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Citation Information

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

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1 folder (partial)

Contact Information

Download Information

Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 12:54:03 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/kw52jd655>

*for Joe's
hunt in Chap 7*

Violet walked into their little house, the heat of the day still stunning. She was wearing coveralls and a sleeveless faded shirt and slowly removed them along with the cloth from her head. On a table near the cook stove stood an enamel basin--speckled blue and white and chipped all round its rim. Under a square of toweling, placed there to keep it insect free, the basin was full of still water. Palms up, fingers leading, Violet slid her hands into the water and rinsed her face. Several times she scooped and splashed until, perspiration and water mixed, her cheeks and forehead cooled. Then dipping the toweling into the water, carefully, slowly, she bathed. From the windowsill she took a white shift, laundered that very morning, and ~~dry now, and~~ dropped it ~~down~~ over her head and shoulders. Then she sat on the bed to unwind her hair. Most of the knots fixed that morning had loosened under her head cloth and were now cupfuls of soft wool her fingers thrilled to. Sitting there, her hands deep in the forbidden pleasure of her hair, she noticed she had not removed her heavy work shoes. Putting the toe of her left foot to the heel of the right she pushed the shoe off. The effort seemed extra and the mild surprise at how very tired she felt was interrupted by a soft wide hat, as big and dim as the room she sat in, descending on her. Violet did not feel her shoulder touch the mattress. Way before that she had entered a safe sleep. Deep, trustworthy, feathered

where-

*In 1898(?)
Shortly after they were
married,*

*(?) I know something now I
didn't before*

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with colorful dreams. The heat was relentless, insinuating. Like the voices of the women in houses nearby singing "Go down, go down, way down in Egypt land..." Answering each other from yard to yard, with a verse or its variation.

When Joe got there and stood in the door he saw Violet's dark girl-body limp on the bed. She looked frail to him, and penetrable everywhere, except ^{at} one foot where her man's workshoe remained. Smiling, he took off his straw hat and sat down at the ^{bottom} ~~foot~~ of the bed. One of her hands held her face; the other rested on her thigh. He looked at the nails hard as her palm skin, and noticed for the first time how shapely her hands were. The arm that curved out of the shift's white sleeve was muscled by field labor but thin and smooth as a child's. He undid the laces of her shoe and eased it off. It must have helped something in her dream for she laughed then, a light happy laugh that seemed to belong to someone else.

I have lived too long in my mind. People say I should get out more. I agree that I am closed off in places nobody else sees, but if you have been left standing, as I have, while your partner over stays at another appointment, or promises to give you all his attention after supper, but is falling asleep just as you have begun to speak...well it can make you [tk]

He looked for the tree--the one whose roots grew backwards as though, having gone obediently into earth and found it barren,

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retreated to the trunk for what was needed. Defiant and against logic, they climbed. Toward leaves, light, wind.

*Tr. Below a river which
called Treason here*

Beyond the hibiscus a boulder. Behind it an opening so badly disguised it could be only the work of a human (No fox or foaling doe would be so sloppy.) Had she been hiding there? Was she that small?

He squatted to look closer for signs of her, recognizing none. Finally he stuck his head in. Pitch dark. No odor of dung or fur. It had, instead, a domestic smell--oil, ashes--that led him on. Crawling, squinting through a space low enough to graze his hair. Just as he decided to back out of there, the dirt under his hands became stone and light hit him so hard he flinched. He had come through a few body-lengths of darkness and was looking out the south side of the rock face. A natural burrow. Going nowhere. Angling through one curve of the slope to another. Treason River glistening below. Unable to turn around inside, he squirmed all the way out to re-enter head first. Immediately he was in open air, the domestic smell intensified. Cooking oil reeked under powerful sunlight. Then he saw the crevice. He went into it on his behind until a floor stopped his slide. It was like falling into the sun. Noon light followed him like lava into a stone room where somebody cooked in oil.

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The color of the stone walls had changed from gold to fish gill blue by the time he left.

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A river white people called Treason where fish raced to the line, and swimming among them could be riotous or serene. But to get there you risked treachery by the very ground you walked on. The slopes and low hills that fell gently toward the river only appeared welcoming; underneath vines, carpet grass, wild grape, hibiscus and [tk] the ground was as porous as a seive. A step could swallow your foot or your whole self.

N.B. Joe's hunt thru the City streets for Dorcus is interrupted by his recollections of these women-inhabited rooms: Violet sleeping with one shoe on; Wild's chamber of gold; Malvonne's leased room...

Inside Wild's chamber of gold

1. the green dress
2. the yellow silk shirt
3. the rocking chair without arms
4. a circle of stones for cooking; jars/basket/pot arrangement; a doll, spindle, photograph, e arrings, stack of sticks, set of silver brushes and a silver cigar case; man's trousers and vest with buttons of bone.

Not peace-- a kind of waiting, watchfulness. A before-supper feeling, as though somebody was waiting to be fed.