

## CHAPTER THREE

SUMMARIES OF THE BLUEST EYE, SULA, AND BELOVED

This chapter consists of summaries three novels: The Bluest Eye, Sula, and Beloved. These summaries will be of great help in understanding the analysis of black women's images in the next chapter.

The Bluest Eye

Aunt Jimmy rescued Cholly Breedlove from the junk heap and raised him up herself. She died when he was fourteen. Cholly ran away from home after two big changes in his life: his great aunt's death and the failure of his first sexual experience with a cousin who came to Aunt Jimmy's funeral. This was witnessed and jeered at by two white men.

Searching for his father, Cholly finally found him at a crap game. Unfortunately, Cholly did not know his mother's name so the man refused to continue to talk with him. In his shameful and painful disappointment Cholly wandered freely around until he met Pauline Williams in Kentucky. He fell in love with her when he first saw her scratching her lame leg. The two married and moved up north to Lorain, Ohio, where the mine factory promised a better life for all immigrants. Pauline left her warm neighbourhood and the big responsibility of the housework and her young brothers to the loneliness of married life. The Breedlove lived in a storefront shared upstairs by the

three prostitutes. Pauline went out to work as a housemaid in a beautiful house near the lake. Cholly was always drunken and did not take care of the family. Since he never learned how to be a father and a husband. The couple were always fighting each other even when their children were born: Sammy and Pecola. Sammy ran away from home when his parents were fighting after even when their children were born: Sammy and Pecola. Sammy ran away from home when his parents were fighting while Pecola wished to disappear. She loved to eat Mary Jane candy because of the picture of a white girl with blue eyes.

She believed blue eyes could change her ugliness and her family condition. At night, Pecola prayed for blue eyes. For her, having blue eyes meant being beautiful and lovable. The girl was ignored by people around her. At school, she was ignored by her teachers and classmates: Pecola sat alone at a double desk, the teachers tried not to call on her in class. No one played with her but rather she was treated her as a target of ridicule. Her world outside school was not much different. For example, an immigrant grocer avoided to touch her palm while he was picking up money from her and the girl knew this. When she was on her way home, a black boy of a better living status used her as a scapegoat for killing the cat his mother liked. Finally, when the boy's mother arrived home, she scolded Pecola and evicted her.

In the same town, the Macteers had two daughters: Claudia and Frieda. Mr. Macteer worked hard in a coal mine to support his family. They were not rich but quite happy. When Pecola was eleven, her drunken father set fire to his storefront. As a result, he went to jail and Pecola was sent into the Macteers' house. The three girls got along with one another but Mrs. Macteer complained about the three quarts of milk Pecola drank each day. The girl loved to drink milk because of the Shirley Temple's silhouette on the milk jug. During her stay with the Macteers, Pecola began menstruating. The girl asked the Macteer sisters about the meaning of menstruation. Then Pecola wondered how she could have a baby since no one loved her.

Pauline Breedlove did not pay enough attention to her family. She devoted herself to the housework at the beautiful house. She was Polly to the Fishers but Mrs. Breedlove to her own children. At the Fishers' house, she slapped Pecola because the girl spilled the blueberry juice on the stove and it messed up the floor. While Pecola was hurt by the hot juice and her mother's slop, Pauline turned to the pink-and-yellow girl, the owners' daughter, who was frightened by the event.

One day, Cholly was drunken when he came home and saw Pecola scratching her leg the way Pauline used to do. The event reminded him of the first time he met Pecola's mother. Cholly raped his own daughter and the child

fainted. Pecola was pregnant with her father and people gossiped about this shameful immorality.

And then her wish for blue eyes was fulfilled by Soaphead Church--the mixed-blood West Indian who called himself a spiritualist and psychic reader. Pecola got her blue eyes but only she herself could see them because she was mad. Later, her father died and so did the baby.

### SULA

The Bottom was a community of freedmen gained its name by a "Nigger Joke" because it was at the bottom of Heaven. It was on the hillside above Medallion. There, some black women lived and shook this community before it collapsed.

After the bitter marriage ended, Eva Peace's husband BoyBoy went away. She had to live in a needy condition with her three children Hannah, Pearl and Plum. Eva left the Bottom and left all her children with a neighbor. She let the train cut her left leg off to get money. Eighteen months later she came back.

She built a big house and ran a rooming house. Her first born child Hannah married a man who died shortly after their marriage. Hannah had one daughter, Sula. At the age of three, Sula and her mother came back to Eva's big house. Plum came back from the war but still wasn't grown-up because he was addicted to drugs. Eva burned him dead because "she could not keep him in her womb again." When Sula was eleven, Eva took in three stray boys all of

whom she called "Dewey." Sula had a close friend, Nel, from a Creole mother who tried her best to shape her daughter's life. And so Nel lived her life under mother's protection and direction.

Hannah was sexually generous to any man available. Sula once saw her with a man. Once Sula accidentally heard her mother, Hannah, said that she did not like Sula though she loved her. Hannah dreamt about a red wedding gown and she told her mother about it. First, Eva could not understand its meaning. Soon after that Hannah was accidentally burnt in the yard. And Eva failed to rescue her and she herself was badly injured. Later, Eva realized that red wedding dress meant death. Eva saw Sula watched her own mother dancing in the fire with no attempt to help.

Nel Wright was a daughter of a fair-skinned mother-- Helene whom people called Helen. Sula and Nel were good friends who shared their girlhood together. When they were twelve, Sula threw a young boy named Chicken Little into the river by accident. No one saw the event except Shadrack, a mad ex-soldier who named January the third to be National Suicide Day. Sula rushed to Shadrack's shack. Her eyes and her face asked for secrecy. Shadrack replied by the only word "always."

When Nel married Jude at the age of eighteen, Sula left the Bottom to the outside world. She returned again at the age of twenty nine. The day she returned a big

flock of robins abovedied and messed up the Bottom. Sula troubled the community with her free-minded behaviors. The mixture of Eva's arrogance and Hannah's self-indulgence in Sula made her a dangerous woman. The community rejected her; she went to church without a brazzier, she sent old Eva to Sunnydale--the homecare for aged people. Sula slept with many men no matter whether they were married or not, black or white. The Bottom people were more irritated by Sula's sexual behaviors than Hannah's because once she bedded a man down, she would never turn to him again. One of those men whom Sula had sex with was Jude. After the affair was discovered by Nel, Jude went away and Sula and Nel's relationship came to an end.

Ajax was another man who came to share Sula's bed. Ajax, who adored only one woman in his life--his mother, was interested in Sula's notoriety. When the two met each other, Ajax found that Sula's personality was like his mother's. And for Sula, Ajax was the only man she had missed since he had called her "pig meat" when she was in her early teens. The relationship went on smoothly until Sula felt possessive of him--a feeling which Ajax had run away from all his life. After Ajax left, the only thing that confirmed his presence in Sula's life was his driving license by which she knew his real name--Albert Jacks.

Despite her evil, the Bottom people turned to be good to one another: mothers looked after their children, wives

loved and cared more for their husbands, and young people took more care of old relatives. This was because they saw Sula's mistreating of her grandmother. Further, they believed Sula was dangerous and harmful because of many notorious incidents. For example, a young boy's arm was broken because he went to Sula asked for bottles. An old man who loved sucking chicken bones died of those bones because he looked at Sula. And these beliefs were strengthened and perpetuated by the civil greeting of Sula by Shadrack who generally cussed and misbehaved.

When Sula fell sick, no one paid her a visit. Nel went to see her just to show her social morality. Sula died after that in Eva's big bed, turning her face to the window where Eva once jumped down in vain to help Hannah from burning. No black folks wanted to go to her funeral, not even Eva.

Either "after" or "because" of Sula's death, many things in the Bottom changed; men and women turned back to their old behaviors as before Sula's returned to the Bottom. The people of the Bottom suffered many difficulties and lost good chances in life.

Further, after Sula's death, Shadrack decided to give up his cerebation of the National Suicide Day. Before he did, he performed it for the last time. He went out and sang a "childish dirge." The people who used to scare of his ceremony this time joined his parade singing and

dancing around. When they reached the un-finished tunnel, it broke down and killed some people in the parade.

Nel went to visit Eva who looked smaller than she used to. Eva talked about the accident in the river and blamed Nel for her "watching." Eva called Nel Sula (whom Eva remembered as the girl who watched her own mother dancing in the fire). Eva said Nel and Sula were the same thing. Walking back from Sula's grave, Nel finally learned that in the years of Sula's and Jude's absence she really missed Sula, not her own husband. She cried for her long dead friend.

#### Beloved

Baby Suggs and Halle were sold to Sweet Home when Halle was fourteen. The Garners, treated their slaves different from other white slave owners; their slaves had guns and could learn how to read and write if they wanted. Slaves at Sweet Home could tell their owner what they thought. Suggs mother, crippled by an accident at work from her former place, became the only female slave in Sweet Home. Halle, her last child, was the only living child she had. He was one of her eight children who were born of six fathers. When Halle was twenty, he sold his part time labor in and outside Sweet Home for his mother's freedom.

Mr. Garner helped Baby Suggs to settle down in Ohio, at the big house of the Bodwins. At 124, on the Bluestone



Road, Baby Suggs became an unchurched preacher in her colored community. The house was a way station which became the center of the community. It was the place where people came for advice, information, preaching, entertainment, medical care and, sometimes, a sanctuary for fugitives.

While Baby Suggs started her newly-gained freedom, Halle and other slaves, Paul A, Paul F, Paul D, were waiting for the coming of a woman. When Sethe arrived at Sweet Home, she was fourteen. Sixo, a male slave with an indigo face, was the only man who did not pay attention to her. He had his own woman who was thirty miles away so that he had to walk seventeen hours to meet her.

Sixo's distance love affair later helped all slaves at Sweet Home to escape. There was a "rail road" for running away which Sixo knew about through his outside business. Sethe decided to choose Halle to be her husband and her she hoped in vain to have a wedding party. Mr. Garner died when Sethe had the second child. Mrs. Garner's health was so weak that she was call Onka to look after the business Mr. Garner left behind.

Onka, Mr. Garner's brother-in-law was a teacher who came to change things in Sweet Home and sparked the thought of escaping. Paul F was sold for the dekt. Halle's debt and his promise of freedom was cancelled and the guns they kept were taken back. They were treated like animals by

being inspected both for their physical characteristics and their thoughts. All slaves planned to run away.

Sethe's third pregnancy delayed the plan to escape. However, after the baby girl was born, the plan was carried out. Halle disappeared with no sign; Paul D and Sixo were caught. Paul A was hung and Sixo was burnt. Paul D was sold away and wandered around the country after that. Sethe sent her three children with the "conductors" telling them to drop those children at Baby Suggs' 124. The waiting for Halle delayed Sethe. She was whiped for punishment. With her fourth pregnancy and a bleeding back, Sethe finally succeeded in her escape after the mossy teeth boys robbed her of milk (which she claimed belonged to her baby girl's).

On her way to Cincinnati where Baby Suggs' house was, Amy Denver, a bare-footed white woman with thick hair shared the route and helped take care of Sethe who was badly injured. At the river bank, after the midwifery for Sethe's fourth child, Amy left Sethe for velvet in Boston. And Sethe's newly born girl was named Denver after the name of the woman who helped her. In her physical weakness and after Amy's departure, Sethe and little Denver were helped by Stamp Paid and Ella. Finally, Sethe arrived at 124 on Bluestone Road.

Twenty eight days later, Stamp Paid came to visit baby Denver and her mother and sparked the big party with his

two buckets of blackberries from the riverbank woods. The day after the big party was the day of Sethe's fate. The schoolteacher, his nephew, a slave catcher, and a sheriff arrived at 124 in the afternoon. Recognizing his hat, Sethe took her four children to the shed and tried to kill them.

The first of her infanticide's victims was the crawling girl whose throat Sethe cut with the handsaw. When she was trying to kill Denver, Stamp Paid timely rescued her. Sethe was put in jail instead of being brought back to Sweet Home. Denver was with her mother during the imprisonment. When Sethe was freed and back at 124 the baby ghost revealed its spiteful existence to the members of the house and its visitors.

The result of the dead baby's presence made people avoid coming to the house. Howard and Buglar, her two sons ran away from home. Soon after the boys' departure and ten years of freed living, Baby Suggs died. Her funeral was held among the split of Sethe and the community. People refused to come into the house and eat her food and Sethe did not eat theirs. This reaction resulted in the severing of all social contacts between 124 and its community.

Sethe got a job as a cook assistant in a beer garden in the city of Cincinnati. For eighteen years, Denver had lived in solitude and did not learn to live within a community. She became a lonely and secretive girl. She

had no friends of her own age. Once Denver looked around and found herself a place to ease her loneliness in a green house in the woods near the river. This secret place was known only to her brothers before they ran away.

Another place Denver kept thinking of was Lady Jones' house. This woman taught colored children to read and write for a nickel a month. At first, Denver hid herself and listened to the lesson under the window. Later she was invited to join the class. At her seven years of age, Denver spent almost a year studying and joined her peers at the Jones' house. However, she gave up the lessons a boy in the class asked her about the murder of her sister.

Paul D. appeared at Sethe's haunted house nine years after Baby Suggs's death and eighteen years after Sethe's infanticide. He exorcized the haunting spirit. Denver, whose loneliness was consoled by her dead sister's company, did not appreciate the exorcism.

On the day Sethe, Paul D, and Denver went back from the carnival in the city, they saw a well-dressed young girl, sick and with new shoes sitting in front of the house. Denver recognized the girl as her dead sister. Here boy, their old dog, who was injured and crippled by the spirit in the house ran away that day. Denver knew it would not come back to 124 again as long as this woman stayed in 124.

The stranger, who called herself "Beloved", remembered

nothing about herself. Beloved was crazy for Sethe and tried to be near Sethe as often as she could. She liked listening to the story of Sethe's past. She waited for Sethe when Sethe came back from work. The girl gradually went out of the house to the door, the path, and then the road to wait for Sethe. Beloved tried to drive Paul D from the house and from Sethe because she was irritated by Paul D and Sethe's love affair.

She gradually plodded him. He could not stay in Sethe he bed through long nights. So he went around the house each night, on the chair, the storage room, Baby Suggs', and then to cold house which stood a few yards away from the house. After that Beloved came to him and forced him to make love to her. Denver knew the situation but kept quiet. Paul D was ashamed of his affair with Beloved and thought to run away. But, despite the two girls' silent disapproval, Sethe declared her acceptance of Paul D's company to the girls.

However, at the slaughterhouse, Stamp Paid showed a piece of newspaper he kept for eighteen years and told Paul D about Sethe's crime of killing her own baby girl. Paul D asked Sethe about it. At last, he found Sethe was no longer the woman he thought he knew. Paul D left 124 for the cellar of a small church. Sethe was sorry when Paul D left her. But she found out that Beloved was her true-to-life daughter. After Sethe, Denver, and Beloved came back

from skating in the snowy yard, they gathered to drink warm milk. Beloved sang Sethe's lullaby that no one else in the world would ever know because she herself made up these songs. Sethe was very happy to know this. But in her happiness to be with her two daughters, Sethe's health went bad.

Beloved resurrected to get her mother's love and at the same time, she came with a vengeance. She became harmful to Sethe. As Beloved grew fatter and bigger Sethe got thinner and weaker. Sethe was both mentally and physically weak. Each day she went to work late and late and was fired at last. She spent all her time playing games with Beloved. When they ran out of the food supplies Denver went out to the outside world to ask for help from the people in the community.

She first visited Mrs. Jones' house. The people then began to help Denver by putting food somewhere near 124 she could find it. Denver had to visit their houses to thank them and returned their food containers.

However, Denver soon decided to give up her dependence on others' kindness. She found herself a job at the Bodwins' house. The first day Denver was going to work, Mr. Bodwin intended to pick Denver up. At the same time, the women who used to be friends with Sethe and Baby Suggs came to 124 trying to drive away the spirit in the house. When Sethe saw Mr. Bodwin she thought he was the

schoolteacher (who used to come and caused her to kill her crawling baby girl). Sethe, who was both mentally and physically ill, ran to attack Mr. Bodwin. Denver rushed to prevent her mother's second murder. Beloved, a spirit who came back for her mother's love, thought Sethe was running away and she disappeared. Finally, Paul D went back to Sethe and asked her to start their new lives together again.

