



## "Cut it out, Gigi!"

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Morrison, Toni. 1931-

"Cut it out, Gigi!"

1 folder (partial)

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Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 01:03:12 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/1544bt67j>

sham "Cut it out, Gigi!" Mavis spoke from behind closed teeth.

"I haven't!" Gigi leaned over the table toward Seneca. "We don't have much, but soap we do have."

"I said I'd wash them, didn't I? Is it okay to open the bottle, Mavis?"

"Not just okay; it's an order. We got to celebrate Pallas, don't we?"

"And her voice."

"And her appetite. Look at her."

<sup>Carlos had</sup> ~~Love~~ once killed Pallas' appetite. For the eight months <sup>he</sup> ~~Carlos~~ loved (or seemed to) <sup>other than that first chili dog</sup> her, food was a nuisance, an excuse to drink Cokes or a reason to go out. The pounds she had struggled with since elementary school melted away. Carlos never commented on her weight, but the fact that from the first, when she was a butterball, he liked her anyway, chose her, made love to her, ~~had~~ sealed her confidence in him. <sup>his</sup> ~~So~~ his behavior when she was thin intensified <sup>(over)</sup> the sense of betrayal that would never go away. The <sup>nightmare event,</sup> ~~awful thing that~~ forced her to hide in a lake had displaced for a while <sup>the betrayal that</sup> ~~what~~ had driven her there. She had not been able even to whisper it in the darkness of a candlelit room. Her voice had returned but the words to say her

at her  
So his betrayal when she was thickest  
pitched frozen  
intensified her shame into over the rain  
into



~~cauterized~~ <sup>stuck like polyps in?</sup>  
~~her throat~~  
shame ~~would~~ never come.

The melted cheese covering the crepe-tortilla was <sup>thing tangy</sup> smooth; the pieces of chicken had real flavor, like meat; the pale, almost white butter dripping from early corn was nothing like what she was accustomed to; it had a creamy, sweetish taste. There was a warm sugary sauce poured over the bread pudding. And glass after glass of wine. The fear, the fight, the tears, the bickering—<sup>the nausea awful dirt in darkness (cover) dissipated in the pleasure of chewing good food.</sup> all disappeared.

Gigi found her station and danced the radio over to the open back door for better reception. <sup>then</sup> Then she danced back to the table and poured herself more wine. <sup>(cover)</sup> Soon they all were. Even Mavis. First apart, imagining partners. Then partnered, imagining each other.

They slept deep as death that night. Gigi and Seneca in one bedroom. Mavis alone in another. So it was Pallas, asleep on the sofa in the office/study, who heard the knocking.

The girl was wearing white silk shoes and a cotton sundress. She carried a piece of wedding cake on a brand new china plate. And her smile was <sup>regalo</sup> dazzling.

"I'm married now," she said. "Where is she? Or was it a he?"

Later that night, Mavis said, "We should have given her one of those dolls. Something."

[All of the day's <sup>Strange</sup> unruly drama

Eyes closed,

^ Hips grinding, she circled her arms  
to enclose the neck of a <sup>magic</sup> dancer.

It was not long <sup>before</sup> they all followed suit.



"She's crazy," said Gigi. "I know everything about her. K.D. told me everything about her and she's the whole nuthouse. Boy is he in trouble." *Seneca. Please.*

*on her wedding night*  
"Why'd she come here?" *asked Pallas.*

"Long story." Mavis rubbed the bloody scratches on her arm.

"Came here years back. Connie delivered her baby for her. She didn't want it, though." *know what to call a psycho who's got nothing better to do than sit on her wedding night but hunt down a dead baby?*

"So where is it?"

"With Merle and Pearl I think."

"Who?" *My ass. She just wants to hang on to that asshole she married.*

"It died." *Gigi cut her eyes at Mavis*

"Don't she know that?" *asked Seneca. "She said you all killed it."*

"I told you she's the whole house of nuts."

*Mavis said*  
"She left. I don't know what she knows. She wouldn't even look at it." *What for? I don't want that girl anywhere near Connie.*

*→*  
"Maybe it wasn't his. K.D.'s. *said Gigi* Maybe she was stepping out on him." *What do you want, a rabies shot? Come on. Hey, Pallas.*

"So? So what if it wasn't his? It was hers," *said Seneca*

"I don't understand," *Pallas moved toward the stove where the left over bread pudding sat.*

"I do. In a way." Mavis sighed. "I'll make us some coffee."

They paused then, seeing it; they turned away  
face, hands covering ears so not to hear the  
cry. There would be no nipple, then.

Nothing to put in that little mouth. No  
mother shoulder to snuggle against.

None of them wanted to remember or  
know what had taken place after,



"Not for me. I'm going back to bed." *Gigi yawned.*

"She was really mad. You think she'll get back all right?"

"St. Seneca. Please."

"She was screaming," *Seneca said*

"So were we." *Mavis measured coffee into the pot.*

"Yeah but we didn't call her names."

"How do you know what to call a psycho who's got nothing better to do on her wedding night but hunt down a dead baby?"

*Call her*  
"Sorry?"

*answered Gigi*  
"Sorry my ass, She just wants to hang on to that asshole she married."

"Didn't you say you were going to bed?"

"I am. Come on seneca."

*Seneca ignored Gigi*  
"Should we tell Connie?"

*snapped Mavis*  
"What for? I don't want that girl anywhere near Connie."

*Pallas sounded surprised*  
"She bit me. Look. Teeth marks."

*Sen.*  
"What do you want, a rabies shot? Come on. Hey, Pallas. Lighten up."

Pallas stared. "I don't want to sleep down here by myself."

*had to*  
"Who said you ~~did~~? That was your idea."



“They’re no more beds up <sup>stairs</sup> there.”

→ “I told you. The others are stored in the cellar. I’ll put one up tomorrow. You can sleep with me tonight,” said Mavis. “Don’t worry.

She won’t be back.” She locked the back door <sup>then went to watch the coffee</sup> and ~~picked up the lamp.~~ <sup>percolate.</sup>

“By the way what’s your name? Last name I mean.”

“Truelove.”

“No kidding. And your mother named you Pallas?”

“No. My father.”

“What’s her name?” <sup>your mother.”</sup>

“Divine.”

“Oooo. I love it. <sup>Gigi!</sup> You hear that? Her name’s Divine

Truelove.”

<sup>Gigi stuck her head back in the door. Seneca too.</sup>  
“It is not! That’s my mother’s name.”

“She a stripper?” <sup>Gigi was grinning,</sup>

“An artist.”

“They all are, honey.”

“Don’t tease her. <sup>said Seneca</sup> She’s had a long day.”

“Okay, okay, okay. Goodnight...Divine.” <sup>Gigi swung through the door, then Seneca smiled, whispering quickly as she left,</sup>

“Don’t pay her any attention. <sup>^</sup> She has a small mind.”

→ “Is every day like this here?” <sup>Pallas asked her,</sup>

"Oh, Christ." Gigi started toward the  
hall way, ~~Seneca following~~ <sup>got up to follow her</sup>. "What a baby."

Mavis poured coffee into ~~two cups~~ and cut  
two pieces of bread pudding. She served Pallas  
and sat next to her, blowing into the <sup>coffee</sup> steam.  
She was smirking.

PALLAS picked at the pudding with her fingers.  
Show me the tooth marks, said Mavis. The collar of  
Pallas turned her head, <sup>and pulled at her T-shirt to</sup> expose her shoulder.

Umm," said Mavis, touching the dents.



<sup>Frowning</sup>  
"Mavis stroked the wounded skin."  
"No, no. This is the most peaceful place on earth."

"You'll take me to call my father tomorrow?"

"Of course. First thing." <sup>When</sup> They were in front of Mavis' <sup>bedroom</sup> door, ~~But~~  
<sup>her face radiant in the lamplight</sup>  
she didn't open it. Instead she stood stock still. "Hear that? They're  
happy," she said. "I knew it. They love that baby. Absolutely love it."  
She turned to Pallas. "They like you too. They think you're divine."

\* <sup>nighttime</sup> They finished the snack in silence.

Mavis picked up the lamp and  
they left the kitchen in darkness.