



Notes:Jchap 3 or ?

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Citation Information

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

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1 folder (partial)

Contact Information

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Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 12:46:40 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/cr56n5568>

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changed the whole point and meaning of it and was practically all anybody talked about when they talked about Dorcus's death and in the process had changed the woman's name. Violent they called her now. No wonder. Alice, sitting in the first seat in the first aisle ^{had} watched the ^{church} commotion stunned. Later, and little by little, did feelings, like sea trash expelled on a beach--strange and recognizable, stark and murky--return. Chief among them was ~~fear~~ ^{and but anger - a new thing, anger}. Something ~~she did not feel for~~ ^{at} Joe who had been the one who did it: seduced her neice right under her nose in her very own house. The nice one. The man who sold ladies products on the side; a familiar figure in just about every building in town. A man store owners and landlords liked because he set the children's toys in a neat tow when they left them scattered on the sidewalk. Who the children liked because he never minded them. And liked among men because he never cheated in a game, egged a stupid fight on, or carried tales, and he left thier women alone. Liked among the women because he made them feel like girls; like by girls because he made them feel like women--which, she thought, was what Dorcus was looking for. Murderer. But Alice didn't fear him ^{how nar, now,} ~~the way she~~ ~~did~~ his wife. For Joe she felt trembling fury at his snake-in-the grass stealing of the girl in her charge;

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and ^{rage}embarrassment that the grass he had snaked through was her own--the watched and guarded environment where unmarried and unmarriagable pregnancy was the end and close of livable life. After that--zip. Just a wait until the baby that came was old enough to warrant its own watched, guarded environment.

Waiting for Violet, with less hesitation than before, Alice wondered why it was so. At fifty-eight with no children of her own, and the one she had access to and responsibility for dead, she wondered about the hysteria, the violence, the damnation of pregnancy without marriageability. It had occupied her own parents' mind completely for as long as she could remember them. They spoke to her firmly but carefully about her body: sitting nasty (legs open); sitting womanish (legs crossed); breathing through her mouth; hands on hips, and began to resent her the moment she got breasts, a resentment that increased to outright hatred of her pregnant possibilities and never stopped until she married Manfred when suddenly it was the opposite. Even before the wedding her parents were murmuring about grandchildren they could see and hold, while at the same time and in turn resenting the tips showing and growing under the chemises of Alice's younger sisters. Resenting the blood spots, the new hips, the hair. That and the necessity for

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new clothes. "Oh, Lord, girl!" The frown when the hem could not be taken down further; The waist ^{band} refused another stitch. Growing up under that heated control, Alice swore she wouldn't, but she did, pass it on. She passed it on to her sister's only child. And wondered now would she have done so, had her husband lived ^{or stayed} or if she had had children of her own. If he had been there maybe she would not ^{be} ~~spent her life~~ thinking war thoughts. Although war was what it was. Which is why she had chosen surrender and made Dorcus her own prisoner of war.

Other women, however, had not surrendered. All over the country they were armed. Alice worked once with a Swedish tailor who had a scar from his ear lobe to the corner of his mouth. "Negress," he said. "She cut me to the teeth, to the teeth." He smiled his wonder and shook his head. "To the teeth." The iceman in Springfield had four evenly spaced holes in the side of his neck from four evenly spaced jabs by something thin, round and sharp. Men ran through the streets of Springfield, East St. Louis, and the City holding a red wet hand in the other, a flap of skin on the face. Sometimes they got to a hospital safely alive only because they left the razor where it lodged. Black women were armed; Black women were dangerous and the less money they had the deadlier the weapon they chose.

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Who were the unarmed one^s? Those who found protection in church and the judging, angry God whose wrath in their behalf was too terrible to bear contemplation. He was not just on His way, coming, coming to right the wrongs done to them, He was here. Already. See? See? What the world had done to them, it was now doing to itself. Did the world ~~shit on~~ ^{mess over} them? yes but look where the ~~shit~~ ^{mess} came from. Were they berated and cursed? O yes but how the [fx all this] world cursed and berated itself. Were the women fondled in kitchens and the back of stores? Uh uh. Did police put their fists in women's faces so the husbands' spirits would break along with the woman's jaw? Did men (those who knew them as well as strangers sitting in motorcars) call them out of their names every single day of their lives? Uh huh. But in God's eyes and theirs, every hateful word and gesture was the Beast's desire for its own filth. The Beast did not do what was done to it, but what it wished done to itself: raped because it wanted to be raped itself. Slaughtered children because it yearned to be slaughtered children. Built jails to dwell on and hold on to its own private decay. God's wrath, so beautiful, so simple. Their enemies got what they wanted, became what they visited on others. ~~The husband slept; the wife~~

Who else were the unarmed ones? The ones who

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thought they did not need folded blades, packets of lye, shards of glass taped to their hands. Those who bought houses and hoarded money as protection and the means to purchase it. Those attached to armed men. Those who did not carry pistols because they became pistols; did not carry switchblades because they were switchblades cutting through ^{gatherings} ~~meetings~~, shooting down statutes and pointing out the blood and abused flesh. Those who swelled their little unarmed strength into the reckoning one of leagues, clubs, societies, sisterhoods designed to hold or withhold, move or stay put, make a way, solicit, comfort and ease. Bail out, dress the dead, pay the rent, find new rooms, start a school, storm an office, take up collections, rout the block and keep their eyes on all the children. Any other kind of unarmed black woman in 1926 was silent or crazy or dead.

Alice waited this time for the woman with the knife. The woman people called Violent now because she had tried to kill what lay in a coffin. She had left notes under Alice's door every day beginning in ^{January} ~~February~~ -- a ^{week} ~~month~~ after the funeral, and Alice Manfred knew the kind of Negro that couple was: the kind she trained Dorcus away from. ^{The} embarrassing kind. More than unappealing, they were dangerous. ~~Didn't~~ [?] the husband shoot; the wife stab^{bed} Nothing. Nothing her neice did or tried could

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equal the violence done to her. And where there was violence, wasn't there also vice? Gambling. Cursing. A terrible and nasty closeness. Red dresses. Yellow shoes. And, of course, race ~~records~~ ^{MUSIC} to urge them on.

But Alice was not frightened now as she had been before. ^{and as she was the 1st time she let her in} ~~At first~~ she'd thought the woman would end up in jail one day--they all did eventually. But easy pickings? Natural prey? "I don't think so. I don't think so."

At the wake, Malvonne gave her the details. Tried to, any way. Alice leaned away from the woman and held her breath as though to keep the words at bay.

"I appreciate your concern," Alice told her. "Help yourself." She gestured toward tables crowded with food and the well-wishers circling it. "There so much."

"I feel so bad," Malvonne said. "Like it was my own."

"Thank you."

"You raise other people's children and it hurts just the same as it would if it was your own. You know about my nephew....?"

"Excuse me."

"Did everything for him. Everything a mother would."

"Please. Help yourself. There's so much. Too

much."

"They live in my building, you know...."

"Hello, Felice. Nice of you to come...."

She did not want to hear or know too much. And she did not want to see that woman they now called Violent. The note she slid under alice's door offended her, then frightened her. Now she was not frightened at all.

"What could you want from me?"

"Oh, right now I just want to sit down on your chair," Violet said.

"Sorry. I Just can't think what good can come of this."

"I'm having trouble with my head," said Violet placing her fingers on the crown of her hat.

"See a doctor why don't you?"

"Is that her?"

"Yes."

"I'm not the one you need to be scared of."

"Who is?"

"I don't know. That's what hurts my head."

"You didn't come here to say you sorry. I thought maybe you did. You come in here to deliver some of your own evil."

"I don't have no evil of my own."

Reading the headlines in the Age, the
News, the Mission,

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"I think you'd better go."

"Let me rest here a minute. I can't find a place where I can just sit down. That's her there?"

"Yes. I just told you that."

"She give you a lot of trouble?"

"No. None. Well. some."

"I was a good girl here ^{age} age. Never gave a speck of trouble. I did everything anybody told me to. Till I got here. City make you tighten up."

"Why did he do it?"

"Why did she?"

"Why did you?"

"I don't know."

"Your husband. Does he hurt you?"

"Hurt me?" *Violet looked tired.*

"I mean he seemed so nice, so quiet. Did he beat on you?"

"Joe? No. He never hurt nothing."

"Except Dorcus."

"And squirrels."

"What?"

"Rabbits too. Deer. Possum. Pheasant. We ate good down home.."

"Why'd you leave?"

Over
here Alice wonders
about violent
women.

The second time she came, Alice
was still pandering over these wild
women with their packets of lye,
their honed razors, ~~that~~ the
Keloids here and there.

over
←

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"Overseer didn't want rabbit. He want soft money."

"They want money here too." let you do that."

"But there's a way to get it here." got to feeling

"Take that dress off and I'll stitch up your cuff." ^{horn}

Violet came in the same dress each time and Alice was irritated by the thread running loose from her sleeve, As well as the ^{coat} lining ripped in at least three places she could see. Violet ^fsait in her slip with her coat on, while alice mended the sleeve with the tiniest stitches. At no time did Violet take off her hat.

"At first I thought you came here to harm me. Then I thought you wanted to offer condolences. Then I thought you wanted to thank me for not calling the law. But none of that is it, is it?" ^t

"I had to sit down somewhere. I thought I could do it here. ^{that} you would let me and you did. I didn't give Joe much reason to stay out of the street. I wanted to see what kind of girl he'd rather me be."

"Foolish. He'd rather you were eighteen that's all." ^{she's my enemy. Then, when I}

"No. Something more."

"You don't know anything about your own husband, I can't be expected to help you."

"You didn't know they were seeing each other no more than I did and you saw her every day like I did Joe. I

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know where my mind was. Where was yours?."

"Don't chastize me. I won't let you do that."

"City tightens you up, but then I got to feeling loose."

"If you had found out about them before he killed her, would you have?"

"I wonder."

"I don't understand women like you. Women with knives."

"I wasn't born with a knife."

"No, but you picked one up."

"You never did?"

"No I never did. Even when my husband was killed I never did that. And you. You didn't even have a worthy enemy. Somebody worth killing. You picked up a knife to insult a dead girl."

"But that's better ain't it? The harm was already done."

"She wasn't the enemy."

"Oh yes she is. She's my enemy. Then, when I didn't know it and now too."

"Why? Because she was young and pretty and took your husband away from you?"

"You said it. Wouldn't you? You wouldn't fight for your man?"