

Mama's death-funeral (summer) (p. 33)

LEAVING EV... AT THE...  
THEIR BRE...  
BY THE...  
TO...  
SCRATCHING...  
The

scene

Mosquitoes and yellow flies announce summer with their viscous stings

PREVIOUSLY RAGING WATERS OF THE ALABAMA

river becomes a shallow, gently whirling pool, cooling and refreshing the field

hands after the hot sultry days and grueling work of hoeing and weeding in the

TOBACCO FIELDS.

cotton patch. The white <sup>YOUTHS played</sup> swim and play on the east side ~~of~~ the river and the

blacks on the west side, with never the two venturing past the invisible,

undeclared line.

As much as poverty can stifle creativity, it can also enhance it, as was

OF THE OCCUPANTS OF THE WESTERN PORTION OF THE RETREAT.

the case for ~~Lola and the other young workers of Seymour.~~ They invented

games such as dodging the tupelo berries. Falling maroon-colored berries

from the tupelo trees on the river banks, <sup>PLUNKED INTO THE WATER,</sup> float <sup>PAST</sup> by the ambushers who <sup>skimmed and</sup> gathered

~~them~~ torpedoeing one another and occasional nibbling the bitter fruit before

reloading and firing. <sup>Wet bodies rolling in the sand giving a frosted effect to</sup>

~~the chocolate colored skin; then rolling down the sand banks into the water~~

~~white~~ creating a frosted effect, then down the banks into the exhilarating water

first draft

playfully frequent  
Tiring of the incessant bombarding, some of the wet fieldhands retired  
to the shore to roll in the hot sands, encrusting their chocolate-colored

where the frosting melted away downstream leaving an invigorating effect in its aftermath. ~~exhilarated (over)~~ \* \* \* feeling cleaner than before as the frosted melts away. (shenanigans)

An exasperated nearby fisherman, ~~frustrated with the youthful antics~~ impatient with youth, states his views profanely and verbally stakes his territorial ~~claim~~ Disconcertingly, the youths refuse to relinquish their rightful claim to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, ~~with the exuberance of youth~~ and ~~with complete abandon~~ continue their merriment and dusk makes its debut by casting its gray hue over the sand, water, willows and youth indulging in one last ~~trip~~ swim, then making their exit before the darkness takes its cue, spreading its colorless fingers erasing the entire scene.

Swarming house flies buzz then light alternately on Mama's body now still and uncharacteristically peaceful in the rough pine, home-made coffin built by ~~Deak~~ <sup>Mr Deak</sup> and Jim. Lola sitting nearby on the mattress thought Mama looked unfamiliar with her usual bushy hair brushed back neatly as if finally relenting also, her body laid out in a white gown furnished by ~~Mrs June~~ <sup>some one</sup> with Her arms crossed over her bosom revealing the roughened hands which gave evidence of years of hard work. Lola brushes the perspiration from her face with her small hands and possibly a tear.

The unbearable July heat of the day before in the ~~cotton~~ <sup>place</sup> field drained the last ~~ounce~~ of usable strength from ~~the young~~ <sup>Mac</sup> Lola. Trudging back to the end of the rows again and again for water, then back again grasping the hot hoe handle <sup>in position</sup> to remove the weeds threatening to rise above the small ~~cotton~~ <sup>tobacco</sup> plants, Lola ~~Mac continued through the day anticipating the sound of the truck horn signifying the end of yet another scorching day. Licking away the dripping perspiration above her upper lip, tasting the salty liquid <sup>and</sup> trying to distinguish the desirable from the undesirable plants in the glare of the evening sun, Lola listens to the chatter of the other field hands nearby with out really hearing the words. The sound of the truck horn gives her sudden hope for ~~something yet unknown~~ <sup>SIMPLE RELIEF</sup>. Dragging her hoe slowly to the end of the long row, she boards the truck for a brief period of rest. As the truck moves slowly away from the rows of wilting plants <sup>having</sup> ~~giving~~ up hope of nourishing rain, a gentle hot breeze offers the promise of cooling the dehydrated bodies, and looking skyward a single gray~~

Chia 7 Characters - Lola's peers - Lola - Mama - Lola's sister - Deak - worker - Preacher Bob  
Problems - recreation - death - work - readjustment to new life style

Eastern superiority would frequently be reasserted  
on an unconcious member of the western rank would  
venture too near the line of demarcation.

Startled by the hostile environment, the youth would  
quickly rejoin his forces on his home base,  
seemingly to forget the honor of the moment before.

cloud does likewise as a trail of dust blocks the view of the ~~fixxxxx~~ rows of scorching plants.

<sup>(Start here)</sup> Passing each heat-baked, colorless shanty the workers unload at their destination. <sup>Lola</sup> As the truck slows ~~down~~, <sup>Lola</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> ~~blinks the dust from her burning eyes~~ <sup>Lola</sup> Lola jumps down, ~~takes~~ <sup>she</sup> a couple of skips in time with the motion, then walks slowly up the beaten dirt path outlined by wilting weeds. She ~~sits~~ <sup>sits</sup> a moment on the cracked steps and ~~scratches~~ <sup>scratches</sup> the ears of the grateful dog, then rubbing her eyes she wearily enters the house <sup>where</sup> ~~where~~ <sup>Mama</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> lying on the mattress, an empty ~~water~~ <sup>water</sup> bottle beside her, with the ~~two~~ <sup>two</sup> little girls <sup>Mattie & Nellie,</sup> playing around her, occasionally arguing and seemingly not noticing that Lola <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ home. ~~Lola~~ <sup>Lola</sup> ~~goes~~ <sup>goes</sup> into the kitchen, ~~picks~~ <sup>Lola</sup> up the empty water bucket, and ~~goes~~ <sup>goes</sup> outside to draw water from the well. Pulling the bucket up she steadies it on the ledge, lifts and pours the water over her head. Then ~~draws~~ <sup>draws</sup> another, drinking from the side, and ~~takes~~ <sup>takes</sup> the remainder inside <sup>to the house</sup>. She then returns to the backyard and gathers the firewood which ~~Jim~~ <sup>Jim</sup> has split the previous day, ~~carries~~ <sup>carries</sup> it inside, and ~~starts~~ <sup>starts</sup> a fire in the wood stove adding <sup>more heat</sup> to the already stifling atmosphere. She ~~then~~ <sup>then</sup> mixes the cornmeal and water in the chipped <sup>glass</sup> bowl and fries the bread in the sizzling <sup>pan</sup> lard. ~~After this she~~ <sup>and then</sup> ~~tosses~~ <sup>tosses</sup> in some chunks of fat back, and ~~removes~~ <sup>removes</sup> it. <sup>when it has become crunker & brown</sup> Her two little sisters smelling the cooking <sup>are</sup> lead by their growling stomachs to the stove <sup>where</sup> Lola ~~gives~~ <sup>gives</sup> them each a piece of bread and meat and they wander back to Mama's side to devour it. <sup>After they have finished</sup> ~~then full they~~ <sup>eat, they fall asleep contentedly</sup> ~~fall~~ <sup>fall</sup> asleep. Having eaten as she cooked, Lola ~~drinks~~ <sup>drinks</sup> some more water and ~~lies~~ <sup>lies</sup> down to sleep amidst fighting mosquitoes and yellow flies, yet peaceful while ~~all is~~ <sup>the</sup> quiet except ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> faraway sounds of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> whipporwhills and crickets which lull her to sleep.

Waking the next morning to the sound of the ~~truck~~ <sup>truck</sup> horn of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> truck which ~~will~~ <sup>waiting to</sup> transport her back to the hot cottonfields, Lola quickly glances at the sleeping forms and notices that Mama ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> asleep with her eyes open. Prickles



of fear clutch her spine and she slowly kneels, ~~reached out and touched~~ <sup>stand, reaching out and touching</sup> the waxen body. ~~It feels like the doll in the box Miz June had given her.~~ Backing away she moved slowly out the door toward the ~~intermittent~~ <sup>impatience</sup> ~~beeping~~ <sup>beeping</sup> of the ~~horn~~. ~~Approaching the~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~impatient driver,~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>down darkened</sup> simply says, "My name is ~~dead~~." Overhearing the simple unemotional phrase the curious fieldhands clamored out of the truck and into the house. Viewing the lifeless body they back away. "She be dead alright enough. She done got cold," said one of the ~~men~~ <sup>men</sup>. "I ~~just~~ <sup>just</sup> knowed ~~the Lord~~ <sup>the Lord</sup> would punish her for her wicked ways; 'these poor lil' old chilluns'", ~~said~~ <sup>said</sup> one of the female spectators. The two young girls ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> wakened by the excitement ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> crawled to the floor to join the onlookers. Jim, who had spent the night across the road at Zeke's, ~~xxxxxx~~ a friend with whom he had caroused at "Abe's" most of the night, entered after hearing the commotion, with ~~Deak~~ <sup>Deak</sup> following. Seeing the cause of the excitement, a lump formed in Jim's throat and a feeling of loss for the one who had given birth to him. ~~Deak~~ <sup>Deak</sup> pushed through the crowd ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~reached~~ <sup>after concluding that the woman was actually dead,</sup> into his pockets removing two coins, kneeled and closed each eye placing the coins on the still lids. He then pulled the dingy sheet at the foot of the bed over the lifeless woman. Standing he turned and offered solace to the confused offspring, "Lola take ~~the 'lil' ones~~ <sup>the 'lil' ones</sup> and ~~come~~ <sup>come</sup> to my house 'til I send for you". Lola obeyed, taking the hands of the little girls and leaving ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> mumbling crowd which now consisted of most of the neighborhood. ~~Feeling~~ <sup>Feeling</sup> ill at ease Lola entered through the open front door of Deak's house with the two girls holding her skirt. The ticking of a clock seemed loud in the silence as she glanced at the mantel from which it perched on a white crecheted doily. An old wooden rocking chair beneath the mantel beckoned her to sit as the girls sat ~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>at</sup> her feet on the clean wooden floor. A ~~calendar~~ <sup>calendar</sup> with a picture of a snow scene faced her from the opposite wall seeming ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> out of place in the heated room. The smell of coffee led Lola's gaze to the corner on her right where the pot containing the brew sat on a ~~round~~ <sup>round</sup> pot bellied woodstove jutting out ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> a neat stack of ~~the wall~~ <sup>the wall</sup>

wood nearby on the floor. An old safe with screen ~~wire~~ panels at a safe distance from the stove contained various blue pattereded dishes. Adjacent to the safe was a small round table covered by a red-checked oil cloth of the same texture as Miz June's and upon it was a half-filled blue mug of coffee which obviously had been <sup>Miz June's</sup> ~~the~~ preoccupation when the noise had disturbed him. Lola, purusing the room, ~~on around~~ saw an old chest covered with another crocheted square and on it sat a wooden framed picture of Lucy. It startled Lola back to reality. She had never seen a picture of someone she knew and a dead person at that. She thought of Mama next door with coins on her eyes, dead also, but no picture.

The younger children, ~~how~~ bored with <sup>the orderly</sup> ~~fascinating~~ surroundings, ~~was~~ were hungry <sup>and</sup> began tugging at Lola and begging for food. Unsure about what to do, Lola started looking for food in the wooden safe. <sup>Unlatching</sup> one of the screen panels with a metal latch she saw a pack of soda crackers on the bottom shelf along with some canned foods. She opened the wax <sup>ed</sup> pack and gave two <sup>crackers</sup> to each girl and, feeling like a thief, she took one for herself. The little girls now contented, sat on the floor again munching, with crumbs falling onto the clean planks. Walking to the window behind the stove, Lola parted the white cotton homespun curtains. Peering out she saw neighbors coming and going from the house with different expressions of curiosity or sadness. She saw Miz June entering with a paper bag and wondered if she had brought some more clothes for her and the children. Hearing the sound of a hammer and a ~~waw~~ she looked to her left ~~and~~ at the end of <sup>Mr. Lee's</sup> ~~the~~ back yard <sup>and</sup> she saw <sup>him</sup> ~~he~~ and Jim building something like a box. The box created a feeling of dread because as she continued watching, it took on the form of the same kind <sup>that</sup> Lucy had laid in at the funeral. Going <sup>back</sup> to the pack of crackers, she treated herself once more giving her sisters one also. Then she sat on the rocker again and rocked <sup>to and fro</sup> creating a rythm on the squeaking boards underneath. <sup>She experienced a renewed feeling of dread.</sup> ~~as she rocked to and fro with a new feeling of dread.~~ The morbid presence of death had once again visited her.

<sup>mi</sup> Deak returned <sup>and</sup> around noon took them back to their shanty where Mama lay in the pine box. The endless days with neighbors in and out, sitting up all night while the children slept nearby, inevitably resulted in the dreaded funeral. <sup>part here</sup> Sitting in the small block church on the hard wooden bench on the second row with the children, Jim, and Deak, the first row having been reserved for the Lee's, Lola looked around at the kind and the curious faces, many familiar, others not so. Some weeping piously for the lost soul, others merely staring at coffin as if afraid the ghost of the deceased might arise. Singing and clapping in harmony, the service began. After the hymn Preacher Bob, a graying old man with rheumy eyes, arose supported by his cane, carrying his worn, black Bible with a page hanging loose, moved slowly to stand behind the coffin. He started praying amidst out burst of "Amen", "Praise <sup>the</sup> Lawd", "ain't it so, <sup>brother's</sup> and other contributions from the congregation. When all had quieted to some degree, he spoke; <sup>next line indent</sup> "Sister Eula Mae <sup>done</sup> done left <sup>of this</sup> world". <sup>indent</sup> In chorus came the reply of the members of the congregation, "Amen, brother", "ain't it so?" <sup>indent</sup> continuing on, Brother Bob said, "Done left <sup>or</sup> her chiluns' and friends". "She <sup>had</sup> had a hard life; her old man left her some time ago, but now her sufferins <sup>done</sup> <sup>indent</sup> are." "Praise <sup>the</sup> Lawd, brother", the congregation agreed. <sup>indent</sup> "She imbibed the likker, as we all know", Brother Bob <sup>said</sup> commented. <sup>indent</sup> "Sho' did now", the people <sup>said</sup> <sup>indent</sup> replied. <sup>raising</sup> Holding <sup>up</sup> both bent arms, <sup>precisely skywards</sup> Brother Bob interrupted, "But <sup>(unless)</sup> we <sup>had</sup> had her soul, we ain't knowing how she might'a felt. <sup>The</sup> Bible plainly says 'Judge not, lest ye be judged, <sup>the</sup> the measure you give is <sup>the</sup> the measure <sup>you</sup> <sup>get</sup> <sup>indent</sup>'. Fearfully the congregation became hushed, eyes downcast as he continued, arms still up lifted, ~~"I must~~ read long ago a saying by some great man, and it goes like ~~this: 'If I had~~ but one cent, I would take half ~~of it and buy white hyacinths to feed my~~ soul'. ~~White hyacinths is a flower, brothers and sisters, and we all buys~~ <sup>sermon about freedom hereafter</sup> ~~Sister Eula Mae's just happened to be lik'ker. May <sup>the</sup> Lawd have~~ mercy." <sup>Sister Eula Mae's ev. ~~was~~ <sup>held</sup> <sup>hell on</sup></sup> Total quietness <sup>engulfed</sup> the small room as he finished, lowering his tired old arms to his side, "The Lawd giveth, and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> Lawd taketh away".



*debbily*

Lola had no idea what the phrase had meant but it remained stamped in ~~indelible~~ *indelible* ink in ~~her~~ *the unconcious recesses of* her mind from that day on.

As the friends and family filed by the open coffin to pay their last respects it was with bowed heads and reverence, which ~~remained~~ *continued* all throughout the ~~burial~~ *remainder of the service*.

After the box containing ~~Mama~~ *Mama* was placed in the deep hole and covered completely with the black earth mounded on top the exact length of her body to identify the grave, a small wooden marker was placed at her head with ~~her~~ *only* her name and ~~and~~ the date of ~~her~~ *her* death which ~~Deke~~ *Mr Deke* had etched with a nail. Friends and neighbors came by and offered condolences to the children, patting the little ones on their ~~winy~~ *winy* heads, *muttering pious pleas of "God have mercy" before turning aside to resume their normal activities*. When the last mourner had left the small graveyard, Lola passed through the wooden picket gate also with the children behind her. Walking on the dusty road in the sultry ~~day~~ *humidity*, a drop of rain mixed with the tears on Lola's face, more following with a sudden downpour. Lola continued the slow pace grateful for the wetness of the cool rain and the sound to drown out her crying.

*check this scene with copy for correction*

*end scene*  
The day after the funeral Mrs. Mattie Lou, (Jim's friend Zeke's mother), a robust woman in her ~~only~~ *early* fifties whose shanty was directly across the road from Lolas came over dressed in an ~~clean~~ *clean* ~~apron~~ *apron*, *with hands on her bread hips* and announced, "you chill'uns ~~are~~ *done* needing a home and ~~its~~ *its* gonna' give you one, ~~for you~~ *for you* ~~can't~~ *can't* stay here no more by your self". Lola was reluctant but the brusque speech offered no alternative. ~~amidst~~ *amidst* much good natured grumblings the busy woman started gathering scattered, dirty clothing and belongings ~~and~~ *and* placing them in one of the cardboard boxes from one of Mrs. Junes gift givings. Lola carried her own containing the broken mirror and shoes Mrs. June had given her leaving behind the box with the doll.

Trailing behind Mrs. Mattie Lou the children crossed ~~ed~~ *ed* the road ~~and~~ *and* entered the cleanly hoed and swept yard with traces of brush broom marks in the

*MUSSINA*

*miscellaneous*

*sandy, black*

dirt. No grass or weeds were allowed to grow here. A perfectly square yard was made around the house with weeds being allowed to remain outside the boundary. Walking up the immaculate door steps, which creaked with Mattie Lou's bulk, they trailed. Rust speckled cans and worn out pots contained various flowers and plants along the porch ledges. Two old worn rockers with cow hide bottoms sat amidst the <sup>display</sup> forray of planters. Entering the house each child imitated Mattie Lou's brushing of the feet on the multi-colored, braided, rag rug. A hot breeze gently stirred the <sup>bleached</sup> homespun curtains at the open wooden windows. Against the walls were three more chairs with cowhide bottoms and a long, narrow cot-like bed with a patch work quilt covering. On the floor was another circular braided rug. The mantel above the small brick fireplace contained a clock like Deaks. Also like Deaks, were several calendars, spaced in equal distances apart with similar scenes, except for one larger one which was a print of two happy smiling white children playing on an old wooden swing.

Bustling on through the house to another room separated by more clean, sunny smelling homespun curtains, Mattie Lou proceeded with the children bringing up the rear. Not another word had been spoken, but there was no doubt about who was the authority figure here. The smell of ginger bread and other good things made the children stop as they entered through the parted curtains. They stood and sniffed deeply as they watched Mattie Lou deposit the box containing their few belongings on the floor. With much ado Mattie Lou started lifting lids on the old wood stove which emitted smells Lola hadn't smelled since ~~Mrs.~~ June's Christmas dinner. Above the stove, against the wall, hung several iron pots of various shapes and sizes. A wood scaffold hung out side the window and Mattie Lou reached through and easily grabbed a couple of pieces with her big, capable hands, and opening the door of the stove placed them carefully. Stirring once more then replacing the lids she turned to the hypnotized

*of wood*

youngsters. "I bet y'all is hungry", she stated. Getting no response from the three, she spoke louder, "~~HAS~~ y'all et today?" "No <sup>None</sup> mam", we ain't", replied Lola, feeling more than a little apprehensive but too hungry not to speak up for some of that wonderful food bubbling in the pots. "Get ~~your~~ <sup>your</sup> selves clean first, ~~then~~ <sup>then</sup> we can eat". "Out on ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> porch", she <sup>SAID</sup> ~~pointed~~ to the screen door leading out the back of the house. Opening the screened door upon which was attached a piece of cotton to keep flies out, she went. The children quietly tiptoeing behind. On the back porch was a long shelf containing 2 buckets of water. One held a <sup>GOAL</sup> ~~goard~~ dipper; the other without. She easily lifted and poured a nearby pan halfful. Beside the bucket was a bar of foul smelling soap which she handed to Lola. "Now you wash up good, you hear, I don't take kindly to <sup>no</sup> ~~nast~~'ness." Mattie <sup>SAID</sup> ~~warned~~. Lola started rubbing the soap over her dark, dry hands leaving ~~a~~ white ~~tracks~~ tracks. Mattie Lou took <sup>Lola's</sup> ~~her~~ hands and dunked them into the water, lathering with the soap again and again. When Lola thought her hands might have no skin left, Mattie Lou turned her towards the wall to a clean white towel hanging from a nail and dried the clean flesh roughly. Continuing this process until all three were clean, they then followed her back towards the delicious <sup>aroma</sup> ~~as~~ she continued her lecture about cleanliness.

Taking three plates from the old safe in one corner of the kitchen, she bid the children to sit ~~at~~ at the table on a long smooth <sup>WOOD</sup> ~~hewed~~ <sup>wood</sup> bench. They obeyed without question with feet dangling and eyes large as Mattie Lou heaped generous steaming portions of acre peas, squash, boilded, red skinned white potatoes; all vegetables she <sup>BOASTED</sup> ~~proudly~~ came from her own garden. Then she added large scoops of pork and rice and fluffy biscuits onto the plates. ~~Mattie Lou~~ <sup>Placed</sup> a plate in front of each child with the scents rising to their noses <sup>OR</sup> they continued sniffing. ~~When~~ Mattie Lou released each plate, the children moving the forks out of the plates, ~~dug~~ dug in with their fingers. "Woe, you <sup>ORN'RY</sup> ~~chery~~ mules," shouted Mattie, holding her white palmed hands towards them

"Y'all might be hungry, but y'all ain't <sup>no</sup> animals". Now move yo' hands away til I ~~say~~ grace," she <sup>SAID</sup> ordered. Having no idea of the meaning of grace, they sat, hands in laps, until Mrs. Mattie Lou finished talking to "'de Good Lawd". Still unsure, they waited for her signal. "Now y'all ~~can~~ eat, but not ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> yo' fingers; ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> the fo'kes ~~and~~". Lola, now starved beyond endurance, began first with the others watching. ~~Now they~~ <sup>They</sup> ~~followed~~ <sup>saw</sup>, losing more in their laps than went into their mouths. Soon Mattie Lou turned away, cleaning, washing, and stirring; occasionally glancing discreetly back ~~occasionally~~ at the three. Sneakily, eyes on her back, ~~they~~ <sup>they</sup> ~~began~~ eating once again with their fingers of one hand, holding the utensil with the other. When they were stuffed <sup>near</sup> to their limits, Mattie Lou turned around with a pan of ginger bread and placed a large square on each child's licked-clean plate. They immediately dug in again as Mattie purposely turned her back, busily cleaning ~~again~~ and smiling. It had been so long since she had had ~~these~~ small children in her home and she missed that. <sup>para</sup> Her own children <sup>were</sup> grown except Zeke who was now fifteen and away most of the time. Mattie had missed the mothering which was instinctive to her by nature. She loved fussing over these young children whom she had watched for so long in their horrible house accross the way, never daring before to step in because Willie, her husband, said it was none of her business. Well, now ~~there~~ was no one else to look after them. Their older sister Rose had moved away with George and no one had heard from her since. He couldn't refuse, being the gentle man that he was. Except for his drinking, which he mostly did away from the house, because Mattie Lou didn't allow ~~alcohol~~ in her house, Willie was a fine man and an excellent worker and she loved him dearly, but as most of the ~~homes~~ homes in the "quarters" of Seymore theirs was ~~matriarcal~~ <sup>matriarcal</sup>, for the most part; the strong woman as head of the house. Her two older daughters ~~was~~ were married and living in N. Ga. in the same town. Zeke had started drinking also and keeping bad company, as she called ~~it~~ Jim,

occasionally  
they began

these

alcohol

matriarcal

;

I would consider deleting this

They worked and visited "Abe's" almost nightly where Mattie Lou had heard that a prostitute exhibited her charms frequently. Living on the hill, the prostitute, <sup>WHO</sup> which was labelled Jezabel by the other women, ~~had been said to perform various unnatural acts in exchange for money~~, earned <sup>ed</sup> more than she ever could have while working in the fields. The woman of low character created quite a fuss by the good women of Seymore. Not only did some their men squander their hard-earned money on <sup>the white whiskey</sup> liquor but also on Jezabel. Mattie Lou had heard that she ~~entertained~~ more than one at the time, also, which seemed quite absurd to her who had long ago decided sex was quite disgusting aside ~~from~~ the purpose of creation. There had been a time when she and Willie were much younger that she had enjoyed his caresses, but seeing the carnal nature of the act she had ~~it~~ laid down the law to Willie and after Zeke was born refused to be a party any longer. Years of hard work and mothering had taken the place of affection for Willie. She still loved him but it was more maternal than lustful. *Thoughts about Lucy The Pigeon's miscegenation*

After the kitchen was spotlessly clean, Mattie dashed the pan of greasy dishwater out the window onto the lucious blooms of <sup>THE</sup> purple hydrangers, wiped out the bottom, and hung it on a nail above the wooden shelf covered below by hanging curtains of pink cotton material. <sup>SHE SIGNALLED</sup> Signaling the still seated <sup>little</sup> children to follow, grabbed the box of clothes, and went out the back door into the clean yard. Under a large mimosa tree filled with frilly pink flowers she placed the box on ~~an~~ old wooden bench and took her position of command. Looking like a big general she ordered the small <sup>up</sup> troops to gather firewood from the nearby pile and place it under the <sup>big</sup> black wash kettle. Taking a box of matches from her apron pocket, she lit the fire under the pot which the little ragged troops had filled with water from the brick walled well next to the <sup>boiling</sup> boiling pot. Next she dumped the clothes into the water stirring with a long

pole until the steam was rising. Then she lifted <sup>EACH GARMENT</sup> one by one, onto the bench. After they had cooled, she began scrubbing them vigorously ~~after rubbing soap~~ on a metal ribbed rubbing board held upright against the tree. Then she tossed them back into the steaming water, stirring them <sup>AGAIN</sup> and <sup>AFTER</sup> removing them, she placed them in a bent tin tub. Trudging off to the clothes line, staunch and ready hung between two sturdy poles, she wrung the hot water out, flapped them ceremoniously in the wind, <sup>then</sup> taking wooden clothes pins she proceeded to hang the tattered, abused garments. When the last was hung, she took a long fence rail with a slit in the top, placed the wire between the slit and raised it. Clothes now saluting ~~to~~ her in the gentle summer breeze, she wiped her hands on her apron and ~~then~~ turned to face the little troops standing at attention. "Get ~~that~~ ~~the~~ wash tub and put it on ~~the~~ porch". Obeying the orders immediately, wondering what next, all three grabbed the empty tub and hoisted it up over the side of the porch. Mattie Lou began bringing buckets full of the now warming water from the wash pot and filling it. When it was filled almost to the top she again commanded, "Follow me". The little black soldiers obeyed, marching ~~xxxxxxx~~ up the porch steps <sup>AND</sup> over to the tin tub. "Now you strip down", she <sup>SAID TO</sup> ordered Lola. Lola looked at her, then down at her filthy shift. "Off with ~~it~~ and the breeches", <sup>SAID</sup> shouted Mattie Lou. Lola, without hesitation, took the dress off and the dirty cotton panties. "Now get into ~~the~~ water", <sup>SAID</sup> directed Mattie Lou. "Yes 'um", <sup>SAID</sup> replied Lola, ~~and~~ stepping into the ~~the~~ tub. ~~she~~. "Set yourself down", ordered the officer, and the little soldier sat. Mattie Lou grabbed the bucket and scooped <sup>IT</sup> half ~~up~~ <sup>FULL</sup> bucket full of water from between Lola's out stretched knees and poured it over her head without warning. Lola sputtered and started to get up and make a run for it, but Mattie Lou stayed her with her strong hands, picked up the foul smelling soap and a rough rag and ~~gathered~~ <sup>gathered</sup> it until bubbles stung Lola's

eyes. She then started scrubbing Lola from head to foot. Every inch was scrubbed until the skin threatened to peel. Pouring more water from the bucket over Lola's head, she allowed her to immerge to the floor where she started vigorously drying her with a fresh towel. Lola now donned her old uniform to wait as Mattie <sup>INSTRUCTED</sup> ~~said~~ until the others on the line had dried. The younger children having witnessed the process of washing began to scurry away when Mattie Lou looked at them and commanded, "into ~~the~~ water". She easily and gently grabbed them, shucking their clothes aside and plopped them both into the tub together. They started to cry but then seeing ~~xx~~ Lola none the worse for the wear and tear of the scouring, they squealed delightfully as Mattie poured water on them also. Bath time over, the small platoon was marched back inside and put down on patchwork quilted pallets for a nap. Lola was amazed at the complicated procedure of what Mattie Lou called "decent liv'in". She quickly <sup>BECAME</sup> ~~becoming~~ drowsy, her skin tingling, and her stomach full. Mattie Lou <sup>SAT</sup> ~~sitting~~ nearby in the old rocker watching over her troops as they slept. with anticipation of "mussing" (as she referred to holding) the smaller ones  
(STOP) (end of scene) Mattie Lou thrived in her role as surrogate mother, paying particular attention to the smaller girls. The ten year old Lola, too large to be rocked and cuddled, was quite often put to work in the small garden patch out back picking the peas ~~and~~ squash and digging the potatoes. She scrubbed floors, washed clothes and dishes constantly under the scrutiny of Mattie. She didn't mind at all, she had a full stomach and wasn't accustomed to affection anyway. The following week Mattie announced that Lola must ~~one~~ again go to the cotton fields so she wouldn't "get spiled by easy livin'". Lola was glad to return although now the summer heat was at ~~it's~~ peak. In much <sup>PHYSICAL</sup> better condition than before, Lola hoed the cotton each day except Sun, on which she still helped Mrs. June. Mattie would attend church with the other children proudly preening them on the short walk to the hill.

Sometimes walking over to the Lee's on hot summer mornings Lola would stand in front of her old house remembering Mama <sup>holding a</sup> ~~with white~~ flowers in her rough hands. She didn't know why she imagined the flowers because Mama never had had any flowers. She still enjoyed going to Miz June's, who always seemed eager to hear ~~about~~ her new home. Lola wasn't much for conversation and would only nod affirmatively to questions <sup>about</sup> ~~about~~ how she was treated by Mattie. And in truth Mattie was good to her <sup>seeing to her physical needs</sup> but Mattie's speciality was babies and Lola had started <sup>maturing</sup> ~~developing~~ slightly from all the nourishing foods and "clean living". Mattie had insisted that Lola wear the shoes in her box from Miz June and she would, squenching her toes in agony until out of sight of the house, and then she carried them in her hands <sup>and enjoyed</sup> ~~and enjoyed~~ once again <sup>enjoying the feel of the sand squishing</sup> ~~the squishing sand under~~ her toes.

Return

Mr. Willie came home most nights and spoke kindly but formally one by one to the children who replied at Mattie's prompting, "How de do".and "Fine thank <sup>you!</sup>" Terrified of men since Big Mo had been the only male role model they could relate to, the two little girls would wrap themselves in Mattie's big skirt for cover, much to her delight. Lola was indifferent to Willie as was she to Zeke, who occasionally made his appearance along with Jim. Jim never even seemed to notice any of them. He seemed to have completely extricated himself from the remaining family since his new found man hood. Zeke was always swearing and Mattie correcting. Occasionally she would slap him if he used "de Lawd's name in vain" and he would wander away with Jim not to be seen again for several days but Mattie's cooking always enticed him back again. Summer now coming to an end it was <sup>Time</sup> to pick up the sweet potatoes for the farmers. A mule pulled ~~turn plow~~ turn plow would go down the <sup>back</sup> ~~green~~ <sup>leaved</sup> ~~folliaged~~ rows uprooting the red vegetables and the children would follow the mule picking up the potatoes and tossing them into a pile. Then



moving on along they would form another. Later a wagon would come along and they would again pick up the potatoes and pile them on the <sup>it</sup> wagon to be taken to the farm yard to be banked. Banking consisted of layering the potatoes in straw to protect them from the coming cold. A large mound was formed, ~~then~~ covered with dirt and on top <sup>and with</sup> a piece of tin <sup>was put</sup> to prevent erosion from the up-coming <sup>fall</sup> rains. Lola enjoyed the work in the sweet potatoes more than anything else. As much as she knew Mattie would fuss, she loved munching off the end of the long potato sprout, dirt and all. She had not become accustomed to the total lack of dirt and Mattie warned that she would die of worms in her body <sup>if the practice continued.</sup> In the potato fields she felt free from the restrictions of Mattie's immaculate household and also free to laugh with her peers at bawdy jokes of which Mattie would certainly not approve. She made a game of pretending <sup>that</sup> the potatoes of different shapes were various objects or people. Toss the doll onto the pile, toss the ball onto the pile, etc. The others would join her and they would laugh uproariously making the supervising farmer suspicious.

Walking home in the evenings they would always stop by the river, despite Mattie's warnings. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Crossing the bridge they would jump over the side at the end and race down the bank, jumping into the cold shallow water, rolling over and over. Finally emerging as the sun started sinking low, shaking like dogs they would climb the steep banks avoiding the bamboo vines thorns and the heavily wooded areas which surely housed moccassins waiting for a small animal to <sup>attack.</sup> ~~eat.~~ Partially drying in the <sup>balmy late</sup> ~~hot~~ summer breeze, walking as slowly as possible to allow the traces of dampness to disappear, they would start for home. Walking the tree lined road <sup>they</sup> pretending <sup>would</sup> fright as night <sup>would</sup> fall and an owl hoot <sup>would</sup> from a nearby tree.   
*(needs rewriting)*