

"Y'all come on, ^{Buddy} ~~free~~," I holler to the young'un
 walk across the sand to the shallow part where the
 sand looks scalloped under the ~~sun's~~ ^{sun's} water. ^{It can smell fryin' fish and}
 Thunder booms downwind where the soapstone ^{other side of the} ~~other~~ ^{Mr. Shaw} ~~side~~ ^{may} ~~side~~ ^{stay}

turns to sand bar & willows & tules.
 I'm trying to be a writer. Mr. Shaw (Allen) says I'm
 got what it takes, but the way he twists what he's saying, that could mean somethin' else.
 Preme & Lizabeth both start whining, rolling to their backs & floating
 toward the dropoff and I step off the bank to the cool water &
 grab pick up Lizabeth & pop ^{Buddy} ~~pick~~ ^{up} ~~up~~ ^{side} the head and he just
 sets (site) in the water up to his skinny chest and cries with his
 head hung.

~~When~~ I tell you something I mean it, I say more to make
 myself feel better than him. I start ~~swimming~~ ^{plowing} thru the water, with
 Lizabeth ^{with} baby ^{snuggled to my white t-shirt} ~~snuggled to my white t-shirt~~. Generally, I let Buddy get
 away with murder because I feel guilty for getting pregnant with
 him and having to get married to B. marry Bobby. No, I feel
 bad about not likin' ~~Buddy~~ ^{Buddy} about half the time cause he's ^{the reason I married Bobby} ~~reminds me~~ ^{of}
 of Bobby. ~~And~~ He's beginnin' to act dumb like Bobby too, and I kind of
 dread Mr. Shaw meetin' her and wish for about the millionth time that
 I had ~~not~~ ^{invited} him to come to Drama & Daddy's Fourth of
 July picnic. With Bobby's family here, at that.

I need my head examined.

Halfway up the steep sandy bank I have to stop & pick a bamboo thorn
 out of Buddy's heel and stand the baby in the snakey bucket round the
 fall ^{big oak} ~~big oak~~ ^{lay} ~~lay~~ ^{on} ~~on~~ ^{broadside} ~~broadside~~ where, other side, Mama is layin' too, shrill &
~~and~~ talkin' too much, and I know she's tryin' to what they call "bridge
 the gap" between the Fender Bunch and Mr. Shaw while fryin' fish
 out doors with a storm comin' up.

Shit!

At the top of the bank, with Buddy bawling behind me, I see Mr. Shaw
 setting in a brack-wheeled green lawn chair in his ^{Princeton} ~~Princeton~~ ^{shirt} ~~shirt ^{with} ~~with~~ ^{his} ~~his ^{ponytail} ~~ponytail~~ ^{trapped} ~~trapped~~ ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{back} ~~back,
 to my daddy and mama in law, just watchin' Bobby with his ^{white} ~~white~~ ^{hairless} ~~hairless~~ ^{legs} ~~legs~~
 and scratchin' at the picnic table about 3 feet away, who is scratchin' his
 hairless white chest with his dirty fingernails and glory at Mr. Shaw.~~~~~~~~

So back
part

It can't tell yet where (whether) everybody has been caught on that I'm having a ~~bit~~ part of affair with Mr. Shaw. They ain't talkin' to him, but that's probably cause he ain't talkin' to them neither, or cause he's from New Jersey. So far, he's just kissed me in the library.

Miss Fann, my mother-in-law sees us coming up the bank & quite layin' out paper plates & napkins & heads for Buddy who is ^{still} bowing his head off. She picks him up, shushy him, and carries him to a ^{new} chair on a little hill of thorny bushes, set a down & rocks him.

~~The wind picks~~
Mama & Daddy are standing over the high table nailed to a tree - him fryin' fish & her melt meal there.

The wind picks up & the sun spots under the gum soot and the white paper napkins start blowin' like acher and Mama squeals & says ^{in her company voice} "Allen, go get them napkins, for me, will you?"

~~He has called him Allen. She has called him Allen.~~

~~It can't~~
She seems to she acts like teacher think if she keeps talkin' steady no storm word come and Bobby won't catch on that I'm bent to walk out on him for Mr. Shaw. Allen! She called him Allen, I can always depend on Mama.

~~the dog way~~
Minky, my father-daddy in law, sits over to where Daddy's fryin' fish on his gold chain necklace & knit agree shorts and talks thru the side of his mouth. They laugh. Minky goes to his pick-up parked amongs off in the trees & comes back with 2 Bud's ~~same~~ by Bud alongside held low on his ^{thin} hairy legs, like if Miss Fann don't see ~~them~~ see them she'll think he's gettin' for Ren, my daddy, who she know drinks ~~but~~ anyway and what he know to be a rounder so it don't matter. Then are lets that,

Winky got the piles and I hope he hasn't mentioned it.

(thunder) talk about the rain - hurry & eat

Aunt Nonnie -- Bobby's aunt, not mine -- is

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sitting next to Bobby's Grammy in the line of fishy grease
smoke, ^{watching} Mr. Shaw, who ^{is} gathering naphkin in his ^{hand} way
up and move her chair a little over
and the wind whips the smoke to her made-up face. She
holds her short black beauty-parlor hair and sets again

Grammy looks like a prune ^(chick) she's so wrinkled & old, but
her hair is still dark and she's tall and skinnny from
smoking all her life. Her ~~nickel eye~~ "flak" ret's gone
rain, y'all y" she says and nobody but me don't
even hear her.

Mr. Shaw has gathered up all the ^{white} paper napkins
& plates and is putting them on the picnic table with
the tin foil - tented potato salad & cold (cole?) slaw
and ^{almond} dark sugary tea. He's got that a little mocky
smile playing at the corner of his mouth. He has a

patience that would be ugly if he wasn't so cute,

so I ^{straddled} over his hip, show him how to set the potato
salad on top of the naphkin to keep them from blowing
and my hand touches his and he stares up with those
~~mingled~~ speckled grey eyes and I can feel Bobby, ^{watching}
us and figure he knows, can't help not knowing since
I ain't let him come near me in I don't know when

I set the baby on his lap and he bumps her up &
down on his knee & she snakes or ak ak ak ~~stange~~
sounded that vibrator & he does it too, and I'm
~~so embarrassed~~ hope it rains, hope it rains right in
Daddy's hot grease and everybody has to light out to their
cars. I wish I could get in Mr. Shaw's white Pinto

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which it can see thru the trees is parked next to Daddy's
new blue Bronco. But next thing I know, the world is
dying down & the sun spots is ^(are) back on the gray
dirt and green leaves.

Aunt Nonnie ~~keeps~~ ^{has been stepping} to the ridge of the bank
& eyeing the east bound clouds & yelling for every to hurry
up, about every five minutes, "it's gone rain", and
now she holler out, "it's passed over", thunder
rumbles east with the stream of smoke.

~~Seems~~ like Mama is back to her old self, playing
hostess to God, and is offering iced tea in red
Solo cups to everybody.

Mr. Shaw, slid low on his lounge chair, says, "I'll have
some bottled water, if you have it," and Bobby stops ~~bringing~~
the baby & saying ah-ah-ah and fawn at him.

Mama goes over to the ice chest, gets another cup of ice &
pours water from a gallon plastic jug and brings it back to
him.

"Where you from?" says Winkie ^{to Mr. Shaw}, getting friendly now that
he has had a beer or two.

"Most recently from Princeton, Pa.," says Mr. Shaw.

"What's a Yankee doing way down here?" says Bobbie, feeding
the baby ^{the} from his ^{own} cups.

"Teaching," says Mr. Shaw & sips his water.

"Man knows a good thing," says Daddy with his fork
raised. The grease is getting too hot, & he turns the knob on his gas
burner, adding, "This is where the money is, right, man?"

Mr. Shaw sips more water, his eyes lily over the red cup at
me.

A smile.

Granny says, "Nonnie, I'm out of cigarettes and
nattles has empty pack of Kools at her daughter's."

Nonnie struggles up from her chair and waddle
toward the car in her big dungarees. All day.

"Well, reckon it'll ^{be} just a little ^{say a Bobby and}
hands the baby to me ^{to get the baby & tip the baby into the truck} she sucks her thumb & snuggles
into my neck.

"Gidget," says Mamer at the feet table, "why don't
you go on & pick the young'un's plates before they
fall asleep on us."

About that time I hear ^{my brother} Knocker's ~~old~~ green
Ford pickup idling thru the woods toward the
river. And in a few minutes I hear his three
young'un hollering and bawling out. His wife Shirl
comes walking up, don't speak to nobody, and the
young'un streak out down the bank & head for
the water. Shirl's black hair is skint back, slick
like it ain't been washed in a month of Sundays. She
has on a short light denim skirt and a pink knit top
and sandals with red nail polish wore off halfway her
toenails.

Knocker comes ambling up, lugging two long green-
streaked water melons & ~~drops~~ drops them by the picnic table.

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"Y'all bout to miss the party," says Mama & swirls
around the cook table and hugs Knocker with her messy
hands out to keep from messing up his thin white polo.

"Knocker," I say, "this is my teacher, Mr Shaw,"
and he ~~point~~ ^{point} & bitts his head at Mr Shaw who stands
with his dark, muscled legs straddled to ~~chair~~ ^{lounge chair}
& holds out one hand. Knocker shakes it, tying
the Princeton shirt.

"Shirt's alley must be acting up again," say
Granny to Nonnie as she hands over the ^{fresh packed}
Kools.

"Got the black an," Aunt Nonnie says low &
goes over to where Daddy's taking egg fish out
from paper sack. She reaches inside and pulls out
a small brown bean & punches it to bait & eats it.

"Always was a sight for fish bait," say Granny
smoking with her blue Keds around.

Then I am in singly a church song with Buddy asleep
on her lap.

"I'm going down for a swim," I say, "if you see look
after Sijeth."

"Y'all go on," say Mama, waving her hands. "You young
people go swim till the fish gets done."

⁴² I head down bank, listening behind me to see if
Mr Shaw is following. I think I hear his white tennis shoes

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squeaking in the sand but I don't look back.
Bobby is casting his net & rod (I put the rod) into
the black water with his back to me.

I walk on past him to the shallow water,
step out of my shorts and wade in with my shirt on.
He watches me, reels in, ~~and in a moment~~ ^{then looks back at Mr Shaw}
stand about halfway down the bank watching me to,
Bobby walks ^{slump} ~~off~~ ^{shoulder} down river where the clouds are banky
again. More thunder. He's ~~slump~~ ^{slump} ~~shoulder~~

Mr Shaw sits on the bank with his hands locked
around his legs and puts on ~~his~~ ^{good-lensed} sunglasses &
I can't tell where (whether) he is watching me or
Bobby or both of us.

I hear music changing thru the woods off the
opposite bank & a truck rattling & roaring. In
a minute it stops at the blue tent and
about a half dozen people get out. The truck
stops but the music goes on. (unloading ice chests, etc
laughing)

~~Kind of knowing Dad is trying to shoot across
the river I walk back across~~

Two mean-looking boys, about ten & twelve, dive from
the weedy cliff to the black water, ^{pop up like bed eggs,} I try to think
what Mr Shaw is thinking about them, about us,
& La chicks, I know that. And I feel kind of mad at him,
a little tired of him & his high-falutin way, but not
tired enough yet. I know better but I wish we could

go walking upstream, looking for driftwood and nobody would even notice or care

Bobby is standing on a rock ledge down river, ~~catch~~ fishing and not even looking back which makes me sorry for him. He's a good mechanic - best in Swanton Co - and for a fact has never been ~~nothing~~ but good to me & the babies. We have never gone without food & clothes & a roof over our heads, and as Mama says, Looker ain't every thing.

It wait till I see wires of lightning in the navy clouds before I wade out & across the scorchy sand start up the bank north of where Bobby is fishing and Mr Shaw is sitting like I'm there with both of them

A long aluminum pan of fish & hugh pepper is on the table & Aunt Nonnie & Mrs Jan & Harry & Mame are (is?) hurrying around, family flies & hanging to blowing napkins, I trying to hurry everybody eating before the rain starts. It is almost dark under the trees, but the thunder still sounds way off. Buddy is whing, setting at the picnic table with a orange beach towel wrapped around him.

I don't think nothing about it at first, but nobody ^{except Mame} ever speaks to me. If ~~any~~ is in her "So tell yell at Bobby & your friend to come on & eat," she says ~~the~~ ^{the} try to make my friend

(Shirley's youngun are swimming - she's sitting on a log) 10
into Bobby's friend. She is slipping baked beans
with bacon strips on top to a plate for Daddy, who

is sitting crosslegged on the broadside oak and
drinking beer & staring across the river at the
other picnickers. She hands him the plate & he
says, "Look like we got enough ~~beans~~ ^{some} without
that bunch," he says & nodding at the river.

I start fixing my plate, sure now that
everybody knows about me & Mr. Shaw - ~~Mr. Shaw~~ ^{Miss Lane} is
glaring at me like the biggest sinner since Mary Magdalene.
So I go on & fix a plate for "my friend" and go down
the trail where he is sitting & hand it to him.

"I'm sorry," I say and hand him the plate &
fish & corn dodgers & beans & cole slaw, look out
down & look up at Bobby with his rod & reel
walking up bank. He gets ^{up} ~~up~~ ^{to} where we ~~get~~ ^{get} & says,
"You ~~don't~~ ^{don't} ~~get~~ ^{get} the youngun I can tell you ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~right~~ ^{right}," and
goes on up. (wind blowing, clouds)

I set my plate down and cover my face with
my hands.

(Go back - nothing has happened - the teacher doesn't
even know she has a crush on him) ^{she's embarrassed because they both ~~are~~ ^{are} acting like they are lovers -}

"What ~~does~~ ^{does} ~~that~~ ^{that} mean?" says Mr. Shaw.

"I don't know," I say and we sit together watching yet another
storm cloud pass with out rain.

The sun out, it's about 3:00 and I am mad now. I help Mama & Aunt Nonnie pack up the food, her still try ing to talk our whole family's way out of trouble with the Germans.

Every body else but Gramie, has gone swimming, all except ^{Gramie & Miss Sam} Shirl who is ~~watching the younguns swim & slapping at the~~ ^{sitting in their truck} yellow flies on her white legs & arms. (Knocker)

Daddy & Winby are sitting by the water, drinky Beer, and watching the other picnicker swiming & eat. Bobby is off fishing in the black hole. Mr Shan ain't moved from his spot, halfway up the banks.

Knocker comes up to me & gets one of the watermelon & a bitter lime and goes back down & cuts a big wedge for the younguns.

When we get done putting up the food & picking up trash, I go on down with Mama & Aunt Nonnie & Mama.

At some point the squat man with the song across the river has started mouthing back at Daddy till they've got a regular war going but can't get at each other for the river between.

Mama tells Daddy to hush up and he tells her to go to hell he's got his rights & don't appreciate

a bunch of loafers messing up his fourth of July pic 12
corkout.

The man on the far bank goes to his truck &
Mama says she he could be going for a gun & starts
trying to get every body rounded up & up the bank.

The man comes back with a ~~red~~ great big
American flag & stakes it into the dirt so inherent it is
flying high in the cypress & pines, and I

don't know what comes over me, but all of
sudden I don't have to live ~~with~~ ^{for} Bobby's family,

ain't no law says I gotta suffer ~~now~~
be just like his family or my family because I got
bored & moved into them - (distracted)

I slip my white T-shirt over my head &
stand there in my black bikini with neon green
& pink dots & dive into the black hole where
Bobby is fishing.

When I come up I see every body watching
me with their mouths open & Mr Shaw
still sitting on the bank with his ~~eyes~~
narrowly ~~the~~ glaring sun -

(she has gone to church with Miss Lane, cooked cleaned etc,
tried to be everything I go to school