

Hattie on the Block



Remember me?

*I'm the woman you nailed to a tree
after the twilight died.*

Carrie, you be still, now,
don't make no noise.

Mama will protect you
from all the shoutin' an' screamin'
an' biddin' that's goin' on
right now. Hold on. Hold onto Mama.

Won't be long now,
they done had they lunch,
an' somethin' will happen to take
the fear outta your bones
an' the sweat off of your eyelids
an' drain them to the sweet winds
for the birds to eat. Somethin' will happen:

*Happens that I be a slave woman,
maybe that makes me property,
not a human bein' like all
you who come to buy me,
see if I'm sturdy, can hold ground,
can withstand the elements, bear fruit*

*when the seed is in me, like the Lord's land,
sing for my supper when the seasons come,
give death the mortgage on my bones.*

*Don't come near me! Stay away!
I'm not buyable yet,
I'm a bit unleavened.*

*Still, Carrie, be still, child. Don't cry,
don't let them see you cry, honey,
there's a victory in that. Keep the tears
inward, outta they sight.
Hold onto my apron, tear it, if you want,
hold hard while we crush the evil
pushin' its way through that crowd of shoppers
yellin' before us an' standin' there
mockin' us with money an' all the changers
in the temple, but they all look good,
don't they? Nice coats an' trousers,
bright shoes, sturdy hats. Ever seen
a finer lookin' peoples than that?*

Evil be pretty sometimes, don't it?

Money look good, even if it be for your soul.

*Souls cain't be bought.
I won't be of much use to anybody
who buys me without my Carrie here.
I be crippled, needin' crutches: who gonna
pay for them? Or will I have to work
the fields limp'in' about with my mind
catchin' butterflies, when I should be
pickin' cotton, 'cause my soul be amputated
when you bought me without my Carrie
for a few dollars cheaper?*

*No, don't, I beg, you, don't touch me!
Stay back. I cain't leave this block
in holo-cust!*

*That's it, Carrie, hang tight;
My, your forehead be hot,
fever comin' on I 'spect, an' your
mother's fever gone cold
makin' it more dangerous when
it be exposed to the elements
that gather up 'round her now,
this early, bright mornin'
spoiled an' festerin' in the mouths
of all these happy buyers who need
the disease of your Mama's wrath
so they can recover from their own
dyin'.*

*Dyin' today if I be sold without my Carrie.
I promise you that.*

*Look on us before you lay
your money down. What we cost? \$2500?*

Good price. Buy what you breed.

*Masters, Owners, Buyers, Fathers, Sons,
Take vengeance on your dollar!
God help me, I be His maidservant,
I be His witness to this sale of womanflesh
in the twenty-eighth year of my delivery!*

*Carrie, look! Wipe your eyes, child.
See. They finished the biddin'. Money
be paid. We's together, God heard my*

haltin' words through the ears of these
deafened people; you an' me from this strange
pulpit. Look lively, child. We be sold,
but we ain't bought.