

DEAR GOD. DEAR STARS, DEAR TREES, DEAR SKY, DEAR PEOPLES.
DEAR EVERYTHING. DEAR GOD.

Thank you for bringing my sister Nettie and our children home. Wonder who that coming yonder? ast Albert, looking up the road. Us can see the dust just aflyng.

Me and him and Shug sitting out on the porch after dinner. Talking. Not talking. Rocking and fanning flies. Shug mention she don't want to sing in public no more—well, maybe a night or two at Harpo's. Think maybe she retire. Albert say he want her to try on his new shirt. I talk bout Henrietta. Sofia. My garden and the store. How things doing generally. So much in the habit of sewing something I stitch up a bunch of scraps, try to see what I can make. The weather cool for the last of June, and sitting on the porch with Albert and Shug feel real pleasant. Next week be the fourth of July and us plan a big family reunion outdoors here at my house. Just hope the cool weather hold.

Could be the mailman, I say. Cept he driving a little fast

Could be Sofia, say Shug. You know she drive like a maniac.

Could be Harpo, say Albert. But it not.

By now the car stop under the trees in the yard and all these peoples dress like old folks git out.

A big tall whitehaired man with a backward turn white collar, a little dumpty woman with her gray hair in plaits cross on top her head. A tall youngish man and two robust looking youngish women. The whitehaired man say something to the driver of the car and the car leave. They all stand down there at the edge of the drive surrounded by boxes and bags and all kinds of stuff.

By now my heart is in my mouth and I can't move.

It's Nettie, Albert say, gitting up.

All the people down by the drive look up at us. They look at the house. The yard. Shug and Albert's cars. They look round at the fields. Then they commence to walk real slow up the walk to the house.

I'm so scared I don't know what to do. Feel like my mind stuck. I try to speak, nothing come. Try to git up, almost fall. Shug reach down and give me a helping hand. Albert press me on the arm.

When Nettie's foot come down on the porch I almost die. I stand swaying, tween Albert and Shug. Nettie stand swaying tween Samuel and I reckon it must be Adam. Then us both start to moan and cry. Us totter toward one nother like us use to do when us was babies. Then us feel so weak when us touch, us knock each other down. But what us care? Us sit and lay there on the porch inside each other's arms.

After while, she say *Celie*.

I say *Nettie*.

Little bit more time pass. Us look round at a lot of peoples knees. Nettie never let go my waist. This my husband Samuel, she say, pointing up. These our children Olivia and Adam and this Adam's wife Tashi, she say.

I point up at my peoples. This Shug and Albert, I say.

Everybody say Pleased to Meetcha. Then Shug and Albert start to hug everybody one after the other.

Me and Nettie finally git up off the porch and I hug my children. And I hug Tashi. Then I hug Samuel.

Why us always have family reunion on July 4th, say Henrietta, mouth poke out, full of complaint. It so hot.

White people busy celebrating they independence from England July 4th, say Harpo, so most black folks don't have to work. Us can spend the day celebrating each other.

Ah, Harpo, say Mary Agnes, sipping some lemonade, I didn't know you knowed history. She and Sofia working together on the potato salad. Mary Agnes come back home to pick up Suzie Q. She done left Grady, move back to Memphis and live with her sister and her ma. They gon look after Suzie Q while she work. She got a lot of new songs, she say, and not too knocked out to sing 'em.

After while, being with Grady, I couldn't think, she say. Plus, he not a good influence for no child. Course, I wasn't either, she say. Smoking so much reefer.

Everybody make a lot of miration over Tashi. People look at her and Adam's scars like that's they business. Say they never suspect African ladies could look so *good*. They make a fine couple. Speak a little funny, but us gitting use to it.

What your people love best to eat over there in Africa? us ast.

She sort of blush and say *barbecue*.

Everybody laugh and stuff her with one more piece.

I feel a little peculiar round the children. For one thing, they grown. And I see they think me and Nettie and Shug and Albert and Samuel and Harpo and Sofia and Jack and Odessa real old and don't know much what going on. But I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I think this the youngest us ever felt.

Amen