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In the daylight they scuttled like bugs to the westward; and as the dark caught them, they clustered like bugs near to shelter and to water. And because they were lonely and perplexed, because they had all come from a place of sadness and worry and defeat, and because they were all going to a new mysterious place, they huddled together; they talked together; they shared their lives, their food, and the things they hoped for in the new country.
The families learned what rights must be observed—the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the past black hidden in the heart; the right to talk and to listen; the right to refuse help or to accept, to offer help or to decline it; the right of son to court and daughter to be courted; the right of the hungry to be fed; the rights of the pregnant and the sick to transcend all other rights.

And the families learned, although no one told them, what rights are monstrous and must be destroyed: the right to intrude upon privacy, the right to be noisy while the camp slept, the right of seduction or rape, the right of adultery and theft and murder. These rights were crushed, because the little worlds could not exist for even a night with such rights alive.
Each man sat in the water and felt the tug of the current. The preacher let his arms and hands float on the surface. The bodies were white to the neck and wrists, burned dark brown on the hands and faces, with V’s of brown at the collar bones. They scratched themselves with sand.
Pa said, “Wait till we get to California. You’ll see nice country then.”

“Jesus Christ, Pa! This here is California.”
Pa asked, “Can you make a livin’ there?”

“Nope. But at leas’ we can starve to death with folks we know. Won’t have a bunch a fellas that hates us to starve with.”
“It ain’t no use,” Noah said. “I’m sad, but I can’t he’p it. I got to go.” He turned abruptly and walked downstream along the shore. Tom started to follow, and then he stopped. He saw Noah disappear into the brush, and then appear again, following the edge of the river. And he watched Noah growing smaller on the edge of the river until he disappeared into the willows at last. And Tom took off his cap and scratched his head. He went back to his willow cave and law down to sleep.
“When you’re young, Rosasharn, ever’thing that happens is a thing all by itself. It’s a lonely thing. I know, I ‘member, Rosasharn.” Her mouth loved the name of her daughter. “You’re gonna have a baby, Rosasharn, and that’s somepin to you lonely and away. That’s gonna hurt you, an’ the hurt’ll be lonely hurt, an’ this here tent is alone in the worl’, Rosasharn.” … “They’s a time of change, an’ when that comes, dyin’ is a piece of all dyin’, and bearin’ is a piece of all bearin’, an bearin’ an’ dyin’ is two pieces of the same thing. An’ then things ain’t lonely any more. An’ then a hurt don’t hurt so bad, ‘cause it ain’t a lonely hurt no more, Rosasharn. I wisht I could tell you so you’d know, but I can’t.” And her voice was so soft, so full of love, that tears corwded into Rose of Sharon’s eyes, and flowed over her eyes and blinded her.
Granma kicked the curtain off her legs, which lay like gray, knotted sticks. And Granma whined with the whining in the distance. Ma pulled the curtain back in place.