

SYNOPSIS

A day after Mr. Smith's leap, there was a Negro baby, Macon Dead Jr. or popularly called Milkman, born inside No Mercy Hospital's ward for the first time. Mr. Smith's blue silk wings must have left their marks because when this little boy discovered, at four years old, the same thing that Mr. Smith had learned earlier—that only the birds and the airplanes could fly—he lost all interest in himself. Living without the gift of wings grieved him. His imagination of flying was left so bereft in his eyes that he appeared dull.

Dead family's house was a quiet but not peaceful house. It was big but stuffy. The atmosphere in this house was gloomy and dull. Mornings were always preceded by and evenings would soon be terminated by the presence of Macon Dead who came with his solid and rumbling yells. Macon loved to keep each member of his family moved awkwardly in fear. His hatred on his wife glittered in his eyes and sparkled in every word he spoke to her.

In the late afternoon, before Macon Dead returned from his office, Milkman's mother, Ruth, always called Milkman to come to a little evergreen room that was called 'a study'. When Milkman was in the room, Ruth unbuttoned her blouse and smiled to him. Milkman was already a four-year-old boy so he was old enough to get bored by the flat taste of his mother's milk that he approached her reluctantly. Until one day Freddie, the janitor, passed the study by accident and saw Ruth breast-feeding Milkman. Suddenly a terror that came from a quick realization she was going to lose a fully half of what made her daily life bearable, sprang in Ruth's eyes. On the other hand, for Macon Dead Jr. this day was the birth of his nickname, Milkman.



Macon Dead never knew how his son's nickname came about. It concerned him a good deal, for the names in the history of his family was always surrounded by what he believed as a monumental foolishness. Without knowing the detail of the real story, Macon Dead guessed with a mind full of hatred, that his son's nickname was not clean.

Sunday afternoon driving became rituals in Dead family. It also became more important for Macon Dead to enjoy and to show his classiness. Only Magdalene called Lena and First Corinthians were genuinely happy when Macon Dead's big Packard rolled evenly and silently out of the driveway. But for little Milkman, it was simply a burden. On the other hands, people outside the Packard thought that it was a ridiculous performance from a bunch of Deads who hardly made a movement inside a hearse.

At twelve, Milkman met an older boy, Guitar who not only could liberate him from the stuffy atmosphere in his house, but also could take him to the woman who had as much to do with his future as she had his past. Her name was Pilate. She was Milkman's aunt whose brother refused to admit on her existence. One day Guitar took Milkman to Pilate's house and introduced him to her. First Milkman felt awkward but as he came closer to her and saw a bras box dangling from her ear, he knew that neither his father nor the caution of the world—could keep him from her. Finally Macon Dead found out that his son had crossed his rule by going to Pilate's wine house. He was angry with Milkman and instructed him not to go there anymore. However, Macon Dead never gave his son a satisfied reasonable and clear reason for his disallowance. Instead he gave him an advise to spend his time for better things such as learning how to work

and learning how to own things which later must be developed to own other things such as himself and the other people.

By the time Milkman was fourteen years old, he noticed that one of his legs was shorter than his other leg. Milkman feared his father and respected him, but he knew that because of his uneven leg, he would never emulate him. So he felt that he differed from his father as much as he dared. This physical cripple was only an excuse to hide the real cripple inside him.

Milkman was twenty-two years old then and since he had been fucking for six years, some of them with the same women, he had begun to see his mother in a new point of view. Now he saw her as a frail woman contented to do tiny things such as to grow and to cultivate a small life that would not hurt her if it died. One day Ruth told to the whole family about her stupid mistake at a Catholic Church. Her foolishness embarrassed her husband, Macon Dead. Therefore he smashed his fist into her jaw. Milkman did not have a plan to avenge on all his father's bad treatments towards his mother, but after he watched his mother searching for any broken teeth, he was not able to stand it. Before his father drew his fist back, Milkman yanked him by back of his coat collar, lifted him up out of his chair, and knocked him into a radiator. Then he threatened his father not to touch her anymore unless he would kill him.

Afraid of losing his son's respect, Macon followed Milkman into his son's bedroom and told that if Milkman wanted to be a real man, he had to deal with the whole truth. Then Macon told him a shocking story that Milkman had never heard before. Macon said that at the night of his father-in-law's death he saw his wife lying naked next to her father's dead body and kissing his fingers. Milkman, who had not wakened up from what he had done to his father, got confused with

this story. World suddenly turned upside down and people run to an opposite direction with him. He could not think clearly and he ran away from home.

Hagar, Milkman's niece, was looking for Milkman. She wanted to kill him because he had broken their relationship. She had tried two times and when she got her third chance, she did not dare to kill him though she had already had a knife in her hands. She only made a small cut on Milkman's throat. It was due to the fact that she was too in love with him.

When Milkman was thirty years old, he was in a deep conversation with his father. He told his father that he wanted to run his own life and stand on his own feet just like a free people. He got bored with his father's interference in his life. However Macon Dead would not allow him. He told that Milkman could not stand on his own feet without his help. When their argument was about reaching its peak, suddenly their topic turned into another more interesting topic, that was GOLD. The white man's gold that Macon Dead suspected had been hidden by Pilate in her green bundle which was hanging down from her house ceiling. Macon Dead told another story about his past with Pilate concerning the origin of this gold. It was the white man's gold who tried to catch Macon Dead and Pilate in the cave when they were children. After telling the story, Macon persuaded Milkman to steal it from Pilate.

Guitar and Milkman were in the jail. A local white police caught them because they were carrying a big bundle of rocks and skeleton in the middle of the night. They were suspected to have killed someone. Macon Dead tried to release them by offering some amount of money to the police, but they refused it. For them sentencing Negro to jail was more valuable than money. Fortunately Pilate could release them by acting as a humble, low, and poor Negro woman

who had no money for her husband's burial. She made artificial confession that those bones and skull were her husband. She begged to give them back to her. She also asked to free Milkman and Guitar. Milkman was shame of what he had done to her and also what she had done for them in the police office, Guitar and Milkman. But on the other hands, Macon Dead did not feel guilty about it. He continued to suspect that Pilate must have hidden the gold somewhere in the South.

Longing for freedom, Milkman decided to search the gold alone. He refused Guitar's proposal to accompany him. He persuaded Guitar that if he could find the gold, he would share it only with him. But before he left Michigan, he felt that there was something evil growing in Guitar's heart.

In Danville, Milkman met Rev. Cooper, the son of Milkman's grandfather's best friend. Here Milkman found out that Danville people respected Milkman's grandfather, Macon Dead and Pilate. Their names and their story did not fade from Danville people's mind. They told Milkman how beautiful and prosperous his grandfather's farm, Lincoln Heaven, was. They also remembered how worry they were on Jake's children when Jake was killed. In here Milkman also visited Circe, a woman who helped Singing Byrd, Milkman's grandmother, gave birth of Pilate. She saved and hade Macon and Pilate from Butler—a white man who killed their father. She lived at Butler's big, decayed house which was almost totally covered by big trees and thick leave. Circe looked like a witch that children usually imagined. She made her living by breeding and selling some Weimaraner dogs. Circe told Milkman where the Hunter Cave was.

Road to Hunter Cave was so difficult to pass through. There were many branches of the trees from the thick forest scratched Milkman's clothes. Milkman

had to pass through a small creek with many slippery and sharp stones along it. When Milkman reached Hunter Cave, he found nothing except an old can cup. However, he did not give up. He decided to trace the gold to the South because he remembered Pilate's story that she had wandered alone to the South to find her relatives there.

Milkman's car machine suddenly conked out at a small village called Shalimar. It was a village which people did not use money as self-respect's measurement. Most of the inhabitants were farmers who lived modestly. In this village, Milkman got into a feud with a young Shalimar man. Because of Milkman's improper act—such as bragging on his wealth, dirty comments about Shalimar's women, and his snobbish and arrogant attitude—one of young Shalimar man's feelings was hurt. Then they began to blow each other. But before Milkman got killed, there were two Shalimar women separated this fight. Although Milkman was wrong, he did not want to admit it. Because Milkman kept his arrogance, the elder Shalimar people challenged him to join them in night hunting. Milkman received their challenge in order not to be called "chicken".

Milkman had never gone hunting before. He even had not touched a gun in his life. Thus during the night hunting, his arrogance must face the power of nature. Until there was under the moon and in the midst of the dark forest, Milkman must admit that the human's power was not unlimited compared to nature's and God's power. Therefore Milkman realized his snob so long. After the night hunting, Milkman lived with a woman namely Sweet in Shalimar. Together with her, Milkman felt the real love that he dreamt so long. With Sweet on his side, Milkman understood the "give and take" love that nobody in Michigan had shown to him before.

Everything in Shalimar was new for Milkman. Its peacefulness, hospitality, and purity had changed Milkman's attitude in some extent. However the most important thing that changed Milkman's point of view on his life and self was the *Song of Solomon*. It was children's old folksong that Shalimar children sang in playing a flying game. It was not an ordinary folksong because it contented the history of Milkman's family. Milkman could cover up the mystery of his family tree which was hidden in that song after he combined the story in the song with the information given by a native Indian woman who was actually his relative, Susan Byrd. From it he finally found out that he was the descendant of a flying African man whose name was Solomon. This news made him proud of himself and woke up his self-esteem. Because he was so happy knowing whose blood running in his veins, he bathed himself in a small clean and pure lake as if he baptized himself.

Milkman returned to his hometown in a different person—a wiser person who had gained his self-identity. However the condition in Michigan almost had no progress as when he left it. Only some of them had changed such as his sister, Magdalene called Lena, moved with one of the Seven Days members and Hagar had passed away. At the beginning Milkman did not know that Hagar died. But after he got in Pilate's house and Pilate hit him so hard that made him fell unconsciously, he realized that something terrible had happened to Pilate. Milkman knew that nothing would set Pilate's anger except bothering a member of her family.

Finally Milkman could win Pilate's heart after he told the relieving news that he got from Shalimar. Milkman also told her that the bones she had carried so long were not the white man's bones but they were her father's. Milkman told

the story of Dead family that he knew to Macon Dead. It did not change him a bit. But he was happy knowing that he was a descendant of a flying African. On the next day Milkman and Pilate went to Shalimar to meet their relatives and to bury Jake's remains. Pilate looked so relief and peaceful along the way. At sundown they went uphill to bury Jake remains. Pilate yanked her earring from her ear and buried it with the bones. Suddenly there was a shot and then Pilate fell down on the ground with a stream of blood running from her head. Before she died, she asked Milkman to sing the *Song of Solomon*. Milkman sang it as loud as possible in order to prevent Pilate's soul flew away. But his voice did nothing except waking the birds on the tree. One of the birds suddenly went down and took Pilate brass box earring in its beak and flew away. From a distance there was Guitar who had shot Pilate. Guitar was ready to shoot Milkman when suddenly Milkman leaped from the *Solomon's Leap* and surrendered into the air.

Brief Biography of Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison or Chloe Anthony Wofford was born in 193. She was raised in Loraine, northern Ohio. She was the daughter of George Wofford and Rhaman Willis Wofford, both of whom had relocated from the South in search of an improved standard of life. She was brought up in a type of family that regarded a strong family bound among its members.

Toni Morrison's father influenced her much. From him, a shipyard welder, she gained a *Garvey-like* perspective on white people—distrust for all whites. So, Morrison's father was a racist. He became a racist after he received shocking impressions of adult white people who despised Negro when he was a child in Georgia (Hudson and Samuel:5). Morrison's father died before she began her third novel, *Song of Solomon*.

Toni Morrison upholds women status. Once she covered on the marriage and the position of women (her mother, grandmother, and great grandmother) in it. She said that the word "Comrade" came to mind in regard to the marriages she knew and she didn't find imbalance or unevenness in these relationships. Then she didn't think that her mother's talents were hidden from males or white society. In contrary they were very much on display. So she didn't feel a tension there, or the struggle for dominance. The same was true for her grandparents—her mother's parents. She also remembered her great grandmother whose husband died before she was born. The major thing about her great-grandmother that kept remain in her mind was when her great-grandmother walked into a room, all her grandsons and her nephews stood up. At the moment she

felt the authority of those women more than she did her own (Gates: 399). Indeed, the resonance of such "authority" resides in all of Morrison's novels.

No less important to Morrison's life is the sense of community that is inspired from her childhood in Loraine, Ohio. Community, as an underlying theme, is presented throughout Morrison's works. Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was set in Loraine, Ohio, and was explicit in its portrayal of an interwoven African-American community that could intuitively be seen as a partially autobiographical picture of her childhood home. Though the sense of community expanded and diversified with her later novels, the essence of that community, in which the lives and business of its inhabitants were only, as Morrison wrote, "Quiet as it kept", remained (Morrison: 1970). Even in her most recent novel, *Jazz*, in which she depicted the complex social structure of New York City in the 20's, Morrison suggested that the same principles of community that existed in the small town of Loraine, Ohio could be found in the greatest "City" of them all.

The mythic qualities in Morrison's fiction are often noted, but she also draws on her direct experience as a black woman. In 1981 interview, she said, "I was very conscious of trying to capture, in writing about what black life meant to me, not just what black people do but the way in which we look at it (Muscatine:1988).

Toni Morrison also uses the view of her grandparents and parents to show how Negro has faced their problems, and how diverse are their responses on it. Morrison hopes that the future generation of young Afro-

American people are those who know who they are because they have invented themselves and who know where they are going to because they have envisioned it.

Regarding her third novel, *Song of Solomon*, Morrison admitted that her grandfather, John Solomon Willis, an ex-slave, suggested her to use her family history, in some extent, into a complex and mature story. Then related to *Song of Solomon*, Morrison told in a PBS interview with Charlie Rose that in *Song of Solomon*, she was trying to figure out how somebody who was in his late 20s or 30s got educated. She wondered what would help informed him to learn how to be a complete human being, without these conflicts, without these self-destructive impulses for material things. She tried to figure out what kinds of people could manifest that for her and set that up ("Toni Morrison", Contemporary Authors: 1993)

Toni Morrison graduated from Loraine High School in 1949 and attended Howard University with financial aid of her parents. In college, Chloe Wofford changed her name to Toni. Toni Morrison received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and went on to achieve a Master of Arts degree in English in 1953. Morrison began her teaching career as a member of the English faculty at Texas Southern University of Houston. In 1957, she began teaching English at Howard. While at Howard, Morrison met and married her husband, Harold Morrison, originally from Jamaica. Morrison had two sons with Harold, Harold Ford Morrison and Slade Kevin Morrison.

Divorced from her husband, Morrison moved to Syracuse, New York, where she began work as an editor for Random House Publishing. In 1967 Morrison took a position of senior editor at Random House in New York City. In 1970, Morrison published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*. Her second novel, *Sula*, was published in 1973. *Song of Solomon*, her third novel, was published in 1977 which won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1977 and also the first novel by a black writer to become a Book-of-the Month Club selection since Richard Wright's *Native Son* was published in 1940. Her fourth novel, *Tar Baby*, was published in 1981. Her fifth novel, *Beloved*, was published in 1987. Then *Jazz* was published in 1992. Her latest novel, *Paradise*, was released in 1998. Morrison has suggested that the *Beloved* and *Jazz* are the first and the second books, respectively, in a planned trilogy.

In 1988, Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for *Beloved*. In 1989, Morrison became the Robert F. Goheen Professor of Humanities at Princeton University. In 1993, Toni Morrison won the Nobel prize for literature.