

Everybody has to find out about living for themselves

Janie Crawford evolving selfhood through three marriages. Fair-skinned, long haired, dreamy
as a child, Janie grows up expecting better treatment than she gets. Living life as one man's mules or another man's adornment. Janie is one black woman who does not have to live in lost sorrow, bitterness, fear, or foolish romantic dreams, for Janie has learned "two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh themselves." Janie Crawford is better off at the end of the noval Their Eyes Were Watching God. Janie is confused when she was a young woman. The noval explains her life as a young girl. Her mother left her when she was really young. Janie never met her. Her grandmother explains that her master rapped her, "Den, one night ah heard de big funs boomin' lak thunder. It kept up all night. And de next morin' Ah could see uh big ship at a distance and a great stirrin' round. So Ah wrapped mah way on down to de landin'. The men was all in blue, and Ah heard people say Sherman was comin' to meet de boats in Savannah, and all of us slaves was free. So Ah run got mah baby and got in quotation wid people and found a place Ah could stay." Grandmother was wanting to make a school teacher out of Janie's mother. Janie found out that a school teacher rapped her mother so she never met her father either. Janie's mother was seventeen, when she was pregnant with Janie. After Janie was born, Janie's mother took to drinking a lot. Janie's grandmother raised Janie since she was born, grandmother says "Maybe it wasn't much, but Ah done de best Ah kin by you. Ah raked and scraped and bought dis lil piece uh land so you wouldn't have to stay in de white folk's yard and tuck yo' head befor' other chillun at school." When Janie turned sixteen years of age, her childhood had ended with a kiss from a boy named Johnny Taylor. Grandmother wanted to see her married at once but Janie did not understand what was going on. Janie did not feel love for this man or any man at this time but grandmother explains that she is not going to be around forever and she wants to protect her from harm and danger. Janie's life as a young person was a hardship she did not understand what purpose in life she has and she does not understand what love is. Janie dreams marriage will bring her love. Logon is a man wanting to marry Janie. Janie had no chance to know things, so she had to ask. "Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated? Did marriage compel love like the sun the day?" After Grandmother's talks and Janie's own conjectures she made a sort of comfort for herself. She came to the conclusion that she would love Logon after

they were married. "I saw no other way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it, so it must be so. Husbands and wives always loved each other, and that was what marriage meant.

It was just so." Janie felt glad for a moment in her life she felt that for then it wouldn't seem so destructive and moldy. She would not be lonely anymore. Janie married Logan in Nanny's parlor.

Janie felt lonesome when she went to Logan's house "It was a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been. The house was absent of flavor, too. But anyhow Janie went on inside to wait for love to begin." After two months have gone by Janie had to reconsider her marriage with Logon. "Janie waited a bloom time, and a green time and an orange time.

Nevertheless, when the pollen again gilded the sun and sifted down on the world she began to stand around the gate and expect things." She did not know exactly what to expect. "Janie knew that God tore down the old world every evening and built a new one by sun-up." Janie knew now that marriage did not make love. Her Grandmother dies and leave Janie to explore life for herself. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman.

Janie's marriage with Logan is falling apart. Before long Janie noticed that Logan had stopped doing what he used to do to her. He had stopped playing with her long black hair. He said "If Ah kin haul de wood heah and chop it fuh yuh, look lak you oughta be able tuh tote it inside. Mah fust wife never bothered me 'bout choppin' no wood nohow. She'd grab dat axe and sling chips lak uh man. You done been spoilt rotten." One morning Logan has to go to Lake City to see a man about a mule. Janie had started noticing how beautiful it is outside and went outside. Janie had been outside for a long time when she heard a whistling coming down the road who she later found out his name was Joe Starks.

Janie and Joe starting talking and she found out that he was aiming to go down to the new part of Florida. He later decided he needed a rest so it would do him good to rest a week or so. Every day after that they managed to meet. They would talk about when Joe would become a big ruler of things.

He spoke for change and chance. Still Janie hung back. The memory of Nanny was still powerful and strong. Joe says "Janie, if you think Ah aims to tole you off and make a dog outa you, youse wrong. Ah wants to make a wife outa you." Janie debated the matter that night in bed. That morning Janie hurried out of the front gate and turned south. She thought that even if Joe was not there waiting for her, the change was bound to do her good. After she came, their Joe Starks was waiting for her with a hired rig. He was a very solemn and helped her to the seat beside him. With him on it, it sat like some high, ruling chair. She thought "From now on until death she was going to have flower dust and

springtime sprinkled over everything. A bee for her bloom. Her old thoughts were going to come in

handy now, but new words would have to be made and said to fit them." Joe and Janie were married

before sundown, just like Joe had told her. Janie starts a new life with Joe Starks hoping to find love.

Janie understands that she is an independent person it's she that makes her not her husband

that makes her. On the train the day after they got, married Joe did not make many speeches with

rhymes to her, but he bought her the best things the butcher had, like apples and a glass lantern full

of candies. Mostly he talked about plans for the town when he got there. Janie liked the looks of Joe.

Joe and Janie go to the new down and they noticed it was a major disappointment. People thought that

Janie was Joe's daughter because of the age difference. Joe wanted to be a big voice in this town.

Life went on in Eatonville and Joe bought some more land for the town. People were impressed about

Joe. They astonished Janie to see the money Jody had spent for the land come back to him so fast.

Later ten new families bought lots and moved to town in six weeks. It seemed all too big and rushing

for Janie to keep track of. Joe had a store built for him, before it had a complete roof there where

canned goods piled on the floor and was selling so much he didn't have time to go off on his talking

tours. The people of Eatonville have liked him so much they decided to make him mayor. Janie was

talking to Joe "Joe, it jus' looks lak it keeps us some way we ain't natural wid one 'nother. You'se

always off talkin' and fixin' things, and Ah feel lak Ah'm jus' makin' time. Hope it soon gits over. Joe

says "Over, Janie? I god, Ah ain't even started good. ah told you in de very first beginnin' dat Ah aimed

tuh be uh big voice. You oughta be glad, 'cause dat makes uh big woman outa you." Janie soon began

to feel the impact of awe and envy against her sensibilities. "The wife of the Mayor was not just another

woman as she has supposed. She slept with authority and so she was part of it in the town mind."

Janie started to think the inside state of her marriage. She was not petal-open anymore with Joe. She

was twenty-four and seven year's marriage when she knew. She found that out one day when Joe had

slapped her face in the kitchen. Joe had got really badly sick and died. Janie never loved him, and the

first thing she did when he died was to get ride of the embargoes he had put on her like him wanting

her always to have her hair up. Janie is finally starting to understand who she is and she understands

what independency means.

Janie is going to do things her way not her grandmother's way. After Joe Starks death Janie

spent six months or more grieving about him. She would dress in black and after awhile she dressed

in white. One most of the town went to a ball game so the store was very slow. A man came into the

store and asked for some cigarettes. Janie later found out that his name is Virgibil Woods whom

everybody called Tea Cake. This man did not want to go to the game. He asked Janie if she wanted

to play checkers but she did not know how because nobody has ever taught her. Tea Cake showed

her how to play checkers. Janie felt good for the first time, she did not understand what this feeling was

"Janie found herself flowing inside. Somebody wanted her to play. Somebody thought it natural for her

to play." Janie looked at Tea Cake and like what she saw "Janie looked him over and got little thrills

from every one of his good points. Those full, lazy eyes with the lashed curling sharply away like drawn

scimitars. The lean, over-padded shoulders and narrow waist." Tea Cake came back a week later for

some snub. Tea Cake told Janie that he loved her "Ah didn't aim tuh let on tuh you 'bout it, leastways

not right away, but Ah ruther be shot wid tacks than fuh you tuh act wid me lak you is right now. You

got me in de go-long" Tea Cake was twelve years younger than Janie, Janie told him "Aw, Tea Cake,

you just say dat tuhnight because de fish and corn bread tasted sort of good. Tomorrow yo' mind would

change." Tea Cake disagreed to the comment and Janie said that she would love to hear what he

thought of her in the morning. Tea Cake came back two days later to tell Janie his thoughts about her.

Janie was starting to feel what love really is "Janie awoke next morning by feeling Tea Cake almost

kissing her breath away. Holding her and caressing her as if he feared she might escaped his grasp

and fly away." After found days Tea Cake returned to her Janie adored him and hated him while she

felt how could he make me suffer so much by not being here. Janie and Tea Cake were to be married.

Janie's first dream has come true. She has finally felt love.

Janie's first love was her last love. Tea Cake was a gambling man. He played dice, cards, or

anything in which there was a stake. At first Janie was afraid Tea Cake was going to leave her because

she had twelve hundred dollars and it was missing she thought he took it and left her. Tea Cake came

back and said that "Ah don't blame yuh but it wasn't lak you think." Tea Cake had promised that he

would pay back every dime with his gambling and he did. Janie felt really wanted for the first time Tea

Cake wanted her to participate in everything that he did. Tea Cake taught her how to shoot and hunt,

play cards, anything that he did he wanted her to do. Tea Cake missed her when he was working in

the fields so he came back and sees her throughout the day. Janie finally went to work in the fields with

him so they would be together always. Janie and Tea Cake moved to the Everglades. Everything in

the Everglades was big and new for Janie. Janie learned what it felt like to be jealous "A little chunky

girl took to picking a play out of Tea Cake in the fields and in the quarters. If he said anything at all,

she'd take the opposite side and hit him or shove him and run away to make him chase her." Janie

thought that Tea Caked loved this women and not her Tea Cake said "New, never did, and you know

it too. Ah didn't want her. Mrs. Turner was a person that did not like black people and she thought that

it was such a sin for Janie to be married with a person so black. Mrs. Turner wanted to introduce Janie

to her brother, Janie did not want that, she had no feelings for Mr. Turner. When Mrs. Turner's brother

came and Mrs. Turner brought him to be introduced to Janie. When that happened Tea Cake had a

brainstorm and before the week was over he whipped Janie "Not because of her behavior justified his

jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession."

Later there were a hurricane coming and Janie and Tea Cake decided to ride it out. The hurricane we

much more then they had expected "Tea Cake touched Janie and said, "Ah reckon you wish you had

of stayed in yo' big house 'way from such as dis, don't you?" Tea Cake was the only love Janie has ever

had. After the hurricane has passed many, repair and work up was due. Three weeks or so Tea Cake

started getting really sick. During the storm a Wild Dog and got rabbis bit Tea Cake in the face. Tea

Cake started getting delusional about things, the doctor wanted Janie to sleep by herself. Tea Cake

could not drink water and he was dieing. One day Tea Cake started wondering why Janie was leaving,

he did not understand that she was going to the doctors to find if there was. Janie really started to

worry about the well being of her life. Tea Cake was confused about everything and he got a gun and

aimed it at Janie. There were only three bullets in the gun and he pulled the trigger three times on an

empty chamber. Janie shot and killed Tea Cake in self defense. Her first love was out of her life

forever.

Janie is better off at the end of the noval Their Eyes Were Watching God then at the beginning.

When Janie was a young girl she was confused about many things. Although her grandmother told her

that marriage will bring her love Janie finds out for herself that love must come first. Logan treats her

as property not as a wife. Janie understands that you are what you make your self to be nobody else

makes who you are. Janie figures out that she must do what she feels she must do not what her

grandmother wants her to do. Janie felt love for the first time with Tea Cake and when Tea Cake was

gone so was her last love. Janie experiences a lot throughout the noval but the greatest thing she has

achieved is that she knows who she is.

