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A BLACK WOMAN'S CON NECTION

A Story of Revolution

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Installment One

Serenity has obtained her heart's desire. After many years of scrimping and saving, she has finally purchased a large portion of land in Idlewild. The restoration of what is to be her home has come to fruition. She surveys the land and rests her eyes on the work of her hands. Like the Abakaliki farmers of Nigeria she has used her hoes to construct mounds and then planted crops based on the water and space requirements of each.[1]

There's a deep satisfaction in owning a home and seeing the literal fruit of her labor spring forth from this beautiful land. A virtual passed test of the lessons Mother Earth has whispered to her heart and mind as she pored over the vast knowledge of her ancestors who understood our connection to Mother Earth. Who revered all things as living beings. And so Mother Earth was worshipped instead of violated.

The still of the night has come. It is alive. This is Serenity's favorite time of day. She sits on her porch and listens to the silence of the cicadas, the crickets, and the night owl. The trees sway to and fro with the gentle breeze fanning and applauding their Creator, for life, health, and wellness.

"Like ancient times, where each town would demarcate an area of forest that nobody was allowed to touch, a forest reserve she determined, "I will keep this untouched, unharmed, and undeveloped. This place shall always be the best piece of us." Serenity will send up the message that what happens to her happens to Mother Earth, Brother Trees, and Sister Soil, and vice versa, for we are all interdependent. She (Serenity and Mother Earth) will educate us for generations to come that "trees are like lungs. If we do not protect them and increase their numbers, it will be the end of the world." [3]

Mother Earth will reintroduce us to the true meaning of community. She'll teach us our resources should be pooled and distributed as needed. She'll remind us that when "a mother tree is stressed or sick, the younger trees will reverse the flow of water and nutrients to shore her up." [4] These lessons will reunify us as a people with the understanding that we are only as strong as our weakest members. These lessons will remind us that, although we are individuals, we will thrive if and only if we live as one body.

Serenity exits the often-visited land of the tomorrow she has envisioned since she enrolled in her first Afro-Environmentalism course; the course that opened her eyes to the dreams and visions she'd been having about her future as a trailblazer for cultural change within her community. The course that drove home the perspective "that God chooses to connect with creation in Yeshuva (Hebrew for Jesus). The essential unity of spirit and matter means that I can't do anything earthly that does not have a spiritual ramification, and vice versa." [5]

She stands, glances once more out the windows of her porch, bows in homage to the land before her and whispers, "Tomorrow we begin..." All activity of creation ceases in response to

this declaration. The silence is affirming and lets her know that the land agrees. Serenity smiles at the knowledge that Mother Earth concurs with her plans and enters her home.



Artwork by Shirikiana Draper

Installment Two

It is the dawning of a new day. Serenity, like a butterfly whose metamorphosis is newly completed, awakens excited about this new leg of her journey toward self-actualization. This city-born and raised woman moved out here to the country because she finally realized that on this land she could truly discover “the personal importance of experiences of wonder and mystery and nature.”[6] She hopes to come to a mature understanding that “there is life that [she] [is] actually connected to, and something here worthwhile to explore.”[7]

She finds herself arisen by the streaking brightness of Mr. Sun and the melodious sounds of Nature praising Adonai Elohim (Hebrew for LORD God) for this day that He has made. Gone are the days of being rudely awakened by Mr. Alarm Clock. That poor unfortunate soul has stung his last bee and sang his last song—at least for Serenity he has. Nowadays she rises before the light with coffee in hand. She sets herself up to be in fellowship with all the other living beings inhabiting the land. It is a daily ritual to rise and commune with Creator amidst His Creation. It adds a depth of meaning to the Word of God that had previously been missing from her daily faith walk.

Serenity realizes that there is wisdom and meaning being “revealed in the mystery and magic of this direct connection with the Divine in nature and in being open to the existence of something beyond what {she} initially think(s) is present.” Nature has been blessed with the state of being. They all understand and demonstrate that they were created to be. They all understand and demonstrate that what humans desire to do takes them far away from The Source of all their strength, peace, and joy. Nature understands and demonstrates that their connection to Creator is stronger and purer without striving. So much so that “they speak with the voice of God.”[8] Serenity sits quietly and listens attentively. Gone are the days of worshipping to music with spiritual lyrics which she now understands only serve as background noise; noise that actually dulled and muffled the still small voice of God speaking to her during their time together.

Serenity ventures out on her daily walk thinking, “I have learned so much about balance here. I now know that “we are gardeners who have been entrusted by God to maintain health and balanced ecosystems.”[9] This revelation has added an element to Serenity’s faith walk in a way that no devotional ever could.

She finally arrives at one of her favorite spots. It became such the moment she tread upon it and found that the grass beneath her bare feet was as soft as smooth as a baby's bottom. It is here that she comes often to center herself with the practice of yoga, a practice that has been an integral part of her lasting change that Ruach HaKodesh (Hebrew for Holy Spirit) has been leading her toward. A change of heart, mind, and soul. A change that has left her dissatisfied with striving and allowed her, like Mother Earth, Brother Trees, and Sister Soil to just BE.

The continuation of striving and learning the art of Being is allowing her the time and space to learn how to—like a tree planted by the water—stop being so easily moved.

[1] *Black Earth*, xxxviii.

[2] *Black Earth*, 7.

[3] *Black Earth*, xxx.

[4] *Black Earth*, 36.

[5] *Black Earth*, 24.

[6] *Black Earth*, 13.

[7] *Black Earth*, 13.

[8] *Black Earth*, 23.

[9] *Black Earth*, 26.

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