

By Lisa Langford

HATTIE SIDE

Edited to be read as a monologue from page 49

HATTIE

It ain't easy. Holding bits and pieces in your hand. Jig-sawin' them together to figure things out. Once you know, ain't no going back. Once you remember ain't no forgetting. I ain't had a mama. Beulah came before me, Bessie before that; the others without names. I got all them inside me. Somebody 'fraid of dogs. Somebody call, "Lord, Lord." Somebody-a snap a neck. I picked it all up. I got fingerprints like anybody else. Not womb-made, but still. It loop the past and whorl me 'round so.

Mister scratch me out his head and I come forth fully formed. I was his favorite. He'd watch me watch me. See myself in the glass. "Smile, Hattie!" What is smile? I'm in wonder.

My hands. My eyes. Everything I am...is wonder.

A scream. Pitched-high. A child scurry behind Mister. She got ringlets like gold. She come from round him. Look up at me. I see me how she see me. She take all my wonder.

Bessie-in-me pull my cheeks and I smile Hattie. Beulah-in-me bend my knees and I say, "Who dis sweet lil' girl?"

She kick my leg. Make Mister laugh. He take out tools and say a few more fiddling with this and that and I be pert-near human.

I see me how he see me.

I know better.

I stay ready.

For war.