



## God Help the Child Part Two Draft

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## PART TWO

Blood stained his knuckles and his 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 had noticed the man

Rabbit's foot  
 where did find skate board

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

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 book bag off the ground and walked away—not too fast—but fast enough to 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. The latecomers took seats in the last rows and plopped backpacks, brief cases or laptops on their desks. Only one of them, beside himself, had a notebook. He preferred pencil on paper but his swollen fingers 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 wrongheadedness as he did in almost every lecture as though the history of economics had only one scholar worth trashing. What about Milton Friedman or that idiot Karl Marx? Booker's obsession with Mammon was fairly recent. Four years ago as an undergraduate he'd nibbled 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 as a graduate student he turned to the history of economics 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. He liked to contrast the ragged, half-naked King of the Jews

<sup>betrayal</sup>  
screaming on a cross with the be-jeweled, over dressed Pope  
whispering homilies from the Vatican's vault.

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? 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 day to day information and vinyl records for entertainment, he had to fake his



classmates' enthusiasm for screen sounds blasting from every dorm room, lounge and student friendly bar. He knew he was seriously out of the loop—a Luddite incapable of sharing the exciting world of tech. He had been shaped by talk in the flesh and text on the page. 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 only three counties in 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—oatmeal, in-season fruit, 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 <sup>insert skateboard</sup> 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 <sup>?</sup> 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~~ <sup>skateboard</sup> was found. In a culvert.



Only Booker and his father looked at the remains. Filthy, rat-gnawed with a single open eye-socket, the maggots, overfed and bursting with glee had gone home. His mother could not go there. She refused to have etched in her brain anything other than her image of his young outrageous beauty. The closed coffin funeral seemed cheap and lonely to Booker, 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 in twilight, his yellow t-shirt florescent under the trees. It was early September and nothing anywhere had begun to die. Oak leaves behaved as though their green was immortal. The sun began turning



aggressively alive in the process of setting. Down the sidewalk  
 between hedges and towering trees Adam floated, a <sup>dot</sup> pot of gold  
<sup>floating</sup> moving down a shadowy tunnel toward the mouth of a living sun.

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 Booker was thinking, feeling before he <sup>himself</sup> did,  
 whose humor was both raucous and instructive but never cruel, who  
 cherished each of his siblings but especially Booker.

Remembering that last sighting of yellow tunneling down the  
 street Booker placed one yellow rose on the coffin lid 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. And the conferences and breakfast feasts continued  
 with the rest of the children: Carole, Donovan, Ellie, Favor, and  
 Goodman. The family perked up like Sesame <sup>Street</sup> Seed puppets hoping

cheer, if intensive enough, could soothe the living and quiet the dead.

Booker thought their strained joking and made up problems *were*

misguided and insulting. Fearful of another crisis that could *they were*

eliminate the soul stretching music his father played which Booker

counted on to oil and straighten his tangled feelings, he asked his

father if he could take trumpet lessons. Mr. B. agreed provided his <sup>2</sup>

son earned half the cost. With relief he skipped the Saturday

conferences for trumpet lessons that dampened his budding

intolerance for his siblings. How could they pretend it was over?

What happened? Who and where was the murderer?

His teacher, already slightly drunk early in the morning, was

nevertheless an excellent musician and an even better instructor.

"You got the lungs, the hands, now you need the lip. When you get

all three you can forget about them and let the music out."

Six years later when Booker was fourteen and a *fairly* faintly

accomplished trumpet player, the nicest man in the world was caught,

tried, convicted of SSS, the sexually stimulated slaughter of six boys



each of whose names, beginning with Adam's, was tattooed across the shoulders 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, not those of other people.

The nicest man in the world was an easy-going car mechanic who did home repairs if asked. He was especially helpful with old refrigerators—the Philcos and GE's built in the fifties to last. "Dirt," he said. "Most machinery died because they were never cleaned."

Everyone who had used his services remembered that advice.

Another feature some remembered was his smile, how welcoming, attractive even. Otherwise he was fastidious, capable and, well, nice.

The single other thing people remembered most about him was that he always, always wore a string tie with a horseshoe pin. The police withheld what details they could, but the families of the slaughtered six could not be stopped. Nightmares about what had been done to their children did not outweigh the reality. Six years of grief and unanswered questions coalesced around <sup>the families</sup> their recollections of time

spent in the morgue, heaving, weeping, stone-faced or on their ~~backs~~ <sup>knees</sup>

in helpless <sup>prayer</sup> faints. Evidence of bondage, penetrations, desecrations

and surgery was explicit. The rage, the noise, the public clamor upon

the arrest of the nicest man in the world disturbed Booker deeply and

he struggled to find some way to freeze and personalize his <sup>but also</sup>

mourning, separate it from other victim's families. Adam's calamity

was not public fare. It was private, intimate belonging only to the two

brothers. A year later just before he entered college a satisfactory <sup>log</sup>

solution arrived. Re-enacting the gesture he'd made at Adam's <sup>leg</sup>

funeral, he had a small rose tattooed on his left shoulder. Was this

the same chair, the same needle used for the killer? Booker didn't

ask. The artist couldn't do the dazzling yellow of Booker's memory, so

they settled for <sup>dull orange</sup> ~~pale red~~. <sup>undergraduate</sup> <sup>2) What problem do</sup>

Booker's enchantment with <sup>^</sup> campus life, the classes, the

professors, his lively, know-it-all classmates did not wane for two

years. All he did from freshman year to sophomore was react—

sneer, laugh, dismiss, find fault, demean--a young man's version of



critical thinking. They ranked girls according to porn videos and each other according to movies. The smart ones breezed through classes; the clever ones dropped out. It was as a junior that his mild cynicism morphed into depression. The views of his classmates began to bother him not only because they were predictable but also because they blocked 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 sarcasm fluttered its triumphant flag and giggles became its oath, when the docile manipulation of professors became routine, Booker reverted to those questions posed by his parents during those Saturday conferences on Decater Street: 1) What have you learned that is true? 2) What problem do you have?

1) So far nothing. 2) Despair.

HEY GIRL, WHAT'S INSIDE YOUR WOOLY HEAD BESIDES DARK  
ROOMS WITH DARK MEN DANCING TOO CLOSE TO COMFORT

THE MOUTH HUNGRY FOR MORE OF WHAT IT IS SURE IS  
 THERE SOMEWHERE OUT THERE JUST WAITING FOR A  
 TONGUE AND SOME BREATH TO STROKE TEETH THAT BITE  
 THE NIGHT AND SWALLOW WHOLE THE WORLD DENIED YOU  
 SO GET RID OF THOSE SMOKEY DREAMS AND LIE DOWN IN  
 THE HOLE WHILE THEY FILL IT WITH WHITE SAND FROM  
 SHORES YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN LAPPED BY WATERS SO  
 CRYSTAL AND BLUE THEY MAKE YOU SHED TEARS OF BLISS  
 AND LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU BELONG FINALLY TO THE  
 PLANET YOU WERE BORN ON AND NOW CAN JOIN THE OUT  
 THERE WORLD IN THE DEEP PEACE OF A CELLO.

XX

I TOOK MY HEART OUT AND GAVE IT TO WHOEVER NEEDED IT  
 TO PUMP BLOOD INTO A BLEAK LIFE HIDING UNDER THE  
 ROAR OF CROWDS SLOBBERING *fine bared* OR LICKING UP  
 HEY GIRL WHAT'S INSIDE YOUR WOOLY HEAD BESIDES DARK  
 ROOMS WITH DARK MEN DANCING TOO CLOSE TO COMFORT  
 HAPPINESS LOOKS JUST LIKE A HEART PAINED ON A



*your*  
THE MOUTH HUNGRY FOR MORE OF WHAT IT IS SURE IS  
THERE SOMEWHERE OUT THERE JUST WAITING FOR A  
TONGUE AND SOME BREATH TO STROKE TEETH THAT BITE  
THE NIGHT AND SWALLOW WHOLE THE WORLD DENIED YOU  
SO GET RID OF THOSE SMOKEY DREAMS AND LIE DOWN IN  
THE HOLE WHILE THEY FILL IT WITH WHITE SAND FROM  
SHORES YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN LAPPED BY WATERS SO  
CRYSTAL AND BLUE THEY MAKE YOU SHED TEARS OF BLISS  
AND LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU BELONG FINALLY TO THE  
PLANET YOU WERE BORN ON AND NOW CAN JOIN THE OUT  
THERE WORLD IN THE DEEP PEACE OF A CELLO.

I TOOK MY HEART OUT AND GAVE IT TO WHOEVER NEEDED IT  
TO PUMP BLOOD INTO A BLEAK LIFE HIDING UNDER THE  
ROAR OF CROWDS Slobbering or Pouting or Licking up  
THE FROTH THEY MISTAKE FOR HAPPINESS BECAUSE  
HAPPINESS LOOKS JUST LIKE A HEART PAINTED ON A

*Chipotle?*

VALENTINE CUP OR TATTOED ON AN ARM THAT HAS NEVER  
HELD A VICTIM OR COMFORTED A FRIEND SUCKING AIR IN  
DESPAIR AT THE WRECK OF LIFE. I TOOK IT OUT AND THE  
SPACE IT LEFT CLOSED TIGHT SUTURED LIKE THE SKIN OF A  
DRUM.  
NOT THE HEART BUT THE MIND THAT KNOWS THE OBOE'S  
SHRIEK AND THE WAY IT TEARS INTO RAGS THE SILENCE TO  
HER IMAGINATION IS IMPECCABLE THE WAY IT CUTS AND  
SCRAPES THE BONE NEVER TOUCHING THE MARROW WHERE  
THAT AWFUL FEELING IS THRUMMING LIKE A FIDDLE FOR  
FEAR ITS STRINGS WILL BREAK AND SCREECH THE LOSS OF  
ITS TUNE SINCE FOR HER PERMANENT IGNORANCE IS SO  
MUCH BETTER THAN THE QUICK OF LIFE.

*Bride*



*Adan*

THANK YOU. YOU GAVE ME RAGE AND FRAILTY AND HOSTILE  
RECKLESSNESS AND WORRY WORRY WORRY DAPPLED WITH  
SUCH UNCOMPROMISING SHARDS OF BRILLIANCE AND LOVE  
IT SEEMED A KINDNESS IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO LET YOU  
GO AND NOT FOLD INTO A GRIEF SO DEEP IT WOULD BREAK  
NOT THE HEART BUT THE MIND THAT KNOWS THE OBOE'S  
SHRIEK AND THE WAY IT TEARS INTO RAGS THE SILENCE TO  
LET IN A BEAUTY TOO DAZZLING TO CONTAIN AND WHICH  
TURNS ITS MELODY INTO THE GRACE OF LIVABLE SPACE.

WHEN I WAS A BOY A DETECTIVE HANDLED ME AND I  
HANDLED HIM BACK LIKE THE PLUCK OF HARP STRINGS  
BEFORE THE TRILLING AND AFTER IT TOO WHEN ONLY BLOOD  
COULD SOFTEN THE SOUND OF OUR POPPED WIRE WHICH IS  
WHY I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AS WHEN I WAS A BOY.

YOU ACCEPTED LIKE A BEAST OF BURDEN THE WHIP OF A  
 STRANGER'S WORD AND THE MINDLESS MENACE IT HOLDS  
 AND THE SCAR IT LEAVES AS A DEFINITION YOU SPEND YOUR  
 LIFE REFUTING ALTHOUGH IT IS ONLY A SLIM LINE DRAWN ON  
 A SHORE AND QUICKLY DISSOLVED IN THE SEAWORLD ANY  
 MOMENT WHEN AN EQUALLY MINDLESS WAVE FONDLES IF  
 LIKE THE ACCIDENTAL TOUCH OF A FINGER ON A CLARINET  
 STOP THAT THE MUSICIAN CONVERTS INTO SILENCE IN  
 ORDER TO LET THE TRUE NOTE RING OUT LOUD.

*Bridy*  
*after*  
*their*  
*talk*

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND MALIGNANCY ONLY FEEDS IT,  
 MAKES IT BALLOON-FAT AND LOFTY FLOATING HIGH  
 OVERHEAD FEARFUL OF SINKING TO EARTH WHERE A BLADE  
 OF GRASS COULD PUNCTURE IT LETTING ITS WATERY FECES  
 SOIL THE ENTHRALLED AUDIENCE THE WAY MOLD RUINS



PIANO KEYS BOTH BLACK AND WHITE, SHARP AND FLAT TO  
PRODUCE A DIRGE OF ITS DECAY.

I REFUSE TO BE ASHAMED OF MY SHAME, YOU KNOW THE  
ONE ASSIGNED TO ME WHICH MATCHES THE LOW PRIORITY  
AND THE DEGRADED MORALITY OF THOSE WHO INSIST UPON  
THE MOST FACILE OF HUMAN FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY AND  
FLAW SIMPLY TO DISGUISE THEIR OWN COWARDICE BY  
PRETENDING IT IS IDENTICAL TO A BANJO'S PURITY.

I SAW A BUTTERFLY CLINGING TO A LEAF BROKEN BY THE  
SLAM OF A RAINDROP ON ITS WINGS FOLDING AND  
FLUTTERING AS IT HIT A POOL OF WATER BELOW YET EVEN  
THEN FIGHTING FOR THE LIFT THAT IS ITS NATURE AND DUE  
HAVING SHED THREE COCOONS EACH ONE A PROTECTING

PRISON FREE OF THE RAVAGE THAT THREATENS ITS DESTINY  
 AS SURE AS RAIN DESPOILS THE DIVINITY OF A  
 STRADEVARIUS.

I NEVER LOVED ANYBODY OR ANYTHING LIKE I LOVED YOU  
 AND SINCE I HAVE TO SEE YOU AGAIN I AM DETERMINED TO  
 JOIN YOU <sup>Among</sup> ~~BETWEEN~~ THE SKY-FIRE OF THOSE BURNING  
 ROILING ROCKS CALLED STARS WHERE YOU AND I WILL PLAY  
 THE MUSIC THAT MAKES THEM TURN AND WE WILL TALK AND  
 TALK AND TALK UNTIL ALL IS KNOWN AND UNDERSTOOD TO  
 BE AS PERFECT AND MEANINGFUL AS BIRDSONG.

*Bride  
the  
god.*



THE MOUTH HUNGRY FOR MORE OF WHAT IT IS SURE IS  
 THERE SOMEWHERE OUT THERE JUST WAITING FOR A  
 TONGUE AND SOME BREATH TO STROKE TEETH THAT BITE  
 THE NIGHT AND SWALLOW WHOLE THE WORLD DENIED YOU  
 SO GET RID OF THOSE SMOKEY DREAMS AND LIE DOWN IN  
 THE HOLE WHILE THEY <sup>surround you</sup> FILL IT WITH WHITE SAND FROM  
 SHORES YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN LAPPED BY WATERS SO  
 CRYSTAL AND BLUE THEY MAKE YOU SHED TEARS OF BLISS  
 AND LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU BELONG <sup>truly</sup> FINALLY TO THE  
 PLANET YOU WERE BORN ON AND NOW CAN JOIN <sup>us</sup> (THE OUT  
 THERE WORLD) IN THE DEEP PEACE OF A CELLO.

I TOOK MY HEART OUT AND GAVE IT TO <sup>Someone</sup> ~~WHOEVER NEEDED IT~~ <sup>made heartless by fame (and) who</sup>  
~~TO PUMP BLOOD INTO A BLEAK LIFE HIDING UNDER THE~~ <sup>needed it</sup>  
~~ROAR OF CROWDS SLOBBERING OR POUTING OR LICKING UP~~ <sup>to pump blood into a</sup>  
<sup>poisoning</sup> ~~THE~~ <sup>veins</sup>  
<sup>red</sup> THE FROTH THEY MISTAKE FOR HAPPINESS BECAUSE <sup>dessicated</sup>  
 HAPPINESS LOOKS JUST LIKE A HEART PAINTED ON A <sup>by the</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>suck</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>17007</sup>

VALENTINE CUP OR TATTOED ON AN ARM THAT HAS NEVER  
 HELD A VICTIM OR COMFORTED A FRIEND <sup>hurt</sup> ~~SUCKING AIR IN~~ ~~BROKEN IN~~

DESPAIR AT THE WRECK OF LIFE. I TOOK IT OUT AND THE

SPACE IT LEFT CLOSED TIGHT SUTURED LIKE THE SKIN OF A

DRUM.

( was filled with the whole damn world.

HER IMAGINATION IS IMPECCABLE THE WAY IT CUTS AND

SCRAPES THE BONE NEVER TOUCHING THE MARROW WHERE

THAT AWFUL FEELING IS THRUMMING LIKE A FIDDLE FOR

FEAR ITS STRINGS WILL BREAK AND SCREECH THE LOSS OF

ITS TUNE SINCE FOR HER PERMANENT IGNORANCE IS SO

MUCH BETTER THAN THE QUICK OF LIFE.

June 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 AM  
 dinner 3 Commencement?  
 \* lumbar pillows



~~Buy pad~~

June 27  
th  
Dr. C. C. C. C. C.

June 27  
th  
Dr. C. C. C. C. C.

917 553 6223

Cell  
Fax  
Saturday