



## Chapter 3

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The sad little orange trees were running as fast as they could. No fruit weighed them down <sup>so</sup> ~~or would for months when they would begin to blossom.~~ <sup>traveled light</sup> In October they ~~ran lightly~~ along the edge of the highway, slowing down when Christine lifted her foot from the gas pedal. Then they cut their pace to a stroll. For forty miles west of Silk, land was turned over to fruit trees; forty miles north, to tobacco. A glass of orange juice and a cigarette made <sup>bad neighbors, thought Christine</sup> ~~interesting companions~~—each once canceling out the effects of the other while holding <sup>its ground.</sup> ~~on to its own identity.~~ And forty was also the number of years since she first ran away. ~~The second time (28 years later) she walked.~~ Sort of. The first escape was by bus, the second by car. ~~The first set her bones; the second broke them~~ and each time the orange trees adjusted their pace to hers.

<sup>drove the same road</sup> Now she ~~made the trip again~~ with the same haste, spurred by the same person. Only this time she was not taking flight; she was staking claim. Romen's version of washing the car did not include opening its doors, so the Oldsmobile sparkled on the outside but its interior smelled of



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damp. Christine had fought with a car for less. Tried to kill it (instead of its owner) but mostly the Pine Scent that choked her nostrils and escalated her anger. The owner, Mr. Rio, never saw the damage because his new girl friend had the car towed away before the sight of it could break her lover's heart. So Christine's bat swings against the windshield, the razor cuts through butter soft leather; the ripping out of radio knobs; the ribbons of tape (including and especially Al Greene's tk) she draped over the dash board and steering wheel, he only heard about, Never saw. And that hurt as much as his dismissal. Fighting a Cadillac was never easy but doing it in bright day light with the doors locked and Pine Scent egging on was an accomplishment that deserved serious witnessing by the person for whom it was designed. Mr. Rio was spared, according to Christine's landlady, by his new woman. A mistake Christine thought. Her replacement should have let him see the lesson what scorn could do and solidify her own tenure in his arms.

The road was empty except for a few pick up trucks now and again, encouraging Christine to speed and day dream. Scenes of herself being led away by police; rocking in her own elbows on her landlady's couch;

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Packing her shoes, pride, halter tops and pedal pushers into a shopping bag. <sup>Everything</sup> All but the diamonds and her silver baby spoon. Those she zipped into her purse along with the landlady's loan of fifty dollars. Some exit. The four Samsonite suitcases she had left home with <sup>e</sup> hold all she thought she would need in 1950. In 1975 the Wal-Mart shopping bag contained all she <sup>owned</sup> had. Considering how much practice she had had, her <sup>& nervous</sup> exits had gotten worse and worse. The first <sup>exit</sup> time as a seventeen year old; the second <sup>was sudden</sup> time <sup>she left</sup> better planned but disastrous. The third in 1971 with murder on her mind. Each time leaving <sup>home</sup> Silk was harder, fed more and more by disorder and malice. But leaving Harbor City, Jackson, Tampa, Waycross—or any of the places that once beckoned her got easier. Until the final <sup>return to Silk</sup> exit in shame and on borrowed money.

MTK (over)

Christine braked for a turtle crossing the road, <sup>but</sup> then, swerving right to avoid it, she drove over a second one trailing the first. She stopped and looked in the rear view mirrors—left one, right one and overhead—for a sign of life or death: legs pleading skyward for help, or a cracked immobile shell. MTK

Her hands were shaking. Seeing nothing, <sup>she</sup> Christine left the driver's seat and ran back down the road. The <sup>pavement</sup> concrete was blank, the orange trees at

\* Thrown out of the apartment <sup>for weeks</sup> when she refused to leave quietly. Given no time to get her suede coat, her <sup>leather</sup> pants, suits, <sup>her linen</sup> not even her diaphragm. <sup>St. Laurent</sup> the shoes



Heed's ~~surround~~ her with

look was cold and long. so C just pushed past her into through the door. With few words they came to an agreement.

because <sup>the</sup> place <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ filthy, Heed's arthritis was deforming her hands and nobody in town <sup>could stand</sup> ~~talked~~ either one of them. The one who had attended private school kept house, <sup>while</sup> the one who could barely read kept ruled.

A bad bargain, a hopeless truce.

(For ~~years~~ <sup>hooked</sup> suspicion and hatred ~~hooked~~ <sup>hooked</sup> them tighter than love) ? ~~And~~ The dance

of mutual hatred and suspicion <sup>need being</sup> hooked them together - tighter than love

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rest. No turtle anywhere. Had she dreamed it? The second turtle, the one left behind, the one trying to keep up and failing, Miss Second Best crushed by a tire rushing to save its sister? Scanning the road she did not wonder what the matter was; did not ask herself why her heart was sitting up for a turtle creeping along Route 12. Then she saw a movement on the south side of the road where the first turtle had been heading. Slowly she approached and was relieved to see two shiney green shells edging toward the trees. The car wheels had missed Miss Second Best and while she was shuddering in the car, she had caught up to the leader. Transfixed Christine watched the pair disappear, returning to her car only when another slowed behind it. As she left the verge, the driver smiled, "Ain't you got no toilet at home?"

"Go around, motherfucker!"

He gave her a thick finger and pulled away.

The lawyer might be surprised, Christine had no appointment, but would see her anyway. Each time Christine forced herself into the office, she had been accommodated. She was a Cosey, after all and in Harbor City the name still garnered respect. William Cosey, owner of houses, a



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hotel resort, two boats and gossiped <sup>(over)</sup> about, legendary cash, <sup>had</sup> left no will,

just a doodle on a 1957 menu stating his posthumous desires. Which

turned out to be 1. Julia II to Sandler Gibson. 2. Montenegro Coronas to

Chief Buddy Silk

Boy's

~~tk~~ 3. Hotel to Billy's wife. 4. the Silk house to "my sweet Cosey child." 5.

His '55 convertible to L. 6. His stick pins to ~~tk~~ and on and on. \* Feeling

Meal Daddy

down me night

good, <sup>No doubt</sup> probably, from the Tom Collins, he had sat with some friends and,

<sup>scrawled</sup> squeezed among side orders and specials, appetizers, main courses and

desserts, <sup>listed the</sup> ~~scrawled~~ his distribution of <sup>his</sup> wealth to those he thought he loved. <sup>during</sup> in

the argument following his death fourteen years later, the friends had been

located and verified the event, the hand writing and the clarity of the mind

that had taken no further steps to make his wishes known. Questions rose

like snake heads: Why was he giving Sandler his newest boat? What

Coronas and who was Meal Daddy? The lead singer of tk, said Heed. No,

the manager of the tk, said May, But he's in prison can inmates receive

bequests? they're just cigars, fool so what and why give a convertible to

somebody who can't drive you don't need to drive a car to sell it this ain't a

will it's a comic book! They focused on stick pins and cigars and ~~tk~~ never

the value of old 78's —

asking the central question. Who was "my sweet Cosey child"? Who

\* <sup>5</sup> down to his record collection to Blind Josephus, "the best blues guitar player on God's earth"

always interested people in the Country, one way or  
another, but <sup>he had</sup> excited them to fever when they  
learned he



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indeed? Heed's claim was strong—especially since she called her husband Papa. Yet, since, biologically speaking, Christine was the only "child" left, her claim was equal to Heed's. Or so she and May thought. <sup>but years of</sup> <sup>Absence</sup> from home, no history of working at the hotel, except for a few years as a young girl, worked against her. The court examined the greasy menu, lingering perhaps over the pineapple flavored slaw and Fat's Mean Chili, listened to three lawyers and tentatively (until further evidence could be provided) judged Heed the "sweet child" of a drunken man's memory.

Gwendolyn East, Attorney at Law, however, thought otherwise and told Christine ~~the~~ <sup>for reversal</sup> grounds were promising. In any case there was room for appeal, review, even if no mitigating evidence was found. For years

Christine searched: the hotel, the house and found nothing (except tik). If there was anything it would be in one of Heed's many desks. <sup>locked</sup> <sup>behind her bedroom door</sup> ~~Each locked~~ <sup>locked</sup> <sup>her door against the other at night and padlocked everything else). <sup>locked</sup> <sup>mightily</sup> <sup>against</sup> <sup>intruders.</sup> Now</sup>

the matter was urgent. No more waiting for the other to die or, at a minimum, suffer a debilitating stroke. Now a third element was in the mix.

Heed had hired a girl. To help write her memoirs, Junior had said at breakfast. Christine's jaw dropped at the thought <sup>+</sup> of the word "write"

<sup>connected</sup>  
~~associated~~ with some one who had gone to school off and on for less than five years. Scooping grapefruit sections, Junior had pronounced "memoirs" just the way illiterate Heed would have. "Of her family," said Junior. What family, Christine wondered. That batch of beach rats who bathed in a barrel and slept in their clothes? Certainly not the Cosey family she had married into?

No. She didn't believe it for a minute. Heed was up to something. <sup>or sell,</sup> Maybe writing her own will. Maybe getting ready to evict. Christine made up her mind that afternoon. Romen was puttering around in the sunshine, inspecting <sup>the ice</sup> damage done to the shrubs etc. Christine asked him to wash the car, and when he was done, she called him to help her with the garage door stuck in ice that had not melted though the temperature had climbed. Then she drove off, picking up speed as quickly as she could to get to Gwendolyn East before <sup>the lawyer's</sup> ~~her~~ office closed. MTK/TR

Thoughts of Mr. Rio displaced apprehension. Regret, too, faded as well as the embarrassment of her battle with his beloved Cadillac. <sup>The three</sup> ~~It~~ years with him--well, near him; he was mightily un-divorceable--were the best. She had seen movies about the misery of kept women, how they died in the



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end or had suffering illegitimate babies who died also. Some times they were ~~overwhelmed~~ <sup>Saddened</sup> by guilt and cried on the betrayed wife's lap. Even now, tk years after she'd been replaced, Christine recalled her kept years as the best. Complete freedom; total care. Reliable love; reckless gifts. Trips, parties, edginess... He was an older man. To her forty-one years, his sixty was "older." Now in her sixties the term meant nothing. He was a beautiful man. Elegant dresser, successful gp.