



Violet Revised

No Known Copyright

Princeton University Library reasonably believes that the Item is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made.

You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use.

Princeton University Library Disclaimer

Princeton University Library claims no copyright governing this digital resource. It is provided for free, on a non-commercial, open-access basis, for fair-use academic and research purposes only. Anyone who claims copyright over any part of these resources and feels that they should not be presented in this manner is invited to contact Princeton University Library, who will in turn consider such concerns and make every effort to respond appropriately. We request that users reproducing this resource cite it according the guidelines described at <http://rbcs.princeton.edu/policies/forms-citation>.

Citation Information

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

Violet Revised

1 folder (partial)

Contact Information

Download Information

Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 12:44:17 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/ht24wp998>

Violet Revised

That woman lives on Lenox Avenue. ^{with} Her husband, a ^{fall} quiet man who works in a warehouse, ^{and} cries a lot. The woman doesn't know what to do about it, but she does know why he does it: he fell for an ^{the crying} eighteen year old girl with a love that made him so sad and happy he shot her just to keep the feeling going. The woman, her name is Violet, is furious with him because he could forget her and love anybody else that much. She went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face, but they threw her to the floor and out of the church. She ran, then, through all that snow, back to her apartment on Lenox Avenue where she let the birds out of their cages and out the windows, including her favorite, the parrot that said, "I love you." But the snow she ran through was so heavy she left no footprints in it, so for a time nobody knew ^{exactly where} she lived on Lenox Avenue. But they knew who she was, who she had to be, because they knew ^{was the one} who ^{shot} killed the girl. Her husband, Joe Trace. There is no one to prosecute him because nobody actually saw him do it, and the dead girl's aunt doesn't want to throw money to helpless lawyers or laughing cops when she knows the expense wouldn't improve anything. She ~~wasn't too keen on a generous funeral, being of the "don't put insurance money in the ground" school, and kept most of the \$184.00 for herself.~~ Besides, she probably knows that the man who killed her neice cries all day and for him and for Violet that is as bad as jail.

~~But~~ even
without hips or youth
~~She believed~~
2

She's awfully skinny, Violet, but still good looking and only ^{even though} ~~about~~ ^{She must be} ~~forty~~ ^{five} or so. ~~That must be why she thought she could punish~~ ^{hips and not young she} Joe by getting herself a boyfriend and letting him visit in her own house while her husband cried in the parlour. She thought it would dry the tears up and give her some satisfaction as well. It could have worked, I suppose, but the children of suicides are hard to please and quick to believe no one loves them because they are not really here. Whether she sent the boyfriend away or whether he came to feel that Violet's rewards were too poor measured against his sympathy for the heaving man in the next room, I can't say. But ^{And} Violet's next plan--to fall in love with her husband--exhausted her before it got on a good footing. ^{the mess} ^{it didn't} ^{last} ^{2 weeks} So she decided to love--well, find out about--the eighteen year old whose face she tried to cut open even though nothing would have come out but straw. Violet didn't know anything about ^{the girl at first} ^{name} her except her address, her former beauty, and that she was very well liked in the beauty parlor. She started going around gathering the rest of the information. ~~Everything,~~ ^{I say} Maybe she thought she could solve the mystery of love that way. ^{From Melvonne she learned} ^{more!} She found out what kind of lip rouge the girl wore; saw the marcelling iron the beauticians used on her (though I suspect that girl didn't need to straighten her hair); listened to the band the girl liked best (Slim Bates' ^{when she was known how she} Ebony Keys which is pretty good except for his vocalist); and did the dance steps the girl used to do. All that. But when she had the steps down pat--her knees just so--everybody in her building got disgusted with her. It was like watching an old street pigeon

* starting with Melvonne, ^{an upstairs} a neighbor whose apt. ~~let her be burned~~ Joe & the girl used as a love-nest.

She was washing his handkerchiefs

and putting food on the table
before him - was ^{the most} ~~all~~ she

could manage. ^{the} Days of tears

and nights of silence wore
her down.

FOX RIVER BOND

25% COTTON

^{sl}
~~peeking the remains~~ of a sardine sandwich the cats had left behind.

But Violet is nothing but persistent and no crack or ugly-eyed look

stops her. She haunted PS12 ^{over on} to talk to teachers who knew the girl.

^{De Will} Clinton High School too, because the girl had ^{Quit} ~~dropped out~~ from

there in the eleventh grade. And she ^{perished for} ~~fought~~ a long time with the

girl's aunt, a lonesome woman who works as a seamstress in the

garment district, until ^{the aunt} ~~she~~ broke down and began talking, ^{She began} mostly

to relieve her own sorrow, then to look forward to a chat about ^{Violet's visits for}

youth ~~and love~~ and misbehavior. The aunt showed Violet all the

dead girl's things and it became clear that her niece had been

^(bold) ~~sweet~~ as well as pretty. One particular thing the aunt showed her,

and eventually let Violet keep for a few weeks, was a picture of

the girl's face. Not smiling, but alive at least and very bold.

Violet had the nerve to put it on ^{the} ~~her own~~ fireplace mantle in her

own parlour and both she and Joe looked at it and cried--for the

same reasons: to hang on to what they had lost.

It promised to be a mighty bleak household, what with the

birds gone and the two of them wiping their cheeks all day, but

when spring came to the city Violet saw, coming into the building

with an OKEH record under her arm and ^{carrying} some stewmeat wrapped in

butcher paper, another girl with four marcelled waves on each side

of her head. Violet invited her in to hear the record and that is

how ^{that} the threesome on Lenox Avenue began. What turned out different

was who shot whom.

[#] In those days the City wasn't so sure of itself and was

looking around at the world instead of its own face. It was a port,

audacious

after all, surrounded by deep water to cross over if you wanted to get in or out. So it stared up at the sky, looked down into its deep waters and worked its harbors ~~happily~~ but without a touch of smugness. What went on in its streets and neighborhoods was anything the strong could think of and the weak could admire. Armistice was half a dozen years old ~~that~~ ^{the} winter when Violet disrupted the funeral, and veterans on Lenox Avenue wore their army issue greatcoats, because nothing they could pay for was as sturdy or hid so well what ~~it~~ ^{they} could not boast of. When snow came, it sat where it fell on Lexington and Park Avenue too, and waited for horse drawn wagons to tamp it down when they delivered coal for the furnaces cooling down in the cellars. Up in the apartments and between the stone houses people knocked on each others doors to see if anything was needed or could be had. A bar of soap? A little kerosene? Some fat, chicken or pork, to brace the soup one more time? Whose husband was getting ready to go to the store with a list drawn up by the wives? And if there were problems [tk] they put up with them because it was worth anything to be on Lenox Avenue where the sidewalks, snow-covered or not, were wider than the main ~~roads~~ of the towns where they were born and perfectly ordinary people could stand at the stop, get on the streetcar, give the man the nickel, and ride anywhere you damned well pleased, although you didn't please to go many places because everything you wanted was right where you were: the church, the store, the party, the women, the men, the postbox {but no high schools, no hospital}, the furniture store, street ~~newspaper~~ ^w vendors, the bootleg houses (but

no banks}, the beauty parlors, the barbar shops, the pool halls, the open food markets, the number runner, and every club, organization, group, association, union, society, brotherhood, sisterhood, or order imaginable. The City was not citified then. It was a clutch of islands, sporting villages (called neighborhoods) cheek and jowl, with unencumbered, if infrequent, trespass among them. The service trails, of course, were worn, and there were paths that got slick from the foray of villagers into the territory of another where it was believed something curious or thrilling lay. Some gleaming, cracking scarey stuff. Where you could ^{pop the cork and} put the cold glass mouth ^{right} up to your own. Knock ^{any sort of} the danger away with another and laugh at the knife when it misses ^{didn't} and when it doesn't. It would make you wonderful just to see it. And just as wonderful to know that back in one's own ^{building} village there were lists drawn up by the wives to give to the husband braving the snow to get to any market open, and the sheets ^{that} could not be hung ^{impossible to hang} out in snowfall ^{to dry} would drape ^{pillbox} kitchens like the wings of angels drowned at sea.

The young were not so young then, and there was no such thing as mid-life.