



Chapter 6

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Chapter ~~Seven~~

Correctional girls knew better than to trust a label. "Let set for 5 minutes, then rinse thoroughly" was a suggestion, not an order. Some products needed fifteen minutes; others would cook the scalp instantly. Correctionals knew all about grooming hair—braiding, curling, shampooing, straightening, cutting. And—before coloring privileges were taken away—(x sprayed y with a blast of Natural Instinct)—they practiced tint and dye with professional single mindedness.

Junior slid the tail of a fine-tooth comb through Heed's hair. Then filled the silver valley with a thick stream of Velvet Tress. She had lubricated each parting with Vaseline to lessen the burn, take down the pain of its lye. Upon completion she tipped Heed's head gently—this way and that—to check the nape and hairline. The rims of Heed's ears were lightly scarred either

from old dye burns or awkwardly held straightening combs. Junior ran a gloved forefinger slowly over the wounded skin. Then she bent the ear forward and ^{to} ~~blotted~~ ^{the} the excess liquid with cotton. Satisfied that ~~every~~ ^{were} roots ~~was~~ wet and steeping, she tucked the hair into a shower cap. Washing utensils, folding towels, she listened to Heed's ^a ~~drone~~ ^{in the} voluptuous murmur that accompanies hair dressing. Massage, caress by devoted hands are natural companions to a warm water rinse, to the shy squeak of clean hair. In a drowsy voice full of amusement Heed explained the barber's ^{she was sitting in} chair. How Papa said no chair in the world was more comfortable; that he had paid x for it but it was worth y. How home decorating issues could not ^{keep} dissuade him from moving it into the bathroom of their new house. How much Heed treasured it because in the early days of their marriage he took great pains to teach her how to manicure, pedicure, keep all his nails in perfect shape. And how to shave him too with a straight razor and strop. She was so little she had to stand on a stool to reach. But he was nothing but patience and she learned. Encouraged by Junior's obedient but interested silence, she went on to say she never felt clean enough in those early days. Folks from her neighborhood were

mocked for living near a fish factory and although she had never worked one minute in the place, she suspected she was suspected of its blight. Even now it was the worse thing about her hands, how limited her habits of hygiene had become.

Junior wondered if Heed was trying to ask for a pedicure as well as a bathing hand. Although it was not the fun of group showers at Correctional, soaping a body—any body—held a satisfaction only a Settlement child could know.

Tr tk

? Besides,
it pleased him. *
He winked when
she approached when they
and smiled when they
naked in the.
* to see her taking
care of his wife -
like a mistress -
the one who belonged.
She wore ^{one of} his
undershirts more

"We were the first colored family in Silk and not a peep out of one white mouth. Nineteen forty seven. The War was just over. Everybody had money but Papa had more than most, so he bought this house. He was good friends with the sheriff whose family named it for themselves and by themselves. We owned x acres, all of Oceanside but it wasn't Oceanside then. It was a rundown orchard full of birds. Hand me the towel."

Heed patted her temples and looked in the mirrors. Next to her

Junior rinsed utensils.

"We had two Victory celebrations. One at the hotel for the public; and a private one here at the house. The one at the Hotel..." Heed stopped. Memory of two kinds of Victory parties was swamped by another pair of celebrations. A sixteenth birthday plus graduation party for Christine. A family dinner at the house preceding a public celebration at the Hotel. In May of 1947, Heed had not seen her used-to-be friend in four years. In 1943 the Christine that stepped out of Cosey's Cadillac was nothing like the one who had left rubbing tears from her cheeks with her palm. The eyes above those cheeks had widened—and cooled. Two braids had become a page boy smooth as the wearer's smile. They did not pretend to like each other and hid curiosity like pros.

those *in 1945* *a later*

L had cooked a sumptuous meal and prepared a lavish cake. Sixteen candles waited to be lit in a garden of sugar roses and ribbons of blue marzipan. The conversation, polite and hollow, was punctuated by meaningful glances between May and Christine. Cosy, in the grip of post-war excitement, talked about his plans to improve the hotel including a Carrier air cooling system.

the quotation of ceiling fan and

^{Wouldn't}
 "That ~~would~~ be wonderful," said Christine. "I had forgotten how hot it gets here."

"We'll do the Hotel first," said Cosey. "Then the house."

Heed, feeling a flush of authority, chimed in. "The bedroom fans are in good shape, but I do feel badly about the one in this room."

You mean 'bad.' You feel 'bad.'

That's what I said.

You said "badly". Feel is an intransitive verb in your sentence and is modified by an adjective. If you really mean you feel "badly", then you are saying something like "My fingers are numb and therefore they don't touch things well. Now if you..."

Don't you sit at my table and tell me how to talk.

Your table?

Be quiet, you two. Please? Just be quiet.

Whose side you on?

Do what I say, Heed.

You taking her side. Heed stood up.

Sit down, you hear me?

Heed sat in a thumping silence un-broken by L's entrance with a champagne bucket. May didn't try to hide her smile as she exchanged gleeful glances with her daughter. When Heed caught the smile, the look, she burst out of herself and throwing her ~~glass of water~~ ^{champagne glass} at her husband rushed past him toward the stairs. Cosey rose and grabbed her arm. Then with a kind of unimaginable grace, he put her across his knee and spanked her. Not hard. Not vicious. Methodically, reluctantly, like you would any other brat. When he stopped there was no way for her to get out of the room onto the stairs. No way at all, but she made it, sweet Cosey child. The conversation that picked up as she climbed the stairs was relaxed, as though an awful smell that had been distracting the guests had been eliminated at last.

(mist) "Listen." ~~Heed~~ ^{she} reached ~~back~~ ^{over} to touch Junior's elbow. "There is something I want you to do for me. Together. We have to do it together. There's something in it for you as well as me."

"Sure. What?"

"There's some documents I need. But they're in a place I can't get to alone. You'll have to take me there and then you have to help me find

them."

"Take you where?"

"To the Hotel. The attic. We'll need a fountain pen."

Tk

"That's a nice picture of you at your cousin's wedding. You've known her a long time then?"

"Cousin?"

"I mean friend or whatever. Mrs. Cosey. You're not related?"

"Your Mrs. Cosey is not my friend. She's my grandmother."

"Your what?"

"You heard me. Grandmother? Get it?"

"But you're the same age. I thought you said..."

"I'm older. Eight months older."

"Wait a minute. She said she was married for forty years and he died twenty five years ago. So she must have been...a baby."

"Mention was made."

"And you were...how old?"

"Twelve. My grandfather married her when she was eleven. ~~We were~~ best friends then. One day we built castles on the beach; next day he sat her in his lap. One day we were playing house under a quilt; next day she slept in his bed. One day we played jacks; the next she was fucking my grandfather."

Tk

"And one day this house was mine; next day she owned it."

Junior

I knew it! He liked young girls. Needed her,
in this house. Wanted her, to stay