

colleges
Fanny's son
subplot

Save All My Children and Grandchildren
By
Janice Daugharty

can tell
you like
long ago
scattered
clayton
of powder
bad memory
sister who had
child by her
husband
ever while
during at it
from her
really Georgie
is a big girl about
Marion being good
Georgia running
month on her
summer, not
during her

CHANGE FANNY TO FANNY AND ZEKE TO ZEKE (EZEKIEL)—LOUSANNE COULD BE CHANGED TO FLORIDA OR FLORA

NOTES: PERIOD, PRESENT. CIRCUMSTANCES, ALL CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN GATHERING AT THE HOME OF GRANDMOTHER AFTER HER FUNERAL; ZEKE, FAVORITE GRANDCHILD, MOTHER FANNY. ZEKE TAKES THE DOLLAR BILL THE GIRLS FIND UNDER AN OLD CAKE TIN, KNOWING HIS GRANDMOTHER WOULD WANT HIM TO HAVE IT, BESIDES HE NEEDS IT TO HELP PAY FOR CIGARETTES. LOUSANNE FROM CALIF, WIG OF BRAIDS LIKE WHIPS DOWN HER BACK, doesn't talk much but talks through her goldrimmed front teeth; START WITH SCENE, MOOD; GRANDCHILDREN WITH LONG ODD NAMES, PRETTY LITTLE GIRLS IN FRILLY DRESSES AND BOWS IN THEIR HAIR AND SHINY PATENT SHOES; LITTLE BOYS IN SUITS—a glimpse into the life of

DIALOGUE LIKE FLANNERY O'CONNOR -SENSORY DETAIL—WHAT ABOUT THE MEN, HUSBANDS, ETC

MARK PICKED UP THE DOLLAR BILL BECAUSE THE MONEY HAD BEEN VALUABLE TO HIS . FRISKY—FANNY'S NEW NAME

MUCH MORE ATMOSPHERE—A GLIMPSE IN THE LIFE OF THE GRANDMOTHER SMOKED; SMELL OF TOBACCO—NEAT SMOKER, RITUAL TO HER SITTING ON THE FRONT PORCH WITH HER LITTLE GREEN ASHTRAY, BOX OF MATCHES AND SOFT PACK OF CAMELS (FANNY BOUGHTT HER CIGARETTES AFTER THE PRICE WENT UP SO THAT THE OLD LADY COULD NO LONGER AFORD THE COMPANY OF HER CIGARETTES. THERE TOO, FANNY WAS IN CONTROL. HER MOTHER WAS INDEBTED TO HER . FANNY CALLED THE SHOTS, BE IT WHETHER THE OLD LADY WENT TO CHURCH OR STAYED HOME ON SUNDAYS, OR WHETHER ONE OF FANNY'S "FEELINGS" HAD TURNED OUT TO BE FACT. IF FANNY WAS OUT WITH ONE OF THE SISTERS, IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THAT HER MOTHER WOULD TAKE HER SIDE. REALLY THERE WERE NO LIMITS TO FANNY'S BRIBERY, WHEN OF COURSE FANNY

but where he mentions cigarette smoke

So slowly -
develop
Georgia goes
by her
for all kinds
of things
she has in
her own
thing
Georgia
& Marion
Flora
Flora alone
more development
relationships
she pulls in
Pants
him in
a boy

So slowly - develop
Marion's apartment - Georgia change how
apart in to work

Flora sets out of just stands there, shocked,

Observed in her doll-size rocker, she
 would sit out on the front porch after her
 work was done for the day, savouring each piece
 of her ~~practised~~ ^{practised} smoking ~~practice~~ ritual. Small green
~~Whitney~~ balanced on a chair arm.

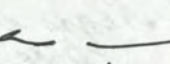
Make it clear that Fanny is proud of
 Zeke, in an odd modest way -- she is
 above bragging about him. But he is
 the only child of the sisters to have gone to
 college.

On Monday morning, flat at nine on Zeke's
 watch, Fanny out front of ~~his~~ ^{his apartment} ~~the~~ horn of the
 Suburbans before his apartment.

He has just dragged himself out of the narrow
 bed of his darkened bedroom -- last night he'd drunk
 beer and watched TV till 2 AM. The taste rises
 upon his throat, a sour belch, and he needs to brush
 his teeth at least. A shower is out of the question.

She toots the horn again. Waits, then lays down
 on it.

In the felt-tipped bathroom, he gales his toothbrush
 or is it Fud's? No time to try to figure it out. He squirts

a worm of toothpaste on the worn buckles -- it's
Fud's, and scrubs his tongue like a  on
one of the stoves in the kitchen of a house they
clean.

Now she's slapping on the door. Not knocking
like anybody else. "E-ze-ki-el!"

On the way to the door, he sees Fud sleepily
undisturbed in the bedroom across from his - ~~door~~.

(Zeke has slept in his ~~clothes~~ same pants &
jumps on a TV shirt - VSU red
belonging to Fud, they met at VSU before Zeke quit. He'd never
bought a
shirt and
usually would
be caught dead in
one. He's never
gone back though
Fanny
he's told Fanny
that he's taking a permit
off to make some
money for tuition &
such. Hope school's

Flora, staying over with Fanny for a few days before
heading back to Calif, is seated up front with Fanny
driving, running her mouth, it's summer & Fanny's not
downing her his route, but that doesn't stop her from
pointing out the grassy ^{parked median} of Berner Road where
any fool can see there is no turn entrance for 2 whole
miles; "Don't know their heads from a hole in the ground,
that bunch of commissioners."
When she has to stop for breath, Flora turns & says,

"VSU?"
Zeke looks down at the white setting on Fud's ^{shirt} ~~short~~.
"Yeah. Salinas State University."

Post tense

"He's going back if I have to drag his - back." Fanny adjusted the rear mirror to show her rectangle of bulging black eyes set on him. "Taking time out to make ~~some~~ ^{within} money, he say. Lose his HOPE scholarship - all that messing round. Couldn't keep up his grades."

Flora started to speak but Fanny batted her. Talking now about cleaning houses, who was who & what they liked & what asked her to 'do & what she didn't do. "Am I sweeping no ~~spaces~~ ^{spaces}, not me. Not less they pay me for it. Am I included, 'll say."

Zeke watched the whips or brails on the back of Flora's waddy head; then stared out the window of the sliding Walmart parking lot, ~~looking~~ ^{jamming} with automobile at 9:15 in the morning. Fanny got at Walmart on clean supplies which somehow leads into cheaper bargains at Top Dollar & messer her chance at the Valdosta Mall on the

* * *
make clean
her bragging
underhand
or Zeke.
"Still, ain't
a one of my
sisters ever
had a gringer
with the
brain for
college."
competes
with sister
Zeke embarrassed
by her bragging

Suburban whinger part, on over the interstate and the traffic below which usually would set ~~off~~ ^{off} some long tirade about people on the go and ~~the~~ ^{'s (husband)} getting his gas hauling job ~~and~~ ^{the picks up there} ~~of course~~ naturally leads into his ^{business} affair with her own sister Billy Ruth. Of course, she's not sleeping with him any more. "Anyway...", she holds out her pointer finger to Flora & let it drop, then cast her eyes back on the mirror to be sure Zeke hadn't seen & (Go back: Fanny's ^{body} T-shirt - "No, I'm not PC (something else)")

2 more scenes: clearing house, Hardeen

purpose
To undercut his embarrassment about ~~of~~ Jimmy's ^{underhanded} bragging on him, Zeke gets out of the Suburban in front of the house they'll be clearing, and heads straight for a rope swing hanging from the huge oak on the south side of the house.

~~He swings~~
Shoving at the trench of door with his ^{falling} Nukes he swings high, up ~~and~~ looking down at Jimmy & Selora unloading & packing clearing supplies from the back of the car to the doorstep, then inside. ~~There~~ Jimmy is ^{hanging} ~~standing~~ down next to nothing & Selora smiling from the porch before going inside.

All that Zeke can hear is the way of roar of traffic on the Interstate & the ~~at~~ rote bird call of a ~~humming~~ mocking bird from another oak nearby. One call is of a bob-white; he listens for the bob white that the mocking bird is mocking, but doesn't hear one & thinks that bird is pretty smart to have ~~remembered~~ ~~remembered~~ kept the sound in ~~his~~ its head.

At the height of his ~~swing~~ Zeke could see the sky above the peak of the ~~the~~ peak of the black roof ~~where~~ and the mocking bird in flight after it has ~~tried~~ used up all its calls.
used up all it knows. work or thin

5
weather - atmosphere

go back to page one: "Fanny's baby, 21 year old Zeki,"

It was Zeki's job to clean the kitchen. ~~While~~ He listened to Fanny talking over the vacuum cleaner at the back of the house, while she moved everything from the long counter to the oak table, middle of the kitchen: Toaster, ~~coffee~~ coffee maker, old vase of cooking utensils, ^{blender,} chopping board, even the microwave. Then he set to scrubbing the counter tops, pink & stone with straight Clorox on a rag. Fumes rising like methane gas, almost choking him. ~~But~~

The vacuum cleaner cut off: "U see you like orange too," Flora said to Fanny.

"Orange everything?" Fanny began naming off the ~~brands~~ brands of furniture polish, bathroom scrub, on & on. When she broke off to make the next on her list Flora said, "Baby Ruth is a good about orange too."

"How you know that?"
"U went to," stay with her in Florida a little while last year.

"Huh!" The vacuum cleaner raved into actions. Flora wandered into the kitchen, smiling.

Zeke wiped his beach-burned eyes of the
sleeve of his ^{white} shirt. There was
a ^{white} spot of white on the tail of his shirt where
the bleach from the sparkly corners had touched.

"Boy, you're in for it now," Zeke laughed, "you
saying that about going to ^{Aunt} Baby Ruth."

"It's no change of expression on Flora's face --
she was still smiling. She did glance back as
if Fanny might be standing in the doorway listening,
even though the vacuum cleaner was still
roaring, tramping, bumping behind dressers
in its way.

"Worth it though, wouldn't it?" Zeke was
replacing the appliance ~~stuff~~ on the counter.

Flora ~~sat at the table~~ handed him the
chopping board. Smiling. Saying nothing.

"What gets her so?" -- Zeke took the
cutting board, placing it carefully between the
bleached stone & sink. "What gets her goat is
not knowing something. Not that she's any
fool about Aunt Baby Ruth, not now after
what happened with Waddy. Man! he's in
the dog house. Nope. She just has to
know." (so back "ZE-YALL!")

"She's proud of you." ^{backhanded}
"Yeah, yeah. Really all that raging on me is
bragging on herself. How she's done better than her
~~other~~ raising her younger."

7

The vacuum cleaner chutes off the very second Fanny choute, "ZEE-YALL!"

"Yeah, Mama." He was neatly ~~the~~ coffee ~~in~~ its exact spot (describe) "What'll tell you about Mrs Budie hair be falling out? Whole glob tangle round the vacuum roller."

"Yeah, Mama."

Flora smiled.

"See what I mean?" Zeke said.

(not speaking to Flora now)
(withy fast, bumpy shuff)

At Fanny's at Flora for having gone to see Baby Ruth with out telling her, Fanny was giving her the silent treatment, the U.-can't-even-see-you-treatment, so stay out of my way or I'll run over you. Sugging plastic boxes, cleaning supplies & rags and the vacuum cleaner, she set out for the Suburban loading it up. Last thing she did before leaving, was take her special Mrs Budie mops & swab down the kitchen floor. She kept ^{the ~~strongest~~ wet} it wet & clean & covered with a ^{poor} stone plastic bag. She wouldn't use her other mops, like wire covered, on other people's floors. Zeke sat in the ~~back~~ ^{front} seat of the car with the door open, sweaty, listening to the mocking bird, trying

to name off on his head each of the various imitations.
~~then~~ One she felt sure was a recitation of
the frog.

Flora, in the passenger seat up front, was
sitting still, waiting, sweating with her door closed.

~~Turn on the~~
"Want me to crank up & turn on the air
for you," Zeke said, fanning snats from his
face with his black rubber hand. The snats didn't
even notice the bleach, kept swarming.

"I'm okay," she said.

They watched as Fanny came breezing out the
door with the map, plastic bag tied to the
handle. She slapped the map in back of the
Sunbather, slammed down the hatch &
in a flash (till how she walks) opened to
driver door & hauled herself up into the seat
by hanging to the pull overhead.

"Hardee's. What you say Zeke?"

"Whatever Aunt Flora wants suits
me."

"Huh!"

Now that she was out with Flora, she
was badder with Zeke. Well, she was badder
to Hardee's anyway, he knew that.

her huge ^{water} ^{throat} ^{lose} ^{weight} ^{drunk} ^{use}
At the drive through ^{she} ^{ordered} ^{for} ^{herself}. Two burger all the way with a large fries
& large Coke.

If poor Flora thought one of the burgers was
for her, she had another think coming. ^{She always order of} ^{the same they those} ^{fused about} ^{her weight.}

"Zek-yall?" Fanny eyed him in the mirror.

"The same," he said. He would give her

Fanny
in
photo

don't Flora one of his burgers.

Fanny must have flew as much, because
her ^{to} ^{light} ^{palmed} ^{hand} just missed Flora's
head as she swung it behind her for the
money. Some times she would pay for Zeku in order,
sometimes she wouldn't.

He stretched out his right leg & dug in his
pockets. He handed her a five & three ones.

Then she passed her own 20 dollar bill
to the hand in the window to show Flora
how well she was doing, how much better off
in the money department she was compared to
that lazy Baby Ruth who lived off child support
from her own husband.

While waiting for the change, she leaned her
arm in the window & drummed with her fingers
on the roof of the car.

Suddenly, she stopped, staring down at Zeku's
5 & 3 ones on her lap.
When the girl in the window came back
with her change, she took it

9
Can she understand why she should "reduce"?

She just sat there.

10

When her order came along with her change, she took it, placing all on top of the narrow space between her seat & Flora's, even the glass cover, which slid into the back & popped over on the car floor & even Zeke's feet. Overlapped sliding to the floor, change rolling & Flora trying to retrieve it all, while her eyes rolled over Fanny's beached white face;

"Mama, what..."

She threw the car in gear & shot off, just missing a car & into a parking slot, then scabbled up the remaining reach of fries on the space between seat & started to slings it like a whip at Zeke in the rear, shouting, crying.

Flora opened the door & got out, then closed it and stood there, stunned. "Mama." Zeke got out, come id in salt & scattered from to the bitterny asphalt.

Now she was holding up a dollar bill, fanning it for him to see. "You stole my mama's dolla." ~~But~~

So, that was it. He'd forgotten.

"I didn't steal nothing. I took it cause nobody else did & want it."

Fanny's dresser down window on the side
"You a thief & don't make like you ain't. Flora my witness."
"I ain't nobody's witness," Flora said.
"You my witness, my son be a thief?"

~~You make to~~
"You make too much out of this," said Flora, seeming to puff like a turtle out of its shell.

"Yeah, Mama." Zeke ~~was stopped~~ ^{became stumpy} like from his shoes.

A man & woman on the way to their car pretended not to watch. But once inside their car, they simply sat there watching.

Fanny was still fanning the dollar bill with some my children & grandchildren on it.
"You, Zeke, you ain't no son a mine."

"If that's how you want it, Mama." 12
He started to walk off.
"Get back in here," she shouted. "You
too, Florida."

"No, ma'am," Flora said, following
after Zeke across the parking lot.

Zeke stopped. "Let 'em get back in to
shut her up."

Manager & customer staidly outside the
door (cross armed)

Flora kept walking.

"Aunt Flora, she's liable to run over
you if you don't."

"She's not my marna," ^{headed around building} Zeke said, "I'm sick of her
bossing me around."

Zeke stepped up to the window where Fanny
was sitting, silent now. She smelled of
orange. "Keep the money, Mama."

"It ain't money I'm talkin' about. It's
the principal of the thing."

"Keep the principle then," he said &
stalked off, following running to catch up with
Flora around the back of the building.

Fud and his girlfriend had eaten all the popcorn, and Zeke had to eat all that was left in the kitchen was a halfpack ~~of~~ stale saltines, suspiciously ^{prebly} ~~prebly~~. ~~Maybe~~ Really hungry. Needing something to nibble on, ~~with~~ to go with his beer, he had placed the crackers in the microwave, to at least ~~kill~~ make the bugs, or maybe worms, and when he'd taken ~~the~~ them out, each cracker had black burn holes in the center, looked struck by lightning. The whole apartment smelled of scorch, and Zeke can ~~can~~ could smell it now.

in car waiting for Fanny;
 "He wondered what the true
 around of the monkey had,
 wondered if even the monkey
 knew."

Zeke had girlfriends, himself, lots of girlfriends, but none serious since Sera, a ~~be~~ petite, light-skinned girl ^{from Atlanta} who he had met in Eng 181. He'd made the mistake of taking her to the last family reunion, where the sisters of Fanny had spoken her with their ^{cutty} loud mouths. She'd looked like a mouse among cats. Fanny was the one though who eventually scared Sera away by calling her at her door the following day & telling her what from what, laying down ^{the family} rules: no drinking, no smoking, no dope, ~~no sex~~. "Forget sex." My son is going off to be a doctor and he don't want him getting some girl in the family way.

And on it went, Fanny even going so far as to venture that the word 'save' had been meant in a religious vein, and they should leave it at that. Plus, some she could name in that very room ought to take it as a sign and turn to Jesus or they would wind up in hell.

Baby Ruth stepped out on the back porch. Leaning against one of the leaning posts and pouting. WHAT'S SHE WEARING. ALL IN HATS, ETC

Inside, the sisters had toned down, talking about the hard old times and what a dollar would buy back then but wouldn't buy today. Not even a loaf of bread.

Unable to resist such sisterly reminising Baby Ruth turned and went back through the screen door, slamming it.

The slam reverberated over the darkening yard and darker woods. Zeke stepped out from under the grapevine. Through the window a yellow light shined and he could see the sisters gathered round the round table in the middle of the kitchen. Half seated, half standing, they were crying again, sniffing, hugging necks. Then Fanny's familiar heavy pounding feet in one room and then the other as if she was everywhere at once. The others rose from the table, all except for Flora, and soon they were carting boxes of dishes and pots and pans and crochet pieces from the house to their cars. More doors slamming and all of them calling out to the children that it was time to go.

"Ezek--iel!" From the front yard, Fanny yelled through a megaphone of hands, sounded like, "You Zeke!" Fanny listening. "Go in the house there and help carry these boxes out, will you?" she added. *shouted*

He watched Flora still seated at the table, reading and rereading the message on the dollar bill. She folded it. Unfolded it, stood and put it the pocket of her black pants, then turned, looking back at the kitchen.

Zeke started toward the porch, to go inside, when he saw Flora return and place the dollar bill flat on the table, then leave again.

He didn't know what to make of it. Had Flora decided that the dollar was as worthless as all the others apparently had? Was one of them coming back for it? Maybe Flora had wanted it for a keepsake, one of the few worthless items in the house with the old ladies handwriting on it, but changed her mind.

Were they leaving it? Did nobody want it?

Bedraggled with untied sashes and dangling bowties, the children dashed up the doorsteps and through the back door and out the front. Was the dollar bill so worthless, this day and age, that even the children who had wasted the grapes wouldn't pick it up?

ZEKE goes through the door to the quiet kitchen—not even a clock tick—all sounds taking place in a huge monstrous racket of the family in the front yard, saying goodbyes and children whining about who had to sit in back and they are hungry, starving. Mothers scolding.

having TAKES THE BILL AND FOLDS IT AND PUTS IT IN HIS POCKETS TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS GRANDMOTHER'S GESTure, BECAUSE HE KNOWS SHE SAVED IT FOR HER FAMILY DURING HARD TIMES, WHEN A DOLLAR WAS A DOLLAR, AND IN GOOD TIMES NOBODY WANTS IT.

shrilling laughter and shouts almost deafened him, not to mention the hen-clucking of the sisters already on the porch and inside the house.

Fanny was dressed in black. For everyday, she wore overlarge tee shirts with writing on them denying that she minded being bigger around than she was high. Jokey stuff that she thought was cute. The black dress was short and showed the pale creases on the backs of her knees like cuts in dough. Flora was all in black too, but her knit tailored pantsuit looked somber, suited to her, with those whippets of fake braids flipping on her shoulders the only decoration. Mostly she just smiled. Was smiling now as up the lye-scrubbed wooden steps she followed Fanny onto the porch. A yellowfly was feeding on her left cheek. Another sister, older and stouter, walked right up and slapped her face and she hardly flinched. Fanny, on the other hand, was raking the flies off her arms and face, talking loud and pushing through the crowd in the doorway.

It was hot as hell, and the sisters were ~~START EDITING HERE, SEE BELOW FOR ARGUMENT~~ whispering about Fanny bad-mouthing their dead mother for siding with Baby Ruth on some earlier argument between the two sisters ~~HOT—DIALOGUE~~

“That the thanks I get for raising you-all.” Fanny flounced inside, snatching round so that her back was to the grouped sisters in Mama’s living room.

“Mama raise me, what I say,” Baby Ruth said low. “What y’all say?” Fanning with a hand fan from church, she stepped out of the grumbling crowd, to the porch and kept going till she reached the south end.

“Mama be at work half the time.” Fanny almost shouted from the doorway, for the benefit of those in the room and on the porch. “Cooking for Mr. Dukes and them.”

LIKELY BENEFITTED FROM THE OLD LADY'S HABIT BECAUSE IT KEPT HER FROM MAKING MORE MAJOR REQUESTS.

*archive about
Spella's house
Island*

Save All My Children and Grandchildren

By

Janice Daugharty

Fanny, who knew everything and never stinted on sharing what she knew, turned her dusty green SUV left off the rutted dirt road and up the lane behind her sister Baby Ruth's new gold Maxima. The lane was two paths worn through thickets of cat-claw briars, bamboo and vines, and volunteer scrub trees dooming the old two-acre home place as wasteland in the prime timber country of Southeast Georgia. It was as if the very taint of Negro ownership had rendered the land valueless, in spite of the background view of tall hardy pines whose tops stood in tiers against the fading blue sky along the bottomland of the Alapaha River.

Yellowflies darted at the mirror and window on the side where Fanny's ^{son} baby Zeke, ^{baby of the family} was sitting and now and then he could hear the shriek of rank chinkypin branches like somebody keying a new paintjob on an enemy's car. Zeke had done that before so he would know.

Already Fanny's sisters, twelve all told, had parked or were parking before the weathered-gray shack of their mother whose funeral they had attended that afternoon. Middle of the week funeral, and the old lady really belonged to a place and time when the family waited a decent week and held the service on the following Sunday. But this was today and that was then and most of her daughters worked at jobs as far away as they could get from the fields and woods of Mayday, Georgia, where they had been born dragging on a tit and raised eating grits.

*Complete with fancy white limosines & shiny gables
back w/ flowers
result of
from a
life time
of premiums
paid on "the
insurance."*

GREAT AUNTS

Zeke couldn't make out what was going on exactly. But from past experience he knew that Fanny was always claiming she had raised her sisters, despite the fact that she was younger than Baby Ruth and three or four of the others. Who could keep track? For a fact, Fanny was the one they always looked to for advice and money when they got in a tight. Fanny always had money even when she didn't have much cash. That's how she kept control. **MAYBE USE NOTES ABOUT OLD WOMAN'S CIGARETTES FANNY USED TO BUY FOR HER—**
ABOVE, TOP OF PAGE

Baby Ruth stood with her back to all of them, staring out into a staked tangle of wild yellow honeysuckle. She was tall but drooped, gray hair done up in a loose bun. Fanny claimed that Baby Ruth's nine-year-old son belonged to Zeke's daddy. Only a few months ago, when Fanny had accidentally on purpose opened a letter sent to ^{her husband} Snead, ~~her husband~~, from the child welfare agency, stating that he was behind on his child support, Fanny had learned of the decade-old affair between her own sister and husband. She'd been fighting mad, had brought the whole family into the fray. Days on end she called her sisters and mother on the phone; even told the preacher at the church where Snead was a deacon. Somehow Fanny and Baby Ruth had reached a kind of tolerance of each other, not to be confused with a truce, though Fanny had claimed that she would never speak to Baby Ruth again. Actually, the way Zeke had summed it up, Fanny gloried in having gained yet another weapon to keep control.

MAYBE HERE THE PART ABOUT THE OLD LADY'S CIGARETTES

Already two of the sisters had their mother's cigar boxes of pictures on their laps, seated in the dense hot living room on the old sofa with a ^{yellow chenille spread} patchwork quilt covering it. Holding the pinkish-sheared snapshots a distance from their faces, to better see, they were arguing about who was in the picture, who the two girls were with the ^{sickly} starvling goat between them.

~~Zeke's girlfriend
afraid to let them
meet Fanny~~

~~Fanny talks about what she has eaten,
how little, how much. Every meal
is either victory or defeat.~~

~~100 dollar bill handed to Nedeen
stroke
stroke
ST u SK
redeem her in end --~~

~~Goes up to Flora
walking across the
lot.~~

~~Gets out, hugs her, beats on
her back. "I love you, baby, you know
that? Just anybody if I don't go on to an about
my baby sister, the one I help raise."~~

~~"Now get on back in the car & lets eat,"
Flora walks back to the car with Florida's arm
about her shoulder of her ^{was} stepping high to make up ~~the~~ for
their difference in height. The word "help" Fanny's only concession
to the ^{matter} fact of her control.~~

Take Aunt Florida, for instance, who was sitting forward in the back seat of Fanny's car. She lived in Long Beach, California, and went to "school" part-time and had taken up Karate and kick-boxing. Big-boned and tall as she was, she didn't look like the type to kick a dog, much less a human. It was her face—no, her subtle way of smiling. She was shy, intelligent, humble and content to just listen, the opposite of her older sister Fanny; or maybe Flora, as she liked to be called now, simply wasn't quick enough to speak before one of the sisters began over-speaking her. Flora had flown in for the funeral, which said it all: she still valued family and place in spite of belonging to that other time and place, California, as far away and different as the divide between earth and heaven. This was a new day and age and the old lady whose funeral they had just been to hadn't belonged anywhere, anymore, so God had called her home to that cabin in Gloryland she always talked about. Everybody else, her many children and grandchildren, wanted their Gloryland cabins on earth. Preferably, with wheels.

Colorful cars—even the older models—were waxed, bright and in rows before the unpainted shack surrounded by woods. ^{Two or three had those spinning chrome rims that} Little girls in pastel dresses with matching bows on their ^{continued to spin like pendulums even after the cars had stopped} many stubby braids, and little boys in white shirts with bowties, were chasing about the clean dirt yard bound by acres of green and home of the chirring locusts, and of course the yellowflies. The sisters hugging necks and crying on the porch looked mad, slapping yellowflies on one another's arms and faces.

Hey, Zeke could vouch that they weren't above a fight or two! They were here to take stock of and divvy up their mother's belongings, then get the hell out of these woods. To be done with one another, you might say, till next year's family reunion. Depending on the topic in dispute, it could take six months to a year between get-togethers for heads to cool down and hearts to heat up. All week they'd been on the phone, arguing about funeral arrangements, all

except for Flora who spoke little and mumbled through her gold-trimmed teeth. She was the silent type, given to traveling light. Younger and more modern than the other sisters. Zeke could stomach her but his mother Fanny and the others were making him sick with their greed and loud overlapping talk and breakthrough wailing.

Zeke had been his grandmother's pick of the grands and he'd known and loved her best. When he got in trouble with the law—not all that serious but often—the grandmother had been the one to bail him out. But even Zeke, at 21, tall, handsome and clean-cut, was eager for Fanny and her sisters to settle up on their share of the old lady's cracked bowls, burnt baking pans and dim stained pictures and get back to the apartment he shared with a buddy in Valdosta, twenty miles away. To bury the memories with his grandmother, so to speak.

Really, he wouldn't have come if not for paying his last respects to his grandmother, plus the fact that he was in debt to Fanny, who drove a school bus and cleaned houses, to the tune of four hundred and some-odd dollars a week. Which often put him in the position of having to help her clean houses and she could clean nine a day, she boasted, with his help. He was good at it, cleaning, but often felt ashamed to be seen with his short, fat but quick mother, doing women's work.

Even on this foray into memory-land he was the only grown male. His daddy and his uncles had somehow managed to escape after the funeral—gone to Fanny's ^{double-wide} house to watch the races on her wide-screen and drink beer. Most of the aunts were divorced, or had been divorced; some were on marriages number two or three.

Out of the SUV he followed Fanny and Flora up the dirt path, with side by side patches of faded purple petunias now being trampled by the patent leather shoes of the children. Their

check
"every"
overused

foray

double-wide

Fanny immediately informed them that the girl on the left was her—it was *her* goat. The sister on the right, seated on the couch, called her a “story,” meaning “liar,” which was less apt to stir Fanny up. It was ^{Flora}Loussanne, the other seated sister said, and passed the snapshot to ^{Flora}Loussanne for verification. She only smiled, shining her gold trimmed teeth.

To Zeke the house still smelled of the old lady’s cigarettes and the oily kerosene from the stove, but also of vanilla. Something baked or baking. Made him think of the bread pudding his grandmother used to create from leftover biscuits, nutmeg and raisins. He followed the scent to the kitchen on the left at the back of the small house. There, four more of Fanny’s sisters were going through pots and pans in a drawer under the old but scoured white kerosene stove and shelves of bowls and other dishes Zeke recalled having eaten from. He traced the vanilla scent to the screened pie safe in the southeast corner of the kitchen.

A two by four inch smooth wood strip, which turned on a single nail in the center, secured the twin screen panels to the oak frame of the safe. As he twisted the latch, two of the aunts rattling pots crowded in, pilfering among the small square ^{tins}cans of spices and red-checked dish clothes and old cake tins. They were talking so loud his ears rang. He crossed the kitchen to the screen door leading out to the back and a narrow porch and watched the children playing under the grapevine arbor. The slat wood crossmembers overhead bowed with the weight of the vines and the dangling pods of rich purple grapes. Rather than eat the grapes, the children were picking them and throwing them at each other and the panicking chickens. Even the old black rooster with the red cone was on the run toward the east woods and the dusk gathering there. The clean sandy gray dirt, save for chicken droppings and an occasional staked tree or bush, had been carved out of ^{the mowachin}woods with a hoe. One of Zeke’s chores when he’d lived with the old lady after his grandfather died.

SMELLS, SOUNDS, SIGHTS, similies—KEEP PAST TENSE

The children scattered, squealing, as Zeke stepped out the doorsteps and across the yard, ducking under the grapevine. Cool under the shelter of green leaves, but assailed by yellowflies, Zeke stooped, picking and eating grapes. The chickens had come back, clucking at his feet on the soft loam and pecking at spat seeds and grape skins. The pulp on his tongue went from tart to sweet the more he ate. Peering up through the ^{woven}knitted heart leaves, he could see the dusky sky and an airplane way up high. The sun going down behind the west woods struck the plane and it looked like a silver sewing needle drawing a line of white thread through silk.

In the kitchen, the aunts had discovered something that brought the others running, tramping through the house, then all (how many) huddling around the pie safe. Through the open window, he could hear them fussing. Something about a dollar bill one of them had found under a cake tin. Something written on it. What did it mean? they all asked. Fanny of course read it aloud—"Save all my children and grandchildren."

Being real religious, an usher at her church, she claimed it was a prayer written by her mother on the finest and possibly the only paper in the house.

Baby Ruth and a couple of the others disagreed. Likely the dollar was the old lady's meagerly savings intended for her children and grandchildren. What she'd meant to write, they claimed, was 'Save *for* all my children and grandchildren.'

"Ain't what it say," Fanny shouted. She read it again: "'Save all my children and grandchildren,' what it say and ain't no 'for' in it best I can see."

"Mama wadn't never no hand to write," Baby Ruth pointed out. "Couldn't hardly write her own name."