illusions – pretend – act – mirrors – Throw-back of self – woman of girl/girl of woman – witness in mirror, reflection of each other – the girl sees herself in Myrtle/Myrtle sees herself in girl

The Witness

Myrtle, alias Aunt Martha, dabbed at her crepe-paper cheeks with a towel. If they didn't come on she'd have to redo her make-up. It was that hot.

She fanned the steamy bathroom with the door – tried to. But each swing back it stuck on popped-up tile. The peep-hole of a window wouldn't open and the pink plastic shower curtain trimmed from the shower curtain was dripping with sweat.

The (nicked) mirror over the sink, though (immune to anything) squeezed shot back the image of one black arched eyebrow & the other receding to a thin gray smudge. She picked up the eyebrow pencil & leaning close to the mirror, drew it again, bracing her elbow against the slobbering wall. In contrast to her orange hair, her eyebrows were too stark; and though she didn't quite approve of them that way at least they accented her recessed blue eyes. She looked washed-out without it.

Squatting, she picked up & swigged from the beer Golden had brought over from the beer joint with the message that a couple getting married needed a witness.

She'd done it before and she'd do it again –

mirror immune to anything pencil draws

anything for fine breaks. She'd done worse. Inside the line

And holed up here in this drab shack with the worst sheddlone

could drive a woman to do worse than the worst she'd done, & he needed to get out.

She lit She stood, lighting a cigaret, and finished

Probably touched on a little more mascara to bring out her

eyes. Spitting on the tiny brush, she tried to hump up

the clumps on her lashes and poked herself in

the eye. She blinked and blinked, lifting her face to prevent tears from

damaging the face she'd just made and smelled her good turquoise rayon dress scorching.

Clapping at the pin points of holes, scorching

to the size of the cigarette tips, she burned her palm & spied the other holes nearer the hem. older black-rimmed scars of holes near the hem.

"Shit!" she said, kicking over the beer to

thick runnels, like urine, across the dingy white

tiles.

A car horn sounded out front. She listened

to the gunning and coming at the liquor store next

door, out front, trying to determine sportscar type sounds of her ride

automobile stopping, passing and sulky up. There was

always a racket to beat all. She was still lonely.

The horn blew again — out front, she decided.

Hanging the cigaret between her lipstick

stuck lips, she dashed through the kitchen, grabbing

her cloth shoulder bag from the table, through the

cluttered dismal living room and out the front door.

~~Just~~ A swayback tabby cat slunk through the screen door. ~~Or she let the door go, it trapped his tail, and he~~ arched his body & curled round, screeching ~~roller & then jerk free inside.~~ jerked free.

"Shit!" she said, looking back a hen through the screen as he meandered through the living room like ~~he doesn't give a shit, passing the sun shadows from the scrub oaks (canon)~~ just off.

Two quick beeps sounded-off from the 1962 burgundy Cherry parked in the big lot, new barewood, 1962 Rolly out front.

"Coming," she called.

Loud music reaped out the cinder block beer joint on the right, where the narrow white highway opened into Florida between flanks of tall pines, filled with the deep woods. On her left, the straight road was black top. The same road stretching white in the September sun, the Fla side was more forlorn, promise. She carried small the mail, pretty asphalt from the black top, something sharp in the air.

With the heat like this, so thick, it seemed as if stiff with the humming of the locusts ~~added to its density~~. When she left, it would be to the south: Florida. And it would be with someone less & more than Golden: sulky, thick-tongued, flat-faced, beer-bellied. She was that old, despite her 45 years.

Going down the shaky door steps, the right heel on her white pumps wobbled and she turned her ankle. "Shit!" she said, wobbling across the yard of sand laced with gravel to the little car.

idling ~~a~~ alive with giggles.

"Kids!" she said. "Well, if they fool enough..."

"Howdy-do!" said the boy, who was driving, his clean sharp face striking her eyes like the glare of the windshield.

~~The girl glanced at Myrtle & leaned against the boy who obviously was already tight from his pressure.~~ Sliding nearer to the boy where already she ~~[illegible]~~ snuggled ~~against~~ to him.

"How y'all?" said Myrtle, sliding in next to the girl's long golden legs. (She was wearing white short shorts, Myrtle observed, and from her cropped-top ~~print~~ knit shirt up her body and face seemed too short for her legs. Her hair was golden — natural gold, Myrtle observed — and cropped, full & ~~thick~~ wavy. She was chewing ~~a~~ intense gum. A broken pack lay on the dash.

"Was the one we s'posed to pick up for us-women?" the boy said, already ~~gunning~~ swerving around ~~heading~~ towards the Ole.

"That's me" Myrtle said, trying to locate an ash tray to stub out her cigarette. Finding none, she ~~[illegible]~~ flipped it out the window. "I'm your Aunt Martha," she said to the girl, leaning ~~[illegible]~~ toward her.

The girl looked at her, squinted her narrow green eyes and placed her hand on the boy's long ~~[illegible]~~ leg, looking ahead. Her nose was ~~[illegible]~~ the most perfect thing ~~[illegible]~~ hardly any nostrils. ~~[illegible]~~ nose Myrtle had seen since ~~[illegible]~~ dolls. Not a day over 15, Myrtle thought.

"My name's Pete," said the boy, drawing with one hand. [illegible] The other [illegible] across the back of the seat, [illegible] patting the girl hard on the shoulder. He looked down at her, "And this is my wife-to-be, Nanette."

"Pleased to meet you," Myrtle said, rolling up the window to keep from ruining her hair. "Don't it hot?"

"U-tell you!" the boy said, looking at the road opening up before them in sun-streaked shadows. Again, he looked at the girl, [illegible] his flat top haircut showing a bald spot on top [illegible] of his pumpkin-blonde hair.

They'd have some pretty babies, Myrtle thought.

"So, y'all [illegible] taking the big step?" she said.

"Mighty right!" he said, still gazing at the girl who was [illegible] her since [illegible] stare, [illegible] which [illegible] crooned "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." He gritted his teeth and moved her on the forehead. She raised her eyes to his and maintained to some veiled expression while emanating a hot earnest yearning, as of adventure or coming to terms with something yet untapped.

"Pore birds," said Myrtle, unable to think of anything else to say. And didn't she always say it while thinking it wouldn't last. [illegible] She,

herself had been in & out of love fifteen ~~other~~ times ~~fifteen~~ at least in fifteen different states and when the last one in Tennessee had worked out, she'd decided to quit with marriage & go on anyhow, the relationships. Thaft, now, she didn't bother to call them love, just necessity.

"Where y'all from?" she said.

"Tuckaseegee," the boy said.

"Kidding," said Myrtle — they all were. "Why that's my old stomping ground!"

The girl shuddered, burying her face on the boy's shoulder.

"Oh all right, sugar," he said, laughing. Aunt Martha used to keep secrets. Don't you, Aunt Martha?

"Lord, Honey, I don't count how many," said Myrtle, flicking her thick red finger nails in a pek! pek! pek! sound although fallfing them up.

The girl glared sideways at her, tight chewing one corner of her tight cushiony mouth.

"You don't got to worry about me," Myrtle said, reaching over & patting the girl's slick flank.

As though forcibly, against a natural urge to flinch, the girl rocked her knees.

"You must be running away from your old man?" Myrtle said, gazing at her. The girl shied away

like — young doe.

"I don't to let you in on a little secret, sugar," Myrtle said, speaking low around the steady whirring of the engine, the wind racing around & tearing at her hair do. "I run off from home when I was just about your age. Don't worry, look at me, here I am at my age, and ain't been caught yet," she laughed.

The girl calibrated Myrtle's eyes that seemed squeezed shut, coughing slightly.

"I come from right where you are. Yeah!" Myrtle said, rubbing her knee. "I'll see there."

The girl gradually closed her eyes. She had short dark curl lashes. The boy rested her on top of her glossy (frothing) hair. Myrtle could smell youth in the car around the dentine and deer tongue from the woods like something (a memory) old she remembered & couldn't place (evoked by smell but not yet clear) - warmed over history.

"Well, here we are," she said, looking at the new brick courthouse in full sun. "I reckon you got the paper, don't you?" she said to the boy, not looking at him, but at herself in the compact mirror, powdering her oily pointed nose. "Shit!" she said, noticing that one eye brow was painted higher than the other. "Give me a minute."

She took her eyebrow out of her stuffed shoulder

long and ~~expertly~~ adroitly arched the other one, ~~pursed it~~ ~~[illegible]~~ it, jerked her head & fluffed her curls. Working her red lips together, she snapped to compact & ~~popped it back~~ dropped it into her bag. "Let's go," she said, as if she'd done all she could.

The boy opened the door & slid out, with the girl sidling after him. Her legs were clamped tight, ~~[illegible]~~ appearing as one leg.

Myrtle stood and smoothed her dress over ~~the~~ her slight ~~pouch~~ swell of her abdomen, sucked in and sauntered off behind them along the concrete walk, through the brass swinging doors into the courthouse. The fragrance of cut grass followed them & stopped as she lit a cigarette. She took a long drag, felt her eyes glaze and exhaled.

The boy had laced the girl's hand in his and locked her arm ~~through~~ the crook of his elbow.

Myrtle ~~toddled~~ tottered faster, coming up alongside the girl just before they entered the dim corridor ~~room~~ where on both sides separate offices squared off against each other.

~~"Don't forget me, Ilse"~~

At the closed door ~~with~~ signifying the Justice of the Peace in ~~painted~~ painted black letters, the boy stopped, cleared his throat and peeked at the girl over the head. He didn't appear nervous, just vulnerably young. The girl was taller than Myrtle had ~~thought~~ followed, almost as tall as

uncomfortable
tense pressed atmosphere

Myrtle, herself, echoed had always carried herself well.

Opening the door, the boy stepped up on over a log, dragging the girl with him. "We come to get married," he announced to the intense man with cat eyes peering at the window at the postoffice.

The old man, with bristly black hair, stood, one leg shorter than the other and stuck out his hand across the heavy shellacked desk. "Name's Carter, judge," he said. He shook with the boy, a exaggerated shake on the boy's part. The girl blushed and smiled demurely, her eyes fixed on the face of the judge.

"Your Pete and this is my wife-to-be, Naomette," the boy said. "We come to get married." He said it as though to leave no quarter for doubt that it was to be a hurried affair without ceremony.

The girl was hugging his elbow to her breasts, swaying.

"Where her Aunt Martha," said Myrtle, sidling up to the girl, putting her arm around her shoulder, and finding herself crossing arms with the boy.

"I know who you are," the Judge said, flapping his hardened hand at her and silly pilfering in a drawer. His pallid face was brightened by a circle rash above his forehead. Myrtle felt the boy and the girl tense.

"Y'all don't pay him no mind," she whispered in the girl's face, even the boy, shaking her head. The judge's unnaturally black hair & the unnatural white light, showering from the ceiling, intensified the four white walls, made it all seem to Myrtle an artificial obliviousness (obsequious) [illegible]

"Let's see now," the judge said. "Joyce sleeve." Every sound, every utterance came like a slap in the [illegible] ringing room. Myrtle had never noticed it before; noticed it now & felt it was filtered through the cang the girl [illegible] rather than the room.

The boy released his hold on the girl and pulled the folded white sheet from his plaid shirt pocket. He handed it to the Judge.

The Judge took it by the corner & flapped it open, spread it on the desk and scanned it, muttering to himself: [illegible] pilfering in the drawer, he located his black glasses & put them on his nose, his ear still reading. [illegible]

The girl had grown pallid, breathing in short vaporous pants. Myrtle could smell ink & sweat and regret in the room. Again she thought it was through the silk [illegible] not her own [illegible]

"All looks like it's in order," said the judge solemnly rising and tucking his short sleeved white shirt in the bunched straight & his pants. "If you go right over there & see if you can't arrange yourself," he nodded to the white wall where two chairs sat like witnesses themselves.

~~Her~~ Myrtle shrugged and started to walk away but the girl grabbed her ~~hand~~, pulling her back. ~~[illegible]~~

~~The~~ Myrtle searched her face; her eyes were closed as in a swoon. "Honey, ya ain't ~~[illegible]~~ got anything in this world to be worrying about," Myrtle whispered, bending her to her with her arm around her shoulder. "Let me fix you a drink a minute." It sounded to Myrtle so silly, saying ~~fix one in a minute~~ that, like getting a shot for

Myrtle hadn't counted on this: usually they were so eager to get married, they just ignored her while she sat against the wall for five dollars & tried to keep from thinking of the judges, who ~~[illegible]~~ despised her for no good reason except that she earned a decent dollar as a professional witness who lived with a man responsible for selling liquor and buying gasoline.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here..."

The judge began with his eyes closed. Myrtle peered; ~~[illegible]~~ he opened them, black & chilled, at Myrtle. ~~[illegible]~~ "See if you can't go over there and set down!" he snapped.

Myrtle turned away and gently tugged at the girl's hand. The girl tightened her grip.

"No," she said. "She's my Aunt Martha."

Myrtle felt warm ~~[illegible]~~ water wash over her as she crept back to the

He also disapproved of Myrtle's dyed hair which she chipped in for free

Girl's side.

"Hump!" the judge said, staring at the girl, at Myrtle. "This ain't her first time in here."

"I'll just stand here," ~~[illegible]~~ said Myrtle, woozy from the light raspy ~~of the~~ off-center voice, the light clutch of her soft, clammy fingers.

"Dearly beloved..." he began again, roughly, mock reading it from the memorized words he'd written on a page inside a gray legal book.

The last girl had seemed older, more eager and willing to scorn Myrtle with the judge. This one flattered Myrtle. Though warmed by this make-believe niece clinging like a cat, she resented ~~the~~ her, felt like untwining her fingers one by one. Unaccountably, she stood there, feet aching in the pointed heels, one eyelash goading her eye till it smarted. Tears ~~pooled~~ oozed from ~~each~~ eye and trickled down her cheeks; she ~~sniffed~~ sniffled. The judge stopped, peered up at her, and went on with the reading. Willing her shoulders, she urged to tear ~~trickling~~ drippy from her cheek, a terrible tickling sensation that caused the other eye to tear, and a lump to form in her throat. She was really crying? It shocked her. ~~and shocked~~ The judge read on and the boys rocked nervously on the other side of the girl. Myrtle

take it
~~[illegible]~~
part of the
act - she
cries for
real

the girl
pretends
pretends
not?
carbon
copy
Myrtle

it was past her job —

did not know why she was crying, that ~~yes she~~ ~~not recognized that she was~~ but she knew it was for someone; a child never formed or being, never formed, some one in her forlorn ~~life~~ forty-two years for whom she should have made a difference but hadn't. (past here) (OVER) →

The judge glowered at Myrtle, saying the same old words, not even acting as though he were reading.

The girl ~~sobbed~~ sniffled with Myrtle. Myrtle would not look at her, ~~merely~~ stood foolishly ~~pretty~~ innocently ~~crying~~ sobbing, pretending. Her mascara was ruined. She could feel the girl's eyes, the girl, ~~all in the~~ ~~inner~~ ~~lust~~ manifested in telling long passionate sulks) ~~crying~~ sobbing; ~~like~~ She looked at the girl and her misty eyes were fixed on Myrtle's face, a slight pompatient ~~just above her~~ forming above her blonde eyebrow. (Over) →

"I'd ~~now~~ ~~pronounce~~ prohouce ~~full man and wife~~," the Judge said.

~~She~~ The girl turned to kiss the boy and released Myrtle's hand.

"That'll be fine ~~dollars~~ bucks," ~~Myrtle~~ pat at the couple ~~said to the~~ boy. And this time she'd earned it. ~~This~~ time.

She'd ~~almost had~~ a child — male or female, she didn't know
never asked — who would be about the same age as this
trumped-up neice. That was so long ago when she was 17.
be her ~~[illegible]~~ of the baby ~~[illegible]~~ female, or him if male!
She searched the boy's innocent glowing face ~~&~~ decided he was too fair:
she, herself, was naturally brunette and the father had been spanish
or something. Shifting her gaze to the girl, she thought how she recognized
something of herself in the dreamy — around the eyes, a dim (delayed) shame innocence. Emotional
an early starter, impulsive Myrtle wondered if traits like that — around the eyes — could be
~~too~~ inherited. She didn't know.

With a snap of her eyes, Myrtle let her know
that she didn't need her fresh, untried sympathy. Like all the
others, this girl would leave & learn & return, and
nothing for Myrtle would have changed: ~~poor~~ same displaced ~~poor~~ whore
in another hick town, making cigarett money where she could,
those eyes boring holes in her might have been her own
at another time, in another town, ~~[illegible]~~ set semlike in a new face.
Witnessing & being witnessed blurred with time & circumstance.
Yesterday was now and tomorrow ~~[illegible]~~ had ~~[illegible]~~ backed up like sewage.
Suddenly, she felt as tired as her own face as she was of Soldiers.

Box 5 F3

notes

- stay with humorous
- part of ~~Martha~~ My mother's act in the crying - (which ~~Grace~~ she ~~[illegible]~~ in for free)
- sit over with her - then she really does cry - ~~end~~
- what is pretend or not

44

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The Witness

Man's Best Friend

Fastest Gun on the Bench

The Witness

Sears & Harbuck

Suicide

From idea to do Party Line

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