

The Cat-Killing

① He stands on the corner of the door with the lumpy crocker sack & ^{dark} shadow blowing over him.

It doesn't seem like it walked out on that porch. It seems like it was just there, always there. Like ~~it~~ ^{my feet were} drove in the floor with the nails and it couldn't move so it had to be and watch ~~it~~ ^{was born to watch} sack up the cat - to drown in the river. Which for a fact wasn't the worst thing K Breull ever did.

It think it was crying; it probably was, but it ~~didn't~~ ^{wasn't} crying out loud and it wasn't begging. And it can't say it didn't take some pleasure in the Mama cat clawing his hands when he dropped her inside with her staidy babies. He was holding her by the scruff of her neck and her legs were stiff till he ~~tried to~~ dropped her inside and then the whole ~~crocker~~ ^{sack} came alive with spools & meyoole and the sack looked like it was ~~was~~ punched out with headed legs & lumps, just the mama cats white paws sticking out and her claws like rattlesnake fangs hooked into the top of K Breull's ^{rough tanned} hands. His pale ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} were stretched wide -- it think he had a cigarette in his mouth -- and he brought the other hand up in what seemed like slow motion

tell where he is
describe briefly the blowing shadow
smell see hear

smell of whiskey, dog and
smoke

To the neck of the man cat and squeezed & swung till her body in the brown burlap went ^{on the bottom,} still. The buttons were still bumpy about & newly made the sack. Her claws were still pinned to the top of his hand. ~~He pulled the claws out~~ ^{He pulled the claws out} ~~and let go of the cat, straight down in the sack.~~ ^{and began} pulled the ~~top~~ ^{top} twisted it and slung it over his shoulder & walked around the back of the house, then the woods toward the river

Little
Bride
beside
her

#

That was Saturday morning, and Mom's had to work ~~the~~ ^{the} 11 to 7 shift at Ferris. ^{before} It was a strange winter day, too hot for January and trying to rain like it will in S. Ga. then turn off cold. ~~By the time~~ ^{When} ~~she~~ ^{she} got home Billy and I were still on the porch when we saw her old ^{apple} ~~apple~~ ^{river} ~~river~~ ^{Shambler} ~~Shambler~~ coming up the dirt road to the house. It must have been about 8 o'clock because she had to drive about 30 miles to and from work. She wasn't one to stand around and talk after work, or even go out to eat breakfast. She'd head home to fix us ~~some~~ ^a bite and half the time

wouldn't ever go to bed till good dark. 3
Maybe she was afraid for us there by
ourselves with K. Bray; ~~maybe she~~
said that, she'd look scared, like she was
holding her breath & smiling at the same
time; but generally she'd make it some
excuse for him. Looking back, I figure
it was her pride. She couldn't admit
~~that she'd picked a nut to marry and~~
~~try to make over ^{into} a daddy, and she couldn't~~
so once she found she couldn't remake him,
she ~~made~~ ~~extra~~ tried to make us see
him ~~not the way he~~ how she'd hoped
he'd be, not how he was.

"I say let's just do & mention the cats,"
I told Billy.

But he was out the door barefooted &
barechested in shorts by the time she peeled
up under the water oak out front.

The ^{leaves of the} old oak had just turned rust colored,
after our first late frost at Christmas.

~~He was~~ ~~Stocky~~ dark curly bushy brown hair,
my mother ~~got~~ and must have been about
45 then.

He was about 8 then and Mena's 4
baby and K. Bray, didn't hate him like he did me.
And when Billy would see Mena drung up from
work, he'd stomp out & hang his ~~long~~ head
& grin. ~~Stay~~ ^{humble} acting after he'd been pucky at one end
messing up the house everytime I'd clean it.

She had a wide red smile that looked painted
on with her lip stick, a kind of trademark cause
she never could stand belly aching of no kind. That's
how I remember her best, that red smile.

"How is my big boy?" she said getting out of the
card closing the door.

He would wrap himself around one of her legs so
that she'd have to drag him along while she walked.
He didn't care if she was tired, had been all
night working. She wore blue jeans with a ^{red} plaid
shirt packed on tight. She was stocky & dark
had bushy brown hair.

"Hey, sister," she said to me at the door
of the screened porch. "Turn loose a minute, ^{buddy} ~~brother~~"
she said to Billy but pulled his ^{sandy} buzzed head to her
waist.

He held her around the waist & walked a
little behind for her to get them the door. "What
I all doing up ~~the~~ time of morning and it on a Sat.?"

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past tense
I could hear the TV going on the living room,
happy with cartoons, so I told her we were
up watching cartoons.

I uncrossed my arms and turned to keep
her from seeing my eyes were red from crying.

"Where's your daddy?" she asked, meaning
the cat killer.

I didn't answer. Billy didn't answer.
I could feel myself fixing to cry again, so I
walked fast thru the living room, ~~into the~~
through the old kitchen & into the bathroom. I
knew it was crazy, but I wanted her to know
about the cats and all. I wanted her to say
just once that he was wrong & mean & ~~that~~
she wasn't about to put up with him any more.
One reason it was so crazy was to me then
it seemed like she didn't have any choice because
she had no money except the little bit she
made working at Lewis. Which was all wrong
& mixed up, because K. Brough didn't even
work and we'd have been ~~about~~ a few dollar
richer every week without her having to buy her whiskey
& cigarettes. The truth was, it was like she
had this picture in her head of the perfect family
and it would fall apart without a man in it.
But I couldn't help thinking if she'd finally left on
real daddy, who was meaner a snake to, that she would

R Brazell story

locking up bottles & mama to
scene throw in river - Mama eat pops
out & ~~dig~~ clam into hand & ~~he~~
he chokes ~~sat to death~~ ^{dig clam into hand} he catches it by
front & back jaws. he chokes & turns
upside down. He wrench wrench around
& chokes eat to death & peddle back
into bag. Billy & Sue watching from
screened porch. (house at Lakeland -

(Rambler) mother walks children to church - he won't
let her drive the car -- later they go out to
Green Apple & leave - he wanders woods,
threatening people, then goes to VA Hospital
with rifle - suicide - they shoot him

a woman story (something I know)
like Kay Gibbons) -- false reader
than everyday life -

reach a point, a boiling point, where she would be
leave & Brazell too. Surely the cat-bellie
would ~~be just the fire~~ be the match that
started the fire that made her boil.

I was crying, low squeezing tears through my
reddened eyes while standing before the medicine
cabinet mirror. I am 13 and not pretty
unless I hold my head a certain way. And
still my nose is too thick, my lips are too
thick. But my eyes are like an sewer,
gray, and when I'm not crying I look okay,
I cry anyway.

I can hear her in the kitchen, glazing
pots under the sink. I know she is making
coffee, on breakfast. I feel sorry for her,
afraid she might get sick & die if she doesn't
get enough sleep. ~~But~~ But I don't want her
to go to sleep. One day she died, after working
all night and all Saturday. Betty and I had
to sit in the living room & watch TV while
Brazell drank & smoked & watched me. I don't
know why and I'm not saying he ever tried
anything dirty with me, but he hated me -
maybe because he knew deep down that I
wanted her to leave. That I was looking for

~~of books~~ ~~maildew~~ - not smells 7

just the right mistake or evil act of his to
make her go. Like the cats. We'd ~~glad~~
he killed the cats? I cry louder but not
loud, just till my ears feel stopped up.

I am just picturing the mama cat onto his
hands around her neck, ^{to keep going}, when I
hear the dead leaves rustling on the dirt
outside the bathroom window. I smell
his cigaret smoke. I see just the top of
his head thru the ~~little~~ window over the
blue bath tub. ^{His body face} His hair hanging his
eyes. ^(Body face) (I hold my breath) Mama's

I smell bacon or ham frying. Mama's
black iron frying pan scraping across the
grills of the stove. Happy sounds (sorta
I like crying for how it feels so relaxing afterwards)
But happiest of all is the sound of Mama's
old Studebaker starting out front, backing ~~face~~
then running fast up the lane.

"Sister," Mama calls.

"Yer ma'am," I say and turn on the
water. I start to splash my face but I
look so sad, so believably grief-stricken that
I can't risk changing anything.

(Mama older than stepdaddy)

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I opened the door, stepped out. Bacon smoke was drifting in ~~boarded~~ ~~sun~~ ~~light~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~kitchen~~ window.

Mama in study with her square ~~lock~~ ~~to~~ ~~me~~. At the sink, getting a glass of water. She drinks puts the glass down on the ~~the~~ brown-streaked laminate counter. She heard me ^{sniffing} behind her, said, "Did you and your daddy have a fall out this morning?"

"No ma'am," I said.

She turned to the stove and began ~~flipping~~ the bacon in the frying pan with the ~~long~~ ~~fork~~ ~~Old~~ she had forever. "What are you crying about then?"

"He killed her old cats," Billy yelled from the living room.

"Shut up, Billy," I yelled thru the doorway.

He ~~lying~~ ~~on~~ the couch with ~~his~~ ~~one~~ scrawny white leg bent at the knee. "You make me," he shouted - I start crying again.

"Okay," Mama said and stepped to the doorway beside me. "What happened, Buddy?"

Billy ~~don't~~ take did & take his eye
off the TV. "He just killed you," he
says low. "That's all."

"Well," she says and went back to
the stove. "I can't say I blame him.
You couldn't turn around good with all
them cats."

"Mama!" I cry harder, cross my
arms and walk over to the stand beside
her. "Why do you always take up for
him?"

"Why ~~are~~ you always trying to
make trouble?"

"Like I'm the one killed the cats!"

"Don't get smart with me," she
says & I fork the bacon to the plate
covered in ~~paper towels~~ paper towels.

I can tell her hearts not in
cooking breakfast anymore, not and him
gone.

atmosphere

#

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take yard, ~~clean house~~ sheriff come
say ~~the~~ Brazell jumped on some fellow at
the line. I treated people
* you about daily work like nothing happened.

^{that afternoon} ~~that~~ breeze covered the sun and the wind blew
straight thru the ^{narrow} little old house, smelling
of pine oil. While she cleaned & Billy watched
the ~~it~~ hung out the ~~to~~ wash on the ~~back~~
clothes line in the back yard. Left of
the line was an ~~old dead~~ ^{old} sapling
with a few yellow leaves still clinging to
the dead wood. Straight ahead ~~on top~~
tin hog ~~wall~~ pen that belonged to the
family who lived there before ~~the~~ ^{pecan trees}
& pine trees, ~~wood~~ ^{wood} of more woods that ~~was~~
never explored, ~~fields~~ ^{fields} of ~~grass~~ ^{grass} each
side of the road.

It hung up K Brazell ~~old~~ ^{old} ~~boy~~ ^{boy}
little-boy sized blue jeans and felt kind of
guilty because Mama was ~~not~~ ^{not} working so
hard to make Sat a normal Saturday, just
like tomorrow she would take us to church
to make Sun a normal Sun. ~~Adult~~ ^{Adult} made
~~no sense~~ I know now ~~that~~ ^{that} it made no sense

for me to feel ^{my cats} guilty because K Breyell " had killed my cats, then and left, and made Mama break herself down working. But I did feel guilty and sad, ~~and I liked~~ there was no way back that I could see to that almost sweet peace of self pity before of the morning.

Throughout the day, I would think about it with longing. And then I'd feel guilty ~~for the cats~~ taking advantage of the cat killing to get that feeling. It was almost cleansing, down time from all our trouble, and we were starting over. Clean up the house, the clothes, the yard.

Billy would jump in the pits & leave Mama naked and she'd have to rub them up again and beg him to load them in the wheel barrow & haul them out to the hog pen. He would get about half a load and then run right through where I was naking at the corner of the house when K Breyell killed my cats just that morning. Leaver flying over the side of the wheel barrow he was itching for me to scold him so Mama would scold me. Once he even brought the backs

of my legs with the wheelbarrow & of 12
just stepped to one side, trying to slap him,
to cry or say something. It was just
the very place I saw the sheriff's ^{old by the top}
car coming up the cloudy flooded lane. ^{Not}
the first time I had ^{seen} law ^{men} ^{at} ^{home}
Mama was raking ^{under the bay tree} and didn't see him at

first -

I said, "Mama", and stopped raking and
she stopped raking and stood watching till the car
came to a stop. She fluffed up her hair and
walked toward him, carrying the rake. I
followed.

He got out, leaving one foot inside, and
leaned on the door, talking over it. "How
ya been today?" he said.

"Good to see you, sheriff," Mama
said. A big lie.

"Y'all making it look good around here," he
said & looked all around at the sooty dirt
and broom sage and dead ^{leaves} ~~twigs~~. "I always
did love looking at raked dirt."

Mama looked puffed up, like she was
holding her breath. She said, "Looks like it
might rain, don't it."

"Rain & turn cold right after," they said
on the radio. "He steps out closer his door,
leans against it."

Not 13
"Mr. Brazell, he started and crossed
his arms. "You don't when I might find
your husband, do you?"

"He was here a while ago, Sheriff. Said
he was going to get a tire changed for me."
"That so?"

I stepped closer to Mama, trying to
feel if she was scared.

Quadruple
read this
back
word
can.
"Quadruple to be back in a bit."
"Well, if he does
He looked inside, lean against. "Well, you
tell him if he does, I got a warrant out
for his arrest."

"A warrant?"

"Yes' um."

"What for?"

"He laid open a old boy's head
with a beer bottle about a hour ago at
the line."

"I can feel Mama going tight. I
can feel what she is thinking. I picture a boy with his
to be worse than the cats and this time
nothing to do with me. But I feel
scared for myself, for my own safety. Same
thing as Mama's safety, I realize."

That evening we eat supper with ~~the~~
~~fire~~ blowing leaf smoke straight thru the
 clean house. I don't recall us talking
 but we must have, or maybe we
 didn't. Maybe we were just waiting for
 K Brazell to come home & start
 waving his pistol & shooting out the door
 & cussing & falling asleep drunk on the
 couch, just like lots of other Saturdays.
 Then come Sunday morning the yard
 would be raked and the house clean
 & we would go to church and K Brazell
 would suck & drink & talk crap about ~~next~~ ~~man~~
 Monday Thayer would go back to work,
 and we'd start over.

~~She~~ She put us to bed early, I guess
 in case K Brazell came in &
 started something. But I lay in the
 dark watching the seam of light around
 my door & listened to her washing dishes
 & imagined her getting ready to make

The next morning when I woke up ¹⁶
it was raining, so I figured we
wouldn't be going to church. I ~~wondered~~
~~Sometimes~~ she walked us to church --
for exercise, she said -- when he'd
taken her ^{old Rambler.} car. He'd called it
an old rust-bucket one time and she'd
laughed, then made us help paint
it apple green with some ^{house} paint she
found under the eaves of the home. Fleet
colour was apple-green, not a car colour
for sure.

The rain ticks pucker on the tin roof
and ticks through the leaves of the trees.
I want to sleep but I can't, not
without knowing if he came back, if
it's over for the weekend.

I get up & go thru the living room to
the door of her bedroom left side of the
living room. I listen at the closed
door, noticed it's not latched, push it

(Dressed in red dress)

open just a little & see her sleeping
with her back turned toward the door.
She is still, but lying with her ~~back~~
~~feet~~ ^{feet} stained yellow ~~side~~ ^{of} the bed, as if she
had just lay down to rest, to wait.

I pull the door to by its bent nail
handle.

I can't recall ever having thought
about ~~love~~ ^{romantic} before, but I thought
about it then. ~~I~~ ^{off} ~~in~~ ^{the} kitchen (see notes)
ran drops & alone in the pink laundry
room, I thought about it. I thought
about like I'd seen on TV and
tried to make it fit around the woman
waiting on the bed in there and Kenneth
Bresell. ~~But~~ With all my might I
tried to feel it and to make sense
of it. I never opened the door again
to look at her yellowed feet
and ~~stun~~ ^{drive} up the feeling of having
wanted to feel it. I should let it
go and walked out on the front
screened porch to listen to the ~~rain~~ ^{peace of Sunday}
~~with Kenneth Bresell.~~

(See notes
on p. 18)

I wonder if
somebody
is waiting for somebody
in my room
for good real
love

notes

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brother sitting on top of leaver in wheelbarrow
with legs sticking off the back. "I
am jealous because ~~he~~ he'll never
be scared like us; I hate him because
he'll grow up to kill cats. Then I
almost ^{can} remember that I'll have to go to war.