

Analysis of everyday use story by alice walker

Literature



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The beginning of the story shows how Maggie struggles to look presentable since she is shy of carrying herself as an African American. The flashback reveals how Maggie got engulfed in a fire several years ago when her skin was burnt and her physical appearance was distorted. The lack of eye contact between mama, Dee, and Maggie shows how they have a tough time relating to each other. Mama's inability to look into the eye of a white person shows how she has not been able to come to terms with the idea of equality. The love-hate relationship between the daughters has been depicted often in the story. At the very least, Maggie seems to have an inferiority complex because of the lack of opportunities she had compared to her sister Dee. At the onset of the story, Dee has been described as a guest on some TV show which describes that there is something enchanting or striking about her. By stating " what a fine girl I have", mama is accepting her feelings of pride when she is applauded for raising such a daughter as Dee (Walker 24). Mama seems to be preoccupied with self-hatred and considers nothing feminine about her as she associates herself with the rural class by using the words " man-working hands" (Walker 24). She is unable to look at a white man in his eye because of her ugly appearance. She also falls short of the expectations of her daughter who wants her to be humorous, slim and have fresh white skin. Mama shows disgust at the way Maggie walks like a " lame animal" by claiming that, even if she tried to look presentable by wearing nice clothes, her way of walking cannot be changed ever since she got burnt in the fire (Walker 25). Maggie's way of walking with her head down shows how she imagines herself as a silent sufferer. On the other hand, Dee's ability to stare without blinking shows her self-assuredness and critical thinking. The shocking sequence of events in that fire, including Maggie's

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tears, smoking hair and her dress turning to ashes is still fresh in mama's mind. This is the reason why she cannot stop comparing Dee to Maggie.