



"The Bluest Eye: On the southeast corner..."

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The Blue City

On the southeast corner of Broadway and 31st Street ^{there} is ~~the~~ a pizza parlor where slow-footed teenagers group to smoke cigarettes.

A particularly abandoned store stands

On the ^{southeast} corner of Broadway and 31st Street ~~there stands an abandoned store which~~ ^{stands} ~~is particularly~~ ^{It does not}

recede into its background of other ~~empty~~ ^{empty} stores, but rather faunts itself on the eye in a manner that is both ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ irritating and melancholy.

Visitors driving along Broadway wonder why it ~~isn't~~ has not been torn down while pedestrians in the neighborhood

simply look away when they pass it.

Those who have lived ^{in that part of town for} ~~there~~ ^{many} years remember when it was a Hungarian Bakery well known for Brickle and poppy seed bread.

~~At one time~~ ^{So} fluid and transient ^{has} the population ^{in that area been} ~~these days~~ that few persons can recall the time before that when it

was a pizza parlor where slow-footed teenagers grouped ^{while they} ~~to~~ smoked cigarettes,

feel their grains and played wild out-
rages. Probably no one ^(in the entire town, I should say) ~~remembers,~~

even longer longer ago when ~~this street~~ ^{was} where Eunice Winder lived there.

The Winder family didn't live in a store front because the war was just over and ^{temporary} ~~causing~~ difficulty ^{adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant,} They lived there because they were poor ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~mean.~~ ^{mean.} But, ~~though~~ ^{although} they were poor, ~~the~~ ^{one felt}

first three, ^{of those} ~~one~~ ^{adjectives} ~~feet~~, because they were so
very much the last. Their poverty was
~~stultifying, their meanness, and slowness~~
~~legend, but their ugliness was real~~

Stultifying, ^{and conceivable} as their poverty was it was
not unique; But though their meanness
and slowness were legends, there were
periods ^{of abatement in} ~~to~~ one or the other. But they
were relentlessly ~~stultifying~~ ^{ugly}.

~~Except for the father, Cholly, the mother, Mrs. Maudie,~~
~~the two children, Sammy and Curly,~~ ^{all were ugly in the same way}
But, Mark you, deformed which could
have been pitiable or plain which would
have been ^{ignominiously not} ~~for appearance~~. ~~But it was the an~~
~~ugliness which would not~~ ^{made to} ~~apologize~~ for itself.

The eyes, the small eyes set far too
close together under a ~~low~~ narrow
forehead. The ^{low} ragged hairlines made
even more ragged by ^{the constant} straight heavy
eyebrows which almost met over the
bridge of the nose. Keen, bent crooked

noses with insolent nostrils, ^{high} ~~But~~ ^{cheekbones -}
~~eyes turned forward.~~ ^{I order that this ugliness not be complete & therefore pitiable,}
~~They had pretty mouths,~~
~~Perhaps~~ That was the final insult
which sealed the otherwise open mind.

The ~~for~~ shapely lips and fierce even
teeth calling attention, not to themselves,
but to the rest of the face. The
aesthetes who say that beauty is
the juxtaposition of the perfect with the
imperfect, the ^{subtle distortions of the ideal} ~~stems~~ of perfection
have never seen Sammy Minder. Still
~~and all~~ True ugliness, that is, ugliness
in a vacuum - pure and undistorted - is ^{far} ~~more~~ ^{palpable}
than true beauty.

* Where ugliness stemmed was the product of a
the fire blood of ignorance, breeding a vicious, discrimination;
and violence directed toward the pretty.

Then, ^{on a} Saturday morning ⁱⁿ of October of 1947
this Weirder family ^{by me} began to stir out of ~~out~~ their
~~ever~~ dream of affluence and vengeance into
the oppressive misery of their store front.

The plan of the living quarters was as
unimagination as ^{the} first generation Brecken
landlord could contrive ^{it to be}. The large
store area was separated by heavy board
into two rooms - a ^{living room} ~~part~~ commonly called
the "front ~~room~~" - which looked out onto the
street and the "bedroom" where all the "living"
was done. In the front room were two
sifos, discards, an upright piano and a tiny
~~an~~ artificial Christmas tree which had
been there, completely decorated ^{and dust-laden} for two years.
The bedroom had 3 beds - ^{12'} ~~12'~~ cots ^{each}
~~the~~ for Eunice ^{11'} and Sammy ^{14'} and a
double bed for Cholly and Mrs. Weirder.
in the off center stood a coal stove.
Trunks, chairs, ^a small end table and a
card board closet stood around the
walls. The kitchen ~~end~~ was to the back of this
room. There were no bath facilities. only
a toilet ^{booth} which was curtained off from
the kitchen.

Mrs. Weirder ^{stepped noisily out of bed,}
~~got up~~ ~~and~~ put a sweater
on over her nightgown and began to make
loud hollow noises in the kitchen, noises
designed to wake every body up.
Eunice opened her eyes ^{and lay staring at the}
~~coal stove.~~ ^{free} up to her stomach. Cholly mumbled
and thrashed about for a minute and then
was quiet. Sammy ~~id~~ snored.

Even from where Eunice lay, she could

smell Chally's whiskey. The noise in the Kitchen became louder and there seemed to be a direction and purpose to Mrs. W's movements which had nothing to do with the making of breakfast. The ~~awareness~~ ^{consciousness} of this along with the accumulated knowledge of the past, made Eunice tighten her stomach muscles and ~~in a~~ ^{she} ~~in~~ ^{breathed in} ~~shot~~ ^{shortly} let her breath come and go ~~in~~ ^{as though} in anticipation of another fight. Chally had come in late and drunk. Too drunk to quarrel. So the whole business ~~waved~~ ^{was} ~~leaves~~ ^{meant} to erupt this morning.

Mrs. Under came swiftly into the room + stood at the foot of the bed where Chally lay.

"I need ^{some} coal in this house" ~~She shouted~~
Chally did not move.

"Hear me?" She jabbed his foot.

Chally opened his eyes slowly. They were red and ~~merging~~ ^{staring}. ~~And~~ ^{For} ~~with~~ ^{the} exception of "Grey-Eye" who had killed 13 men and had ~~only~~ ^{only} spent 14 days in jail, Chally had the meanest eyes in town.

"Answer woman" he said as though already at the height of fury.

"I said I need some coal" ^{It's as cold as a witch's tongue} ^{her voice} ^{peaked at} ^{the} ^{brake} ^{stopped} ^{the} ^{car} ^{like} ^a ^{whip} ^{for} ^{ward}.

"Leave me alone"

"What you mean, leave you alone? You think I'm going to wade out in the cold and get it my self?"

"I don't care how you get it."

"You going to get your drunk self out of that bed + get me some coal or not?"

The movement in anticipation of a fight as the door was closed.

in anticipation of a fight as the door was closed.

high

Silence
"Cholly" she shouted "Don't ^{you} try me this
~~evening~~ I'm ~~ten~~ ~~enough~~ for you.

"Woman, if you say one more word to
me I'll split you open"

"Alright, All right. But if I ~~sneeze~~ ~~once~~
~~just once~~, God help your butt!"

Sammy was awake now but pretended to be
asleep still. Currier ~~that~~ held her stomach in.
But Everybody knew that Mrs. W. could have
would ^{have} and had gotten coal from the shed for
the fire - or ^{that} either Sammy or Currier
could be directed to get it. But

everybody also knew that this was simply
today's ~~in~~ the means. She ~~had selected~~
this particular morning to ^{set the angry} ~~start the~~ ^{unpleasant evening}

straight by a
stimulating manner

inevitable brawl with her husband.

* ~~She looked forward to the fight~~

Cholly by his habitual drunkenness
one ~~sheer~~ ^{means by which both their} ^{lives were destroyed}
~~ample entertainment~~. If he came
home drunk and hellish they fought
immediately, ~~until~~ ~~or~~ ~~last~~ ~~as~~ 2/3

on the previous night, he was too drunk
to beat her, she provoked him into it
the next morning or whenever she could
wake him up to it. She considered
herself an upright and religious
woman burdened with a no-count
man, ~~She was a~~ ~~God would~~ whom
God wanted her to punish. Quite

often she could be heard discoursing with
God about Cholly, pleading with Him

* The tiny little deep she lived were measured and
identified ~~not~~ ^{by} these quarrels. They gave
substance to drive him to the brain, & then
the tremendous of power, they gave strength
to the ~~man~~ ^{puller} ^{woman}, & then she ~~lost~~
could display styles & imagination. To begin to
if then was to change the ~~of~~ ^{meaning} ^{of} ^{fighting}

to help her "strike him down" and once ~~when~~^{when} a drunken gesture catapulted ~~Cholly~~^{Cholly} husband into the red hot stove, she screamed with glee "Hit him hard. Hit him!"

If Cholly had suddenly stopped drinking, she would have been ^{mortally} hurt. She used his sins desperately to justify her own.

The lower he sank, the wider and more irresponsible he became, the more splendid she was in her own eyes.

No less did Cholly need her. She was one of the ~~something~~^{few things} abhorrent to him which he could touch and therefore hurt. He ~~was~~ poured out on her ^{the sum of} his inarticulate fury and aborted desires.

They fought each other with a kind of darkly brutal formalism ~~and ritual~~ that was paralleled only in their sexual excursions. Tacitly they had agreed not to kill each other.

So their struggles were like ritualized. He fought her the way a ~~coward~~^{coward} ~~fight to a man~~^{fight to a man} ~~fight a woman~~ - with his fists and feet. While she, in turn, fought back in a purely feminine way - with frying pans, poker and, occasionally, the flat-iron would sail toward his head. They did not talk or even

groan during these beatings. There was only the ^{muted} ~~sound of~~ ~~flesh on things~~ ~~falling things~~ ~~and flesh on~~ ^{unrestrained} ~~striking~~ flesh.

There was a desperation in the reaction of the children toward these battles. Sammy cowered for a while then left the house. He was known to have run

away from home
no less than 27 times - Once Legat
as far as Buffalo ^{and stayed} for 3 months.

Eunice, on the other hand, ~~was deeply~~ ^{rested by youth & experience} ~~was~~ ^{had} to endure them in
deep pain. ~~She~~ ^{She} struggled between
an overwhelming desire that one would
kill the other and a profound
wish that they would both kill her.
She herself could die.

By the grace of God, no doubt, Mrs. W.,
still knocking about in the kitchen, ~~not~~ sneezed-
just once. She ran into the room with
dishpan full of cold water and threw it
in Chally's face. He, ^{saw it} choked & spitting, ~~and~~
then leaped from the bed, ^{naked and ashen},
& tackled with a flying tackle grabbed
his wife around the waist and knocked her
down. She fell in a sitting position, her
back supported by Sammy's bed and began
hitting Chally on the head and shoulders
with the dishpan. He gave her a short
right to the ~~right~~ of her abdomen and she
dropped the pan. Several times he struck
her in the face and she might have succumbed
early except in ^{falling} ~~the~~ of the blows he struck
her head against the ~~metal~~ edge of the bed.
Swiftly, his wife took advantage of this
split second lull and slipped out of his
reach. Sammy ^{near where head} started hitting ^{they were struggling} his father
on the head with his fists & shouting "You
waked bastard" over & over again. Mrs. W.

having snatched the round flat shoe ~~Chally~~ and
~~been~~ ^{ran} on tip toe ^{up to Chally and} struck Chally two

* Chally reached up
and grabbed Sammy's
feet holding him
at bay

blows. one caught him on the shoulder
and the other squarely on top of ^{his} head knocking
him tight back into the senseless ^{spot} of
which she had thrust him. Panting, she
threw a blanket over him and let him lie.

Sammy ~~let out~~ a string of disconnected
curses while ~~and~~ began to dress ^{hurriedly}.
"Cut out that noise, boy" Mr. W. said.
"Get some coal!"

~~Sammy~~ Letting herself breathe easy now,
Eunice covered her head ^{under} the quilt.
The sick feeling, which she ^{had} tried to prevent by
reading in her stomach, came quickly in
spite of her precautions. There surged
in her ^{as always} desire to leave, but she
knew she would not.

"Please God" she whispered, ~~why~~ ^{make me}
disappear. Make me disappear."

She wanted so much to be ^{gone} ~~away from them~~.
She had longed, even planned, to
run away as Sammy had done
so often, ~~but she knew she~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} as long as she was ugly, ~~not~~
As long as she looked the way she did
~~she knew~~ ^{she knew} ~~she would~~ ^{she would} have to stay with these
people, ~~with the ugly~~ ^{with the ugly} ~~Somehow~~
She belonged to them. ^{Not because they were her family, these common} ^{was what she} ^{found herself}
She had no sense of family, ~~and~~ ^{but} because they looked the way she did.
Long hours she spent in the mirror,
trying to discover the secret of the
ugliness. The secret that made her
~~signed~~ ^{at school} ^{at school} and by her
teachers and class mates. ~~alone~~ ^{alone}. She
was the only member class, who sat alone at a

* ~~Sammy~~ ^{Sammy} for any ~~body~~ ^{body} shot, she
let ~~the~~ ^{the} parts of her body ~~showing~~ ^{showing}
feeling away - now slowly - now with a quick - slowly
a year. And then only after trying it, to get it to appear more like it.

But ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~always~~ ^{always}, when
she ~~opened~~ ^{opened} them -
she ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~still~~ ^{still},
very much ~~there~~ ^{there}.

double desk. Her teacher ~~had~~ seemed
to try never to glance at her. And called
on her only when the ~~whole class~~ ^{each student had to}
~~being called on~~ ^{respond}. She was aware of the
fact that when one of the ~~the~~ ^{white} ~~classmates~~ ^{girls}
School wanted to be particularly insulting
to a boy, she would say "Bobby
loves Fannie Miller". This never
failed to elicit peals of laughter ^{from those in front} and
mock anger on the boy's part.

It ~~had~~ ^{sometimes} occurred to her that, all things
being considered, ~~if~~ if her eyes
were different - beautiful that is, she
would be different. Her ~~mouth~~ teeth
were good; at least her nose wasn't
big and flat like some of the ~~other~~
girls who were thought so cute. ~~He~~ ^{Almost}
~~she~~ ^{she} ~~dearly~~ ^{dearly} wished for other eyes,
any other eyes would do, but her deep yearning was for
large blue eyes with long lashes, white
eyes, blue-sky eyes, blue-like-Mrs. Forest's
blue-sweater-eyes - morning-glow-blue eyes.
Each night, she prayed for these eyes
and fervently, ^{to contemplate the shade of blue} ~~but~~ ^{was to luxuriate} ~~but~~ ^{Even though}
the ~~shade of blue~~ ^{shade of blue} they would ~~be~~ ^{be}. She
had prayed for more than a year, but and ~~was~~
though ~~somewhat~~ discouraged, she had not given
up hope altogether. ^{to have} ~~for~~ ^{something} as
wonderful as that, would take a long
long time.

~~Fannie's desire to leave had~~
~~recently become~~

At night then, without fail, ^a the prayer for
blue eyes. In the morning, often, one to disappear.