

# The story of adah price: a beast in the kingdom



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Adah Price has been surviving from the moment she was born. Surviving, not living. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Kingsolver shows how Adah leads a very cynical existence, outcast to mostly everyone she knows (including her family), and hindered by a debilitating medical condition, makes it so that she must try her hardest just to keep her head above the water. As a consequence of this, her outlook is a pessimistic one; however, life in the Congo changes her view of the world and her own self into a more mature understanding. Through the eyes of the Congo she changes her originally sardonic view upon her own life, as she learns about the true sacrifices of life, and eventually comes to terms with her own existence, finally becoming a product of what the Congo had put her through in order to survive. Adah Price outgrows her old self to become something new. "That is what it means to be a beast in the kingdom." (306)

Adah Price has always been a glass half empty kind of person. Her negative mindset is mostly due to her physical ailment and resulting outsider status, but this all changes in the Congo. Her opinion of herself is rather low and she compares herself to her twin sister when she says, "I am a lame gallimaufry and she [Leah] remains perfect." (34) Along with her low self-esteem, Adah carries with herself a sense of hopelessness. As she describes herself as "lost in the shuffle." (34) She also chooses to view things backward rather than forward such as when she repeats phrases or words backwards.

However, as her story progresses in the Congo, Adah learns to distance herself from comparing herself to Leah and intentionally ostracizing herself from others. She also remarks that the African people stare at her for her whiteness and not for her limp, which is the first time she experiences not

being discriminated against for her limp. Through the events of the Congo little twelve year old Adah's character development proceeds rapidly. The things she experiences in the Congo, such as being abandoned by her mother and being trampled when the fire ants attack are things no twelve year old should ever have to go through. Thus, because of this she matures and outgrows her old bleak attitude, instead transforming into someone who values their own life and isn't willing to go down without a fight. Once Adah learns of the true sacrifices to life, her pessimistic outlook changes and she truly begins to appreciate her own existence.

Adah Price learns many life lessons in the Congo, but by realizing the truth of life and its sacrifices she begins to see the value in her own existence.

During the Revelation, Adah has a near death experience when she is almost killed by a lion, but instead a yearling bushbuck is killed in her stead. By recognizing its inadvertent sacrifice, she thinks, " One god draws in the breath of life and rises; another god expires." (141) She later builds upon this thought when the congolese slaughter animals during a period of food scarcity. This incident is of the many incidents Adah witnesses in Africa that teaches her a very important lesson. By watching the massacre of the wildlife she privately remarks; " the death of something living is the price of our survival, and we pay it again and again. We have no choice. It is the one solemn promise every life on Earth is born and bound to keep." (347) When she comprehends what sacrifices must be made in order to succor a life, she starts to appreciate the sacrifices that were made for her, and finally comes to terms with appreciating her own life. However, the true value in this statement is what Adah realizes she must do in order to sustain a life. From

the lessons Adah learns from the Congo, she acquires a deeper understanding of life and eventually begins to see the merit in living.

Adah Price, at this point is someone who is finally willing to live, yet she can not truly appreciate life if she hasn't seen the cost of losing it. Since she has only witnessed the demise of animals, Adah can not distinctify their deaths as a true loss. Adah must experience a meaningful death, one that hits close to home. A death that is not her own. This death comes in the form of her littlest sister's-Ruth May's. When she remarks, " because I could not stop for death he kindly stopped for me-oh how dear we are to ourselves when it comes, it comes, that long, long shadow in the grass." (365) It shows that she finally understands the cost of a life. If it had been Adah that had died, then it wouldn't have been meaningful to her. With the death of someone that she knew intimately she experiences loss and comprehends not just the value of her own life, but the value in others' as well. She believes that death taught her a lesson for her arrogance of not stopping for him. This event pairs with when Adah had " reached out and clung for life with [her] one good hand," of how at that time " even the crooked girl believed her own life was precious." (306) Adah realizes that anyone and anything can die as easily as they can be born and that she must continue to evolve if she truly wishes to live. Adah learns from this experience and banishes her old sardonic judgmental self, who was far more narrow-minded than she herself would have realized, and this character development can be seen in the way she regards the world in the future when she is much older.

In Exodus Adah comes back to Africa to revisit all of what she had gained as well as lost so long ago; In doing so she can only lament about the price of

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what she had to become. In order to come full circle, the Price family meets up once again in the Congo. Two who have been living in Africa, two who have been living in the states, and two of whom are dead. Adah sees all of this and remarks with a sense of privation; " we came, we saw, we took away and we left behind, we must be allowed our anguish and our regrets." (493) Adah looks at Rachel who feels as if the Congo took more away from her than what it really did, and at Leah who doesn't see what the Congo had done to her, and finally at her mother who lives with the price of the events that occurred in the Congo every day; She comes to single conclusion; that while the cost of living is death, the cost of death is also living. In order to claw herself up from the pit that life had placed her in, Adah had to sacrifice and sacrifice until life had taken everything away from her and turned her into something else entirely.

Adah Price was born into a harsh reality and because of that lived with a relatively negative atmosphere, unable to see past her own issues she grew ignorant. However, Adah is no fool. She knows that the effect of her condition was no biblical predestination, and comprehends more of the world around her than others, even her own family would believe her too. Despite her intelligence, she harbors a deeply sated ire towards herself and life itself. But as it would turn out, the answer to resolving her shortcomings lies in the Congo. Through the trials that occurred in Africa she changes her originally sardonic view upon her own life, as she learns about the true sacrifices of life, and eventually comes to terms with her own existence. However, it is more than just the appreciation of life that Adah acquires; It is the ability to hold onto her precious life with everything she has in her. It is the means of

which to fight back in the cruel world. Not monster nor man, Adah Price is much more; A beast in the kingdom.