



"She came in there and solved all their problems..."

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advertisement. 1 Old Post Road. No house on the street had a single digit number. Finally, her knees and thighs stinging from the cold that her mini skirt exposed them to, she turned into a driveway where an elderly man ripped the seam from a sack of ice-off.

"You sure?" he asked when she told him the address.

She glanced at the square of paper and nodded.

He scanned her legs then looked carefully at her face. "That's the house, place. It's

isn't been number one for a long time now. But you can't tell them that, can't tell them nothing.

2. "1410 or 1401, probably."

Now it was her turn to question his certainty.

She came in there and solved all their problems: mice, embarrassing dreams, blocked drains, outrageous ancestry and the simplest and cheapest way to clean diamonds. She was never able, however, to crack the silence and the two women who had not spoken more than the purely perfunctory and absolutely necessary in twenty years continued their mute argument as though the function of their lungs depended on it.

The day she came was novel for that part of the state--cold and scratchy. Chafing winds

depressed the temperature and the sun was helpless to move thermostats more than a few degrees above freezing. The houses on Post Road were recently built so, pretty as they were, trees and shrubbery, young and unaccustomed to such winds, could protect no one from its icy lick.

Dogwood and palmetto arched to breaking as she marched along sidewalks still rough from the trowel. She should have bent her head and closed her eyes to slits in that weather, but being a stranger, she stared wide-eyed at each house searching for the address that matched the one in the

* Patches of ice gleamed there, disappeared in the early evening shadow causing the sidewalks she marched along to undermine even the most agile tread.

advertisement. 1 Old Post Road. No house on the street had a single digit number. Finally, her knees and thighs stinging from the cold that her mini skirt exposed them to, she turned into a driveway where an elderly man ripped the seam from a sack of Ice-off.

"You sure?" he asked when she told him the address.

She glanced at the square of paper and nodded.

He scanned her legs then looked carefully at her face. ^{he said} "That's the Cossey place. But it ain't been number one for a long time now. But you can't tell them that, can't tell them nothing. It's 1410 or 1401, probably."

Now it was her turn to question his certainty.

"Trust me," he said. "Go on up that a way. You won't miss it. Big as a church."

She thanked him but did not turn around when he hollered at her back, "Or a jail house."

She did not miss it and he was not wrong. The white house was gracefully imposing, and its peaked third story roof did suggest a chapel. On either side of the walkway old trees ^{met} confronted the blasting wind with the ^{careless} ~~careless~~ dignity that came with a century of triumph.

^{hesitated} Seeing no bell, she started to knock, ^{but paused when she} then noticed a brightly lit window below, to the right of the porch. It had the look of what was called by some a garden apartment—by others a basement one. She went back down the wooden steps, followed a ^{the curve marked by that} narrow path and descended a flight of iron stairs ^{which led toward} leading past the window to the door. Pausing at the ^{lit window} pane she saw a ^{piece of} ~~dark~~ ^{skate} woman seated at the ^{On the table} table. Before her were a colander, newspaper and a mixing bowl. The girl tapped on the ^{pane} window and smiled when the woman looked up. [tk dis.] (over)

"What is it?" The door opened just wide enough to expose one ^{gray} ~~brown~~ eye.

"I came about the job," said the girl. A marine odor ^{hovered in} ~~eased through~~ the crack.

She stood ~~slowly~~ slowly, but, once on her feet,
moved rapidly to the door.

Miss [unclear] of the [unclear] of her [unclear] [unclear]

He scanned her legs then looked carefully at her face. "That's the [unclear] place [unclear]"

"I've been number one for a long time now. But you can't tell them that can't tell them nothing."

"It's 1410 or 1401, probably."

"Now it was her turn to question his certainty."

"I'm sure, he said. 'Go on up that way. You won't miss it. Big as a church.'"

"She thanked him but did not turn around when he hollered at her back, 'Or a jail house.'"

"She did not miss it and he was not wrong. The white house was gracefully imposing, and

its peaked third story roof did suggest a chapel. On either side of the walkway old trees

confronted the blasting wind with the careless dignity that came with a century of triumph.

Seeing no hall, she started to knock, but a brightly lit window below, to the

right of the porch, it had the look of what was called by a garden apartment by others a

private one. She went down the wooden steps, followed a narrow path and descended a

flight of stairs. In the morning at breakfast she saw a woman

peering at the table. Before her were a colander, newspaper and a mixing bowl. The girl

tapped on the window and smiled when the woman looked up. [unclear] (over)

"What is it?" The door opened just wide enough to expose one eye.

"I came about the job," said the girl. A marble door swung between the crack.

pieces
the curve of a slate
~~pieces~~ marked by

"Then you're lost," said the woman and slammed the door.

The girl banged on it, shouting, "But it says 1 Post Road!. 1 Post Road!"

There was no answer so she went back to the window and pecked the glass with the nails of her left hand while her right pressed the tiny square of newsprint toward the light..

The woman came ^{back} to the window, her eyes flat with annoyance as she stared at the girl's ~~face~~ ^{then}. Slowly she moved her eyes from the young face and its pleading smile to the piece of paper. She squinted at it, looked again at the face then back at the paper, but not before something like panic glinted then died in her eyes. Motioning toward the door she disappeared from the window.

When the girl was inside, the woman offered neither seat nor greeting. She took the advertisement and read. A pencilled circle separated the few lines of one help wanted notice from others above and below.

Companion, secretary sought by elderly woman. Light but highly confidential work.

Apply to Mrs. H. Cosey. 1 Post Road

^{ere} "When did you ^{get} see this?" The woman's voice was calm as a secretary's.

"Yesterday."

"From the newspaper."

"In the Harbor Journal?"

"Yes, Mam."

"When?"

She handed back the advertisement. "Well. I guess you better sit down."

"Are you Mrs. H. Cosey?"

She gave the girl a look. "If I was I'd know about that little scrap of paper wouldn't I?"

"Oh. Of course. I'm sorry." ^{The girl's} Her laughter was the agitation of bells—welcoming ^a ~~family~~.

disrupt^{ion} "Oh, right. I'm sorry."

They both sat and the woman returned to the work of de-veining shrimp. Twelve rings
snatched light from the ceiling fixture, two on three fingers of each hand, a collection that

and ^{her} seemed to elevate the task from drudgery to surgery. ^{surgery?}

What's your name?

Toby, ~~Mam~~.

Toby what?

"Skye. Toby Skye." With an "e."

"You from around here?"

"Used to be. I've been away."

"Who're your people? I never heard of any family name of Skye."

"They're not from here."

"Where, then?"

* "Can I help you with that? I'm a pretty fair cook."

"No. Needs a certain rhythm."

"Is Mrs. Cosey here?"

"Where else?"

"May I speak to her?"

"Let me see that thing again." She wiped her hands on a dishtowel and reached across

the table. "Highly confidential, huh?" Silent laughter roiled in her chest and curled her lips. "I

believe that. I sure do." She dropped the paper with thumb and forefinger as though she were

depositing a used diaper into a soak pail. She wiped her hands again and picked up a shrimp.

There, just there, beneath the pale gray flesh she held in her fingers crept a tender black line.

(over) 2
* The girl shrugged as tho' the question was
trivial and then reached across the table (stet)
stet moved her hands toward the
Colander.

① A bouquet of steam ^{wandered away} ~~lifted~~ from

~~Water rising~~ to a boil, ~~whispered~~

~~Behind the woman~~ ^{was} on the stone @
~~steam~~ A wall of

~~white surfaces of~~ ~~white~~ cabinets

their surfaces ^{as} pale
^{stretching} ~~framed~~ ^{and habited} as pastry,

The silence ^{settling} between ~~woman & girl~~ the two of them

~~with~~ began to pulse. The girl
fidgeted.

② The ^{the} leather jacket leather ~~purred~~ ^{purred} as

the girl shrugged ^{her shoulders} @

and reached across
the table ~~to~~ to the
Colander

Deft as a jeweler she removed it.

"Can I see Mrs. Cosey now?"

I guess.

"Sure. Sure. Up those stairs, then some more stairs. Bedroom at the end of the hall."

Toby stood up and turned toward a flight of stairs in an alcove near the stove. →

"Miss Skye? Miss Toby ~~lying~~ Skye? You not interested in my name?"

Toby turned back, her ~~face~~ a study in embarrassment and muddle. "Oh, yes, mam. I am.

I'm just so nervous."

"Christina. If you get the job you'll need to know it."

"I hope so. Nice meeting you, Christina. Really. Second floor you said?"

Her boots were loud on the stairs and Christina grimaced. Gathering the shrimp shells she plopped them into a pot of ~~heating~~ ^{the boiling} water and adjusted the flame. Returning to the table she picked up a garlic paw and, enjoying as ~~usual~~ ^{always} the dazzle of her hands, peeled away the tissue from two of the cloves. These she diced and left on the cutting board. The old Philco refrigerator hummed and ~~shook~~ ^{trembled} a little. Christina gave it an encouraging pat on her way to a wall of cupboards. She bent to a bottom cabinet thinking, what's she up to now? Must be scared or fixing to make a move. What, though? And how did she manage to get a notice in the paper without ~~stepping out the door?~~ ^{ME KNOWING} Christina glanced at the rice steamer. ~~its~~ ^{ON the} warming light was on. She took out a silver tureen with a fitted glass bowl, sighing at the stubborn tarnish in the crevices of the C on its cover. Like ~~every~~ ^{ALL the} carved letter in the house the C went beyond ornate to illegible. Except for the one on the spoon in her apron pocket, ~~its handle so worn down the initials~~ ^{of} ~~was~~ ^{Even the} ~~trace.~~ ^{double} It was tiny, a child's first spoon, but Christina ate every meal with it to hold the child it was given to close, ~~to~~ ^{summoned} hold also the pictures it brought to mind. How she had scooped peach

~~where the initials~~ hooked together for life,
~~impenetrably~~

~~kept her eyes on the~~

~~And while~~

Toby

(Toby's?)

~~she~~ ^{ed to} listening ~~the girl's~~ leather creak ~~of the girl's~~
jacket as ~~she stood~~ ^{rose from} the chair.
the girl (Toby) stood.

grabbing hooking

together

hooked in an impenetrable

~~hooked in an impenetrable~~

~~hooked in an impenetrable~~

entangled up

helplessly loving its glitter sparkle
slices with it from home made ice cream, admiring its shape, the slide between her lips, never
minding the grains of sand blowing over the dessert—the whole picnic for that matter.

Soaping and rinsing the bowl Christina let her thoughts skitter from beach picnics to
Silver Dip and Q-tips to the interview being held in the bedroom of the meanest woman in the
COAST world. While sitting across from the lying Miss Skye Christina had set her own body of thirty
years ago next to the girl's and won. Toby had okay legs (well, knees and thighs were all she
could see in those tall boots) and the white woman's narrow behind that was all the rage these
days. But nothing to rival her own self in the fifties when the beach was the color of cream
shrimp but glittery and the sucking waves reached out from water so blue you had to turn away
lest it hurt your eyes. Nothing to rival that self, the one that walked inside. It was the face that
hit goncs rang bells of envy. That and the Amazon hair. At first Christina had stared at her, then, a bit
rattled, concentrated on the newspaper clipping. The shrimp work gave her ample reason to
sustain a lowered gaze because she did not like the heart jump that came when she looked in
Toby's lying eyes. Clear, they were, too clear, and full of--what? What was that? Yearning?
Trust? There was something frail under those double lashes. Like the unnerving look of a beautiful, under-
fed child. (over)

Christina stirred the garlic into butter softening in a skillet. After a moment she added the
shrimp then set about making the roux. She drained a little stock to loosen the paste, whisking it
smoothly. to creamy perfection. "I'm a pretty fair cook," is what that Toby had said, all the while reaching
with unwashed hands for the bowl of cleaned shrimp. And "Used to be" from around here she'd
said, while sitting in front of the best known woman in the county, a woman who knew every
black ever born from Niggerhead Rock to Sackers Point, from tk to tk and half of the ones in the
City as well since that was where she had spent (or wasted) twenty years of her life. Skye. Toby

The kind you wanted to stop for
being needy and kind for being perfect.

Skye. She could have gotten that name from True Confessions except she was too young to have even heard of it. So what was the heart skip for? ^{So afraid} ~~She had felt~~ she would blush any moment and sharpened her voice to a razor to ^{cut off the possibility} ~~stop~~ it. What did Heed want her for? How had she got ^{Christina had} ~~to the~~ newspaper without a telephone? Whatever was going on was a trap laid by a high heeled snake. Some new ~~mess~~. Some new way to ~~get rid of her~~. Hurt her. ^{Steal} ~~Take~~ away her future just as she had ^{stolen} ~~taken~~ away her past. ^{an ad in the}

"I'll be damned," she murmured. "I'll be good and damned before I let her win this one."

^{soothed by} ~~Spreading and turning her fingers, loving loving her diamonds,~~ Christina assembled the rice, the shrimp, the sauce, layering each meticulously, artfully in the tureen.. It would remain warm while she tossed a light salad and ~~then~~, ^{ignored} in a little while, arrange it all on a silver tray, take it up three flights of stairs where it would be ~~picked at~~ by the meanest thing on the coast.

Christina spread her fingers for the
Soothing her diamonds ^{lent} ~~provided~~. Then she