snort} contributions to their limited fare. Lola, as partial provider, began more and more to welcome the provisions he supplied.

One night he walked in with a large hog slung over his massive shoulders, stuck and bleeding, plopped it on the floor, and announced, "I done got a hoag for us." It had been a long time since that much meat had been in the house and everyone was quite excited, exclaiming over the huge carcass. ^{never questioning the source of their good fortune.} ^{para} Scooping up the bristley animal once more, he headed for the back door and into the yard with Mama and all the kids in tow. He built a rolling fire under the wash pot with wood and water supplied by the children. To the now boiling water he added a snuff can of tar, extracted from his pocket, to make the hair eaiser to remove. When the water began to get hot, he threw the hog in, legs dangling out. After a time the hair was loosened and he removed it

from the water with a hoe borrowed from Lucy's garden fence. Then he laid it out on the kitchen table and began the process of scraping the hog with his sharp pocket knife. After removing the hair and ^{he slit the middle of the hog open and began a swift downward motion} flinging it to the ground, before the bright eyes watching ^{and} discarding the insides ~~from~~ the hog, saving the chitterlings and head, being careful to remove the burrough of the ^{inner} ear which was claimed to be poisonous. He also saved the liver and lights, considered to be delicacies, then proceeded to cut the pork into sections.

After trimming away the fat, he told Mama and the children to empty the water from the pot. With the buckets slinging water left and right, the pot quickly emptied and he tossed the fat into the pot ^{with his large hands as a double scoop, the traces glistening in the glow of the fire blue-red flame.} It soon began sizzling and frying leaving the greasy, lard to be stored and later used for cooking and making soap, which they never seemed to get around to. ^{para} Smelling the frying cracklings, the children's mouths began to water. ^{They begged} ~~Begging~~ as much as they dared, ~~they were given in to by~~ ^{and} Mo ~~who~~ ^{para} generously scooped out a hoe full of the cracklings, emptying them on the table beside the bloody remains. ^{congealed from the crisp cold air.} Cooling rapidly in the cold air, the children began eating ^{gnawing and crunching close to the fire,} and continued ^{until} ~~until~~ they were almost ill. ^{para} Then entering the house once more they hung the meat sections in the kitchen from nails on the wall, making the floors slippery from the dripping grease and blood. The children began curling up on the mattresses, cold and nauseus but satisfied. Mo beamed broadly as he wiped the blood from his hands on his grimey britches, then took a long slug of well deserved whiskey from the bottle nearby on the table. ^{and lowered his heavy bulk onto one of the mattresses where the others gladly made space.}

For the next few months Lola cooked the meat daily with the usual hoecakes made from the flour purchased at the commissary with

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For the next few months Lola cooked the meat daily with the usual hoe-cakes made from the flour purchased at the commissary with Mama's money. Lola ^{SHE ALSO} cooked the pork with greens taken from Lucy's garden and ^{compared to their usual} ~~a feast~~ was enjoyed by all. ^{PARA} Lola's asthma worsened ^{SYMPTOMS} with the cold which she and the others always seemed to have in the winter. She coughed so much that she could hardly breathe but still worked without complaint. The younger children often ran high fevers during the winter and cried more frequently than before. Mama made ^{USUAL} them a sugar tit ^{THE SWEETIES} at night to keep them quiet, out of a lump of sugar tied in a rag to suck on and even then that ^{didn't} always help. ^{FREQUENTLY} to keep them quiet at night.

During the early part of the winter Lola and Jim would occasionally work for the local farmers who grow sugar cane.

Rising before dawn on the cold winter mornings they would walk barefoot with other children about their same age from Seymore along the dirt roads sleepy, cold, and as usual hungry, across the wooden bridge over the Alapha river always stopping to pay tribute to the ominous high swirling waters by tossing a stick or spitting and waiting for a ^{reply} ~~reply~~. The boys ~~would~~ ^{would} usually teasing the girls by trying to toss them over the sides of the bridge. Lola would keep her distance fearful of the raging current. ^{scene} ^{laughing uproariously} ~~They~~ they would begin walking again increasing their pace with the smaller children trailing. ^{from the} ~~Reaching~~ the farm the older boys would go to the fields and begin hacking

as she watched the ~~attempted~~ playful attempts of the agile adolescent boys to ~~loosen~~ the screeching girls grips from the weathered wooden rails. ~~Correct~~ ^{pleas} ~~arrived~~ only to heighten the pleasure for the boys ~~and~~ the girls would finally relinquish their grips on the rail in exchange for a nearly arm or leg which had been the object of the game from the beginning.

the stubborn cane stalks to the gro ~~under~~ ^{which was no match for} ^{these fresh morning stars} ¹⁶ ^{the} ^{supplying arms} piling them onto the mule ~~xxxxxx~~
drawn cart which was then carried to the site of the cane mill. It ~~was~~ ^{was}

^{here} ~~was~~ ^{here} that Lola and the others worked ~~ed~~ ^{ed}, feeding the ~~xxx~~ stalks of cane into
the mill energized by a ~~horse~~ ^{mule} attached to a ~~pole~~ ^{pole} who pulled it ^{who pulled it} around in a
circle. Standing on a block of wood ^{to obtain the necessary height for reaching the mill,} ~~cut for the purpose,~~ below the sweeping pole

^{while} feeding the cane into the grinder ~~at~~ ^{was} at a continuous pace, ~~was~~ ^{was} quite a feat for
Lola. ~~but worth~~ ^{but worth it when} when the sweet cane juice ~~was~~ ^{was} emptied from the barrels into

the vat for cooking, yielding a sweet syrup to be bottled and corked ~~and~~ ^{used}
used to sop hot busciuts or stored to crystalize ^{INTO} sugar in a few months. ^{LOLA INHALED THE SCENT OF SYRUP AND WAS THAT AFTER}

^{after} the juice was squeezed ~~from~~ ^{was} from the stalks, the cane leavings ~~were~~ ^{were} removed by
cart from the mill and piled later to be burned. But to Lola the best part

of all was the "pole cat" candy. ^{above} The sticky substance which formed ^{was} around the
sides of the vat during the cooking process. ^{para} When Lola had ~~had~~ ^{had} all that she

~~could~~ ^{could} endure of the arduous ~~work~~ ^{work} she ~~would~~ ^{would} be replaced by one of the other
children and she ~~would~~ ^{would} dash off, merry black eyes twinkling, to the cane

syrup kettle, ^{(scene) over} ~~where~~ ^{was} she was given ~~the~~ ^{was} eventually a tin can full of the pole cat, ^{freshly churned, although premature,} ^{freshly}
skimmed, her cold hands grateful for the warmth. ^(conversation with farmer) She then ~~would~~ ^{would} hurriedly

~~find~~ ^{found} a place to sit, resting her tired back against the wall of an old corn
crib and wait ~~ed~~ ^{ed} impatiently for the candy to cool enough so that she ~~could~~ ^{could} put

it into her watering mouth. Toes ^{of unknown origin,} ~~would~~ ^{would} wriggling, happily, she ~~would~~ ^{would} sometimes
hum a tune which she had learned from the ~~cotton~~ ^{fields}. ^{After} Finishing off the

last bite she ~~would~~ ^{would} rush back for seconds, ^{repeating the same sequence of events,} ^{This was one of the few times}
that Lola was ~~ever~~ ^{was} completely full and ~~being~~ ^{was} unable to resist she ~~would~~ ^{would} eat

~~at intervals and when allowed~~ ^{at intervals and when allowed} until her stomach signaled ~~ed~~ ^{ed} her with a loud ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{RUN} rumble, then dash off for the
old wooden ^{outdoor} toilet. Upon the open hole she ~~would~~ ^{would} sit until she ~~was~~ ^{was} able to

return to the mill. ^{para} By the end of the day the children ~~would~~ ^{would} be weak not
only from ^{THE} exertion of work but from the debilitating diarrhea caused by the

AS PART OF HER DAY SHE WOULD FALL HIGER TO !!
OWN

~~Not~~ Not much taller than the round black kettle bubbling
~~the side with the thick, sticky substance~~ the thick,
greenish, black substance over the sides, Sola would stand ^{quietly},
practically lost in the sticky steam, watching the skimmed circle
the surface of the ^{the syrup} then ~~slant~~ ^{wait} ~~draw~~ ^{draw} ~~to~~ ^{emptily with} ~~plank~~ ^{into}
a nearly ~~empty~~ ^{empty} ~~plank~~ ^{plank} ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~attention~~ ^{attention} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~drawn~~ ^{drawn} ~~to~~ ^{to} the white, hairy
arm holding the handle of the skimmer. Dreading the inevitable
~~padding~~ unpleasantness, but more eager for the reward, she
remained watching the ~~future~~ ^{future} ~~farmer's~~ ^{farmer's} belly of the farmer through
the heavy haze, finally allowing her gaze to travel
upwards to the heavy jowls ^{folded} over the grey, stiff
collar. His ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} ~~green~~ ^{green} ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} ~~peered~~ ^{peered} ~~at~~ ^{at} her ~~through~~ ^{through} puffy flesh,
~~at~~ ^{at} ~~last~~ ^{last} finally acknowledging her presence. She continued
her vigil, shifting from one food to the other.

"Why ain't you workin', gal?"

"U'e done gotten too tired, suh."

"Tired, huh? Bet you done gotten hungry too, huh?"

"Yasuh", said Sola, nearing her goal, glancing
from the arrogant face to the kettle.

"Ain't gonna get a lick of work out of you
no how. Might as well feed you."

Sola eagerly watched the slow procession of scraping
with a ~~wooden~~ ^{half} ~~make-shift~~ ^{make-shift} ~~paddle~~ ^{paddle} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~care~~ ^{care} ~~peel~~ ^{peel}
edges of the kettle and moved forward as he
plopped the pole cat into the can, carefully ~~moving~~
scraping the stick on the side to loosen the remains.
Then he ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~blow~~ ^{blow} the stick and stuck it into his mouth,
covering the taste while Sola's eyes begged for the can.

pole cat, They began their weary trek back to Seymore. Crossing the river again, heavy drops of rain began pelting the cold youngsters causing them to quicken their slow pace. Upon reaching their homes they ^{were} drenched and shivering. Entering the yard, Lola and Jim grabbed some firewood, ^{so went} ^{PMP} went inside ^{and} threw it into the iron stove. They began striking matches but to no avail - the wet wood ^{would} not start ^{and} they finally gave up ^{and} huddled on one of the mattresses and fell asleep. ^{face} The following morning having slept the entire night without waking, Jim awakened ^{Lola} who was feverish and coughing. Struggling against the body threatening to stay in bed, she dragged herself back to the farm to begin the incessant feeding of the cane mill. While standing on the wooden block, blackness engulfed her, later to awaken in her own bed where she had been carried by the ^{obviously in convenience} cane farmer. She remained ^{was} quite ill with what Mrs. June called pneumonia. Mrs. June nursed her, placing mustard poltices on her chest daily, for the next two weeks, during which she dozed in and out of feverish sleep, missing the culmination of the cane grinding season and the polecat.

After the crisis, Lola, in her weakened condition, resumed her daily chores collapsing at night onto the mattress to wait for another day. One such night as she lay there while Mama ^{was} away at ~~the~~ "Abe's", the children had just gone to sleep ~~when she heard the car's whirring engine leaving from Lucy's house and she had dozed off after her fitful coughing~~ ^{when she heard} screaming and crying from Mr. Deak's house. She jumped up and ran outside, freezing. When she got to the front porch of Lucy's house, she stopped ^{abruptly} in her tracks. The front door ^{was} open and Mr. Deak ^{was} standing over a white and red bundle of clothing. He ^{was} wailing in a heart rending pitch and lamenting, "Oh Lawd have mercy, somebody done gone an' kill' my baby". As Lola stepped ^{ed} closer to the door she ^{saw} ^{that} the white cloth ^{was} Lucy's gown and the red on it ^{was} blood. A Knife ^{was} laying

beside the still form and it too ^{was} red. Lola turned ^{ed} and ran ^{fast} faster than she had ever ^{run} done in her life, back to her house, not even closing her front door as she flew ^{through}; flinging herself on her mattress and shaking so hard that her small body could not still itself. She ^{could} hear other voices from the nearby houses ^{could} talking and trying to comfort Deak and find a solution ^{for} the hideous deed. She ^{heard} them saying that Lucy ^{had} been knifed. ^{LOLA} She just ^{LAY} laid there for the remainder of the night shivering and coughing and gasping for air, but she never spoke ^{of} what she ^{knew} knew to anyone ^{concerning} concerning the ^{night} night by ^{any} any.

Lola was aware of the arrangements for the funeral ^{because} because Mama ^{kept} kept talking about ^{it} and ^{said} said that everyone wondered ^{who} who could have done it. ^{scene} The death had ^{para} occurred on a Tues. night and the burial ^{would} would not take place until the next Sun, ^{as} as was the custom. ^{All} All burials ^{were} were on Sundays. The neighbors ^{came} came all ^{week} week to Deaks bearing dishes of food for the bereaved father and offering consolation and also easing their consciences for not accepting the girl. The curious ^{came} came also as if they ^{could} could find some clue of what had ^{occurred} occurred on that fateful night ^{if} if they ^{just} just entered ^{the} the house. Superstition ^{was} rampant and Lola ^{felt} felt that most of all she ^{would} would surely be visited by Lucy's ghost for having taken her greens and for having known of her night visitors. She suffered ^{terribly} terribly for the weekly interval before the ^{burial} burial and on that day ^{was} was forced to go to the funeral by Mama who ^{got} got off work at ^{Mrs.} Mrs. June's because ^{she} she and Mr. Lee ^{would} would attend also. The service ^{was} was extremely long and the coughing, frightened Lola ^{sat} sat as still ^{and} and small as possible as if the ghost of Lucy might not notice her presence if she ^{didn't} didn't move. People ^{were} were weeping and praying out loud, ^{and} and singing and clapping. ^(write more) (write more) all during ^{the} the service with ^{words} words spoken by ^{the} the preacher. ^{little} little ^{only} only heard ^{the} the ^{preacher} preacher. ^{funeral} funeral Lucy's burial took place in the small graveyard behind the ^{small} small block church; ^{The} The procession including family, ^{Deak's} Deak's friends, ^{and} and piously weeping ^{mourners} mourners followed ^{at} at a respectful pace behind the wooden coffin with the preacher ^{leading} leading the way. ^{Mama} Mama ^{was} was relieved when the last song was sung and the dirt

"Sura 'nuf, a bad deed ^{done} been done right here,
~~in my own front yard~~, Sura 'nuf bad ~~and to~~
to kill that fine gal, her so friendly and all dat,
Mama said ~~to me~~ to no one in particular,
~~while~~ ^{sighing and} ending the bottle she was holding as if to
~~alleviate~~ ^{alleviate} her grief. "Sura" "I sure wonders who ~~done it~~ done it."

~~Sola provided with her~~

Sola stiffly continued prying the burning hoe cake
from the iron frypan, her hands trembling, not daring
to turn her face towards Mama ^{who was} ~~partly~~ behind her at
the table.

"Weren't a bad deed what she ever done
neither," Mama said.

Sola could hear ~~her~~ ^{Mama's} ~~mother~~ ^{mother} snoring, drunkenly
and her hands were shaking for fear of
revealing her secret which she now felt a part
to. She burned her hand white ~~transferring the~~
turning the charred bread but didn't even
flinch for fear of being noticed by the intoxicated
woman at her rear.

"Ain't no murderess what lives in this place
I ain't reckoning," Mama said. "Us they?"
Sola was now forced to reply and steeled herself to answer.
"She ain't now."

was flung into the grave, ~~even~~^{could} if the spirit could still wander among them at least the body ~~could~~^{could} no longer be observed.

Mama having gone on to "Abe's" with Big Mo after the service, Lola returned to the house with the three smaller children and assailed the many chores with eagerness, glad for the normalcy of routine which would help squelch the morbidness of the presence of death. Out back gathering firewood, Lola ~~saw~~^{saw} Deke returning home from the graveyard. She ~~stood~~^{stood} behind the china berry tree and watched him with his shoulders slumped, ambling up the door steps. The guilt returned to Lola as she watched the forelorn figure from her hiding place, she knew she had to make some sort of retribution. She decided to do what she had seen the neighbors do. She ~~took~~^{took} the firewood inside, made a fire in the stove, put some water in the old metal pot, hacked off a hunk of the hanging pork, and put it into the boiling water. After it had cooked for a short while she removed it with a fork and carefully placed it in a flour sack. Her heart was racing and she felt she might faint as she carried it up the clean but shackly steps to Deke's house. She felt she might faint as she mustered the courage to knock on the door. She knocked lightly and as she heard approaching steps, she quickly laid the parcel in front of the door and ran. Looking back as she neared her own porch she saw Deke holding her offering. He waved to her and she felt ~~happy~~^{relieved and assured}.

A few days after Lola's generous offering ~~Mr. Deke~~^{came} by and ~~gave~~^{gave} her three catfish which he had caught in the river, ~~and after that for a long time to come the same pattern followed.~~^{for many years, bonding a relationship between the two, (scene with Deke offering fish)}