

Man, if he could get that girl! The idea was fascinating. When he was getting ready to leave for America, he had not exactly planned to find a black girlfriend, but the notion had been there as a possibility, and it had been an intriguing one. Damn those racist Southerners! Damn that prejudice that made things so difficult! If it weren't so dangerous for them both, he would love to give those bastards the finger by driving around in Yellow Bird with Hailee at his side. The most beautiful car and the most beautiful girl, both his! Take that, you assholes!

The next day he arrived at the cafeteria later, reasoning that the line at the counter would be shorter then, and Hailee less rushed. Most of the people would have already ordered, and would already have started eating. His hunch proved correct. He was almost immediately able to meet Hailee's eyes, and she definitely recognized him.

"Hi Hailee," he said. She laughed a quiet little laugh. "Hi."

She smiled but lowered her eyes while she took his order. It was just a slight, amused smile that showed no teeth. She fixed his plate and placed it on the counter.

"There you go. Enjoy."

"Thank you. Uh, . . . Can I see you some time?"

The question surprised and embarrassed her, and she shook her head with a funny little grimace that showed both amusement and regret. "Nawww . . . "

"I'd like to."

"Well, you know" She just shrugged her shoulders and did not specify what he knew, but it did not have to be said. Certain things are just not done, and one should not talk about things that are not decent.

It gave him a slight feeling of giddiness to say what he could not hold back, the forbidden, perverse words, the sentiment a white man was not allowed to admit even to himself:

"I think you're beautiful."