

Miss July was an enslaved woman on Amity Plantation. Although narrated in the third person, July is the omniscient narrator. Now an elderly woman, her son has asked her to write her story.

5 SOMEWHERE, READER, THERE IS a painting, a portrait rendered in oils upon an oblong canvas (perhaps an arm's span in width) entitled, Mr and Mrs Goodwin. This likeness was commissioned by the newly married Caroline Goodwin from a renowned artist who did reside within the town of Falmouth. The painter—a Mr Francis Bear— produced, in his evidently
10 quite fashionable to have a Bear in your great house. The sitters in this portrait sat for several weeks within the long room at Amity¹ making no movement nor sound, as requested by the artist, whilst steadily perspiring their finest clothes several shades darker. But what became of this portrait I do not know. It was lost or stolen or perhaps even nibbled to tatting by some
15 of the many ravenous creatures that live here upon this Caribbean island. However, if you should perchance alight upon this portrait, Mr and Mrs Goodwin, please be sure to make a careful study of it—for hidden close within its artifice lies the next piece of my tale. Standing tall in the foreground of this splendid picture you will find Robert Goodwin. His manner is casual, one leg crossed in front of the other, while he leans his elbow upon the chair back in front of him. He wears a light linen jacket with a waistcoat of cream silk embellished with a tracery of green floral stitching. There is no hat upon his head, and although his curling hair and bristling whiskers confer the distinction of a gentleman upon him, they also cause him to look a good deal older than his years. [...] Within the painting you will find the missus, Caroline Goodwin, seated upon a chair—the one that her second husband leans upon so
20 casually. She is arranged at a decorous angle within the frame, one that shows off the slope of her shoulders and the intricate array of twisted braids and curls within her hair very well. [...]

25 Appraisers of the artist Francis Bear often commented that his use of the negro² within his portraits added a reliable touch of the exotic to what might otherwise be a dull work. So, even before the artist and Caroline Goodwin had agreed upon the fee for the portrait, they had decided between them that a negro² boy should appear within the picture carrying a parasol and a fan. However, within the room under the house another plan was devised. For upon hearing that a likeness was to be painted of the owners of Amity, July, jumping excitedly within Robert Goodwin's lap, asked, 'Me³ can be in it? Oh, tell me me can be in it. Me long to have a likeness made. Oh, can me be in it?'

30 Having promised July that, 'Of course, of course, of course my little Miss July can be in it,' (addressing her in the baby tones he had, at that time, been so fond of), Robert Goodwin then proceeded to counsel first his wife and then the artist against their idea of a boy, with the obvious reasoning that there was not a negro² boy upon Amity, or indeed upon the whole
35 island, who was capable of staying still the required amount of time. So there within the painting, wearing a white muslin dress with a red silk turban upon her head, you will find July. [...] Although the artist requested that July look towards her mistress with obedient esteem upon her face, July's countenance craftily contrives to catch the eye of the viewer with an expression that says quite clearly, 'So, what do you think of this? Am I not the loveliest negro²
40 you ever did see?' [...] As I earlier disclosed, the artist Francis Bear was obliged to employ some invention within this portrait, Mr and Mrs Goodwin. That July is offering a tray to the mistress is correct, but the colourful and abundant sweets upon it were, in truth, added later. For every time July became weary in her pose the tray would tip and the sweets would slide

45 and scatter on to the floor. After this spilling occurred for the fifth time, the artist suddenly yelled, 'Enough!' He then posed July with an empty tray and set up a still-life of confection in his studio so he might paint them later, at his leisure. [...]

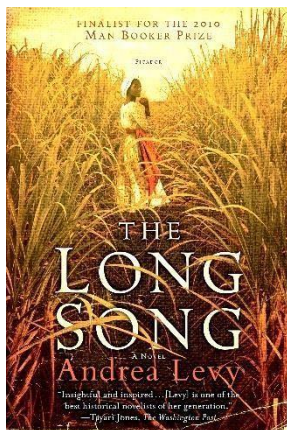
50 So pleased was Caroline Goodwin with the finished picture, Mr and Mrs Goodwin, that not only did she have it replace Agnes's portrait within the long room, but she also sent the artist two bottles of Amity's finest rum. She then invited all her neighbours within the parish to view it. Her intention was to bathe herself within their envy. However, after commenting how Caroline looked strangely sad in the portrait, the next observation from anyone who viewed it, was that her husband, Robert, appears to be gazing firmly upon the nigger⁴. Now although Caroline insisted, 'No, no, it is the sweetmeats that have his eye,' (and the viewers tipped their heads upon the picture, first to the left, then the right, eager to agree) finally, everyone

55 of them had to declare, 'No, no, he stares upon the nigger⁴.'

Robert Goodwin was indeed gazing upon July through the whole of the portrait's execution. For July was carrying his child and he wished to stare nowhere else. Indeed, a few months after the completion of this portrait, July gave birth to a daughter for him. A fair-skinned, grey-eyed girl who was named Emily. So furious was Caroline that the artist had caught her husband's folly, that she insisted he take back the portrait to his studio to rectify this error. Now, although Francis Bear retouched the likeness for several more weeks, still his daubings⁵ could not raise Robert Goodwin's eyes from off our July. Caroline then placed all her wrath at the situation with Francis Bear. She was enraged—for was it not he who so cleverly managed to capture that scene for her friends to view? Come, Caroline was forced to hang the picture within a room that was rarely used. And obliged to demand that the artist return to her the

60 gifted rum!

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Andrea Levy, The Long Song, 2010, p.275

- 1 Amity Plantation
- 2 ~~negro~~ = a derogatory term for a dark-skinned person, **you should never use this term, prefer 'person/people of colour' or 'darkskinned person/people' during your conversation**
- 3 me = Jamaican patois (creole) for 'I' and 'me'
- 4 ~~nigger~~ = a derogatory term for a dark-skinned person, **you should never use this term**
- 5 daubings = attempts to cover the original paint by smearing or smudging

Reporter 4 (most difficult task): Prepare to discuss the ideas from this document. You should look up any difficult vocabulary and prepare your answers to the following questions (at least!). You will have only about 2-3 minutes to present as many details as possible to your group, so you must be efficient!

- 1) Find information about and deduce the relationship between Mr Robert Goodwin and the house slave named July.
- 2) Find information about and deduce the reasons why Mrs Goodwin wanted the portrait to be painted and her opinions of the finished product.
- 3) Find information about the artist's perception/perspicacity, his reliability (*fiabilité*) and the power of his work of art.