

not called on ... the **Start** Man yet! Where is your chapel?

CHARLAYNE. The doctor directed Granddaddy down the hall. Granddaddy entered that empty chapel and he approached the altar.

GRANDDADDY. (*Kneeling and humming, he enters the presence of his God. He sings softly.*) Yes ... yes ... yes ... yes ... yes ... yes ...

Oh Lord, I come before you, your humble servant. I come acknowledging that you are my God — my King — my Father. And I am your child. That's why, Lord, I know I can come boldly before your throne and ask you right now, Lord, heal my li'l grandchild. Right the wrong. Breathe air into her little lungs. Make her heart beat strong. In the name of Jesus! Oh Lord, make her an example to the whole world, of your miracle working power. Hallelujah! I know you're able ... I thank you, Lord. I thank you already ... Amen.

CHARLAYNE. (*Standing.*) With that, my grandfather rose to his feet, triumphant, secure in the knowledge that now ... I was in God's hand.

Several days later, he and my grandmother returned to the hospital to visit with my mother, who had regained her strength. He said:

GRANDDADDY. Well now, Dot, what you gonna name the child?

MOMMY. (*Proudly, holding the baby.*) Well ... Woody and I were thinking of naming her ... Africa.

GRANDDADDY. (*Outraged.*) Africa?! How you gonna name the child Africa, Dot? She's gonna have a hard enough time of it as it is. Look at her! She's a girl, she's underdeveloped, she's blue-black! Africa! People gonna think she jumped out of somebody's Tarzan movie. You can't name her Africa, Dot! She's a child, not a land mass!

CHARLAYNE. My mother took this into consideration and came up with a second choice.

MOMMY. Okay then, what about ... Charlayne?

CHARLAYNE. After her favorite uncle, Uncle Charlie.

MOMMY. And ... Elizabeth.

CHARLAYNE. After her own middle name.

MOMMY. And, of course, Woodard.

CHARLAYNE. Granddaddy rolled that one around on his tongue.

GRANDDADDY. Charlayne Elizabeth Woodard ... Whooie, Dot! That is a mighty big ole name for such a lee li'l girl!

CHARLAYNE. But my mother held her ground this time. She said:

MOMMY. Well ... she'll just have to grow into it.

CHARLAYNE. And I tried.

With each passing week, the doctors said I wouldn't make it

END

My father ... (*Reclining on the sofa; "All Blues" up.*)

He was doing his "Sunday thang," on the couch, listening to the hi-fi as his beloved Miles Davis painted pictures with his horn. (*Smoking, grooving to the music.*)

START DADDY. Yeah ... all right ... ah, look out! Look out! Look out!

(*Music down.*)

CHARLAYNE. "All Blues" in the middle of a snowstorm was all right with Daddy.

Suddenly, (*Music out.*) my mother felt a very hot, tingly sensation all through her body. This was accompanied by a very major urge ... to pee. So she put down her needles and her yarn and (*Standing and making her way down hallway holding on to the walls.*) quickly walked down the hallway that led to the bathroom.

MOMMY. Aoooh!

CHARLAYNE. A terrible pain gripped her body. Suddenly, with no warning at all, water gushed down her legs and all over the floor. Holding onto the wall for support, my mother walked on to the bathroom. She sat down on the toilet. (*Arriving back at the bench and sitting, she is racked by another sharp pain.*)

MOMMY. Aaach!

CHARLAYNE. Instinctively — to this day she doesn't know what made her do it, but my mother just (*Reaching one hand under her dress.*) put her hand between her legs ... (*She withdraws her cupped hand.*)

(*Awestruck.*) She caught me. She caught ... *me!* Just before I would've hit the water in the toilet. My mother took in a deep breath to call for help, but she couldn't, so she swallowed that one and tried it again. And this time:

MOMMY. (*Calling.*) WOODY! (*"All Blues" up. Shifting to Daddy's reclining position on the bench.*)

DADDY. (*Irritated.*) Aw, come on, Dot. Can't I have one day, just one day, when I can kick back and listen to my music? (*Standing; music out.*)

CHARLAYNE. Reluctant, but obedient to the wishes of his pregnant wife, my father walked down that very same hallway, (*Slipping on the wet floor.*) slipping and sliding ...

DADDY. Dot, what is this mess? I suppose you want *me* to clean it up!? (*He listens.*)

CHARLAYNE. Getting no answer, he walked to the bathroom door. He saw us there, my mother, crouched down on the bathroom tiles, holding *me* in the palm of her hand.

I was black. Blue. **END** ... and fuzzy all over, still attached by