



## God Help the Child Part Two Draft

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Morrison, Toni. 1931-

God Help the Child Part Two Draft

1 folder

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Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 01:22:35 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/pv63g4834>

his lips and waving his little white stick toward them. It was the lip  
licking that got to him—the tongue grazing the upper lip, the  
swallowing before its return to grazing. Obviously the sight of  
children was as pleasurable to the man as punishing them.

Booker's fist was in the man's mouth before thinking about it. A  
light spray of blood dappled his t-shirt and when the man lost  
consciousness, he got up, looked off the ground and walked  
away—not too fast—but fast enough hoping he could cross the road.

## PART TWO

Blood stained his knuckles and his <sup>fingers</sup> hand began to swell. The  
stranger he'd been beating wasn't moving any more or moaning, but  
he thought he'd better walk away quickly before a student or campus  
guard thought he was the lawless one instead of the man lying on the  
gravel. He'd left the beaten man's jeans open and his penis exposed  
just the way they were when he first saw him at the edge of the  
campus playground. Only a few faculty children were near the slide  
and just one on the swing. None apparently <sup>had</sup> noticed the man licking

his lips and waving his little white stick toward them. It was the lip  
licking that got to him—the tongue grazing the upper lip, the  
swallowing before its return to grazing. Obviously the sight of  
children was as pleasurable to the man as touching them. <sup>(over)</sup>  
^

Booker's fist was in the man's mouth before thinking about it. A  
light spray of blood dappled his t-shirt and when the man lost  
consciousness, he grabbed his <sup>bookbag</sup> notebook off the ground and walked  
away—not too fast—but fast enough <sup>to</sup> hoping he could cross the road,  
^  
turn his shirt inside out and make it to class on time. He didn't, but  
there were a few others sneaking into the auditorium when he  
arrived. <sup>The latecomers</sup> They all took seats in the last rows and plopped backpacks,  
<sup>bookbags</sup> brief cases or laptops on their desks. Only one of them, beside  
himself, had a notebook. He preferred pencil on paper but his  
<sup>swollen fingers</sup> swelling hand made writing difficult. So he listened a little, day  
dreamed a little and scratched his nose to hide a yawn. The  
professor was going on and on about Adam Smith's  
<sup>almost</sup> wrongheadedness as he did in every lecture as though the history of  
^



because they were calling to him, seductively  
showing their plump thighs and  
panties as they climbed up to the slide  
or pumped the air on the swing.

(over)

economics had only one scholar worth trashing. ~~The single other~~  
~~class he enjoyed was medieval history.~~ Four years ago as an  
undergraduate he'd <sup>nibbled</sup> ~~grazed~~ courses in several curricula: psychology,  
political science, humanities, and taken courses in African American  
Studies where the best professors were brilliant at description but  
could not answer any question beginning with 'why.' He suspected  
most of the real answers concerning slavery, lynching, forced labor,  
reconstruction, Jim Crow, migration, civil rights and revolution were  
about money, so he turned to <sup>the</sup> <sup>of economics</sup> history to learn how money shaped  
every single oppression in the world and created all the empires,  
nations, colonies, with God and His enemies used to reap, then veil,  
the riches.

Unimpressed by the lecture on Adam Smith, his thoughts  
returned to the man lying exposed near the playground. Normal  
looking. Probably an otherwise nice man—they always were. The  
'nicest man in the world', the neighbors always said. 'He wouldn't  
hurt a fly.' Where did that cliché' come from? Why not hurt a fly?



What about Milton F. or ~~TK~~ That, idiot  
Karl Marx. Booker's ~~entire~~ obsession  
with Mammon. Was fairly recent

He liked to contrast  
the ragged half-naked King of  
the Jews <sup>screaming</sup> ~~on a cross~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~and~~  
~~Azzerath~~ ~~suffocating~~ ~~on a cross~~ ~~and~~  
the ~~bearded~~ <sup>overdressed</sup> ~~Pope~~ <sup>whispering</sup> ~~begging~~ <sup>homilies</sup>  
from the Vatican's vault

Did it mean he was too tender to take the life of an insect but could happily take the life of a child?

Booker had been raised in a large tight family with no television in sight. In college he lived surrounded by a television/internet world where both the methods of mass communication and the substance of mass communication seemed to him free of insight or knowledge. The weather channels were the only informative sources and they were off base and hysterical most of the time. Having grown up in a book-reading family with only radio and newspapers for news and vinyl records for entertainment, he <sup>had to fake</sup> ~~was unable to share~~ his

classmates' enthusiasm for screen sounds blasting from every dorm room, lounge and <sup>student friendly</sup> ~~near campus~~ bar. He <sup>knew he was seriously out of the loop</sup> ~~had been shaped by talk and~~ <sup>a Luddite incapable of sharing the exciting world of tech.</sup> ~~text.~~ <sup>on the page</sup> Every Saturday morning, first thing, his parents held

conferences with their children to answer two questions put to each of them: 1. What have you learned that is true? (And how do you know?) 2. What problem do you have? Answers to the first ranged from "worms can't fly," "ice burns", "there are <sup>only three</sup> ~~fourteen~~ counties in

The distrust  
was not his  
fault  
He



this state", to "the pawn is mightier than the queen." Topics relevant to the second question might be "A girl slapped me", "My shoe strings broke", "My stomach hurts", "Conjugation." The question about personal problems prompted solutions from any one at the table and after they were solved or left pending the children were sent to bathe and dress—the older ones helping the younger. Booker loved those Saturday morning conferences rewarded by the highlight of the weekends--his mother's huge breakfast feasts. Banquets really. Warm biscuits, short and flakey; grits snow white and tongue-burning hot; eggs beaten into a pale orange creaminess; sizzling sausage patties, sliced tomatoes, strawberry jam, freshly squeezed orange juice, cold milk in mason jars. The rest of the week they ate modestly—in-season fruit, <sup>oatmeal</sup> dried beans and whatever green leaf was available: kale, spinach, cabbage, collards, mustard greens. Those Sunday morning menus could vary but they were always sumptuous.

endings to  
days of  
scarcity.

Only during the eight months when no one knew where Adam was did the conferences stop and the quiet tick through the house



like a time bomb. His father, Mr. B., refused to play even one of his beloved ragtime, old time, bluesy records some of which Booker could do without but not Satchmo. It was one thing to lose a brother; that broke his heart, but a world without Louis Armstrong's trumpet crushed it.

Then Adam's corpse was found. In a culvert.

Only Booker and his father looked at the remains.\* His mother <sup>refused</sup> ~~could not~~ <sup>closed coffin</sup> ~~could not~~. The funeral seemed cheap and lonely to him, in spite of the preacher's loud eloquence, the crowds of neighbors attending, the mounds of food cooked and delivered to their kitchen. The very excess made him lonelier. It was as though his older brother, close as a twin, was being buried again, suffocating under song, sermon, tears, crowds and flowers. He wanted to re-dress the mourning—make it private, special and, most of all, his alone. Adam was the brother he worshipped, two years older and as strong and sweet as

cane. The last time Booker saw him he was skate boarding down the sidewalk, his yellow t-shirt a <sup>in twilight</sup> ~~light~~ <sup>fluorescent</sup> ~~bulb~~ under the trees. <sup>Remembering that last sighting of yellow tunneling down the street</sup> ~~So at the~~

\* Filthy, not-gnawed with open eyesockets, the maggots over feet had gone home.

(over)

It was early September and nothing  
anywhere had begun to die. Oak leaves  
<sup>became more</sup> aggressively alive. Behaved as though <sup>their green</sup> ~~they were~~ <sup>was</sup>  
immortal. The sun

especially  
even  
while  
setting

Down the sidewalk ~~forward~~ between  
hedges and the towering trees ~~At~~  
~~side~~ Adam <sup>floated</sup> ~~on~~ ~~between~~ ~~Schroeder~~

a ~~golden~~ spot of gold <sup>moving down a green</sup> <sup>living</sup>  
~~golden~~ tunnel <sup>forward</sup> <sup>on</sup> <sup>equally</sup>  
Golden sun. the mouth of a

Adam was more than brother to Booker, more  
than the "A" of parents who named their children  
alphabetically. He was a friend - the one  
who knew what you were thinking, feeling before  
you did; whose <sup>st</sup> humor was <sup>both raucous and</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>instructive</sup>  
<sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ never cruel; who cherished his siblings but especially  
Booker.



viewing Booker placed one yellow rose <sup>ON</sup> in the coffin and another, later, graveside.

The house returned to its routine with the background sounds of Satchmo, Etta James, Sydney Bechet, Jelly Roll, King Oliver, and Bunk Johnson the conferences and breakfast feasts continued.

Fearful of another crisis that could eliminate the background music

Booker counted on to soothe and straighten his tangled feelings, he

asked his father if he could take trumpet lessons. Mr. B. agreed

provided his son earned half the cost. Thereafter he skipped

Saturday conferences for trumpet lessons. His teacher, already

slightly drunk early in the morning, was nevertheless an excellent

musician and an even better instructor. "You got the lungs; <sup>You got the lungs;</sup>

<sup>all three</sup> need the lip. When you have both you can forget about them and let

the music out."

Six years later when Booker was <sup>fourteen</sup> ~~twelve~~ and a faintly accomplished trumpet player, the nicest man in the world was caught, tried, convicted of SSS, the sexually stimulated slaughter of six boys

Carol  
~~Abbott~~  
 10  
 (Adam 9  
 7 Donovan  
 Booker 6  
 5 Elle  
 4 Faver  
 3 Gordon)

All perked themselves up as though  
 Cheer alone could <sup>soothe</sup> ~~make~~ the ~~dead~~  
 happy and the living happy  
 and Quiet the dead.

Booker thought the joking <sup>answers</sup>  
 and fake problems thin  
 and misquided.



each of whose names, beginning with Adam's, was tattooed <sup>across</sup> ~~down~~ the <sup>shoulders</sup> ~~back~~ of the nicest man in the world. Adam. Boise. Lenny. Matthew.

Kevin. Roland. The tattoo artist said he thought they were the names of his client's children.

The nicest man in the world was an easy-going car mechanic who did home repairs if asked. <sup>The single other thing</sup> ~~What~~ people remembered most

about him was that he always, always wore a string tie. <sup>with a horseshoe pin</sup> The police

withheld what details they could, but the families of the slaughtered

six could not be stopped. Their nightmares about what had been

done to <sup>their</sup> ~~these~~ children did not outweigh the reality. <sup>\*</sup> Evidence of

bondage, penetrations, desecrations and surgery was explicit. The

rage, the press, the noisy clamor <sup>upon the arrest of the nicest man in the world</sup> disturbed Booker deeply and he

struggled to find some way to freeze and personalize <sup>his</sup> the mourning.

<sup>4 years later at 16 and</sup> ~~It wasn't until~~ just before he entered college ~~that~~ a satisfactory

solution arrived. Recasting the gesture he'd made at Adam's funeral,

he had a small rose tattooed on his left shoulder. <sup>Was it the</sup> Same chair, same

\* Seven years of grief coalesced around their recollections of time in the marguerite;

Separate it from the other victims' families.

He was especially helpful with old  
refrigerators - the Philcos and GE's <sup>built</sup> ~~bought~~  
in the fifties and made to last. Dirt, he said.  
"most machinery died because they were never cleaned."  
Everyone who had used his services re-  
membered that axiom. because he  
repeated it ad nauseum. The other feature  
they remembered was his smile, how  
welcoming, generous attractive, even. Other  
wise he was capable and, well, nice.



<sup>Wed on</sup> needle the killer <sup>used?</sup> <sup>\* Since</sup> The artist couldn't do yellow, ~~so~~ they settled for pale red.

Booker's enchantment with campus life, the classes, the professors, his <sup>smart-ass</sup> raucous, demanding classmates did not wane for two years, after which his mild cynicism turned into a loose free-floating ~~depression~~ <sup>from freshman to sophomore class</sup> ~~anger~~. All he did ~~those first two years~~ was react—sneer, laugh,

dismiss, find fault, demean--a young man's version of critical thinking. →

<sup>The view of his classmates</sup> It began to bother him not only because <sup>they were so predictable</sup> it was so easy but also

<sup>they blocked</sup> because ~~it curtailed~~ serious inquiry. Unlike the effort to perfect "Wild

Cat Blues" on his trumpet, no new or creative thoughts were required in undergraduate society,

and none penetrated the sweet fog of young transgression. When ~~his~~ <sup>\*\*</sup>

<sup>with sarcasm</sup> discomfort ~~became boredom~~ he reverted to the formula of those

Saturday conferences on Decater Street: What have you learned that

is true? (And how do you know?) What problem do you have?

\* Booker didn't ask.

So far nothing.  
Despair.

<sup>fluttered its</sup> \*\* When sarcasm ~~became~~ triumphant flag and laughter became its oath

when he doctored  
his manipulation  
of professors, routine

12 8 7 10  
Adam, Booker, Clarence, Donovan

They ranked girls according to <sup>PORN TV</sup> ~~TV shows~~  
and each other according to movies.

The smart ones breezed through  
classes; the clever ones dropped out  
It ~~was~~ <sup>as a</sup> ~~in~~ his junior that his mild  
cynicism morphed into depression.

Substitute

~~Substitute~~

~~Substitute~~

10 — Sofa  
11 —