



A Taste of the Sweet Apple: A Memoir (Woodford Reserve Series for Kentucky Literature)

Jo Anna Holt-Watson

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[A] quirky memoir, without the sentimentality and insistence that drives so many personal accounts. Holt Watson has a deeply moving story to tell, with fully realized characters set loose in a specific world and time. And she has a distinctly humorous voice. I'm partial to any writer who can come up with a walleyed laundress and a prize bull named Big Business, in a place called Heaven's Little Footstool. This is a wonderful book.-Bobbie Ann Mason

Jo Anna "Pee-Wee" Holt Watson's voice is so vivid that the reader is transported to a vanished rural culture: mid-20th century Kentucky. This memoir documents one summer, her seventh, at Grassy Springs Farm in the Bluegrass region of Woodford County. At the center of the book is a poetic and telling bond, an adoring friendship between this small white girl and a black foreman, Joe Collins. There's a tempestuous country-physician father, a beautiful, powerful mother in powerless times and the "wonderfully long-winded" Aunt Sudie Louisa. We witness the travail of hired laborers as well as the beauties of craft and devotion in Holt Watson's sharp rendering of traditional tobacco culture.

Here is a world of shadowy lanes, granddaddy's ice-cold artesian well, tobacco stripping rooms, a girl's pony barn, Ginnie Rae's Beauty Shoppe on Main Street and Ocean Frog's Grocery. Brimming with unsentimental innocence, she draws a tough-minded, tomboy--accomplished portrait of girlhood. In the rural tradition, Holt Watson is a conjuror of tales both hilarious and moving, mixed with temper and spirit.

Jo Anna "Pee-Wee" Holt-Watson is a fourth-generation Kentuckian and self-proclaimed Yellow Dog Democrat. She is an amateur photographer, gardener, avid sports-person, former horse trials judge, and creator of *Plumblin'*, a series of televised panel discussions regarding critical political and social issues. She currently lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

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