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Silas Carter and Melba Blue

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SILAS CARTER AND MELBA BLUE

The first time Silas saw Melba, was on the incline behind the fence surrounding the old abandoned parking lot where Flanagan's used to be. He had gone there to find some solace. He couldn't help himself, he had gone there to cry. It was getting to be more than a skinny little boy could bear, every day was the same, he was always picked on in school, always pushed and shoved. That day was one where he had had enough. He sat there drawing aimlessly in the dirt with a stick, tears streaming down his pale, freckled features. Every so often a whimper would escape his lips. He was pressing harder and harder until, he heard a snap, realizing then that he had broken his twig. He started to drink in the surroundings, looking up and down along the fence, momentarily taken away from his tormented thoughts; until they came bounding back, his eyes welling up as he relived his humiliation once again. He tried holding back the tears in vain. Squinching his eyes tightly, he felt the need to try and hold the rushing stream back with his hands, feeling his face hot and flushed, afraid to allow his breathing to go beyond strained shallow gasps, a pounding starting in his head.

Suddenly, he felt he was being watched, but not by his persecutors, no. It was more like an animal watching, secure in its hideaway. Slowly, Silas managed to get his breathing to calm him, breathing in, then out, then in again. He wiped his eyes, took one hand down, slowly moving his eye ball all the way round in its socket, scouring all

in his view. Then the other hand came down. Starting at his feet he carefully moved his eyes upward, not sure what he would see. And then, there it was. Two black eyes looked at him through a broken board in the fence. That was really all he could make out, two gleaming black eyes. He watched the eyes watch him.

Suddenly, he felt he was being watched, but not by his persecutors, no. It was more like an animal watching, secure in its hideaway.

"What you cryin' for?" Silas' eyes bounced against their sockets. He felt he had to blink to keep them from falling out. Why that was no animal at all! It was — Well now it was nothing. Had he imagined it? There were no eyes in the fence now, a blink and they had disappeared. Then he heard the voice again. "What you cryin' for?" This time it came from farther along the fence, and it was attached to a girl. A black girl with pig-tails wearing jeans and a huge white T-shirt. She walked up to Silas and gave him the use of the edge of her T-shirt to wipe his eyes. "What you cryin' for?"

"I ain't cryin'." What else could Silas have said? She was a girl.

"My name's Melba, and you is too cryin'." She sat down beside him and started following the lines he had drawn in the dirt with her fingers. She seemed to have gotten

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rather engrossed, seemed to have completely forgotten Silas sitting beside her. She was ignoring him, and Silas was not at all sure he liked that. "You was cryin' all right"

Oh, this angered Silas downright. This, this girl, this... He wanted to shove her, he wanted to knock her down. Embarrassing him, she was. His fists clenched, even as his eyes welled up again. Silas kicked up the dirt in front of them, destroyed every trace of what he had drawn. Dirt flew everywhere, even in Melba's hair, maybe her eyes. Silas couldn't tell, she sat perfectly still her hands cupping her face. Seeing her like that, something stopped him, made him think, made him feel. And then retrieving the broken twig, he gave her one half, kept the other, and started drawing.

— *Marcella Nowak*

UNTITLED

To a moth

A tree doesn't live
The moth lands
lives
dies

The tree stands unchanged

To a man

The Earth doesn't live
The man is born
lives
dies

The Earth stands unchanged

— *Joseph Hake*