Mule

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Mule

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Now I see and hear the big ape and her husband is sure done that.

He sat down and the rocks; got to the fence, and crept along the side of the church wall to the front. There was Monsieur Gidoone's shack. I hid behind the big elm tree, just in front of the church entrance, and waited.

The shack door was closed, and Papa and M'Oncle were not in sight. Were they inside? Suddenly a loud curse burst out of the shack. That, followed by loud rumbles, like chairs hurtling against the wall, brought Mrs. Gagne to the open window of her house across the street. She listened, and hearing "MON MAUD! CHIEU DE GODDAM!" pulled her head back inside. I recognized Papa's familiar "SALAUD!" but I had never known Papa this angry. Was he going to kill Monsieur Gidoone? I would never have expected Papa to hurt him.

After another crashing noise, I heard my benefactor meaning. I wanted to squirm closer, to see inside, but I could not move from behind the tree. Mrs. Gagne and her husband rushed out their door toward the shack.

Then I heard a siren in the distance. The shack door flew open. Papa and M'Oncle dragged Monsieur Gidoone out by his armpits. Blood trickled from his nose, and he wobbled and slid, trying to stay on his feet. What had I done?

Papa gripped Monsieur Gidoone's shirt and pointed to the Bonford chimney. "Look! Look what you Jonnybulls are doing to us!" he shouted. "But no! That's not enough! You got to go after our children with . . . with your filthy dirty hands!" And he pulled from his pocket a piece of paper, my dollar may-be, and pushed it in Monsieur Gidoone's eyes. Then tore it violently, over and again, and flung it in his benefactor's face. The old man was crying and trembling, and his pants looked wet.

The police car raced up, and Officer Beaulieu, a friend of Papa's, jumped out. Papa gestured wildly, as did M'Oncle Theophile, while a small

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Henson: Mule

by Joan Henson

We ferret ravines and boulders, you and I — foragers, sitting streams and turning rocks; miles into desert, ochre days are clocks we read by shadow length and shade of sky.

You echo in ancient shafts, unseen to all except my long, low ears attuned to mines; I heave in the heat near shimmery cactus spines hearing you pick and probe abandoned wall.

Emerge yellow-dusted, denim soft with sweat, vague as twilight sinking against my side, rocking your head as if the night were wide chasms you must cross or must forget.

I lick your shovel fingers, worn old and stand mute, tranfixed by you: in gold.