

## Ballad of the Returning Citizen

By F.C. Barker

The bidding of a boogeyman is now damned by these twenty-first century colonial descendants and beneficiaries of domestic terrorism. Their forefathers did the unspeakable to Indigenous peoples and received what was to kill for: a second chance. A second chance at life, freedom, property, and even churches. Theirs was a rove like worship across fertile plains until their cupidity founded a new nation, The United States of America. But I am an indigenous African American, and my descendants will say of this ex-boogeyman, "Truly, the curves of his lips rewrote his history."

I will build me up my own American dream, cultivated and sustained by the grace of God; a righteous embodiment of faith works to adorn my heritage. And I will receive into my arms, as a mother her infant born, my second chance. The commandment decreed and ever vulnerable in the midst of a perilous world, I must protect it against the arrogance of comfort. Mercy fed, grace kept: swaddled freedom. From the ashes of shame and regret I will not abdicate. I will heap over mine head hard times and humility, my most earnest acquaintances.

If a continent can be taken by violence, slavery, and deception, and yet resist the responsibility of equity, scoffing when the bill of justice comes due through civil disobedience or calls for reparations, truly I comprehend it an agony of evil to stray from acknowledging my crimes. I take my consequences on the chin, a sure shot. For a riot would ensue if justice were criminal in this grand republic. No question, the American way is founded upon second chances like alternatives to incarceration, or reparations for slave owners effectively ending Reconstruction.

I yearn that my personal transformation from boogeyman to a reputable citizen be celebrated as heavens work on earth. May my contrition illuminate the hearts of those with power to will my release from prison. As understanding was lavished upon countless Confederate losers who found their names atop university campuses and schoolhouses in this nation, may freedom go before me all the days of my life. For I too was a loser, I now stand a monument, an institution of antiracism, learnedness, truth-telling and great potential. Unlike the sympathizers still attempting to glamorize the history of their beloved Lost Cause through revisionism, truth marches on, "Truly, the curves of his lips rewrote his history."

Picture me rollin', a vessel of healing, restoration and bridge buildin'. I rage at the feelings of darkness, weeping for all who repent soon enough to thrive beyond the consequences of their crimes. There is so much more living to do. I recall mine own flesh, what a condemned man I was. No expectation upon me but the sentence of death as I was dragged to

the bottomless pit beneath the gears of poaching, past the soul of the new Jim Crow roiling, rising, and orchestrating his every scheme. But, even there, the Holy Ghost is near. Picture me rollin'.

Our communities at large demand my accountability and the justice of my incarceration. There is no expiration date on my morality. I aim not to be more holy than any saint of any era, nor do I seek to be as civil as those who stormed our nations capital that January 6 day. I only seek to walk humbly with my God in the light of a more harmonious humanity, honest and responsible with the trust my republic has entrusted to me. An office many have and do trample, such as those traitorous citizens Jefferson Davis, Andrew Johnson, and Robert E. Lee, who abandoned their oaths. These homegrown jihadist received state sanctioned second chances and today find social veneration at antebellum themed galas.

As for me, the boogeyman criminal from Baltimore is no more! I journey with empathy's intent; for we are all living the same dream, God's thoughts, from different chapters. I page-turn to second chances, it is what hope dreaming affords. Mine is the true story of tragedy, redemption, and the lure of American legacy. Grace that compounds.

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