



# A WOMAN'S QUEST FOR LOVE IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

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*Abstract:* The paper discusses the author Zora Neale Hurston's insight on how a woman pursues her intention to find a right life partner for herself. It also deals how the protagonist Janie Crawford tries to find real love from the men in her life. Her quest for love is not satisfied with her first two husbands and she faces all the complexities in life. Finally, she tries to find solace in her relationship with her third husband Tea Cake but she loses him too. The paper also speaks of how she finds happiness in her loneliness at the end and of how she learns that she does not need a partner to love in fact, she can love herself.

*Index Terms* - relationship, partner, solace, quest, happiness

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by the African American writer Zora Neale Hurston renders how the heroine of the novel Janie Crawford strives throughout her life in pursuit of love. Janie, who believes that marriage must include love and happiness, seeks infinite and fulfilling love, which she eventually finds with her third husband but only after passing through the failures in her love life.

Zora splits the life of Janie into four different bouts which reflect each stage of Janie's life. Janie's life with Nanny, her grandmother, who raises her, is exemplified in the first stage of her life. The second period is about Janie's unwilling married life with Logan Killicks and the third period is her life with her Second husband Joe Starks. The final period is about her love life with Tea Cake, her third husband. For Janie it is very difficult to pass through three marriages, and change from town to town and person to person in this orthodox and restricted society. But she thinks each marriage experience to be the harbour where she can anchor the ship which can carry the dream of love, happiness and equality.

Janie, narrates the whole life to her only friend Phoeby, how she was brought by her grandmother Nanny at the house of their white masters Mr. and Mrs. Washburn. Nanny's disappointments of her daughter, leads her to believe that Janie would be marrying a respectable man and would lead a respectable life. Hurston describes Nanny's perspective over love and marriage where she wants Janie to be sensible and face the realities of the difficult situations.

Janie yearns for love and happiness because she does not come from a traditional family and does not see her mother or grandmother in a normal marriage connection. As a result, she had a thirst for a considerate existence and a romantic marriage. Janie begins to think about her uniqueness and freedom once she is sixteen, and she yearns for the loving mate who will complete her. Nanny insists that Janie must marry Logan Killicks, a widower in order to live a decent life. Logan is an unattractive old farmer with a house and sixty acres. Nanny finds a safe haven for her granddaughter with him. Nanny pressures Janie to marry Logan despite the reality that she has never met him, but Janie is convinced that his house and money would bring her pleasure.

When Janie expresses her dissatisfaction with him, Nanny tells her that love and happiness would come once they marry. She accepts the traditional concept of marriage and looks forward to finding love and happiness. Janie does not anticipate finding herself in this realm of dreams or a pleasant life. She requires a safe haven in which to nurture her feelings of love and romance but she lives with this old man uncomfortably.

This causes her to doubt the concept of love and marriage. Logan treats Janie as a servant, without any concern about love or emotions. After two months, none of Nanny's promises had come true. Even a year

after Nanny's death, Janie is still looking for love and happiness with Logan. Logan does not lavish her with any attention, instead requiring her to undertake manual labour in the field. Janie feels that the lack of love and understanding weakens their relation. Hurston points out the flaws of Janie's notion that marriage is a method for women to buy material stability and social respectability.

Janie realizes that Logan is not the love that she is looking for. Hurston emphasizes that no marriage can survive without full desire on both the sides. Janie believes that their marriage is in shambles. Janie then meets Joe Starks who stops near Logan's field to ask for some water while working in the field. Joe is smitten by Jane's beauty, where she repays his feelings. Logan has not spoken a word of praise to her since their marriage, so she is blown away by his words and complement.

Joe, with his speech of high society and prestige, he tempts Janie and she believes that he is the man who will envelop her in love and romance. From that point they both begin to meet. Janie and Joe become closer and begin a romantic relationship. Janie is convinced by Joe that if she gives up her husband and marries him, she will be the happiest woman in the world. Janie's realizes that this marriage will not offer her love and she makes the decision to assert herself by eloping with Jody. She leaves Logan with the expectation that Joe will provide her with love and happiness.

Joe and Janie get married in Eatonville, Florida. Joe makes Janie very happy. Joe assures Janie that if he becomes wealthy and popular, he will raise her rank to that of a lady. Janie is pleased with Joe, who does not want a working wife and instead wants her to accompany him wherever he goes. Janie thinks that it will be the new hope and the wide horizon, what she has been seeking for.

Joe demonstrates himself to be a strong and trustworthy guy, as a result of these qualities, the people of Florida elect him as mayor. He constructs a large house as well as a store and invites Janie to join him. Joe finds that everyone's focus is taken to Janie, and men try to approach her in order to obtain her favour because she is now a high-status lady. Janie is unhappy because of Joe's behaviour, as his only intension is to have Janie as his own. So he plans to pursue her aggressively in order to romance her and keep her under his control. He advises her that she should be fine with just being the mayor's wife, and no need to converse or mingle with.

Joe's feelings and interest for her begins to fade. Her marriage to him turns as an ornament to Janie which serves her social position only. For the second time, Janie realizes that marriage is a prison. Seventeen years pass and Joe becomes old and weak. As he grows weak he resents from letting Janie into her room. Janie informs Joe that his promises of love and happiness were all went worthless. Joe passes away, and Janie's life changes forever. Janie is now a free woman who has the experiences of two marriage that makes her to understand life more.

Janie still continues to seek for the man who can satisfy both her spiritual and sexual desires. Logan and Joe have disappointed her by refusing to love her in the way she desires. Janie finds herself alone in the store one day when she notices a man with attractive features and muscular physique, who is a tall, friendly young man who rapidly bonds with Janie. He introduces himself as Vergible Woods, but everyone calls him Tea Cake.

Tea Cake makes Janie feel at ease. They both shares a lot to talk in order to illustrate how well they understand one other. Tea Cake is everything Logan and Joe weren't able to be. He declares his love for Janie and his desire to marry her. Janie has feelings for him, but she refuses to give into them. She decides to wait and consider his offer before accepting it. Tea Cake demonstrates his love and devotion to Janie that if she marries him, he vows to love and protect her.

Janie accepts his proposal and is confident that he will love and care for her. She makes the decision to live her life on her own terms. He pays attention to her and accepts her as his soulmate, with whom he shares his dreams and hopes. He frees her soul and broadens her horizons. Janie and Tea Cake travel to Jacksonville, Everglades, and get married. Janie is experiencing true love for the first time in her life. She is now experiencing a powerful and devastating love. As she is not under the authority of her dominating spouse, she finally discovers true love and the marriage of her dreams.

Tea Cake gets bitten by a dog in an attempt to save Janie and as days pass, he begins to exhibit signs of infection. And his health begins to fade. She assures him that he is her one and only love, and that no one else can fill his heart. When Jane leaves the bed and sleeps in another room, Tea Cake goes insane. Tea Cake becomes angry and draws his pistol to shoot her. She uses the rifle to defend herself and begs Tea Cake to stop. She automatically pulls the rifle and hits him before he can shoot her for the third time. Finally her husband and lover dies. Janie wishes that this had not occurred and that the dog had bitten her rather than Tea Cake.

Janie returns to her hometown, ignoring everyone who is critical of her. Janie is now an independent and liberated lady who has extended her views and created her own perspectives on life. Even though she is not with her lover, she has found love and happiness. Janie understands that in order to attain her goals, a woman must suffer and sacrifice.

Zora makes the readers to live through the life of Janie and her attempts to attain eternal love. The author's attempt to give the women who read the novel, confidence and belief is highly cultured and classy. Zora makes a point to the readers that love is unending and a woman can find love in anything and at any time.

#### REFERENCES

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