No, said Laura, not unless you take your hand, no; and she chung first the stair rail, and then to the topmost branch of the Judas tree that b
slowly and set her upon the earth, and then to the rocky ledge
to the jagged wave of a sea that was not water but a d-

Where are you taking me, she asked its wonder-
death, and it is a long way off, and we must hur-
co, said Laura, not unless you take your hand. Then ear
said Eugenio in a voice of pity; take and get the sponsor of
stripped the warm bleeding flowers, and her
lip. She saw that his hand was fleshless, a cluster of

Eugenio said: "But, my judge, I am one of the sponsors of
both hunger and thirst. My
sir, Cecilio, and Cannibal! This is my
body and my blood. I
at the sound of her own voice, she
awoke trembling; it was a sleep again.
1929, 1930

ZORA NEALE HURSTON 1899--1960

Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1899 in Notasulga, Alabama, and moved with her
family in 1892 to Eatonville, Florida, an all-black town. Her father, a Baptist preacher of
considerable eloquence, was not a family man and made life difficult for his wife and
eight children. The tie between mother and daughter was strong. Lucy Hurston
was a driving force and strong eloquence for all her children. But her death when Zora
Hurston was about eleven left the child with little home life. Hibberto, the town of
Eatonville had been like an extended family to her, and her early childhood was pro-
tected from racism because she encountered no white people. With her mother's
death, Hurston's wanderings and her initiation into African racism began. The early
security her had given her the core of self-confidence she needed to survive. She moved
from one woman's home to another until she was old enough to support herself, and
with her earnings she began slowly to pursue an education. Although she had never
finished grade school in Eatonville she was able to enter and complete college. In the
early 1920s at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (the nation's leading African
American university at that time), she studied with the great black educator Alain
Locke, who was to make history with his anthology The New Negro in 1925. After a
short story, "Drenched in Light," appeared in the New York African American maga-
nize Opportunity, she decided to move to Harlem and pursue a literary career there.

As her biographer, Robert Hemenway, writes, "Zora Hurston was an extraordinar-
iously witty woman, and the acquired an instant reputation in New York for her high spir-
its and side-splitting tales of Eatonville life. She could walk into a room of
strangers . . . and almost immediately garner people, charm, amuse, and impress
them." The Eatonville vignettes printed here convey the flavor of this discourse. Gen-
erous, outspoken, high spirited, an interesting conversationalist, she worked as a per-
sonal secretary for the politically liberal novelist Fannie Hurst and entered Barnard
College. Her career took two simultaneous directions: at Barnard she studied with the
famous anthropologist Franz Boas and developed an interest in black folk traditions,
and in Harlem she became war correspondent, an informal performing artist.

Then she was doubly committed to the oral narrative, and her work excels in its rep-
resentation of people talking.

When she graduated from Barnard in 1927 she received a fellowship to return to
Florida and study the oral traditions of Eatonville. From then on, she strove to achieve
a balance between focusing on the folk and her origins and focusing on herself as an
individual. After the fellowship money ran out, Hurston was supported by Mrs. R.
Osgood Mason, an elderly white patron of the arts. Mason had firm ideas about what
she wanted her protégés to produce; she required all to get her permission before
publishing anything of the work that she had subsidized. In this relationship, Hurston expe-
rrienced a difficulty that all the black artists of the Harlem Renaissance had to face—
the fact that well-off white people were the best-often the chief audience for their
work.

Hurston's work was not entirely popular with the male intellectual leaders of
the Harlem community. She quarreled especially with Langston Hughes; she rejected the
idea that a black writer's chief concern should be how blacks were being portrayed
in the white reader. She did not write to "uplift her race," either; because in her view it
was already uplifted, she (like Claude McKay) was not embarrassed to present her
characters as mixtures of good and bad, strong and weak. Some of the other Harlem
writers thought her either naïve or egotistical, but Hurston argued that freedom could
only mean freedom from all coercion, no matter what the source.

The Great Depression brought an end to the structure that had undergirded
Hurston's fellowship, and she turned fully to writing. Unfortunately her most impor-
tant work appeared in the mid-1930s when there was little interest in it, or in African
American writing in general. She published Joseph's Gold Vine in 1934 (a novel whose
main character is based on her father), Mules and Men in 1935 (based on material
from her field trips in Florida)—this was her best-selling book, but it earned a total of
only $945.75; and Their Eyes Were Watching God, in 1937. This novel about an
African American woman's quest for selfhood has become a popular and critical
favorite, both a woman's story, and a descriptive critique of southern African Ameri-
can folk society, showing its divisions and diversity. Technically, it is a loosely organ-
ized, highly metaphorical novel, with passages of broad folk humor and of extreme
artistic compression. Other books followed in 1938 and 1939, and she wrote an auto-
biography—Dust Tracks on a Road—which appeared in 1942, with its occasional
expression of antitrue sentiments removed by her editors. At this point, however,
Hurston had no audience. For the last decades of her life she lived in Florida, working
from time to time as a maid.

The Eatonville Anthology

1. The Pleading Woman

Mrs. Tony Roberts is the pleading woman. She just loves to ask for things.
Her husband gives her all he can take out of his pockets, which is not only remarkably
more than most wives get for their housekeeping, but she goes from door to door
begging for things.

She starts at the store. "Miss Clarke," she sing-songs in a high keening
voice, "gimme 11 piece 'us meat toh boil a pot 'us greens wid. Ladv knows
me an' mah chillen is so hungry. Hit's uh um. Tony don't fee-ee-ee-ed
me."

Miss Clarke knows that she has money and that her larder is well stocked,
for Tony Roberts is the best provider on his list. But her keening annoys
him. 1

1. The unit is that of I Love Myself When I Am Languishing..., and Then Again When I See Languishing Men and Improvising (1979), edited by Alice Walker. Eatonville was Hurston's hometown, here
she brings together many of the stories about its inhabitants that she told at parties in Harve}.
and he rises heavily. The pleader at his elbow shows all the joy of a starving man being seated at a feast.

"Thass right Mist' Clarke. De Lawd loveh de cheerful giver. Gimme jes' a lil' piece 'bout dis big (indicating the width of her hand) an' de Lawd'll bless yah."

She follows this angel-on-earth to his meat mug and superintends the cutting, crying out in pain when he refuses to move the knife just a tiny bit mo'.

Finally, meat in hand, she departs, remarking on the meanness of some people who give a piece of salt meat only two-fingers wide when they were plainly asked for a hand-wide piece. Clarke puts it down to Tony's account and resumes his reading.

With the slab of salt pork as a foundation, she visits various homes until she has collected all she wants for the day. At the Piersons for instance: "Sis-
ter Pierson, plee-e-e-ease gimme uh han'full uh collard greens fuh me an' mah po' chill'en! Deed, me an' mah chillen is so hungry. Tony doan' fess-e-e-ed me!"

Mrs. Pierson picks a bunch of greens for her, but she springs away from them as if they were poison. "Lawd a mussy, Mist' Pierson, you ain' gona gimme dat lil' eye-full uh greens fuh me an' mah chillen, is you? Don' be so graspin'; Gawd won't bless yuh. Gimme uh han'full mo'. Lawd, some folks is got everything, an' th'ye jes' as graps' an' stingy!"

Mrs. Pierson raises the ante, and the pleading woman moves on to the next place, and on and on. The next day, it commences all over.

II. Turpentine Love

Jim Merchant is always in good humor—even with his wife. He says he fell in love with her at first sight. That was some years ago. She has had all her teeth pulled out, but they still get along splendidly.

He says the first time he called on her he found out that she was subject to fits. This didn't cool his love, however. She had several in his presence.

One Sunday, while he was there, she had one, and her mother tried to give her a dose of turpentine to stop it. Accidentally, she spilled it in her eye and it cured her. She never had another fit, so they got married and have kept each other in good humor ever since.

III.

Becky Moore has eleven children of assorted colors and sizes. She has never been married, but that is not her fault. She has never stopped any of the fathers of her children from proposing, so if she has no father for her children it's not her fault. The men round about are entirely to blame.

The other mothers of the town are afraid that it is catching. They won't let their children play with hers.

IV. Tippy

Sykes Jones' family all shoot craps. The most interesting member of the family—also fond of horses, but another kind—is Tippy, the Jones' dog.

He is so thin, that it amazes one that he lives at all. He sneaks into village kitchens if the housewives are careless about the doors and steals meats, even off the stoves. He also sucks eggs.

For these offenses he has been sentenced to death dozens of times, and the sentences executed upon him, only they didn't work. He has been fed blue-
stone, strychnine, mus novica, even an entire Peruna® bottle beaten up. It didn't fatten him, but it didn't kill him. So Eatonville has resigned itself to the plague of Tippy, reflecting that it has erred in certain matters and is being chastened.

In spite of all the attempts upon his life, Tippy is still willing to be friendly with anyone who will let him.

V. The Way of a Man with a Train

Old Man Anderson lived seven or eight miles out in the country from Eatonville. Over by Lake Apopka. He raised feed-corn and cassava and went to market with it two or three times a year. He bought all of his victuals wholesale so he wouldn't have to come to town for several months more.

He was different from citybred folks. He had never seen a train. Everybody laughed at him for even the smallest child in Eatonville had either been to Maitland or Orlando and watched a train go by. On Sunday afternoons all of the young people of the village would go over to Maitland, a mile away, to see Number 35 which southward on its way to Tampa and wave at the passengers.

So we looked down on him a little. Even children feared his presence because of a person so lacking in worldly knowledge.

The grown-ups kept telling him he ought to go see a train. He always said he didn't have time to wait so long. Only two trains a day passed through Maitland. But patronage and ridicule finally had its effect and Old Man Anderson drove in one morning early. Number 78 went north to Jacksonville at 10:20. He drove his light wagon over in the woods beside the railroad below Maitland, and sat down to wait. He began to fear that his horse would get frightened and run away with the wagon. So he took him out and led him deeper into the grove and tied him securely. Then he returned to his wagon and waited some more. Then he remembered that some of the train-wise vil-
lagers had said the engine belched fire and smoke. He had better move his wagon out of danger. It might catch fire. He climbed down from the seat and placed himself between the shafts to draw it away. Just then 78 came thun-
dering over the trestle spouting smoke, and suddenly began blazing for Mait-
land. Old Man Anderson became so frightened he ran away with the wagon through the woods and tore it up worse then the horse ever could have done.

He doesn't know yet what a train looks like, and says he doesn't care.

VI. Coon Taylor

Coon Taylor never did any real stealing. Of course, if he saw a chicken or a watermelon he'd take it. The people used to get mad but they never could catch him. He took so many melons from Joe Clarke that he set up in the
mellon patch one night with his shotgun loaded with rock-salt. He was going
to fix Coon. But he was tired. It is hard work being a mayor, postmaster, store-
keeper and everything. He dropped asleep sitting on a stump in the middle
of the patch. So he didn't see Coon when he came. Coon didn't see him
either, that is, not on first. He knew the stump was there, however. He had
opened many of Clarke's 'Jaicy Florida' oranges on it. He selected his fruit,
walked over to the stump and looked about. This time it was the stump until it fell over with a yell. Then he knew it was no stump and
deported hastily from those parts. He had cleared the fence when Clarke
came to, so it were. So the charge of rock-salt was wasted on the desert soil.

During the sugar-cane season, he found he couldn't resist Clarke's soft
sugar cane, but Clarke did not go to sleep this time. So after he had cut six
or eight stalks by the moonlight, Clarke one up out of the cane stripplings
with his shotgun and made Coon sit right down and chew up the last one
of them on the spot. And the next day he made Coon leave his town for three
months.

VII. Village Fiction

Joe Lindsay is said by Lum Boger to be the largest manufacturer of pre-
varications in Eatonville: Bazzle (late owner of the world's largest and mean-
est male) contends that his business is the largest in the state and his wife
holds that he is the biggest liar in the world.

Exhibit A—He claims that while he was in Orlando one day he saw a doc-
tor cut open a woman, remove everything—liver, lights and heart included
—clean each of them separately; the doctor then washed out the empty woman,
dried her out neatly with a towel and replaced the organs so exactly that she
was up and about her work in a couple of weeks.

VIII.

Sewell is a man who lives all to himself. He moves a great deal. So often,
that 'Lige Moseley says his chickens are so used to moving that every time he
comes out of his backyard the chickens lie down and cross their legs, ready
to be tied up again.

He is bald-headed; but he says he doesn't mind that, because he wants as
little as possible between him and God.

IX.

Mrs. Clarke is Joe Clarke's wife. She is a soft-looking, middle-aged woman,
whose bust and stomach are always holding a get-together.

She waits on the store sometimes and cries every time he yells at her which
he does every time she makes a mistake, which is quite often. She calls her
husband "Judy." They say he used to beat her in the store when he was
a young man, but he is not so impatient now. He can wait until he goes home.

She shouts to Church every Sunday and dines the hand of fellowship with
everybody in the Church with her eyes closed, but somehow always misses
her husband.

X.

Mrs. Mc Duffy goes to Church every Sunday and always shouts and tells
her "determination." Her husband always sits in the back row and beats her
as soon as they get home. He says there's no sense in her shouting, as big a
devil as she is. She just does it to shut him. Elijah Moseley asked her why
she didn't stop shouting, seeing she was only talking about it. She says she
can't "squash the spirit." Then Elijah asked Mr. Mc Duffy to stop beating
her, seeing that she was going to shout anyway. He answered that she just did
it for spite and that his fist was just as hard as her head. He could last just as
long as she. So the village let the matter rest.

XI. Double-Shuffle

Back in the good old days before the World War, things were very simple
in Eatonville. People didn't fuss too much. When the town wanted to put on its Sun-
day clothes and wash behind the ears, it put on a "breakdown." The daring
younger set would two-step and waltz, but the good church members and the
elders stuck to the grand march. By rural canvas dancing is wicker, but one
is not held to have danced until the feet have been crossed, feet don't get
crossed when one grand marches.

At elaborate affairs the organ from the Methodist church was moved up to
the hall and Uzzimore, the blind pianist, presided. When informal gatherings
were held, he merely played his guitar assisted by any volunteer with mouth
organs or accordions.

Among white people the march is as mild as if it had passed by on Vol-
stead. But it still has a kick in Eatonville. Everybody holds shining eyes,
gleaming teeth, feetiggled 'shláp, 'shláp' to bear out 'the time. No orchestra
needed. Round and round! Back again, pa-se-me-la! 'shláp! 'shláp!
Strut! Strut! Seaboard! 'Shlap! Shlap! Tiddy bum bum! Mr. Clarke in the lead
with Mrs. Moseley.

It's too much for some of the young folks. Double-shuffling commences.
Back and wing. Lizzimore about to break his guitar. Accordion doing con-
tinuous. People fall back against the walls, and let the soloist have it, shouting
as they clap the old, old double-shuffle songs.

'Me an' mah honey got two mo' days
Two mo' days tuh do de back'

Sweating boozes, laughing mouths, grotesque faces, feet drumming fiercely.
Deacons clapping as hard as the rest.

"Great big nigger, black as tar
Trying tuh git tuh bebben on uh 'lectric car."

"Some love cabbage, some love kale
But I love a gal' wid a short skirt tail."

3. Andrew J. Volstead (1860-1947), congressman who introduced the Prohibition Amendment.
It was seldom that anyone wrote to Daisy, but she knew that the men of the town would be assembled there by five o'clock, and some one could usually be induced to buy her some soda water or peanuts.

Daisy flirted with married men. There were only two single men in town. Lunn Roger, who was engaged to the assistant school-teacher, and Hiram Lester, who had been off to school at Tuskegee and wouldn’t look at a person like Daisy. In addition to other drawbacks, she was pigeon-toed and her pet-ticots was always showing so perhaps he was justified. There was nothing else to do except flirt with married men.

This went on for a long time. First one wife and then another complained of her, or drove her from the preserves by threat.

But the affair with Crooms was the most prolonged and serious. He was even known to have bought her a pair of shoes.

Mrs. Laura Crooms was a meek little woman who took all of her troubles crying, and talked a great deal of leaving things in the hands of God.

The affair came to a head one night in orange picking time. Crooms was over at Oneido picking oranges. Many fruit pickers move from one town to the other during the season.

The town was collected at the store-postoffice as is customary on Saturday nights. The town had its bath and with its week’s pay in pocket fares forth to be merry. The men tell stories and treat the ladies to soda water, peanuts and peppermint candy.

Daisy was trying to get treats, but the porch was cold to her that night.

"Ah don’t keer if you don’t treat me. What’s a dirty ill nicker?" She fung this at Walter Thomas. "The everloving Mister Crooms will gimme anything allah Ah wants.

"You better shut up yo' mouf talking'bout Albert Crooms. Heah his wife comes right now."

Daisy went skinsho. "Who? Me? Ah don’t keer what Laura Crooms tink. If she ain’t a heavy hip-ted Mama enough to keep him, she don’t need to come crying to me."

She stood making goo-goo eyes as Mrs. Crooms walked upon the porch. Daisy laughed loud, made several references to Albert Crooms, and when she saw the mail-bag come in from Maitland she said, "Ah better go in an’ see if Ah ain’t got a letter from Oneido."

The more Daisy played the game of getting Mrs. Crooms’ goat, the better she liked it. She ran in and out of the store laughing until she could scarcely stand. Some of the people present began to talk to Mrs. Crooms—to egg her on to halt Daisy’s boasting, but she was for leaving it all in the hands of God. Walter Thomas kept on after Mrs. Crooms until she stiffered and resolved to fight. Daisy was inside when she came to this resolve and never dreamed anything of the kind could happen. She had gotten hold of an envelope and came laughing and shouting, "Oh, Ah can’t stand to see Oneido lose!"

There was a box of us-handles on display on the porch, propped up against the door jamb. As Daisy stepped upon the porch, Mrs. Crooms leaned the heavy end of one of those handles heavily upon her head. She staggered from the porch to the ground and the timid Laura, fearful of a counter-attack, struck again and Daisy toppled into the town ditch. There was not enough water in there to do more than muss her up. Every time she tried to rise, down would come the ax-handle again. Laura was fustling a scared fight. With
Daisy thoroughly licked, she retired to the store porch and left her fallen enemy in the ditch. But Elijah Mosley, who was some distance down the street when the trouble began, arrived as the victor was withdrawing. He rushed up and picked Daisy out of the mud and began feeling her head. "Is she hurt much?" Joe Clark asked from the doorway.

"I don't know," Elijah answered. "I was just looking to see if Laura had been lucky enough to hit one of those nails on the head and drive it in."

Before a week was up, Daisy moved to Orlando. There in a wider sphere, perhaps, her talents as a vamp were appreciated.

XIII. Pants and Calline

Sister Caline Potts was a silent woman. Did all of her laughing down inside, but did the thing that kept the town in an uproar of laughter. It was the general opinion of the village that Calline would do anything she had a mind to. And she had a mind to do several things. Mitchell Potts, her husband, had a weakness for women. No one ever believed that she was jealous. She did things to the women, surely. But most any townswoman would have said that she did them because she liked the novel situation and the queer things she could bring out of it.

Once he took up with Delphine—called Miss Pheeney by the town. She lived on the outskirts of the edge of the piney woods. The town winked and talked. People don't make secrets of such things in villages. Calline went about her business with this black lips pursed tight as ever, and her shiny black eyes unchanging.

"Dast devil of a Calline got somethin' up her sleeve!" The town smiled in anticipation.

"Delphine's too big a cigar for her to smoke. She ain't crazy," said some as the weeks went on and nothing happened. Even Pheeney herself would give an extra flirt to her over-starched petticoats as she rustled into church past her of Sundays.

Mitch Potts said furthermore, that he was tired of Calline's foolishness. She had to stay where he put her. His African soup-bone (arm) was too strong to let a woman run over him. "Nough was enough. And he did some fancy cutting, and he was the fanciest cutter in the county.

So the town waited and the longer it waited, the odds changed slowly from the wife to the husband.

One Saturday, Mitch knocked off work at two o'clock and went over to Maitland. He came back with a rectangular box under his arm and kept straight on out to the barn to put it away. He ducked around the corner of the house quickly, but even so, his wife glimpsed the package. Very much like a shoe box.

He put on the kettle and took a bath. She stood in her bare feet at the ironing board and kept on ironing. He dressed. It was about five o'clock but still very light. He fiddled around outside. She kept on with her ironing. As soon as the sun got red, he sauntered out to the barn, got the parcel and walked away down the road, past the store and out into the piney woods. As soon as he left the house, Calline slipped on her shoes without taking time to don stockings, put on one of her husband's old Stetsons, worn and flappy, slung the axe over her shoulder and followed in his wake. He was hailed cheerily as he passed the sitters on the store porch and answered smiling sheepishly and passed on. Two minutes later passed his wife, silently, unsunningly, and set the porch to giggling and betting.

An hour passed perhaps. It was dark. Clarke had long ago lighted the swinging kerosene lamp inside.

XIV

Once 'way back yonder before the stars fell all the animals used to talk just like people. In them days dogs and rabbits was the best of friends—even the both of them was stuck on the same gal—which was Miss Nancy Coon. She had the sweetest smile and the prettiest striped and bushy tail to be found anywhere.

They both run their leg nigh off trying to win her for themselves—fetching nice ripe persimmons and such. But she never give one or the other no satisfaction.

Finally one night Mr. Dog popped the question right out. "Miss Coon," he says, "Ma'am, also Ma'am which would you rather be—a lark flyin' or a dove a settin'?"

Course Miss Nancy she blushed and laughed a little and hid her face behind her bushy tail for a spell. Then she said sorter shy like, "I does love ya' sweet voice, brother dog—but—I ain't jes' exactly set my mind on it."

Her and Mr. Dog set on a spell, when up comes hopping Mr. Rabbit wid his tail fresh washed and his whiskers shining. He got right down to business and asked Miss Coon to marry him, too.

"Oh, Miss Nancy," he says, "Ma'am, also Ma'am, if you'd see me settin' straddle of a mud-cat' leadin' a minnow, what would you think? Ma'am also Ma'am? Which is a out and out proposition as everybody knows.

"House awful nice, Brother Rabbit and a beautiful dancer, but you cannot sing like Brother Dog. Both you uns come back next week to gimme time for to decide."

They both left arm-in-arm. Finally Mr. Rabbit says to Mr. Dog. "Taint no use in me going back—she ain't gwinner have me. So I mought as well give up. She loves singing, and I ain't got nothing but a squeak."

"Oh, don't talk that a way," says Mr. Dog, thr he is glad Mr. Rabbit can't sing none.

"Thass all right, Beer Dog. But if I had a sweet voice like you got, I'd have it worked on and make it sweeter."

"How! How! How!" Mr. Dog cried, jumping up and down.

"Lemme fix it for you, for I do for Sister Lark and Sister Mockingbird."

"When? Where?" asked Mr. Dog, all quick. But he was figuring that if he could sing just a little better Miss Coon would be bound to have him.

"Just you meet me t'mornin' in the huckleberry patch," says the rabbit and off they both goes to bed.

The dog is there on time next day and after a while the rabbit comes hopping up.

"Mawnin', Beer Dawg," he says kinder chippy like. "Ready to git yo' voice sweetened?"

8. Catfish.
I am colored but I offer nothing in the way of extenuating circumstances except the fact that I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother's side was not an Indian chief.

I remember the very day that I became colored. Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. It is exclusively a colored town. The only white people I knew passed through the town going to or coming from Orlando. The native whites rode dusty horses, the Northern tourists chugged down the sandy village road in automobiles. The town knew the Southerners and never stopped cane chewing when they passed. But the Northerners were something else again. They were peered at cautiously from behind the curtains. The more venturesome would come out on the porch to watch them go past and got just as much pleasure out of the tourists as the tourists got out of the village.

The front porch might seem a dreary place for the rest of the town, but it was a gallery seat for me. My favorite place was atop the gate-post. Precariously balanced on this post was the bell that rung all day, a constant reminder of a world of which I was not a part. I would lose myself in my own thoughts.

How do you feel about being colored?

How do you feel about being colored?

How do you feel about being colored?

How do you feel about being colored?
 Moor and are seared by the jazz waiters. In the abrupt way that jazz orchestras have, this one plunges into a number. It loses no time in circulations, but gets right down to business. It constructs the thorous and splits the heart with its tempo and narcotic harmonics. This orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks the tonal veil with primitive fury, rending it, clawing it until it breaks through to the jungle beyond. I follow those beats—follow them exultingly. I dance wildly inside myself. I yell within, I whoop, I shake my assage! above my head, I hurl it to the mark yeeamewee! I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way. My face is painted red and yellow and my body is painted blue. My pulse is throbbing like a war drum. I want to slaughter something—give pain, give death to what, I do not know. But the piece ends. The men of the orchestra wipe their tips and rest their flumes. I creep back slowly to the scener we call civilization with the last one and find the white friend sitting motionless in his seat smoking a crumb. “Good music they have here,” he remarks, pricking the table with his fingertips. Music. The great blox of purple and red emotion have not touched him. He has only heard what I felt. He is far away and I see him but dimly across the ocean and the continent that have fallen between us. He is so pale with his whiteness then and I am so colored.

At certain times I have no race, I am me. When I set my foot at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City, feeling as snotty as the lions in front of the Forty-Second Street Library, for instance. So far as my feelings are concerned, Peggy Hopkins Joyce on the Boale Macht! with her gorgeous raiment, stately carriage, knees knocking together in a most aristocratic manner, has nothing on me. The cosmic Zora emerges. I belong to no race nor time. I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads. I have no separate feeling about being an American citizen and colored. I am merely a fragment of the Great Soul that surges within the boundaries. My country, right or wrong.

Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It’s beyond me.

But in the main, I feel like a brown bag of miscellaneous propped against a wall. Against a wall in company with other bags, white, red and yellow. Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small things priceless and worthless. A first water diamond, an empty spool, bits of broken glass, lengths of string, a key to a door long since crumbled away, a rusty knife-blade, old shoes saved for a road that never was and never will be, a nail bent under the weight of things too heavy for any nail, a dried flower or two still a little fragrant. In your hand is the brown bag. On the ground before you is the jumble it held—so much like the jumble in the bags, could they be emptied, that all might be dumped in a single heap and the bags refilled without altering the content of any greatly. A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter. Perhaps that is how the Great Stuffer of Bags filled them in the first place—who knows?

1928

The Gilded Six-Bits

It was a Negro yard around a Negro house in a Negro settlement that looked to be the payroll of the G and G Fertilizer works for its support.

But there was something happy about the place. The front yard was parted in the middle by a sidewalk from gate to door-step, a sidewalk edged on either side by quart bottins driven neck down into the ground on a slant. A mess of honeey flowers planted without a plan but blooming cheerily from their helve-skaltee places. The fence and house were whitewashed. The porch and steps scrubbed white.

The front door stood open to the sunshine so that the floor of the front room could finish drying after its weekly scouring. It was Saturday. Everything clean from the front gate to the privy house. Yard raked so that the strokes of the rake would make a pattern. Fresh newspaper cut in fancy edge on the kitchen shelves.

Missie May was bathing herself in the galvanized washtub in black. Her dark brown skin glistered under the soapuds that skittered down from her wash rag. Her still young breasta thrust forward aggressively like broad-naled roses with the tips lacerated in black.

She heard men’s voices in the distance and glanced at the dollar clock on the dresser.

“Humph! Ah’m way behind time day! Joe goiter be beah ‘Fore Ah git mah clothes on if Ah don’t make haste.”

She grabbed the clean meal sack at hand, and dried herself hurriedly and began to dress. But before she could tie her dippers, there came the ring of singing metal on wood. Nine times.

Missie May grinned with delight. She had not seen the big tall man come stealing in the gate and creep up the walk grinning happily at the joyful mischief he was about to commit. But she knew that it was her husband throwing silver dollars in the door for her to pick up and yale beside her plate at dinner. It was this way every Saturday afternoon. The nine dollars hurled into the open door, he scurried to a hiding place behind the cape jasmine bush and waited.

Missie May promptly appeared at the door in mock alarm.

“Who dat chuckin’ money in mah do’way?” she demanded. No answer from the yard. She leaped off the porch and began to search the shrubbery. She peeped under the porch and hung over the gate to look up and down the road. While she did this, the man half the jasmine darte to the chinaberry tree. She spied him and gave chase.

“Nobdy ain’t goiter be chuckin’ money at me and Ah not de’mo’vin’nit, she shouted in mock anger. He ran around the house with Missie May at his heels with coughs that were—still and as—foregrered by American. Joyce was a much—photographed asociate and before.

1. The text is from the printing to Story magazine (1914). "Gilded," lightly printed with thin gold or gold-colored felt. "Six bits": twenty-five cents (two bits equals one quart).
heels. She overtook him at the kitchen door. He ran inside but could not close it after him before she crowded in and locked him in a rough and tumble. For several minutes the two were a furious mass of male and female energy. Shouting, laughing, twisting, turning, turling, tickling each other in the ribs; Missie May clutching onto Joe and Joe trying, but not too hard, to get away.

"Missie May, take yo' hand out mah pocket!" Joe shouted out between laughs.

"Ah ain't, Joe, not less ye ginne gimmie whatever' it is good you got in yo' pocket. Tell me what's in there.

"Go on tear 'em. You de one dat pushes de needles round heah. Move yo' hand Missie May."

"Lemme git dat paper sack out yo' pocket. Ah bet it's candy kissers."

"Tain't. Move yo' hand. Woman ain't go no business in a man's clothes nolose. Go way."

Missie May glopped way down and gave an upward jerk and triumphed.

"Ushinshin! Ah got it. It's 'sos candy kissers. Ah knew you had somethin' for me in yo' clothes. Now Ah got to see what's in every pocket you got."

Joe smiled indigently and let his wife go through all of his pockets and take out the things that he had hidden there for her to find. She tore off the chewing gum, the cuke of sweet soap, the pocket handkerchief as if she had wrestled them from him, as if they had not been bought for the sake of this friendly battle.

"Where! dat play-fight done got me all warmed up," Joe exclaimed. "Got me some water in de fitty?"

"Yo' water is on de fire and yo' clean things is cross de bed. Hurry up and wash yozelf and git changed so we kin eat. Ah'm hungry."

Missie May said this, she bore the steaming kettle into the bedroom.

"You ain't hungry, sugar," Joe contradicted her. "Youse jes' a little empty. Ah'm de one what's hungry. Ah could eat up camp meeting, back off 'sociation, and drink Jordan's dry. Have it on de table when Ah git out of de tub."

"Don't you mess wid no business, man. You git in yo' clothes. Ah'm a real wife, not no dress and breach. Ah might not look on lak one, but if you burn me, you won't git a thing but wife ashes."

Joe splashed in the bedroom and Missie May fanned around in the kitchen. A fresh red and white checkered cloth on the table. Big pitcher of buttermilk beaded with pale drops of butter from the churn. Hot fried mullet, crackling bread, ham hock atop a mound of string beans and new potatoes, and perched on the window-sill a 'pone' of spicy potato pudding.

Very little talked during the meal but that little consisted of banter that pretended to deny affection but in reality flaunted it. Like when Missie May reached for a second helping of the tater pone. Joe snatched it out of her reach.

After Missie May had made two or three unsuccessful grabs at the pan, she begged, "Aw, Joe gimme some mo' dat tater pone."

"Nope, sweetin' is for us men-folk. Y'all pitty lil frail els don't need nothin' lak dis. Yo' sweet already."
dawn saw him bustling home around the lake where the challenging sun flung a flaming sword from east to west across the trembling water. That was the best part of life—going home to Missie May. Their white-washed house, the mock battle on Saturday, the dinner and ice cream parlor afterwards, church on Sunday nights when Missie outdistressed any woman in town—all, everything was right.

One night around eleven the acid ran out at the G. and G. The foreman knocked off the crew and let the steam die down. As Joe rounded the lake on his way home, a lean moon rode the lake in a silver boat. If anybody had asked Joe about the moon on the lake, he would have said it hadn't paid any attention. But he saw it with his feelings. It made him yearn painfully for Missie. Creation obsessed him. He thought about children. They had been married for more than a year now. They had money put away. They ought to be making little feet for shoes. A little boy child would be about right. He saw a dim light in the bedroom and decided to come in through the kitchen door. He could wash the fertilizer dust off himself before presenting himself to Missie May. It would be nice for her to know that he was there until he slipped into his place in bed and hugged her back. She always liked that.

He eased the kitchen door open slowly and silently, but when he went to set his dinner bucket on the table he bumped it into a pile of dishes, and something crashed to the floor. He heard his wife gasp in fright and turned to reassure her.

"Is me, honey. Don't get skreeed."

There was a quick, a large movement in the bedroom. A rustle, a thud, and a stealthy silence. The light went out.

What? Robbers? Murderers? Some varmint attacking his helpless wife, perhaps. He struck a match, threw himself on guard and stepped over the door-sill into the bedroom.

The great belt of the wheel of Time slipped and eternity stood still. By the match light he could see the man's legs fighting with his boots in his frantic desire to get them on. He had both chance and time to kill the intruder in his helpless condition—half in and half out of his pants—but he was too weak to take action. The shapeless enemies of humanity that live in the hours of Time had waylaid Joe. He was Annihilated in his weakness. Like Samson awakening after his haircut. So he just opened his mouth and laughed.

The match went out and he struck another and lit the lamp. A howling wind raced across his heart, but underneath its fury he heard his wife sobbing and Slemmons pleading for his life. Offering to buy it with all that he had. "Please, oh, don't kill me. Sixty-two dollars at de slu.' Gold money." Joe just stood. Slemmons looked at Joe and Slemmons say he go't.

Joe stood out like a rough-backed mountain between him and the body. Barring him from escape, from sunlight, from life.

He considered a surprise attack upon the big clown that stood there laughing like a chissy cat. But before his fist could travel an inch, Joe's own rush to outride him to a battering ram. Then Joe stood over him.

6. Wordplay is "in time immemorial"; see no long ago we be forgotten.

7. Used in making fertilizers.

8. Judge T. L. H., Slemmons' exceptional strength resides in his hair, which his tremendous force, Delaware, even off while he sleeps.

9. I.e., Ch tossy cat; no relevance to the getting car in Shelley's Alastor in Hymns of the Morning (1816), by Louis Carroll (1832-1899).
"Git in yo’ dann red, Slemmons, and dat quick."

Slemmons scrambled to his feet and into his vest and coat. As he grabbed his hat, Joe’s fury overrode his intentions and he grabbed at Slemmons with his left hand and struck at him with his right. The right landed. The left grazed the front of his vest. Slemmons was knocked a somersault into the kitchen and fell through the open door. Joe found himself alone with Missie May, with the golden watch chain clutched in his left fist. A short bit of broken chain dangled between his fingers.

Missie May was sobbing. Waits of weeping without words. Joe stood, and after awhile he found out that he had something in his hand. And then he stood and felt and thought and without seeing with his natural eyes. Missie May kept on crying and Joe kept on feeling so much and not knowing what to do with all his feelings, he put Slemmons’ watch chain in his pants pocket and took a good laugh and went to bed.

"Missie May, what you cryin’ for?"

"Cause Ah love you so hard and Ah know you don’t love me no mo.’"

"Joe, honey, he said he wuz gointor give me dat gold money and he jes’ kep on after me."

Joe was very still and silent for a long time. Then he said, "Well, don’t cry no mo’, Missie May. Ah got yo’ gold piece for you.

The hours were long, and Missie May went to bed and the sun came down the saw the dawn come into her yard. It was day. Nothing more. Joe wouldn’t be coming home as usual. No need to fling open the front door and sweep off the porch, making it nice for Joe. Never no more breakfast to cook; no more washing and starching of Joe’s jumper-jackets and pants. No more nothing. So why get up?

With this strange man in her bed, she felt embarrassed to get up and dress. She decided to wait till he had dressed and gone. Then she would get up, dress quickly and be gone forever beyond reach of Joe’s looks and laughs. But he never moved. Red light turned to yellow, then white.

From beyond the no-man’s-land between them came a voice voice that yesterday had been Joe’s.

"Missie May, ain’t you gonna fix me no breakfast?"

She sprang out of bed. "Yeah, Joe. Ah didn’t reclon you wuz hungry."

No need to today. Joe needed her for a few more minutes anyhow. Soon there was a roaring fire in the cook stove. Water bucket full and two chickens killed. Joe loved fried chicken and rice. She didn’t deserve a thing and good Joe was letting her cook him some breakfast. She rushed hot biscuits to the table as Joe took his seat.

He ate with his eyes on his plate. No laughter, no banter. "Missie May, you ain’t eatin’ yo’ breakfast’.

"Ah don’t choose none, Ah thank yuh."

His coffee cup was empty. She sprang to refill it. When she turned from the stove and bent to set the cup beside Joe’s plate, she saw the yellow coin on the table between them.

She slumped into her seat and wept into her arms.

Presently Joe said calmly, "Missie May, you cry too much. Don’t look back lad. Lot’s wife and turn to salt."

The sun, the hero of every day, the impersonal old man that beams as brightly on death as on birth, came up every morning and raced across the blue dome and dipped into the sea of fire every evening. Water ran down hill and birds nested.

Missie knew why she didn’t leave Joe. She couldn’t. She loved him too much, but she could not understand why Joe didn’t leave her. He was polite, even kind at times, but aloof.

There were no more Saturday romps. No ringing silver dollars to stack beside her plate. No pockets to rifle. In fact the coins in her purses was like a monster hiding in the cave of his pockets to not destroy her.

She often wondered if he still had it, but nothing could have induced her to ask nor yet to explore his pockets to see for herself. It’s shadow was in the house whether or no.

One night Joe came home around midnight and complained of pains in the back. He asked Missie to rub him down with liniment. It had been three.

She saw the paper and she read the coin. She put the paper aside and she read the coin. It was a gilded half dollar. Then she knew why Slemmons had forbidden anyone to touch his gold. He trusted village eyes at a distance not to recognize his stick-pin as a gilded quarter, and his watch chain as a four bit piece.

She was glad at first that Joe had left it there. Perhaps he was through with his punishment. They were man and wife again. Then another thought came clashing at her. He had come home to buy from her as if she were any woman in the long house. Fifty cents for her love. As if to say that he could pay as well as Slemmons. She did the coin into his pocket and dressed herself and left his house.

Halfway between her house and the quarters’ she met her husband’s mother, and after a short talk she turned and went back home. Never would she admit defeat to that woman who prayed for it nightly. If she had not the substance of marriage she had the outside show. Joe must leave her. She let him see she didn’t want his old gold four-bit too.

She saw no more of the coin for some time. Much she knew that Joe could not help finding it in his pocket. But his health kept poor, and he came home at least ten days to be rubbed.

The sun swept around the horizon, trailing its robes of weeks and days. One morning as Joe came in from work, he found Missie May chopping wood. Without a word he took the ax and chopped a huge pile before he stopped. "You ain’t got no business chopping’ wood, and you know it.

"How come? Ah been choppin’ it for de last longest."

1. According to Genesis 19:26, Lot’s wife was permitted to bring a pillow of sand for looking back at the destroyed city of Sodom when she and her hus-


3. Wicked deceitful.
“Ah ain’t blind. You makin’ feet for shoes.”

“Won’t you be glad to have a lil baby chile, Joe?”

“You know dat thout ain’ me.”

“Jas goiner be a boy chile and de very spit of you.” You reckon, Missie May?”

“Who else could it look la?”

Joe said nothing, but he thrust his hand deep into his pocket and fingered something there.

It was almost six months later Missie May took to bed and Joe went and got his mother to come wait on the house.

Missie May delivered a fine boy. Her travail was over when Joe came in from work one morning. His mother and the old women were drinking great bowls of coffee around the fire in the kitchen.

The minute Joe came into the room his mother called him aside.

“How did Missie May make out?” he asked quickly.

“Well, dat gal? She strong as a ox. She goiner have plenty mo’. We done fixed her wid de sugar andlard to sweeten her fur de nex’ one.”

Joe stood silent awhile.

“You ain’t a’bout de baby, Joe. You ought to be mighty proud cause she is de spittin’ image of yuh, sos. Dat’s yourn all right, if you never git another one, dat un is yourn. And you know Ah’n mighty proud too, sos, cause Ah never thought well of you ma’n’nyin’ Missie May cause her ma used tub fan her foot round right smart and Ah been mighty skeered that Missie May was goiner git pun in on her road.”

Joe said nothing. He fooled around the house till late in the day then just before he went to work, he went and stood at the foot of the bed and asked his wife where she left. He did this every day during the week.

On Saturday he went to Orlando to make his market. It had been a long time since he had done that.

Meat and lard, meal and flour, soap and starch. Cans of corn and tomatoes. All the staples. He fooled around town for awhile and bought bananans and apples. Way after he went around to the candy store.

“Hello, Joe,” the clerk greeted him. “Ah ain’t seen you in a long time.”

“Nepe, Ah ain’t been hear. Been round in spots and places.”

“Want some of them mollases kisses you always buy?”

“Yeah.” He threw the golde’n half dollar on the counter. “Will dat spend?”

“What is it, Joe? Well, I’ll be doggone! A gold-plated four-bit piece. Where’d you git it, Joe?”

“Offer a stranger nigger dat come through Eatonville. He had it on his watch chain for a charm—goin’ round making out its gold money. Ha! Ha! He had a quarter on his tie pin and it wuz all golded up too. Tryin’ to fool people. Makin’ out he so rich and everything. Ha! Ha! Tryin’ to take off folks wives from home.”

“How did you git it, Joe? Did he fool you, too?”

“Who? me? Naw suh! He ain’t fooled me none. Know what Ah done? He come round wid me my smart talk, Ah hauled off and knocked ‘im down and took his old four-bits way from ‘im. Goiner buy my wife some good oles kisses wid it. Git me scurme forty cents worth of dem candy kisses.”

“Fifty cents buys a mighty lot of candy kisses, Joe. Why don’t you split it up and take some chocolate bars, too. They eat good, too.”

“Yeah, dey do, but Ah wants all dat in kisses. Ah got a lil boy chile home now. Tain’t a week old yet, but he kis such a sugar tiff and maybe eat one them kisses kisser.”

Joe got his candy and left the store. The clerk turned to the next customer.

“Wish I could be like these darkies. Laughin’ all the time. Nothing worries em.”

Back in Eatonville, Joe reached his own front door. There was the ring of singing metal on wood. Fifteen times. Missie May couldn’t run to the door, but she crept there as quickly as she could.

“Joe Bank, Ah hear you chunkin’ money in mah do’way. You wait till Ah got mah strength back and Ah goin’ fix you for dat.”

1933

NELLA LARSEN

1891—1964

Harlem Renaissance leaders proposed that African American artists and intellectuals should uplift their race. In the famous phrase of W. E. B. Du Bois, it was the duty of the "talented tenth" to "redeem the masses of black Americans while at the same time leading the struggle against white prejudice.

This ideology inspired many writers but produced divisive arguments. Some African American writers believed that African American writing ought to anchor in authentic popular black culture—whether found in the folklore of the rural South or in the jazz scene of urban communities—or should represent a different kind of movement, a new kind of black culture, which could be called "Negroes".

Of these writers, the most influential in the"Negroes" were John Lewis, who grew up in the South, and Nella Larsen. She was born in Chicago, a white mother—she was a Danish immigrant—and a black father. He died when she was two, and her mother then married a white man. Later, Larsen, a family's dark, was viewed by both the family's dark and the family's light as an embar-

The age of athletics she attended a high school connected to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Later, her first experience in an all-black environment, lasted for only a year (1907-08). She moved to Copenhagen, Denmark, where she lived from 1909 to 1912, visiting relatives and studying at the university. Up to this point—but not beyond it—her life story resembles that of Helga Crane, protagonist of Quicksand.

Returning to the United States after three years abroad, Larsen studied and then practiced nursing for several years. In 1919 she married Elmer Samuel Imes, a black research physician who later became chair of Fisk University's Physics Department. In 1922, now residing in Harlem, she left nursing and began to work for the New York...