I AM BELOVED and she is mine. Sethe is the one that picked flowers, yellow flowers in the place before the crouching. Took them away from their green leaves. They are on the quilt now where we sleep. She was about to smile at me when the men without skin came and took us up into the sunlight with the dead and shoved them into the sea. Sethe went into the sea. She went there. They did not push her. She went there. She was getting ready to smile at me and when she saw the dead people pushed into the sea she went also and left me there with no face or hers. Sethe is the face I found and lost in the water under the bridge. When I went in, I saw her face coming to me and it was my face too. I wanted to join. I tried to join, but she went up into the pieces of light at the top of the water. I lost her again, but I found the house she whispered to me and there she was, smiling at last. It’s good, but I cannot lose her again. All I want to know is why did she go in the water in the place where we crouched? Why did she do that when she was just about to smile at me? I wanted to join her in the sea but I could not move; I wanted to help her when she was picking the flowers, but the clouds of gunsmoke blinded me and I lost her. Three times I lost her: once with the flowers because of the noisy clouds of smoke; once when she went into the sea instead of smiling at me; once under the bridge when I went in to join her and she came toward me but did not smile. She whispered to me, chewed me, and swam away. Now I have found her in this house. She smiles at me and it is my own face smiling. I will not lose her again. She is mine.

\* \* \*

Tell me the truth. Didn’t you come from the other side?

Yes. I was on the other side.

You came back because of me?

Yes.

You rememory me?

Yes. I remember you.

You never forgot me?

Your face is mine.

Do you forgive me? Will you stay? You safe here now.

Where are the men without skin?

Out there. Way off.

Can they get in here?

No. They tried that once, but I stopped them. They won’t ever come back.

One of them was in the house I was in. He hurt me.

They can’t hurt us no more.

Where are your earrings?

They took them from me.

The men without skin took them?

Yes.

I was going to help you but the clouds got in the way.

There’re no clouds here.

If they put an iron circle around your neck I will bite it away.

Beloved.

I will make you a round basket.

You’re back. You’re back.

Will we smile at me?

Can’t you see I’m smiling?

I love your face.

We played by the creek.

I was there in the water.

In the quiet time, we played.

The clouds were noisy and in the way.

When I needed you, you came to be with me.

I needed her face to smile.

I could only hear breathing.

The breathing is gone; only the teeth are left.

She said you wouldn’t hurt me.

She hurt me.

I will protect you.

I want her face.

Don’t love her too much.

I am loving her too much.

Watch out for her; she can give you dreams.

She chews and swallows.

Don’t fall asleep when she braids your hair.

She is the laugh; I am the laughter.

I watch the house; I watch the yard.

She left me.

Daddy is coming for us.

A hot thing.

Beloved

You are my sister

You are my daughter

You are my face; you are me

I have found you again; you have come back to me

You are my Beloved

You are mine

You are mine

You are mine

I have your milk

I have your smile

I will take care of you

You are my face; I am you. Why did you leave me who am you?

I will never leave you again

Don’t ever leave me again

You will never leave me again

You went in the water

I drank your blood

I brought your milk

You forgot to smile

I loved you

You hurt me

You came back to me

You left me

I waited for you

You are mine

You are mine

You are mine