

She's fine, where's the money?

Everything Joyce Curnell owned was packed within a compact 18 by 90 feet mobile home in Charleston, South Carolina. Charleston, South Carolina was the sort of place where when the sidewalk wasn't sizzling with heat, rainwater was slinking its way through the roof of her home and clouding her walls. That was fine with her though. The water had been shut off a while ago and the electricity followed soon after.

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Fifty is a pretty good age for a black woman in America. Fifty is an extraordinary age for a poor black woman in America. But fifty years had aged her. Fifty years had eaten away her liver. Fifty years had created in her an empty mouth and empty hands. It had smeared her record with a shoplifting charge four years late. It made her heart sink down to her mangled stomach as she heaved herself to the hospital. She's managed to survive for fifty years. Fifty years. And not one of them had been an easy one.

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The vomit seemed endless. A long stream of acid ejected from her throat into the milk crate lined with a plastic bag. She realized she was going to die after the nurse dismissed her with a wave of her wrist after 94 seconds of examining her...while she still vomited. But she had lost faith in a savior the tenth time after a guard walked by her crumpled body. She thought about her small, worn down mobile home she was leaving behind. She thought about the \$2,000 of debt that was worth her life. She thought about her son. She thought it ironic that the advice she told her son when he was to deal with the police, couldn't save her now. She thought she could hear him at the door.

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