



"for a glimpse of blood..."

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Citation Information

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

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1 folder (partial)

Contact Information

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Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 01:08:16 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/n583z0577>

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.

I wonder what he would make of Junior. He was adept, you know, at spotting needy, wild women. But this is now—not then. No telling what this modern breed of junior woman is capable of. ^{Disgraceful.} Maybe a caring hand, a constant eye, is enough, unless it's too late and their sleep is merely a waiting. Mr. Cosey would know. You could call him a good bad man, or a bad good man. Depends on what you hold dear—the what or the why. I tend to mix them. Whenever I see his righteous face correcting Heed, his extinguished eyes gazing at Christine I think Dark won out. Then I hear the laugh, remember his tenderness with broken things; his wide wallet, his hands roughing his son's hair.... I don't care what you think. He didn't have an S stitched on his shirt and he didn't own a pitchfork. He was an ordinary man ripped, like the rest of us, by wrath and love.

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 to Celestial. Everything. Everything. Except a boat he left to Sandler Gibson. It wasn't right. If I had been allowed to read what I signed in 1964 when the Sheriff threatened to close him down, when little children called him names and whole streets were on fire I might have been able to stop him then—in a nice way—keep him from leaving all we had worked for to the one person who would have given it away rather than live in it or near it; would have blown it up 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 what looked like seven years of self pity and remorse was really vengeance, and that his hatred of the women in his house had no level. 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 cautionary

lesson in Black history. He didn't understand: a dream is just a nightmare with lipstick. 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? And Heed was forty-one. Was she supposed to go back to a family who had not spoken to her since Truman? And Christine—whatever she was into 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 malicious thing up. My menu worked just fine. Gave them a reason to stay connected and maybe figure out how precious the tongue is. If properly used it can save you from the attention of Police Heads hunting desperate women and hard-headed, mis-raised 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—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~~ ^{offended} 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 once in a while 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.

END