



Love Miscellaneous Corrected Pages

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fishermen and wild parrots knew right away was bad news. My mother, limp as a rag waiting for this overdue baby, said she suddenly perked up and decided to hang laundry. *Every pregnant woman in the world knows better than that.* Only later did she realize she was drunk with the pure oxygen that swept through before the storm. Halfway through her basket she saw the day turn black, and I began to thrash. She called my father and the two of them delivered me in a downpour. You could say going from womb water straight into rain marked me. It's noteworthy, I suppose, that the first time I saw Mr. Cosey, he was standing in the sea, holding Julia, his wife, in his arms. I was five; he was 24 and I'd never seen anything like that. Her eyes were closed, head bobbing; her light blue swimming dress ballooned or flattened out depending on the waves and his strength. She lifted an arm, touched his shoulder. He turned her to his chest and carried her ashore. I believed then it was the sunlight that brought those tears to my eyes—not the sight of all that tenderness coming out of the sea. Nine years later, when I heard he was looking for house help, I ran all the way to his door.

The sign outside reads "Maceo's Café...ria" but the diner really belonged to

If they hear her, they give no sign. Christine remains still; Heed is moving, cautiously taking one step then another, the Bic clenched between palm and powerful thumb. The eyes of each are enslaved by the other's. Opening pangs of guilt, rage, fatigue, despair are replaced by a hatred so pure, so solemn, it feels beautiful, almost holy.

Junior's head tracks left to right, like a tennis fan's. She senses rather than sees where Heed, blind to everything but the motionless figure before her, is heading—one footfall at a time. Carefully, with the toe of her boot, Junior eases the piece of carpeting toward herself. She does not watch or call out. Instead, she turns to smile at Christine whose blood roar is louder than the cracking so the falling is like a silent movie and the soft twisted hands with no hope of hanging on to rotted wood dissolve, fade to black as movies always do and the feeling of abandonment loosens a loneliness so intolerable that Christine drops to her knees peering down at the body arching below. She races down the ladder, along the hall and into the room. On her knees again, she turns, then gathers Heed in her arms. In light sifting from above they search the face of the other. The holy feeling is still alive, as is its purity, but it is altered now, overwhelmed by desire. Old, ^{longing}

decrepit yet sharp. The attic light goes out and although they can hear boots running, the engine start of a car, they are neither surprised nor interested. There in a little girl's bedroom an obstinate skeleton stirs, clacks, refreshes itself.

The aroma of baking bread was too intense. Cinnamon flavored. He wasn't there. Although Junior couldn't tell yet what he might be thinking, she was sure he would laugh when she told him, showed him the forged menu his airhead wife thought would work, and the revisions Junior had made in case it did. Sorry, Solitude. She pushed a little harder on the gas pedal. It was a long shot, sudden, unpremeditated, but it might turn out the way she dreamed. If either or both got out, she would say she fled to get help or something. But first she had to get to Monarch Street, find him, share the excitement and her smarts. She parked and ran down the steps. The kitchen door was wide open, swinging in icy air. Christine must have left not just in a hurry but in a fit. She hadn't turned the lights or the oven off, and a shriveled leg of lamb clung to its juices caramelizing in the pan. Junior turned the knob to "off," then wandered the rooms, irritated by the

ball, but her fingers are perfect for scooping.

Hating you was the only thing my mother liked about me.

I heard it was two hundred dollars he gave my daddy, and a pocketbook for Mama.

But you wanted to, didn't you? Didn't you want to?

Quickly Christine scoops four, then groans. The thorn in her shoulder is traveling down her arm.

I wanted to be with you. Married to him I thought I would be.

I wanted to go on your honeymoon.

Wish you had.

How was the sex?

Seemed like fun at the time. Couldn't tell. Nothing to compare it to.

Never?

Once.

Hey Celestial.

I'd just as soon our picnics. Member?

Do I. We had Baby Ruths in the basket.

And lemonade.

ambulance out here. Make haste,"

Romen turns to leave.

"Wait," she says. "Thank you, Romen. Everything left in me thanks you."

"Yes, Ma'am," he says and heads for the door.

"Wait," she says again. "Take a blanket. She might get cold."

Alone, seated at the table, she speaks to the friend of her life ^{who is} waiting
^
to be driven to the morgue.

What do we do with her?

A bullet sounds about right.

You okay?

Middling. You?

Hazy.

It'll pass.

I bet she's figuring out a way to get out before the ambulance comes.

No she's not. Trust me.

Well, she'll start yelling in a minute. Think she's shamed?

Ought to be.