



"I see you..."

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"I see you..."

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I see you. You and your invisible friend, inseparable on the beach. You both are sitting on a red blanket eating ice cream, say, with a silver coffee spoon, say, when a real girl appears sloshing the wavelets. I can see you, too, walking the shore in a man's undershirt instead of a dress, listening to the friend nobody sees but you. Intent on words only you can hear when a real voice says Hi, want some? Unnecessary now, the secret friends disappear in favor of flesh and bone.

It's like that when children fall in love with each other. On the spot, without introduction. Grown ups don't pay it much attention because they can't imagine anything more majestic to a child than their own selves and so confuse dependence with reverence. Parents can be lax or strict, timid or confident, it doesn't matter. Whether they are handing out goodies and,

scared by tears, say yes to any whim, or whether they spend their days making sure the child is correct and corrected—whatever kind they are, their place is secondary to a child's first chosen love. If such children find each other before they know their own sex, or which one of them is starving, which well fed; before they know color from no color, kin from stranger, then they have found a mix of surrender and mutiny they can never live without. Heed and Christine found such a one.

Most people have never felt a passion that strong, that early. If so, they remember it with a smile, dismiss it as a crush that shriveled in and on time. It's hard to think of it any other way when real life shows up with its list of other people, its swarm of other thoughts. I've made this love business my business but it's still curious to me. Strange even. You never know who or when it will hit or if it can stay the road. One thing is true—it bears watching, if you can stand to look at it. Heed and Christine were the kind of children who can't take back love, or park it. When that's the case, separation cuts to the bone. And if the break up is plundered too, squeezed for a glimpse of blood shed for the child's own good, then it can ruin a mind. And if, on top of that, they are made to hate one another, it can kill

a life way before it tries to live. I blame May for the hate she put in them, but I have to fault Mr. Cosey for the theft.

You could call him a good bad man, or a bad good man. Depends. All I know is I had to stop him. Had to.

Just as well they fought over my menu looking in it for a sign of love and mis-reading it when they did. Heed's grasp of handwriting skills was limited, but she had to wonder in 1971 if the "sweet Cosey child" her husband was willing property to in 1958 was neither her nor Christine but a baby on the way. They never saw the real thing—witnessed by me, notarized by Buddy Silk's wife—leaving everything, ~~everything~~ to Celestial. ^{*} It wasn't right. If I had been allowed to read what I signed in 1964 when the Sheriff threatened to close him down and whole streets were on fire I might have been able to stop him then—in a nice way—keep him from leaving ^{all} ~~everything~~ we had worked for to the one person who would have given it away rather than live in it or ^{Near} ~~on~~ it; would have ^{blown it up} ~~burned it to the ground~~ rather than let it stand as a reminder of why she was not permitted to mount its steps but was the real sport of a fishing boat. Regardless of what his heart said, it wasn't right. If I had read it in 1964 instead of 1971, I would have known that

Everything@ Everything@
 * Except a boat he left to Sandler Gibon

what looked like seven years of laziness and remorse was really vengeance,

and that his hatred of the women in his house had no level. He didn't

~~understand:~~ ^{his dream was} just a nightmare with lipstick. ~~he wasn't a human person to them; he was a play-acting~~

~~role a dreamman they thought up depending on what each one needed.~~

~~People give dogs more leeway. (So how could he not want payback, a way to let everybody know who had let him be Billy Cosey and who had not.)~~

First they disappointed him, then they defied him, then they turned his home into a barrel of quarreling she-crabs and his life's work into a joke his

enemies loved to repeat. Whether what he believed was true or no, I wasn't

going to let him put his family out in the street. May was sixty-one; what

was she supposed to do? Spend her old age in a ^{strait jacket} ~~nut house~~? And Heed

was forty-one. Was she supposed to go back to a family who had not

spoken to her since 1947? And Christine-whatever she was into in 1971 it

wasn't going to last. There wasn't but one solution. I made it quick so it

wouldn't hurt so. He wasn't fit to think and at eighty-one he wasn't going to

get better. It took nerve and long before the undertaker knocked on the

door I tore that thing up. Better for them to stay connected arguing over a

^{and y'all locate} ~~menu than to learn what had become of his brain.~~ ^{man).} ~~Messing up the history~~

~~(come to learn)~~ ^(discover in time)

What a miracle

The tongue is, if properly used they could have avoided

of my good cooking by putting money matters on top of it was bad enough.
But finding out what he actually thought of them would have been worse.
~~Besides, without a will maybe they could find some way to live in the world~~
~~without drawing the attention of Police Heads hunting wicked women and~~
bull-headed, unruly children. It's hard to do but I know at least one woman
who did. Who stood right under their wide hats, their dripping beards and
scared them off with a ^{word} shout—or was it a note?

Her scar has disappeared. I sit near her once in a while out at the
cemetery. We are the only two who visit him. She is disgusted by the words
on his tombstone and, legs crossed, perches on its top so the folds of her
red dress hide the insult: "Ideal Husband. Perfect Father." Other than that,
she seems content. I like it when she sings to him. One of those raunchy
tunes that used to excite everybody on the dance floor. Either she doesn't
know about me or has forgiven me for my solution because she doesn't
mind at all if I sit a little ways off, listening. But sometimes her voice is so
full of longing for him, I can't help it. I want something back. Something
just for me. So I join in. And hum.