Their Eyes Were Watching God. Holograph manuscript

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The sun was gone, but he left his footprint in the sand. It was the time for sitting on benches beside the road, it was the time to hear things and talk. The sitters had been toqued, earred, eyeless, convenience all and the becomings were gone. The steers felt human and powerful, shall.

They sat in judgement.

Seeing her as she was made them remember the night they had stood up from other times. So they channelled the deeply part of their questions, not killing tools out of laughter. It was made crudely, words without matters, talking altogether like a song.

"What she do''in,' coming back here in dem overalls? I can't she find no dress to put on?", where'd de cotton dress she left her in? when all dat money her husband and left her? where she not. old woman down, did she have 'virgin' down her back tale don'me you gal? where she left dat young bad gal' out there she used to pour her drink? did she go to marry? when he left her --- what she done with all dat money? --- Butcher, he of wild some gal so you say she ain't even got' hands --- why she don't stay in the house? when she got to where they were showing her face on the back, --- log was spoke. They paraded a notion 'good even' and left that night with nothing.

The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pocket. The great rogue of black hair swimming in her waist and surrounding her wrist like a plume then the large sleeves, breasts trying to hole holes in her shirt. They were sailing with the wind of what she lost with the shirts. The women took the faked shirt and muddy ones and said them away for reminiscence.

But nobody mourn, nobody sport, nobody even thought to swallow spit until after he got slammed behind her.
Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board: for some people they come in with the ball; for others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never never landing till the watchman forgets and turns his eyes away.
Pearl Stone opened her mouth to laugh but held her breath because she didn't know what else to do. She fell all over Mrs. Pumpkin while she laughed.

"Humph! If all the world were like you, you ain't like me, ah aint got none to teach 'bout. At she aint got manners enough to stop and let folks know how she been makin' out, let her quack!"

"She aint hunk no talkin' after," Laura Moore drawled like her nose. "She sitts high but she looks low. Dats what ah say, dont diski she women runnin' after young boys!"

"Phoeby Watson hitched her rocking chair forward before she spoke. "Well, nobody don't know if it's anything to talk about, me and her last friend, and she don't know.

"We all know how she went away from here and no one's seen her come back. Taint no use in you tryin' to chase no old women like Janie Starks, Phoeby, friend or no friend!"

"At dat she aint as she as some I y'all aint talkin'."

"She's way past forty to my knowledge, Phoeby."

"No, more'n forty-two at de outside.

"She's way too old for a boy like Tea Cake."

"Tea Cake aint been no boy for some time. He's sound thirty, his ownself."

"Dont know what it was, she could stop and say a few words with us. She act like we done done something to her. "Pearl Stone complained, "She de one been doin' wrong." (1)

"What you mean, know her to do to so bad as y'all make out. The worst thing ah ever known her to do was taking a few years off her age and dat aint never harmed nobody."

"Y'all makes me tired. You know ah have to sense me, cause ah bound to go take her some supper." Phoeby stood up sharply.

"Dont mind us," Julie smiled. "Just so right ahead, us cant done. You better go see how the feel."

"Sawd," Pearl agreed. "Ah done searched dat lil Ruth and tried too long to talk about. Ah kin stay away from home long as Ah please. Mal husband aint dyin' ya."

Page 4 of 11
you mean, you mad cause she didn't stop and tell us all the business, anyhow
"Oh, li, Phesly, if you’re ready to go, ah could walk over here wid you. Mrs. Lumpkin volunteered, it’s sorta dusty, down dark. De younger man might catch you.

"Now, ah thank you. I couldn’t catch me dey few steps ahse goin’. Anyhow, make husband tell me say, he first class to dey would have me. If she got anything to tell you, you’ll hear it.”

She hurried on off with a covered bowl in her hands. She left the bench, turning her heel with unasked questions, they flapped the awnings like gloves after rain.

Phesly Watson didn’t go in by the front gate and down the palm walk to the front door. She walked around the fence corner and went in through the intricate gate with her happy little feet.

2 Mulatto rice. Janie must be round that side.

"Hello, Janie, how you comin’?”

"Aw, pretty good. Ah’m tryin’ to save some ’bout de tides and de dirt aunt’ maif feet.” She laughed a little.

"Ah see you is. Gal, you look good. You looks like youse ju’ own daughter.” They both laughed,

"Man hid dim swallohs on, you shows yo’ womanhood.”

"Gwan! Gwan, you must think ah brought yo’ somethin’ when ah ain’t brought home a thing but mahself.”

"Dat’s a gracious Plenty. Yo’ friends wouldn’t want nothin’ better.”

"Ah takes dat flattering offa you, Phesly cause ah know it’s from de heart.” Janie extended her hand. "Good Lord, Phesly, ain’t you know gran’ folks gimme dat lil ration you thought me? Ah ain’t had a thing on mah stomacht today except de mush hawd.” They both laughed easily. "Give it here and have a piece.”

"Ah knewed goud be hounery no time to be huntin’ dis time. Not enough bacon greese, but ah reckon it’ll all stone wood after dark. Make mulatto rice ain’t so good hounery.”
Ah'll tell you in a minute," Janie said, lifting the cover.
"Gal, it's too good! you swatches a mean fanny round in a kitchen!"
"Aw, dat ain't nothin' much to eat, Janie. But Ohm shule,
Jenie ate heartily and said nothing. The Varie-colored cloud
slow degrees. Finally the last red paint was swept away
"Here, Pheoby, take yo ole plate. An ain't got a bit 8 see for
a empty dish brod who come in handy."
Pheoby laughed at her friend's rough joke. "Yanes just as
crazy as you run was."
"Hand me dat towel on dat chair by you, honey. Lemme dry
ma hite. She took the towel and rubbed vigorously, laughed
"Well, ah see mouth—alright is still sittin' in de same
place, if I reckon they got me up on they mouth now."
"Yes, indeed. They know I don't work here no more, now."
White boys make a ceaseless war. They done "heay" don't you
"At God don't think no mo about 'em than ah do, they's a
boat full in de high grass."
"Ah hear what my bay say, they just will collect roun'.
Make him go on de big road, mak' husband git so sick! I'm sometime
he makes, run all out, run home."
"Sam is right too, the just wearin' out yo sitting chairs."
"Yeah, Sam say most of 'em goes to church, so they'll be sure to rise
in judgment. Dats de day dat every recent is special to be made known.
They wants to be there and hear it all."
"Sam is too crazy, you cant stop laughin' when you see somethin' it."
"Um hu. He say he aims to be there himself so he can find
out who stole his corn-coke jipes."
"Pheoby, dat Sam, yowin just won't quit, crazy thing."
"Most de dire. Gubbers is so dit up over yo' business, dat dey
bout soon know. You better make haste and tell 'em bout you a
visit some your right, and there at de is now and where all yo'
clothes dat you got to come back here in even halls."
"Ah don't mean to bother wid' tellin' un nothin'. Pheroby. Tell 'em de trouble. You can tell 'em what ah say if you wants to. Dots just de same as me cause rhah tongue is in mon friend's mouth."

"If you so desire ah'll tell 'em what you tell me to tell 'em."

"To start off wid', people like them wastes up too much time puttin' them mon in trouble. They don't know nothin' about 'em. They got to look into 'em doun. Tea cake and see whether it was done right or not. They don't know if life is a mess or corn meal dumplings, and it done is a hell's guilt."

"So long as they get a name to guarn on they don't care who's it is and what about. Especially if they care make it sound like white."

"If they want to see and know, why they don't come and be revenged? All could then sit and tell 'em things. Ah been a delegate to do this. Abolition of life. Yeah! De Grand Lodge de big connection ain't seen me."

They sat there in the fresh, young darkness close together, Phoby eager to feel and do through Janice, but hating to show her eldest human longing—self-revelation. Phoby held her tongue back.

"They don't need to worry about me and my greenbacks long as got me into wearin' 'em—follohin' behind them. Tea cake ain't wasted up no money or money, and he ain't light me for no young gal, neither. He give me every consolation in de world. We'd tell 'em so, too, if he was here. If he wasn't gone."

"Phoby dilated all over with eagerness. Tea cake gone?"

"Yeah, Phoby. Tea cake is gone. And dat's de only reason you see me here. 'Cause Ah ain't got nothing to make me happy no more when ah was at. Down in de Everglades too, down on de mud."

"It's hard for me to understand what you mean, anyway. At times."

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"Now, tain't nothing ' lak you might think. So tain't no use in me tellin' you somethin' unless ah give you de understandin' in to the heart of it. Sittin' down there, Thessey, is Sam Washington to eat an' waitin', if he ain't got sense enough.

"Well then, we come right when we is a talk. Ah go to de house all opened up to let dis breeze get a little lattice in. Depend on you for a good thought, Thessey, to talk of to you from dat become a monstrous old thing. While Janie talked,

Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and

"Ah know exactly what ah got to tell you but it's hard to know where to start at. But ah reckon you make a life time commended at Mammy's gate. She called me to come inside de house because she seen Johnny Taylor kissin' me over de gate."

It was a spring afternoon and Janie had spent part of it under a blossoming peach tree. All the house. She had been spending every minute she could. There had been some days in fact ever since it had been in bloom. It called her at first to gaze on a mystery from barren limberines standing stark against the sky of bloom. How? Why? How? How? It followed her through all the day with other vaguely felt questions that had struck the sort.

Then she had been summoned to behold a revelation. She was stretched on the hard bench beneath the tree where the branches of the sun, the painting breath of the breeze,
"Ah aint never seen mah papa, and abe didn't know muh if abe did. Maha mama neither. She was gone from round
dre long before abe wieg Big enough tuck know. Mah grandma
raised we. Maha grandma and de white folks she worked for.
Washburn she had four grandchilluns on de place and all
mah grandma nothing but hanny cause dat what every
our devilmint and didn't every you juhn on de place and
ab lick annies cause dem three boys and no two girls
was pretty aggravation, ab speck.

"Maha wieg white chillun so much til abe didn't
know abe wieg white till abe was round six years old.
pictures and without certain anybody, Sheldon, abe wieg de
wheat de picture for Mrs. Washburn to see and pay him
sum. So when abe looked at de picture and everybody get pointed
with long hair standing by Eleanor. Thats where abe wieg
150.

"So abe aint ever seen me, abe didn't see me,
 anybody laughed even Mrs. Washburn, Miss Millin. de mama
pointed to de dark one and said. 'Dat's you, Alphabet, don't you
know your own self?

De chillun who come back home after her husband dead, abe
had done named me different names. Abe looked at de picture a
long time and seem it was maha draw and maha hair a
be said'"
"And, ain't, ah'm colored!"

Den day all laughed real hard. But before ah seen de picture ah thought ah was just lika de rest, got to teaser me bout teasin' in de white folk's back yard. They made ah sound real bad and crumpled mah huar helped him out on it with whole heap.