



## God Help the Child Chapter Two Draft

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## CHAPTER TWO

Truth. Clarity. Bride forced herself to repeat those words in her head. When <sup>ever</sup> her thoughts drifted to company work or when the music

on the Jaguar's cd seduced her into forgetting her destination and her purpose. <sup>Truth. Clarity. (tk poem)</sup> Unable to speak to Dear or the landlord or Sofia, there was

one person still available who she could confront. According to the invoice his address was tk. He might be living with another woman he didn't want or he might have moved on. Nevertheless, Bride would track him, force him to first acknowledge that she deserved better treatment from him, and second what did he mean by 'not the woman'? This woman? The one dress <sup>ed</sup> in oyster white cashmere with brushed rabbit <sup>covered</sup> boots the color of the moon? The one who ran a billion dollar company? The one who was already inventing

\* In that collection of incomprehensible <sup>garbage</sup> ~~notes~~ <sup>is his</sup> one struck her as a dare <sub>notebook</sub>

\*\* poem

\*\*\* over

Obviously  
Her life wasn't working. The pieces  
n She had stitched together: glamour,  
<sup>personal</sup>  
~~work~~ <sup>control</sup> in an exciting environment, sexual  
liberation, and, most importantly, a shield  
that protected her from any <sup>too</sup> intense  
feeling be it rage or love. Her response  
to a physical beating was no less  
<sup>unnatural</sup>  
cowardly than her response to an unex-  
pected unexplained break-up. Flip  
or tears. The first was flip; the second  
tears. In both instances she waffled.  
(- <sup>What do I value? Who values me?</sup> Who Am I? - <sup>What am I selling?</sup> what am I selling?)  
To answer any one of those questions,  
she felt she should begin at the beginning.



newer product lines—eyelashes. In addition to breasts every woman (his kind or not) wanted bigger, longer, thicker eyelashes.

Sorry. Truth. Clarity.

The highway became less and less crowded as she <sup>drove</sup> moved west. Soon, she imagined, forests would edge the road. In a few hours she would be in <sup>North Valley</sup> up-state country: logging, small towns no older than she was, dirt roads as old as the Tribes. As long as she was on an interstate, she decided to look for a diner, eat and freshen up before driving into territory too sparse for comfort. A collection of signs on one billboard advertised one brand of gas, four of food, two of lodging.

<sup>trailer park</sup> Following a meal of a back-country version of a white egg omelet, she went into the ladies' room. The <sup>neckline</sup> collar of the cashmere dress was askew, slanting down over her left shoulder. Adjusting it, she noticed that the shoulder slide was due neither to bad posture or a design flaw. The top of the dress sagged as if she had purchased a

size 4 and should have selected a 2. There must be a defect in the cloth or the design otherwise she was losing weight—fast.

MTK

(over)

At least <sup>it</sup> this road was paved, <sup>narrow and</sup> curvy but paved and perhaps that was the reason she trusted the headlights and accelerated. The automobile overshot a bend and crashed into a sycamore and the bushes surrounding it. Bride fought the air bag, moving so hard and fast she did not notice her foot caught and twisted in the space between the brake and the <sup>buckled</sup> door until her effort to free it stunned her with pain. Nothing helped. She lay there awkwardly on the car seat trying to ease her left foot out of the elegant rabbit furred boot. She managed to get to her cell phone, but its face was blank except for the 'no service' message. The likelihood of a passing car was dim in the dark so she simply pressed the car horn desperate for the honk to do more than frighten birds.

She lay there, <sup>all night</sup> by turns afraid, asleep, angry, exhausted



Not a problem. No such thing as too thin  
in her business. She would simply choose  
clothes more carefully.

<sup>where</sup>  
Paying the cashier she asked directions  
to [Blue Hill] Road.

"Not far," said the cashier.

"A hundred, maybe 200 miles." "You'll make it  
before dark."

Is that what these people called  
'Not far'? <sup>Bride</sup> wondered

Gassed up, tires checked, she  
pulled out into Route TK, turning right  
at exit to TK, then another marked not by  
a name: Whiskey Road. <sup>a number</sup>  
But

The sun merely hinted at its rise; teased the sky with a promise of revealing itself. Bride, exhausted with body cramp and leg pain, felt a tingle of hope. A wagon, a truck full of lumber, a boy on a bike, a bear hunter—<sup>a serial killer</sup> anyone to lend a hand? Almost. While she was imagining who or what might rescue her a small, white face appeared at the passenger's side window. A girl, young, carrying a book bag stared at her with the greenest eyes Bride had ever seen.

"Help me. Please. Help me." Bride would have screamed but she didn't have the strength.

The girl turned away and disappeared.

"Oh, God," Bride whispered. Surely the girl had gone for help. Nobody, not the mentally disabled or the genetically violent would leave her there. Would they? She decided to turn on the ignition, shift into reverse and blast the Jaguar out of there—foot or no foot. Just as she turned the ignition key to the withering sound of a dead battery, a man appeared. He peered into the window and went



around to the driver's door. When he opened it her scream of pain startled them both. Carefully he eased her foot from under the brake pedal. With the emerald-eyed girl tagging along, he carried Bride half a mile down a slim path leading to a house. She said thank you, thank you and then fainted.

"Why is her skin black?"

"For the same reason yours is white."

"Oh. You mean like my kittens."

"Right. Born that way."

Bride smiled. What an easy conversation. She was half sleep under a "Navajo" blanket, her ankle throbbing but not debilitating now, propped on a pillow. The rescuing man had brought her to his house and asked his wife to look after her while he took the truck. He wasn't certain, but there was a chance the single doctor in the area could be found. It wasn't a sprain, he said. It appeared to be a



broken ankle. Without phone service including Bride's cell phone he had no choice, *but to get in his truck and drive to TK*

"My name is Evelyn," said the wife. "My husband's is Steve. Yours?"

"Bride. Just Bride."

"Well, Bride, this is Raisen." Evelyn motioned to the emerald-eyed girl. "Actually we named her Rain, because that is where we found her, but she prefers Raisen."

"Thank you Raisen. You saved my life. Really." Bride let a tear sting its way down her cheek.

"Can I fix you something to eat?" asked Evelyn. "You must have been trapped in there all night."

Bride declined. She just wanted to nap she said.

Evelyn covered her with a blanket and did not whisper the kitten conversation as she moved toward the sink. She was a tall woman

with unfashionable hips and a long chestnut braid hanging down her back. She reminded Bride of someone she had seen in the movies, not a recent one but something made in the forties or fifties when movie stars had distinctive faces unlike now when hairstyles alone distinguished one star from another. But she could not put a name to the memory—the actress or the film. Little Raisen, on the other hand, resembled no one Bride had ever seen: bone white face, ebony hair, neon eyes, undetermined age. What had her mother said? "That's where she was when we found her." In the rain.

*Steve and Evelyn's*  
The house seemed to be a converted studio: one large room containing table, chairs, sink, wood burning stove, a rope bed, and the worn couch Bride lay on. Above it all, a skylight that needed *a good* power cleaning. An open door to the rear revealed another room with two beds. Something meaty, like chicken, roasted in the oven while mother and daughter chopped mushrooms and green peppers at the obviously home made table. Without warning they began to sing. Something cowboy-ish. "You are my sunshine, my only, only..."



Bride quickly dashed a burning memory of Dear humming some blues song while dressing, little Lula Ann looking on.

Eventually she did fall asleep only to be awakened by Steve accompanied by a very old, very rumped doctor. Expertly and without pity he announced her ankle broken and unfixable here in this house—she needed to go to the clinic for an ex ray, cast and so on. All he could do, or would do, is bind it so it wouldn't worsen.

<sup>to go</sup>  
Bride refused. She was suddenly so hungry it made her angry. She wanted to bathe and then eat before being driven to a clinic. Not another one, she thought, not another tacky country clinic.

"No," said Steve. "First things first."

They carried her to the truck and when she was driven back she had to admit the cast had eased her pain, as had the pills. The hunger dissipated, but the awareness of being unwashed was stronger.

Please don't  
kill



"We don't have a bathroom. I'll sponge you for now," said Evelyn. "When the cast comes off, I'll heat water for the washtub."

Bride started to cry, and they let her while they all <sup>ate</sup> fixed supper.

Later Bride roused herself to accept the plate Evelyn held before her. Quail as it turned out, not chicken, with a sumptuous mushroom gravy. Following the meal Bride <sup>felt</sup> began to feel ashamed—crying every minute, petulant, childish, and unwilling to help herself or accept aid gracefully from others. Here she was among people living the barest life, putting them selves out for her without hesitation asking nothing in return. Who are these people, she wondered, and where did they come from?

TK. (over)  
Weeks later when the very old doctor returned to remove her cast and expose the <sup>disgusting</sup> horrible skin underneath Evelyn was true to her word. She poured pail after pail of hot water into a wooden tub, handed her a sponge and a bar of hard brown soap. Bride sank into the water with profound gratitude, prolonging the soaping until the

In the following days, Bride learned they <sup>were</sup>  
~~the~~ Both college graduates, in their 50's. \*  
Living, as Evelyn said, 'real.'

By real you mean poor?

What does poor mean? No television?

~~It means~~ No money

~~Something~~ <sup>money no</sup> No television

MEANING NO WASHING machine, no fudge, no...  
money!

Did money ~~save~~ <sup>get</sup> you out of that Jaguar?  
Did it save your life?

(Bride could see pleasant memories lurking  
in the looks they exchanged)

\* Steve was a graduate of Reed College, Evelyn Ohio State.  
With constant bursts of laughter they described how they met  
they <sup>first</sup> met in India, then London, Again in Berlin,  
Finally in Mexico. They <sup>agreed</sup> ~~decided~~ to stop meeting  
that way. <sup>(Steve touched her neck,)</sup> <sup>so</sup> they <sup>got</sup> married in Tijuana and  
moved to California. To live a real life, said  
Evelyn.

Bride's envy was unwarranted, but she couldn't  
stop herself



water had cooled completely. It was when she stood to dry herself that she discovered that her chest was flat. Completely flat with only the nipples to prove it was not her back. Her shock was so great she plopped back down into the dirty, soapy water, holding the towel like a shield.