

## JUBA'S MISTAKE

By

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I likes to watch.

The Massa has come by again. Come to see Juba. She chant, kill chicken, so I knew Massa be here soon.

I likes to watch.

But no one can watch me. I crouch in the bushes by Juba's hut. No moon tonight. It's dark as sin. There no wind either, but the leaves so close they scrape the bamboo walls each time I move. I put my eye back to the hole. I can see brown skin, Juba's *shiny* brown skin. I sweating too. The heat bastes you like molasses o'er a hot leg of ham.

My mouth waters.

Massa keeps the candle lit like before. He likes to watch too. Watch Juba. Naked as the day she was born. She hums, then starts to sing, to sing and dance. But she not dance like them up at the big house. She winds her waist, first moving slow, then faster and faster, her buttocks twitching, her head shaking...

Oh, lordy, she belle that one. And wild. Just like her hair. The long black strands whip her face. Massa groans. I wonder what it's like to have a woman, but none will come near me.

Mwê lèd passé ki -

Juba laughs: a low and husky sound. She sways toward the Massa and kneels on the dirt floor...

I likes to watch.

Massa's breath shaky like mine.

My foot paining me something bad, but no matter. I keeps my eye to the hole and watch

Massa and Juba make like animals. Twisting. Grunting. Pushing hard into each other. They fall back onto Juba's pallet.

I likes to watch: and remember for later.

The Massa finish. Juba take her shift and wipes him. Buttons his trousers. No words are spoken. He walks out. The door is left swinging on its rusty hinges. Juba sucks in her teeth. She cross the room and fixes the latch. I can hear Massa's boots trample the path through the cane fields, towards the big house. Back to the young Madam, his new wife. She kind to me, not like Massa, not like Juba. I watches her when she kneels too: but she praying – for her husband, for her parents in England, for old King George and new King William, e'en for all us slaves here in Sainte-Lucie. She so good, she an angel on earth. I want her to be my angel...

I keep looking through the hole as I does my thinking. Juba turns and moves forward. I feast my eyes on her; on her large breasts that quiver like jellies, on the darkness between her legs. I lick my lips and my fingers start to stray lower. But then she leans over. She stares through the gap, straight at me - giving me bad eye. I shrink back against the branches.

I hear her laugh: a *wicked* sound.

'I watching you too, Moses. I see and know everything,' Juba whispers.

My insides clench like Massa's fist. Then I does think again. Juba smacks her hand on the bamboo and starts chanting. The wall shakes, the noises pierce my head, burst my thoughts. On and on; louder and louder. She vexing me now but Juba don't scare me no more. She might be the Obeah woman and keep everyone in the plantation afeared. But *fam la*, she lies: she don't know it all.

For I keeps a secret of my own. But I can't let her find it out - for my angel's sake...

My hand reaches out in the darkness. I feel for the metal and pick up my cutlass. Juba still cackling, banging on the wall -

- and she don't seem to know what coming next.

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