



## Chapter 6 [Original Chap. 7/Husband]

---

No Known Copyright

Princeton University Library reasonably believes that the Item is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made.

You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use.

## Princeton University Library Disclaimer

---

Princeton University Library claims no copyright governing this digital resource. It is provided for free, on a non-commercial, open-access basis, for fair-use academic and research purposes only. Anyone who claims copyright over any part of these resources and feels that they should not be presented in this manner is invited to contact Princeton University Library, who will in turn consider such concerns and make every effort to respond appropriately. We request that users reproducing this resource cite it according the guidelines described at <http://rbcs.princeton.edu/policies/forms-citation>.

## Citation Information

---

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

Chapter 6 [Original Chap. 7/Husband]

1 folder (partial)

## Contact Information

---

## Download Information

---

Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 01:06:02 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/t435gj57m>

## Chapter Six

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 to blot the excess liquid with cotton. Satisfied that the roots were wet and steeping, she tucked the hair into a shower cap. Washing utensils, folding towels, she listened to Heed drone—the voluptuous murmur that always 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 chair she was sitting in. 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 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. Besides, it pleased him to see her taking care of his wife; as it pleased him to watch her and Romen wrestle naked in the back seat of his twenty-year-old car; just as it tickled him to know she was wearing his shorts.

She turned on the bow dryer. Warm then cool air played on Heed's scalp encouraging reminiscence.

"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 sherif 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."



Chap. 4.

The sun, dipping and red as watermelon,  
left its heat behind - moist and  
buzzing. <sup>Heed remembered</sup> The ~~the~~ baby-powder smell of from  
the ~~gardenias~~ bowl of gardenias.

Their edges browning like toast. And  
Lard: a casual wave at a fly,  
pressing a dinner napkin to a damp  
upper lip, Casey's forefinger playing  
his mustache. In silence they  
waited for L. She.



Heed patted her temples and looked in the mirror. 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 those two kinds of Victory parties in 1945 was swamped by another pair of celebrations, two years later. 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. The Christine that stepped out of Cosey's Cadillac was nothing like the one who, in 1943, had left home 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. *+ (insert)*

*✓* 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. *Earlier* *had been* The conversation, polite and hollow, ~~was~~ punctuated by the grating ceiling fan and meaningful looks between May and Christine.

Cosey, in the grip of post-war excitement, <sup>had</sup> talked about his plans to improve the hotel including a Carrier air cooling system.

"Wouldn't that 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~~ <sup>(over)</sup> 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 champagne glass at her husband, rushed past him toward the stairs. Cosey rose and grabbed her arm. Then with a kind of ~~unimaginable~~ <sup>old-timey</sup> 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.

Junior cut off the dryer. "What about your own family? You never talk about them."

Heed made a sound in her throat and waved a hand.

Junior laughed. "I know what you mean. I'd swallow lye before I'd



of magnified  
aware of hands, and  
petals until L. entered with  
a champagne bucket. <sup>in her presence</sup> ~~Heed~~ <sup>Heed calmed</sup> enough to  
hold <sup>up</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>her</sup> glass for the pouring.

"The other one" he said.

"That's a water glass."

live with my folks."

Heed glanced at Junior's face in the mirror, thinking: That's what it is, what made me take her on. We're both out here, alone. With fire ants for family.

"Listen." She reached back 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."

Junior couldn't find him. Even in his study wearing his tie, <sup>There was</sup> ~~he didn't~~  
<sup>No trace of aftershave.</sup> ~~appear.~~ Maybe she didn't need him to tell her. To approve. Maybe he  
<sup>took for granted</sup> ~~knew~~ she'd know what to do: First, check on Christine; make sure she was

unaware; make sure they were still friendly in case Heed's plans went bust.

^



The house schedule <sup>~~separ~~</sup> was as reliable  
as Correctional's. Getting Heed out to  
the car unseen by Christine  
should be easy since (see notes)

Later, that evening, she joined Christine sitting in the yard smoking.

"Can I have one?"

"~~You should be buying your own.~~ You get paid. I don't."

"How come?"

"Because your boss lady is crazy and needs help."

*as well as evil*

"I help her."

"Not that kind of help. You don't notice anything strange?"

"A little. Maybe."

"A little? Who don't leave a room for years but a crazy? What you all talk about up there, anyway?"

"Stuff. Her life."

"God."

"She showed me pictures. Wedding pictures. I saw a beautiful picture of you at her wedding. You were hot, Christine, really hot. You've known her a long time, right? ~~Are~~ you cousins or something?"

"Cousins?" Christine lips curled.

"Whatever. You're not related? Just friends?"



"She is not my friend. She's my grandmother."

<sup>Say</sup>  
"Your what?"

"You heard me. Grandmother. Get it?"

"But you're the same age."

"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. 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." Christine surveyed her diamonds, waved her fingers like a hula dancer. "One day this house was mine; next day she owned it."

She put her cigarettes away and stood up. "It did something to her mind, marrying that young. She needs professional help, don't you think?"

Back in the kitchen Christine began to perspire. She put her forehead

against the refrigerator door, then opened it for its cool air. The wave of  
 heat receded but left her trembling. It had been a while <sup>(over) 1.</sup> and she wondered  
 if it was she, not Heed, who needed care. Extracting some ice cubes, she  
 wrapped them in a towel, touching her throat, temples, wrists until she felt  
 steady. Yet the bleakness remained. A clear sight of the world as it  
 was—barren, dark, ugly without remorse. What was she doing here? <sup>Cover 2</sup> Her  
 mind scurried, <sup>(over 3.)</sup> her motives pointless. <sup>her, to give her</sup> How else to set it aside—the bleak rock  
 stripped of green. <sup>sandals,</sup> ~~No!~~ This was important. Her struggle with Heed was  
 neither mindless nor wasted. She would never forget. How she had fought  
 for her, defied her own mother to protect, <sup>trade</sup> ~~share~~ clothes: dresses, shorts, a  
 bathing suit; to picnic alone on the beach. They shared stomach ache  
 laughter, a secret language and knew as they slept together one's dreaming  
 was the same as the other one's. Then to have your best and only friend  
 leave the squealing splash in your bath tub, the stories made up and  
 whispered beneath sheets in your bed for a dark room at the end of the hall  
 reeking of liquor and an old man's business, doing things no one would  
 describe but ~~were~~ so awful no one could ignore—she would not forget that.

□ It changed May for life. Even L's jaw dropped.



1. Since the veil parted  
to expose lifeless stone.

2. She knew she was playing  
busy, but

3. Closing her eyes she pressed  
the cold towel against her lids.  
No, she thought, straightening her  
spine,

After the wedding, they tried to play together <sup>occasionally</sup> once or twice, but each <sup>effort</sup> time ended in a quarrel, <sup>with</sup> each one lying in wait for the other's insult. Then tears, May's hand gripping ; words hissed lest Grandpa Cosey hear you mocking his bride.

There was a heap of blame to spread. He was the Big Man with no <sup>who</sup> one to stop him, <sup>else</sup> and could get away with it and anything he wanted. <sup>Her mother</sup> May chose to send her away rather than confront him. And L, the only peacemaker around, whether glaring or shaking her head, took no one's side. But the real betrayal lay at the feet of the friend who grinned happily as she was led down the hall to darkness, <sup>who had to</sup> the liquor smell and old man business. So who had to go? <sup>that's who.</sup> Leave her doll house, her playhouse, the sea? The only innocent one in the place. When she returned, a sixteen year old, poised and ready to take her place in the family, Heed had become grown-up <sup>①</sup> <sup>②</sup> cruel and mean enough to set her on fire.



