

Knowledge

It wasn't as if we knew nothing before.
After all, colored girls must know many
things in order to survive. Not only
could I sew buttons and hems, but I could
make a dress and pantaloons from scratch.
I could milk cows, churn butter, feed chickens,
clean their coops, wring their necks, pluck and cook them.
I cut wood, set fires, and boiled water
to wash the clothes and sheets, then wrung them dry.
And I could read the Bible. Evenings
before the fire, my family tired
from unending work and New England cold,
they'd close their eyes. My favorite was Song of Songs.
They most liked when I read, "In the beginning."