

American Folk Hero Jade

Word count: 684

Jade is a spiteful ghost who has managed to be unexorcized for two hundred and thirty years.

At first, full of pride for her black identity, she inhabited only other black women, with dark skin and full noses. But around 1845, on her third host, she realized this pride was foolishness. It was insanity. She had opted in for suffering, and there was no end to racism in sight.

She'd spoken to Raphael about it. He said slavery would end but there would be a loophole for prisoners and the former slaves would be broke as shit. She wondered day and night if she owed it to her people to continue to live as them. After being sold away from a lover again, she rationalized that she could bring down the oppressor from the inside.

A trifle of mercy ran through her, but it was fleeting. With a glance to the breeding cages, Jade knew that she could never in a million years commit the same harm they committed. But she would try.

They had hard limits. While her morals were pretty solidly connected to the whole "eye for an eye" thing, she would not rape a rapist. Some revenge dirties the soul too much, soils the mind. So, when she inhabited this one rich boy whose grey eyes

were found in many of the slave children on the plantation, she had him jump into a pig pen at feeding time. She left his body and looked on from above, taking in the sound of his screams and the pigs' slurping.

With a poor good ol' boy, she barely lifted a finger, just had him go around town advocating for the rights of slaves, and his town executed the nigger-lover accordingly, making him another fruit hanging from a tree. His mother, who had given the lynchers her blessing, was led by Jade to the nearest cliff, and was made to keep walking until the ground whipped her.

Jade was on a roll. She had metamorphosized into a confident, killing machine, but still being the twenty-year-old she died as, she was easily distracted by pretty things. She was going to smear blood on this one guy, Sergeant Arthur Crawford, and let dogs shred him apart, but she ended up falling in love with this gorgeous lady who ran in his circles. Her name was Annabeth Jenkins and she had freckles and a Roman nose and Jade was sprung.

They met at some spiffy ball for all the classy slavers of the town. Anna's roots were Southern, but she grew up North with her mother. When she boldly caressed Jade's finger at the dinner table, Jade knew Crawford would not be disposed of anytime soon.

Unfortunately, Annabeth died three years later. She was being carried on horseback by Jade, who was rushing Anna to the

doctors on account of her consumption, but it was too late. Jade didn't inhabit anyone for fifteen years after that, resigning herself to stay in heaven and play solitaire.

The early twentieth century was spent in Harlem, living as Vernon, as James, as Lucinda, and as Beulah. Time was spent cultivating their character, reflecting on their worldview, their voice. They were the first person to have people call them "they" as well as "she." Their poetry, full of vitriol and lust and remorse, kickstarted the Renaissance. Some say their ghostly wail inspired the jazz musicians.

A vengeful tick emerged in them again in the 30s, when the vibe of the country's fashion and music turned conservative again. They thought of inhabiting some governor or regular joe and having them swallow rusty nails, but they realized they had felt authentic and tranquil looking in the mirror and seeing a black face again, and creating art was more satisfying than murder, no matter how justified. The feds had launched program after program aimed at destabilizing black arts communities, so she knew this work must be important.

Their afterlife has become relatively stable now, save for the times they go girl crazy, get heartbroken, and pick up solitaire.