

Section 3, Passage #1 (p101)

IT WAS TIME to lay it all down.

Before Paul D came and sat on her porch steps, words whispered in the keeping room had kept her going. Helped her endure the chastising ghost; refurbished the baby faces of Howard and Buglar and kept them whole in the world because in her dreams she saw only their parts in trees; and kept her husband shadowy but there—somewhere.

Now Halle's face between the butter press and the churn swelled larger and larger, crowding her eyes and making her head hurt.

She wished for Baby Suggs' fingers molding her nape, reshaping it, saying, "Lay em down, Sethe. Sword and shield. Down. Down. Both of em down. Down by the riverside. Sword and shield. Don't study war no more. Lay all that mess down. Sword and shield."

And under the pressing fingers and the quiet instructive voice, she would.

Her heavy knives of defense against misery, regret, gall and hurt, she placed one by one on a bank where dear water rushed on below.

Nine years without the fingers or the voice of Baby Suggs was too much. And words whispered in the keeping room were too little. 2

The butter-smeared face of a man God made none sweeter than demanded more: an arch built or a robe sewn. Some fixing ceremony.

Sethe decided to go to the Clearing, back where Baby Suggs had danced in sunlight.

Section 3, Passage # 2 (pg 105)

She put on a shawl and told Denver and Beloved to do likewise.

All three set out late one Sunday morning, Sethe leading, the girls trotting behind, not a soul in sight. When they reached the woods it took her no time to find the path through it because big-city revivals were held there regularly now, complete with food-laden tables, banjos and a tent.

The old path was a track now, but still arched over with trees dropping buckeyes onto the grass below.

There was nothing to be done other than what she had done, but Sethe blamed herself for Baby Suggs' collapse.

However many times Baby denied it, Sethe knew the grief at 124 started when she jumped down off the wagon, her newborn tied to her chest in the underwear of a whitegirl looking for Boston.

Followed by the two girls, down a bright green corridor of oak and horse chestnut, Sethe began to sweat a sweat just like the other one when she woke, mud-caked, on the banks of the Ohio.

Amy was gone. Sethe was alone and weak, but alive, and so was her baby.

She walked a ways downriver and then stood gazing at the glimmering water. By and by a flatbed slid into view, but she could not see if the figures on it were whitepeople or not.

She began to sweat from a fever she thanked God for since it would certainly keep her baby warm.

When the flatbed was beyond her sight she stumbled on and found herself near three coloredpeople fishing-- two boys and an older man. She stopped and waited to be spoken to. One of the boys pointed and the 4man looked over his shoulder at her--a quick look since all he needed to know about her he could see in no time.

Section 3, Passage #3 (pg 117)

Like a faint smell of burning that disappears when the fire is cut off or the window opened for a breeze, the suspicion that the girl's touch was also exactly like the baby's ghost dissipated.

It was only a tiny disturbance anyway--not strong enough to divert her from the ambition welling in her now: she wanted Paul D. No matter what he told and knew, she wanted him in her life.

More than commemorating Halle, that is what she had come to the Clearing to figure out, and now it was figured.

Trust and rememory, yes, the way she believed it could be when he cradled her before the cooking stove.

The weight and angle of him; the true-to-life beard hair on him; arched back,  
educated hands.

His waiting eyes and awful human power. The mind of him that  
knew her own.

Her story was bearable because it was his as well--to tell, to refine  
and tell again.

The things neither knew about the other--the things neither had  
word-shapes for--well, it would come in time: where they led him off to sucking  
iron; the perfect death of her crawling-already? baby. (117)

Section 3, Passage #4 (144)

"You the one thirsty. You want cider or don't you?" Denver's voice is mildly accusatory. Mildly.

She doesn't want to offend and she doesn't want to betray the panic that is creeping over her like hairs. There is no sight or sound of Beloved.

Denver struggles to her feet amid the crackling newspaper. Holding her palm out, she moves slowly toward the door.

There is no latch or knob--just a loop of wire to catch a nail.

She pushes the door open. Cold sunlight displaces the dark.

The room is just as it was when they entered-except Beloved is not there. There is no point in looking further, for everything in the place can be seen at first sight.

Denver looks anyway because the loss is ungovernable.

She steps back into the shed, allowing the door to close quickly behind her.

Darkness or not, she moves rapidly around, reaching, touching cobwebs, cheese, slanting shelves, the pallet interfering with each step.

If she stumbles, she is not aware of it because she does not know where her body stops, which part of her is an arm, a foot or a knee.

She feels like an ice cake torn away from the solid surface of the stream, floating on darkness, thick and crashing against the edges of things around it.

Breakable, meltable and cold.



Section 3, Passage 5 (pgs 137)

"She don't love me like I love her. I don't love nobody but her."

"Then what you come in here for?"

"I want you to touch me on the inside part."

"Go on back in that house and get to bed."

"You have to touch me. On the inside part.

And you have to call me my name."

As long as his eyes were locked on the silver of the lard can he was safe. If he trembled like Lot's wife and felt some womanish need to see the nature of the sin behind him; feel a sympathy, perhaps, for the cursing cursed, or want to hold it in his arms out of respect for the connection between them, he too would be lost.

"Call me my name."

"No."

"Please call it. I'll go if you call it."

"Beloved." He said it, but she did not go.

She moved closer with a footfall he didn't hear and he didn't hear the whisper that the flakes of rust made either as they fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin. So when the lid gave he didn't know it.

What he knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying, "Red heart. Red heart," over and over again.

Softly and then so loud it woke Denver, then Paul D himself. "Red heart. Red heart. Red heart."