Heritage

Rebekah McCloud

St. John Fisher College

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Cover Page Footnote
Appeared in the issue: 1975.

This poem is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1975/iss1/3
there, Mr. Parker was sitting outside on a stump with a bottle in his hand. Pa told Sarah and Sonny to stay in the truck, and he and Ma ran past Mr. Parker into the house.

“Sarah, come with me. Pa’ll beat me for sure bringing you people back here.” They ran wide around the stump and into the house. In the living room, Pa was helping Mrs. Parker off the floor. She was covered with blood, but it wasn’t fresh now, and her face was covered with purple bruises. Ma had gone to the kitchen. She came back with water and cloths and Pa carried Mrs. Parker to the bed in the corner. “Sarah, you straighten those covers so I can lay her down,” Sonny watched from the doorway. Mr. Parker was still drinking in the yard.

Sarah leaned over to pick up the baby. He wasn’t whining. She touched him. He didn’t move. “Pa, he feels funny. He’s cold.”

Quickly, Ma scooped the baby up in the dirty sheet and took it out to the kitchen. Mr. Parker staggered into the room and over to his wife, pushing Sonny and Pa aside. He sat down on the bed. “That’s what comes of you making our business public, Gerta. The boy was dead already, and now you killed the new one.” “We’d better take your wife into the doctor,” Pa suggested. “No doctors. You hear.” Mr. Parker reeled to his feet “Get outta my house.” “Your wife’s ailing, Mr. Parker,” Ma said. “She needs some attention.” She looked around the room. “No one here to help her.” “We don’t need no help from your kind.” “We just wanted …” started Sarah but Ma’s look shut her up.

Mrs. Parker looked up from the bed, holding the wet cloths Ma had put to her head, just barely able to talk, “My man’s right. This ain’t none of your business. You best get off our property.”

Sarah went outside to the truck, then Pa and Ma climbed in on either side and Pa started the truck toward home. They rode along in silence until they were almost up to their gate.

“We only wanted to help,” Sarah said. “Why didn’t Mrs. Parker want us to help?”

Pa stopped the truck and Ma got out. She picked up the egg basket and went into the house. Pa patted Sarah’s hand and opened the door on his side. As he stepped down, he warned Sarah, “Don’t sit here too long in the hot truck.” She watched as he headed back out behind the barn to his plowing. “It is, too, our business,” she whispered, but her Ma and Pa were already out of hearing. Then she said it again, to the inside of the truck, louder and louder, until at last she was crying it out.

Heritage

I am
black, female,
chronologically under twenty-one,
spiritually over sixty-five;
poor, oppressed, neglected denied,
un/under educated, un/under qualified,
un-American.
Human: weak, strong,
lacking of my inalienable rights,
my forty acres and a mule.

I have survived.
Who am I?
The new Negra
with three hundred years
on my back,
on my mind.

Rebekah McCloud