

The Lingerin Lady

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“Mommy, I saw someone.” expels the child.

“Oh? Where?” The mother inquires.

“When I was running in the fields, there was a woman lingerin on the edge of the property.” The child answers.

“Well, what did she want, boy?” The mother pushes.

“Nothing.” The boy says at first, but with one fierce look from his mother, he breaks down the barriers of his resistance. “She just looked at me and smiled, then began to cry.”

“What did you do to this poor woman?” the mother rushes to interrogate.

“Nothing, Mama! I swear” The boy exclaimed.

Smack! A deliberate hit to the boy’s head, “You don’t swear in front of your mama, boy!”

“I’m sorry, Mama! She just cried! But she was smiling! I-I didn’t know what to do!”

“So you run away?” The mother brushes her hand over her face and mumbles, “Oh dear boy, you’re gonna get shot if you run away from white people like that...”

“No Mama! She was black!” he practically yells.

The mother stops in her tracks and takes a moment, “Was it Mary-Louis? She is supposed to be coming over for supper later, baby.” The mother lets out a deep sigh.

“No,” The boy’s head shakes and he reaches into his pocket and clutches something in his hand. Slowly, he reaches out for his mother’s hand and drops something of good weight in her hand, “She tossed me this.”

The mother looks down at her hand and inhales a sharp breath. “Oh, sweet baby.” Tears began to well in this woman’s eyes as she looked at the heaviest gold coin she has ever seen.

“Mama. I’m sorry. I don’t mean to make you cry.” The boy reaches around his mother and grabs her in the biggest hug he can muster.

The mother chuckles, and returns the hug, “These are good tears! Happy tears, baby! You’ve been blessed by the Lingerin Lady.”

“Lingerin Lady?” The boy’s head tilts to the side, “Who is she?”

“She was a woman of my time whom many have had encounters with, but we thought she left us after the war, to be free, to die after her purpose was served...” The mother’s thoughts began to take her away for a moment.

In a gentle voice, the boy looks his mother in the eye and says, “Mama, tell me about her?”

Matching her son’s gaze, “Yes, baby”

When slaves came to the Americas, many were moved around fairly quickly and had to adapt to new terrains, climates, and owners - it was especially difficult for a blind slave woman. This woman in particular was sold and auctioned constantly for her disability, but eventually, a desperate Virginian slave owner needed the extra pair of hands and bought the woman. What none of these slave masters knew was how smart this woman was. Every environment she would come across was never a worry for her: By the smell in the air, she could tell how big the plantation was; By her touching the soil, she could tell how fertile the ground was and how long the plantation could run; with the vibrations of sound, she could tell how many people worked on the plantation; with the perfume of the season, she could taste the sweat on the brows of the hundreds - sometimes even thousands - slaves around her. Her awareness around her, as some (can or have) recalled, was better than the people that could see for miles around.

However, on this Virginian plantation, this woman thrived and was able to develop an idea of freedom for the first time in her life. The senses all around her began to feel bland to her - she wanted to experience the freedom that had been planted in her mind as a child, but how she longed to taste its sweet fruit. One evening after a long day's work, she could detect an opportunity to arise as the master had been drunk off his rocker for a majority of the day, and his wife was too worn out from taking care of him. The slaves around her couldn't sense this opportunity like her and she didn't want to be the burden of disappointment if she would fail more than herself. When the sounds of the night erupted - crickets chirping and the sounds of slumber resonate in the chambers - the woman had crept out of the cabin by herself. However, when she took that step out the door, she realized her biggest mistake: she didn't know of life at night. In all her existence, she had thrived on the alertness of the sun to inspire and create the function of senses around her, but she was now on new, but familiar terrain. It was too late for

her to go back inside and before she could begin to scope out her plan, "You there!" yelled the slave owner, "What do you think you're doing?" He slurred from the scope of his home.

In a panic, the woman burst with the hope of her own light to guide her to freedom and sprinted through the fields. She could hear the family of the slave master emerge from the house and come after hearing yelling and screaming, but that wouldn't stop her. Of course, she was falling and tripping over the terrain at night, but she knew she could never stop running. Eventually, she had burst through the fields of tobacco and the new smells of the wilderness - the smells that teased her for the last couple of months - were suddenly overwhelming for her and she tumbled down such a steep hill that with every thump her body hit the ground. It is said that it was so bad, her senses and her body were completely broken. "Keep moving." she chanted to herself. This poor woman crawled across the land even as her nails bled and her skin broke with every clutch pulling her body away. When they thought they could not crawl any longer, with her last effort, she clawed her hand into the ground and to her surprise, it was not plush grass, but a hard, cold, metal-like substance, unlike anything she had ever touched. As she reached for it and clutched it, her entire body warmed and glowed as her blind eyes had awoken to a hazy new color. Her vision was covered in this hot, celestial, pure color that changed her vision and enlightened her bruised and battered body. Through this magic, her body healed in unimaginable ways: The broken senses healed and were defined better than before, her skin had mended and plumped again with life; the nails that were bloodied and broken cured and evened - as if they had never experienced a day's labor in their existence; the dirtied and untreated hair had begun to flourish from entanglements to become soft and free from their bonds, and her vision on life had completely changed in a moment's notice. When her body had healed, she had risen from the ground and when she heard the loud rustling behind her, her back straightened as she realized she was not the prey at that moment. When a slave owner pounced on her, a color - thick and fiery- fought on her vision. She was infected with poison and when she screamed out in frustration, an ointment of the pure color was placed on her vision and the slave owner began to sob hysterically, "I'm blind!" and let go of the woman. When another man grabbed her, a richer and darker color took her vision again and the pain she had felt before eased as this man began to scream, "She blinded me!" The woman could hear another set of feet rustling around but never dared to come closer. The men around her ran in frenzied directions, separating from one another, down their own paths of loneliness.

The woman had picked up the gold piece from before and had the sensation that there was more. When she discovered the chest containing more, she picked it up and began to trek back to the plantation, intending to free her brothers and sisters from their bonds and found a freedom plantation. The trek was easy, but when she smelled the strong fragrance of tobacco, she rushed to the field only for her to stop abruptly before the field. The large leaves of tobacco were within a breath's reach from her shins, but she couldn't get past this barrier. Oh, did she try! When the sun had come up, and the light graced her, the light began to burn and ache and when she hid in the shadows, her glow had healed the blisters that formed. She understood her ambitions had been too great and that she had to be patient with the suffering and will of her people, but she had to be ready. Every day, she travels the shadows to new plantations and awaits for anyone to come across her path, lingering to punish those with the painful colors and to reward the freed with celestial-greed of a new life.

“.....and from then on, we were always told to look for the lingering lady, to always look for her.” the mother said.

“But Mama, we could use this,” The boy gestured to the gold in his mother's hand, “to pay for Daddy to be home.”

The mother takes her son's hand and places the gold in his hand, “Oh baby. The Lingering Lady has already paid for your Daddy to be home.” She caresses her son's face, “She gave me the gold of you...I see him every day in you.”

“But-”

“No buts.” The mother interrupts, “You are free now.”

“Of what, Mama?” The boy asks.

“I do not know baby, but we are lucky the Lingering Lady knows.”

Always look to the Lingering Lady