

It's Okay to Cry (repeat understud)

Allowing ~~for~~ 30 minutes for ^[cold] unmeant hugs around the graveside of the grandmother who raised them and Martha will be on her way from S. Ga to West Florida with her ~~problem~~ sister Pickle - - nineteen, but an adolescent mess - - and already ^{Martha} she wants to turn around & take back her ~~invitation~~ ^{offer} to ~~take Pickle~~ ^{re-raise her sister} to raise.

Passing before the casket at the altar of the little country church, Martha slips her left arm around Pickle and she presses her warm fat body into Martha's and moans, and Martha feels her own face flush raw and tears stand in her eyes. But Pickle's broad ~~white~~ face ~~remains~~ pale & plastic, her gold eyes dry. Martha walks her sister toward the door and the assorted kin bunched there, ~~and releases her grip on~~ Pickle but still she hovers close. Her hair is flaxen - - she was a cute fat kid but now she is ugly, greedy, mean.

(strong word) Martha, ~~has~~ ^{has} had just enough college psychology to ~~blame~~ ^{blame} that Pickle can't help ~~how she is~~ ^{but she is}, that ~~her mother~~ ^{their mother} having hung herself in jail and their daddy having died an alcoholic ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~the~~ ^{the} reason, that ~~Pickle's~~ ^{Pickle's} ~~problem~~ ^{problem} is a result of all that and reversible. ^{Altogether the} ^{for} ^{made.} But ~~the~~ ^{the} sweet old lady with the stern death face has ~~tried~~ ^{tried} ~~made~~ ^{made} allowances, ~~has~~ ^{has} ~~loved~~ ^{loved} Pickle - - the last person in the world who would tolerate the stealing & lying. ^{she ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~supposed~~ ^{supposed} to love her.} All except for Martha.

"Let's go," Martha says and starts walking toward her little jeep wrangler in front the sideyard of the church. She doesn't look ~~back~~ ^{behind} & half hopes that Pickle isn't following, but on quick side glance at the dry grass lawn reveals Pickle's bulk in shadow. Same as they were from ~~the time~~ ^{as far back as} Martha could remember, ^{up} until she left home.

The sun is beaming down, glancing off the parked cars, and steaming her body beneath the navy blazer. She ~~shoves~~ ^{slides} it down over her shoulder & chucks the sleeve from her sweaty arms. Then slings it over her right shoulder, still walking. Heavily behind her Pickle's pointy-toed shoes skimming the grass. Won't pick up her feet. Separator one of many, of her sloveness. Her fear, maybe, of leaving the only place, the only people, she's ever known. Martha would like to look back, to see if those people ~~were~~ ^{are} watching her go. Watching them go. Best she doesn't.

When she gets to the red ~~Jeep~~ ^{Jeepster}, she opens the door with the remote -- she never can remember to do it from a distance -- ~~she~~ ^{she} gets in & slings across her blazer to the ^{rear} seat. Pickle stands at the other window, ~~glaring~~ ^{glaring} ~~at~~ ^{at} her. Her rattle snake eyes fixed on Martha ~~through~~ ^{through} the hot glass.

"Let's open," Martha says, arranging her tone, her face, her feelings. She starts the truck and the air conditioner blasts the unbeatable heat.

"... Pickle opens the door & has to lurch up her green stranger

skirt to step up. To get in. She laughs & hoists 3
herself up to the seat. The ~~seats~~ ^(girl skirt) Martha bought her to
near to the funeral looks wretched. Her curled hair
is a bird's nest.

Martha takes the folded hand-drawn map from
her pants pocket, James unfolds it & stares down at
the maze of roads that will take her to Interstate
10. If she's lucky. She passes it to Pickle.

"You direct me," she says. If Pickle takes the
paper in her left hand -- not right, mind you --
& jams her face ^{her severely whiplash hair} ~~Martha~~ has never thought
about it before, but now thinks wonder whether
Pickle, ^{who's quite smart, pregnant at 15, and suddenly} ~~can~~ ^{read} ~~read~~.

Whole project of re-raising Pickle seems overwhelmingly --
Where to start? Can she ever afford to feed her
on her meager salary at Electrofax? She tries
to picture Pickle working at Bell South, but
lowers her to the status of a McDonald's clerk,
Pickle, who won't even pick up her own underwear,
as a McDonald's clerk?

"Ought to be in Mobile or Tallahassee by
six," says Martha.

"You got a pool?" Pickle asks. One fat
ankle propped on a fat knee. Skirt up to her
crotch. Dungy white pants. Shoes side ways on
the floor.

"No pool," says Martha, ^{Pickle} ~~she~~ can't help it.

"Cable?"

"No, cable."

"What you do for fun?"

"Study for next day's test at PSU."

"God!" Pickle stares out the window at ~~the~~ pine woods, at a field of cut hay with spool-like rolls against a fence.

"You won't be bored," says Martha. "You'll be too busy to get bored."

"What I'm scared of," says Pickle. Her speech is spit-thick, and Martha can tell she is deep. She passes her a paper cup from the holder on the center console.

"Here," says Martha.

She spits. Brownish saliva like coffee.

"All of it," says Martha.

~~And~~ Pickle laughs low in her throat. "You kidding?"

"No, I'm not."

"God!" She spits the dip with a plunch into the cup, ~~rolls~~ ^{cracks} the window down & tosses it out. Brown spittle flies, spackling the rear window on that side.

"Let's get this straight," says Martha. "I can hardly afford to feed myself, so I won't be spending money on Skool." Or drugs, she thinks.

"Maybe I oughta stayed with Dad," Pickle says & looks back as if to see her step-grandfather.

"Martha turns south at the next fork in the 5 road, shifts gear. "Seems like I recall him telling you he was through."

"Hell, Martha. Wilbur's ~~don't mean about~~ always saying stuff like that, I wish I had her old Caprice & he like to had a heart attack. Next week, he hauled off & handed me the truck key."

Martha driver - Trying to run up ^{success} Pickle's condition. If only she can find ~~some way to~~ a name for it, she can handle it. For instance Pickle acts like a ^{rebellious} spoiled teenager. But that's not true; Pickle ^{wants to belong} runs with ^{drugs} (she ^{can't} accept by a better class). But that's not it either. Martha is back to the problem of being an orphan. But she has ^{been} raised by the same people in the same place under the same circumstances. And it scares the hell out of her to think she might yet turn out like Pickle.

Another backwoods road past neat farm houses, the another, and soon they are ^{nearly passing} Hardeen, an Amoco, followed the blue 175 sign west toward with the sun. "You ain't hungry?" Pickle asks, holding to her fat shamed calf & yanking her foot lifter. "Not yet," Martha says & stares ahead as if she hasn't seen the Hardeen.

A sharp left and they are on the entrance ramp to the interstate, No backing up now. She merges neatly with on-coming traffic. The jeep wobbled as a semi passed on the right. Pickle gives him two fingers and snorts.

A long silver car with a gray-haired couple passenger. Pickle gives them two fingers and snorts.

"Try waving instead," says Martha.

"You wave your ownself," says Pickle.

"I'm not about to argue with you."

"Yeah, you will. Just like Mama Wellman."

"Was that after ^{before} you wrote 15,000 dollar worth of bad checks on them?" ~~before~~

"That again?" Pickle places both feet on the floor & the chuckle rises from her jutting breasts. "I'll just get out up here if that's how it's gonna be."

"I'm sorry, Pickle. Truly, I am."

"Truly, I am."

To make up for lugging along Pickle's pack, Martha pulls off at about the fifth exit since they got on the interstate. Making certain ~~there~~ enough time has lapsed since Pickle offered to get out, she motor up to the STOP sign, then left to a Chic Filet.

"They ain't open on Sundays," Pickle says.

"Oh, yeah. I forgot."

Pickle chuckles as if to say, "See how smart I am?"
"This 'Right yonder in a Kentucky Fried,'" she adds,
pointing farther west up the highway where the
sun is melting down behind a billboard ~~for~~
with three ~~happily~~ young women bare to the ~~the~~ printline --
We Bare All. Which Pickle proceeds to read.

~~She can read~~
The fact that she can read does not, under the
circumstances, ~~lift~~ cause Martha to feel happy,

Under the brilliant yellow & white restaurant
Pickle orders the dinner with a side of corn on the cob.
Same yellow on the walls and pickled hair. The
green suit under the white lights makes her skin
look green. She eats fast & much, storing the
slick greasy brown gray in the ~~center~~ ^{wells} of her
mashed potatoes. Side bar food from the booth
& goes back to the counter for a refill of Coke.
When she scoots back into the booth,
the lapels of her green jacket fall open &
Martha can see the circle imprint of a Skoal
can in her bosom.

"Better take that cup with you," she says &
gets up & dumps her snacks box in the
garbage can. Then heads for the restroom.
When she gets back, Pickle is in the booth,
and suddenly she panics. The ~~lights~~ ^{lights} over head make
her feel ^{disoriented} she can't locate the door on the
left from the window. That kind of feeling. Then she sees the

broad sun out thru the window: Pickle just
standy there, sipping Coke thru a straw without
let up.

It's almost dark and the strip mall lights
overwhelm the daylight ^{or need} light of sundown.
Martha gets into the truck & feels it is all
starting over when Pickle stands there waiting
for her to unlock the unlocked door.

#

(need to make drive longer - university in
Tampa, maybe) (Pickle plundering glove compartment,
then starts something - remark about Martha's
men's shoes. has told all her friends she is
a lesbian - not true) [raining, slurping on straw,
sounds like she is crying but not, wipes gruffly
& chuggin' slapping. [love bug?]

smells - tastes - etc

Radio

9

Just past the Florida line, the rain of
lovebug turns into real rain, but still the
milky starburst of bugs sticks to the windshield.

The rain stops & starts, and Martha, finally
switching the wiper knob from intermittent to slow,
finally turns it off but keeps her right hand on
the lever to ~~manipulate~~ keep it into action as
the rain accumulates. The sky ahead is racked with
nasty clouds but overhead the sky is only patchy.
Another 10 miles farther & the rain is steady &
the car lights in the opposite lanes ~~just~~
on the & slide on the wet gravel and Pickle
sleeps up the wipers for ice. She wipers stop
of a kind & Martha thinks Pickle is crying. She
But she tries to look over Pickle's face as ^{aled} pine green
in the dash light. Her mouth ^{pointy lips} closed
wrapped around the straw, cup ^{with both hands}
"I thought you were crying," Martha says.
Pickle lets go of the straw, says, "How come?"
"Just sounded like it."
"I mean how come would I be crying?"
"I guess because our mother just died."
"Grandmother, besides, you know I don't cry."
"You could," says Martha. "I mean, sometimes
I wish you would."
"How come?" She hunches the window down
& patches the cup out into the rain. It

"You got any crackers or gum?" She opens the glove compartment.

"It'll help you lose weight if you want to."

"Yeah. Like I ain't tried."

"All you have to do is eat healthy & slow."

No answer. She lifts the map & the ~~auto manual~~ & ~~feels~~ pulls out a ~~sigaret~~ red Bic lighter. "You smoke?"

"No."

"Pot. I bet you do pot. All them college kids smoke pot."

"I don't."

The rain has stopped & Martha turns off the wipers and the truck goes quiet & she ~~she~~ as she passes ~~the~~ ~~car~~ ~~head~~, out of the corner of her eye, she sees Pickle straighten & slip something into her ~~shirt~~ pocket.

"All you had to do was ask. I would have given you the lighter."

And then in an overhead light at an exit, she sees the red lighter ~~on top of the map & manual~~. What has she taken? What was in the glove compartment? Nothing of value. Nothing important. But it's the principle...

The rain starts again, ~~slashing~~ marks in the semi-dark. Martha has to lean forward & strain to see ahead. Light traffic & oily pools that spatter like glass ~~with each~~ onto that ~~hits them~~. Checkbook. A spare checkbook was in the glove box. She cuts her eyes quickly at Pickle, now copying her ~~legs~~ ~~with~~ Skool. When she looks at the highway again she is so

close to the bumper of a semi that she can see the greasy axle beneath (the cave of a pole) I — She brakes, the Jeep slides into the left lane, and right ~~side~~ lands itself in the median. Facing ~~north~~ Georgia & backstop of ~~the~~ cypress & gingery & thump ~~rise~~ rise to meet ~~the~~ overheated voice. "You trying to get me killed?"

Martha just sits with both arms on the steering wheel, lights blurry on the wet grass of the ~~south bound~~ south bound traffic slowly to look.

"You don't care about anybody," Martha shouts, not looking because she can't bear to. "You didn't care about Mama and you don't care about me." Then she looks, really looks. "You don't even care about you." "I don't know if you can care. So tell me, how the hell can I drive with you robbing me & smothering off."

"I'm out of here," she says & opens the door & gets out & picks up her girly new pointy-toed shoes, slams the door & starts walking up the median, toward Georgia bonds.

Martha cries, ^{sentimental} watching them ~~the~~ blur of lean & rain. Watches till the broad green sun

flashes hair vanishes from sight. And she is momentarily glad ~~not~~ to no longer see her hear her. She starts to turn only to to interstate, headed in the other direction, ~~then~~ has to wait from the slow moving traffic to this break, but wheels the Jeep into the center of the median & starts ~~drudgely~~ ^{drudgely}. Soon she sees Pickle walking ahead. Then as if ~~for~~ for Martha's benefit, Pickle steps to the edge of the interstate & sticks out her right thumb. Moving her lips when the car ^{slowly} ~~can~~ pass her by.

Martha pulls alongside. Buys the window down & yells thru the rain & the ~~slippery~~ ^{slippery} car tires, the semi's roaring,

"Pickle, come on. Get in here."

Pickle keeps standing there, alone, pitiable wet. Thumb out.

Martha starts to get out of the truck, yelling, "Come on, get in the truck. Right now, get in the truck!" Her voice coming hoarse & thick & obliterated.

One glance back from Pickle & she steps out into the middle of the highway & stands & even begins to

step side to side & back, cars slowing
& swerving, and Martha stands on the
edge of the highway, yelling yelling, but
Pickle only repeats the steps, like hopscotch,
yes hopscotch. And then in the light
of a semi, Martha sees the tears
shine in those rattle snake eyes.

saw girls at a funeral + older was
going to take care of younger
who was a "mess"

Betham - older
Holley - younger