

He gets out, eyes her darkly, and ~~starts down~~ then reaches inside the truck for the child, copper haired & bright in the black ^{background} of fog & gray trees on the gray sky.

"What have you done?" Nancy says, and he says, "You always say that, I am done..." and the child ^{cries} ~~cries~~ ^{scrambles} ~~scrambles~~ ^{stowed} ~~stowed~~ ^{him} ~~him~~ ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{trunk} ~~trunk~~ ^{door} ~~door~~. The man ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{gone} ~~gone now, roughly ^{chitcheled} ~~chitcheled~~ & being bundled to the back door.~~~~

Nancy reaches out & takes the child, smelling ^{just} ~~just~~ ^{like} ~~like~~ ^{her} ~~her~~ ^{hair} ~~hair~~ or blood on her thin cotton dress, feels her heart beating, the warmth of her ^{hard} ~~hard~~ ^{chubby} ~~chubby body. "It's ok," Nancy ^{lies} ~~lies~~ ^{and} ~~and ^{starts} ~~starts ^{turning} ~~turning~~ to the cluttered ^{scanned} ~~scanned~~ porch then into the overwarm kitchen.~~~~~~

Von A. follows, scrubbing his swollen pale face.

"Where's Billie Jean at?" she asks, rocking the child.

He doesn't ~~answer~~ ^{stall} ~~stall~~ ^{on} ~~on~~ ^{though} ~~though~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{bright} ~~bright~~ ^{lit} ~~lit kitchen to the ^{dim} ~~dim~~ ^{bedroom} ~~bedroom ^{of} ~~of~~ ^{plaid} ~~plaid~~ ^{and} ~~and ^{the} ~~the ^{sprinkle} ~~sprinkle~~ ^{on} ~~on~~ the ^{packed} ~~packed ^{tight} ~~tight ^{middle} ~~middle~~ ^{of} ~~of~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{bed} ~~bed.
The ^{freshly} ~~freshly~~ ^{made} ~~made ^{bed} ~~bed~~.~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The child cries, burying her face in Nancy's shoulder, her chin sharp on Nancy's collar bone. Nancy shifts her ^{so} ~~so~~ ^{that} ~~that ^{her} ~~her ^{chin} ~~chin ^{rests} ~~rests ^{on} ~~on~~ ^{Nancy's} ~~Nancy's ^{neck} ~~neck, then she sits at the table brushing her bangs back on her broad white face. "Nancy's baby ok?" she says and doesn't want to know. None of it.~~~~~~~~~~~~

The girl rubs her eyes, looks at the stove where a pot of lima beans steams on the back burner.

"Has she been fed this morning?" she calls out to Von A.
No answer. She can see him ^{muddily} ~~muddily~~ ^{clay} ~~clay ^{with} ~~with ^{staring} ~~staring~~ ^{out} ~~out~~ ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{door} ~~door.~~~~~~~~

light from the hatch. She

She sets the child on the chair and goes to the refrigerator & takes out the sack of grits. Sets a pot of mine water into it, hearing the pump at the side window, clank & groan. Needs waterlogging.

When the grits is done she mixes it with the scrambled egg she can't recall having scrambled - - just that the old iron frying pan will have to be scraped. If she can keep her mind on waterlogging, the pang of scrubbing that pan, she is safe. Her heart won't stop.

She sits at the table with the child on her lap & feeds her like an infant. Each time her mouth opens, her jaw bone twitches and a smear of blood shows behind her ~~small teeth~~ right ear. (Her face is dirty, her nose runs) Nancy longs to wipe the child's nose but is afraid to stop the motion of spoon to mouth.

The phone rings ~~over~~ the counter by the stove and she starts to get up, down it, can hear the bed springs squeak and hold like Van A.'s listening with his head sprung, lifted. It keeps ringing.

"You want to answer that for me?" she says.
~~Nothing.~~ Nothing.

"You ain't afraid to answer it, are you?" she says.

"Are you?" he says.

The phone keeps ringing, each ring ^{letting} her hear at the scalp.

"You wanta get in here & tell me what is going on?"

"Not specially."

"You did it, didn't you?"

"Did what?"

"You know."

The child cries, Nancy hugs her warm ^{to} her breasts. The ^{blistering} ^{eyes} [&] ^{sputter} ^{is} half-gone. "Don't cry. Don't cry."

She lifts the child, heavy with her feet dangling, and takes her into the dim living room and rocks her till she is sucking her thumb.

Tom A. is up, plundering in the refrigerator. ~~She~~ Nancy can see his shadow ^{from the doorway,} ~~from the doorway,~~ ^{across} ~~across~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{white} ~~white~~ ^{tiles.} He's drinking from the water jug, gulping. Then he closes the refrigerator door & goes out back. She waits to hear the truck start but it doesn't and she knows he's ^{going} ~~going~~ ^{walking} ~~walking~~ ^{across} ~~across~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{yard} ~~yard~~ ^{for} ~~for~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{wood.}

The crows caw, ~~rechoetering~~ ^{rechoetering} from the ^{winter-dead} ~~winter-dead~~ ^{trees.}

One o'clock and the child is still sleeping, curled under
Billie in the ~~bedroom~~ bedroom, and Nancy ~~knows~~
she's been up all night.

Von A. hasn't come back. ~~She~~

She starts to call Billie Jean but is afraid
if she does & answers that means she's dead.

Von A. has been threatening to kill her for two
weeks. Nancy feels mad with her for not
just leaving without telling her warning her she
was going. She picks up the phone, puts it
down, and then goes to the back door, peeping
around the white towels on the clothesline to
the path ^{over the field} through the woods. She types back to the
kitchen sink & starts washing dishes. When she
gets to the bowl of eggs & grates, she takes
it out to the backyard & rakes it into the
cat dish on the uncovered well.

The ~~cat~~ old ~~grey~~ speckled tom meows & scampers
onto the tin, scratching it and rubbing chill
over Nancy. On her way back to the porch,
she looks again ~~for~~ toward the woods, then around
the side of the low dingy white house with
peeling white paint.

Everything is still & damp, though the fog
has let up, grey & green green as far as
she can see. No sound except trucks on the
distance on the highway leading from Lake Park to

~~scribbles~~

dingy
shy

Over the She stops at the pickup & peeps thru
the open window. There's ~~the~~ Von A's ^{valence rifle} shot gun
is propped from seat to floor by the floor chest. Not
a sign she tells herself, he always carries a
shot gun or rifle or pistol -- not prof he's shot
Bellie Jean. But she knows.

She turns back inside to keep from walking to child --
not her real grandchild, Bellie Jean by her first or
second husband. She gets mad with her again. Always
starting some row as if she can't bear life without
trouble. They've done nothing but fuss & fight
since they got together a year or so ago. Same
as with Nancy & Von A's daddy, Roland, who
died 3 years ago in 1990. Nancy tries to smooch
him but smooches only his hot flighty nature. And
she gets mad with him then & is no longer
mad with Bellie Jean.

She goes to the phone again, and this time
dials it, listening to it ring & imagining the
ring -- how it sounds -- in the ^{filthy} shack where Von A
& Bellie Jean live. And imagines her body
sprawled on the floor but knows if Von A killed
her he's hid her, just like the cat he ^{believed} ~~buried~~
& covered with dead leaves when he was a boy.
If he's killed anything or anybody else she don't
want to know. She hangs up the noisy phone.

will newspaper
 is USU using my list for invitation to travel & ready?
 is book ready? send half my copies to Susan (?)
 about tape (has it been sent out) ready now, after books get out
 any more reviews

invite people around Atlanta
 send formed the list for Farmer & Nobel

Dwight

20 million
 my books would
 be expensive

~~God it has
 been passed to director
 should be optioned
 as a consultant
 for a fee
 should try to work
 on screen play
 how do I
 It would be big because
 of dialect (if it is best)~~

 after option & start recording lay
 which movie is production

Starting draft
Hell's Spit
Spume of Hell (Fire) Novel

-- use weather to get going - bleak gray foggy morning -
crown in naked pecan trees

- N. Horton / Mother character
- Hortonville
- Mother/son relationship
- Foot Van cross

-- red haired child brought to mother (called slightly spoiled & abused)
(not allowed to go to school)

-- child's mother is dead
-- later sound of bulldozer big tractor looking for body,
conf him roaming the woods like one of Mc Carthy in character /
type of serial killer

-- (documentary on serial killer (previously abused & neglected),
wanting power over women & children, puts them in same
place he was in as a child

-- flashback scene "You didn't do..." (mother) he hands
her the child from the truck "You're always saying
that..." he says. ~~the~~ The child cries, laughs. She
carries her away (before search for ^{child's} mother begins.

-- Time shifts (intermingling of time before when father had tortured son & she'd looked away
(powerless))

-- start with scene where he brings child to mother
-- flash back to past & mingle with present, progression
-- Whole Half of the, L Jön, Hell's Spit,

Other - themes -
Spume of Hell,

-- setting: general vicinity of Lake Park / Echols (Hortonville, etc)

name - ~~Temporary~~ Tony, Wilson A., Billie Jean (drifter in bar)

(Over)

A mother's love ^{compassion} for her son ^{spared him} tested - will she turn him in
for murder -- what does it take to make her do it

style continuous motion like ~~Barrett~~ ^{Macrius} -- No pat little sentences -
echoing, vibrant, dark

remember story of Medusa woman killed, child taken by lover/killer

go into both mother's & son's head using third person
point of view

* get into mood with atmosphere, weather - crowd

character

mixed mother / M. Thornton
father / Van Howell
child - red hair, etc. (D)

I remember it as "almost spring" - "almost spring," like a season itself; spring rushing in on a final gust of wind, March Almost; lagging and winter, with its residual crust of sheet of white frost. Jack Frost to us, my sisters & me.

Almost over, almost beginning. We were tucked between in a realm untouched by hard things until that night, the escaped concrete stole on Duddy's ^{new pickup} truck.

They slipped in and out, like a pulse in the night, changing our celibate world.

We knew them, you might say. We had seen them often at the post office in Lowell, Georgia. Convicts, or criminals, ~~but~~ lurked from the ~~plaster~~ ^{seasoned} walls plastered with ~~Wanted posters~~. ~~Wall~~ Wall-eyed & laconic, sullen, yet smug with innocence, all ~~were~~ scars, whether smudged print on the jaw or sealed silvery darts of the forehead. In living color, they would have been ~~but~~ ^{dull}, because they didn't pertain to Lowell. Life was dull & kind and oblivious, as in any small community in ~~the~~ 1950. It was ~~ten~~ that year.

We moved, in our ~~sheltered~~ ^{attached to} world, as if along a track of cables, from school, to library, to post office, church, store & home. Our parents were there, our neighbors, teachers, pastors and friends. ~~It~~ ^{It} ~~was~~ ^{was} a system ~~on~~ ^{and} course and ~~of~~ ^{of} course - we couldn't veer, couldn't collide with life.

~~That night~~
The following morning after we would try to recall that slip in the night, a thud, a clank, with keen excitement & terror. Had we heard it, the

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intimate brush with our world? How could
we not have heard such significance?

Not see. We couldn't have seen it, tucked
under quilts to our fresh skins, three deep
on the feather bed, safe in exchanged
breath while our mama & daddy slept
in the front room of our small house.
Like Santa Claus, they came & went,
~~not~~ leaving nothing, taking something, leaving
us from our cloistered ^{imprisoned} ~~imprisoned~~ ^{paradise} ~~paradise~~.
Struck, we shivered & wished we could have
seen them - from the front window, perhaps,
wrapped in the sheer ^{white} curtains, afraid to look,
born to close our eyes or open them.

We longed to have seen the ~~thin~~ light
under the dash of the truck as they hot-wired
it - ~~the sheriff~~ Sheriff Watson said hot wire,
and we had envisioned a hot light & its
sparks.

Had they ~~not~~ seen us sleep, broken the
skin of our sleep with their horny ~~knives~~
eyes? We hoped so; we prayed not.

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

We knelt by our bed ~~as~~ as we prayed
each night. What if we had died by alien hands?
My mama ~~who~~ who said from now on we would
leave the key in the ignition so they would leave
quickly - stood over us as we prayed, her
sweet warmth sheltered us. Her ^{strong} ~~strong~~ hand

prevented our destruction. My daddy ~~boards~~
paddy, steered from the front of the house,
a safe voyage, tossed only by his

^{in several ships, those comets}
And yet they would not have boarded our
front yard where the ~~flam~~ oak flanked highway
~~was~~ stretched before them.

And they use the highway or slumber through
the sage field behind the house. We ~~see~~
could find no tracks on the ~~front~~ of frost.

Worse was not knowing how they came.
Oh, adults knew off. They had expected them
someday. They didn't say that, but we knew
by their hushed ^{private} tones.