evil. The captain in "The Secret Sharer" discovers that someone very much like him, virtually his double and therefore probably he himself, is not only capable of murder but may, under certain circumstances and in his capacity as a captain or leader, consciously choose murder as the lesser of evils. Just as the "adult" knowledge into which characters are initiated differs widely, so, too, do their responses: one may retreat from the truth physically or psychologically, as does Brown, or remain unchanged, or revert to one's former state. Such stories suggest, however, that even if we choose to retreat from a newly perceived truth, we can never completely return to our former innocence.

Since to the young all things seem possible—one can be a doctor, novelist, tennis pro, rock star, and saint, serially or simultaneously—many of the truths learned in initiation stories have to do with limitation. The girl in "Boys and Girls" learns that she is "only a girl," the boy in "Araby" that he is merely "a creature driven" by romantic dreams that can never be realized. Sometimes a child learns the difference between words and reality in the adult world, as Hazel does in "Gorilla, My Love."

By the time you finish this chapter, you should have some idea of the variations possible within the initiation story, and, as you look back to such stories as "Sonny's Blues," "The Country Husband," "Odour of Chrysanthemums," and "The Lame Shall Enter First," you should have a still better idea of the range of stories in this kind. Adults may be initiated as well as children and adolescents; the truths may be bitter or pleasing, cosmic, social, psychological; the initiates may change forever, retreat, shrug off what they have learned. By seeing all these stories as part of the large group of initiation stories, you may the more readily notice the differences in the protagonists, the learning experiences, and the effects of the initiations on the protagonists, whether they are permanent or temporary, life-denying or life-enhancing. You may, in other words, have gone a long way toward defining the unique vision of the story, its precise and individual illumination of reality, its particular definitions of illusion and truth, of childlike innocence and adult wisdom. And that's the function of classification in the first place.

TONI CADE BAMBARA

Gorilla, My Love

That was the year Hunca Bubba changed his name. Not a change up, but a change back, since Jefferson Winston Vale was the name in the first place. Which was news to me cause he'd been my Hunca Bubba my whole lifetime, since I couldn't manage Uncle to save my life. So far as I was concerned it was a change completely to somethin soundin very geographical weatherlike to me, like somethin you'd find in a almanac. Or somethin you'd run across when you sittin in the navigator seat with a wet thumb on the map crinkly in your lap, watchin the roads and signs so when Granddaddy Vale say "Which way, Scout," you got sense enough to say take the next exit or take a left or whatever it is. Not that Scout's my name. Just the name Granddaddy call whoever sittin in the navigator seat. Which is usually me cause I don't feature sittin in the back with the pecans. Now, you figure pecans all right to be sittin with. If you thinks so, that's your business. But they dusty sometime and make you cough. And they got a way of slidin around
and dippin down sudden, like maybe a rat in the buckets. So if you scary like me, you sleep with the lights on and blame it on Baby Jason and, so as not to waste good electric, you study the maps. And that’s how come I’m in the navigator seat most times and get to be called Scout.

So Hunca Bubba in the back with the pecans and Baby Jason, and he in love. And we got to hear all this stuff about this woman he in love with and all. Which really ain’t enough to keep the mind alive, though Baby Jason got no better sense than to give his undivided attention and keep grabbin at the photograph which is just a picture of some skinny woman in a countrified dress with her hand shot up to her face like she shame fore cameras. But there’s a movie house in the background which I ax about. Cause I am a movie freak from way back, even though it do get me in trouble sometime.

Like when me and Big Brood and Baby Jason was on our own last Easter and couldn’t go to the Dorset cause we’d seen all the Three Stooges they was. And the RKO Hamilton was closed readying up for the Easter Pageant that night. And the West End, the Regun and the Sunset was too far, less we had grownups with us which we didn’t. So we walk up Amsterdam Avenue to the Washington and Gorilla, My Love playin, they say, which suit me just fine, though the “my love” part kinda drag Big Brood some. As for Baby Jason, shoot, like Granddaddy say, he’d follow me into the fiery furnace if I say come on. So we go in and get three bags of Havmore potato chips which not only are the best potato chips but the best bags for blowin up and bustin real loud so the matron come trottin down the aisle with her chunky self, flashin that flashlight dead in your eye so you can give her some lip, and if she answer back and you already finish seein the show anyway, why then you just turn the place out. Which I love to do, no lie. With Baby Jason kickin at the seat in front, egging me on, and Big Brood mumblin bout what fiercesome things we goin do. Which means me. Like when the big boys come up on us talkin bout Lemme a nickel. It’s me that hide the money. Or when the bad boys in the park take Big Brood’s Spaldeen way from him. It’s me that turn out the show if the matron get too salty.

So the movie come on and away it’s this churchy music and clearly not about no gorilla. Bout Jesus. And I am ready to kill, not cause I got anything gainst Jesus. Just that when you fixed to watch a gorilla picture you don’t wanna get messed around with Sunday School stuff. So I am mad. Besides, we see this raggedy old brown film King of Kings every year and enough’s enough. Grownups figure they can treat you just anyhow. Which burns me up. There I am, my feet up and my Havmore potato chips really salty and crispy and two jawbreakers in my lap and the money safe in my shoe from the boys, and there comes this Jesus stuff. So we all go wild. Yellin, booin, stompin and carrying on. Really to wake the man in the booth up there who musta went to and put on the wrong reels. But no, cause he hollier down to shut up and then he turn the sound}

1. Probably refers to “Spaldeen,” the small pink rubber ball made by the Spalding company and used for stick ball. 2. Although there is a 1961 version, this probably refers to the silent movie made in the 1920s.
up so we really gotta holler like crazy to even hear ourselves good. And the matron ropes off the children section and flashes her light all over the place and we yell some more and some kids slip under the rope and run up and down the aisle just to show it take more than some dusty ole velvet rope to tie us down. And I’m fling the kid in front of me’s popcorn. And Baby Jason kickin seats. And it’s really somethin. Then here come the big and bad matron, the one they let out in case of emergency. And she totin that flashlight like she gonna use it on somebody. This here the colored matron Brandy and her friends call Thunderbuns. She do not play. She do not smile. So we shut up and watch the simple ass picture.

Which is not so simple as it is stupid. Cause I realized that just about anybody in my family is better than this god they always talkin about. My daddy wouldn’t stand for nobody treatin any of us that way. My mama specially. And I can just see it now, Big Brood up there on the cross talkin bout Forgive them Daddy cause they don’t know what they doin. And my Mama say Get on down from there you big fool, whatcha think this is, playtime? And my Daddy yellin to Granddaddy to get him a ladder cause Big Brood actin the fool, his mother side of the family showin up. And my mama and her sister Daisy jumpin on them Romans beatin them with they pocketbooks. And Hunca Bubba tellin them folks on they knees they better get out the way and go get some help or they goin to get trampled on. And Granddaddy Vale sayin Leave the boy alone, if that’s what he wants to do with his life we ain’t got nothin to say about it. Then Aunt Daisy givin him a taste of that pocketbook, fussin bout what a damn fool old man Granddaddy is. Then everybody jumpin in his chest like the time Uncle Clayton went in the army and come back with only one leg and Granddaddy say somethin stupid about that’s life. And by this time Big Brood off the cross and in the playin handball or skully3 or somethin. And the family in the kitchen throwin dishes at each other, screamin bout if you hadn’t done this I wouldn’t had to do that. And me in the parlor trying to do my arithmetic yellin Shut it off.

Which is what I was yellin all by myself which make me a sittin target for Thunderbuns. But when I yell We want our money back, that gets everybody in chorus. And the movie windin up with this heavenly cloud music and the smartass up there in his hole in the wall turns up the sound again to drown us out. Then there comes Bugs Bunny which we already seen so we know we been had. No gorilla my nuthin. And Big Brood say Awww sheeet, we goin to see the manager and get our money back. And I know from this we business. So I brush the potato chips out of my hair which is where Baby Jason like to put em, and I march myself up the aisle to deal with the manager who is a crook in the first for lyin out there sayin Gorilla, My Love playin. And I never did like the man cause he oily and pasty at the same time like the bad guy in the serial, the one that got a hideout behind a push-button bookcase and play “Moonlight Sonata”4 with gloves on. I knock on the door and I am furious. And I am alone, too. Cause Big Brood suddenly got to go so bad even though my mama told us bout goin in

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3. A basketball game that tests shooting skill and can be played alone or as a contest between two people.
4. Popular name for Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in C Sharp Minor, Opus 27, No. 2. The “bad guy” who plays this piece is the Phantom of the Opera.
them nasty bathrooms. And I hear him sigh like he disgusted when he get to
the door and see only a little kid there. And now I’m really furious cause I get
so tired grownups messin over kids cause they little and can’t take em to court.
What is it, he say to me like I lost my mittens or wet myself or am somebody’s
retarded child. When in reality I am the smartest kid P.S. 186 ever had in its
whole lifetime and you can ax anybody. Even them teachers that don’t like me
cause I won’t sing them Southern songs or back off when they tell me my ques-
tions are out of order. And cause my Mama come up there in a minute when
them teachers start playin the dozens’ behind colored folks. She stalks in with
her hat pulled down bad and that Persian lamb coat draped back over one hip
on account of she got her fist planted there so she can talk that talk which gets
us all hypnotized, and teacher be comin undone cause she know this could be
her job and her behind cause Mama got pull with the Board and bad by her
own sell anyhow.

So I kick the door open wider and just walk right by him and sit down and
tell the man about himself and that I want my money back and that goes for
Baby Jason and Big Brood too. And he still trying to shuffle me out the door
even though I’m sittin which shows him for the fool he is. Just like them teach-
ers do fore they realize Mama like a stone on that spot and ain’t backin up. So
he ain’t gettin up off the money. So I was forced to leave, takin the matches
from under his ashtray, and set a fire under the candy stand, which closed the
raggedy ole Washington down for a week. My Daddy had the suspect it was me
cause Big Brood got a big mouth. But I explained right quick what the whole
thing was about and I figured it was even-steven. Cause if you say Gorilla, My
Love, you supposed to mean it. Just like when you say you goin to give me a
party on my birthday, you gotta mean it. And if you say me and Baby Jason can
go South pecan haulin with Granddaddy Vale, you better not be comin up with
no stuff about the weather look uncertain or did you mop the bathroom or any-
other trickified business. I mean even gangsters in the movies say My word is
my bomi. So don’t nobody get away with nothin far as I’m concerned. So
Daddy put his belt back on. Cause that’s the way I was raised. Like my Mama
say in one of them situations when I won’t back down, Okay Badbird, you
right. Your point is well-taken. Not that Badbird my name, just what she say
when she tired arguin and know I’m right. And Aunt Jo, who is the hardest
head in the family and worse even than Aunt Daisy, she say, You absolutely
right Miss Muffin, which also ain’t my real name but the name she gave me
one time when I got some medicine shot in my behind and wouldn’t get up off
her pillows for nothin. And even Granddaddy Vale—who got no memory to
speak of, so sometime you can just plain lie to him, if you want to be like that—
he say, Well if that’s what I said, then that’s it. But this name business was dif-
f erent they said. It wasn’t like Hunca Bubba had gone back on his word or any-
thing, just that he was thinkin bout gettin married and was usin his real name
now. Which ain’t the way I saw it at all.

5. Ritualized game or contest in which two participants exchange insults directed against each other’s
relatives.
So there I am in the navigator seat. And I turned to him and just plain ole ax him. I mean I come right on out with it. No sense goin all around that barn the old folks talk about. And like my mama say, Hazel—which is my real name and what she remembers to call me when she bein serious—when you got somethin on your mind, speak up and let the chips fall where they may. And if anybody don't like it, tell em to come see your mama. And Daddy look up from the paper and say, You hear your Mama good, Hazel. And tell em to come see me first. Like that. That's how I was raised.

So I turn clear round in the navigator seat and say, “Look here, Hunca Bubba or Jefferson Windsong Vale or whatever your name is, you gonna marry this girl?”

“Sure am,” he say, all grins.

And I say, “Member that time you was baby-sittin me when we lived at four-o-nine and there was this big snow and Mama and Daddy got held up in the country so you had to stay for two days?”

And he say, “Sure do.”

“Well, You remember how you told me I was the cutest thing that ever walked the earth?”

“Oh, you were real cute when you were little,” he say, which is supposed to be funny. I am not laughin.

“Well, You remember what you said?”

And Granddaddy Vale squintin over the wheel and axin Which way, Scout. But Scout is busy and don't care if we all get lost for days.

“Watcha mean, Peaches?”

“My name is Hazel. And what I mean is you said you were going to marry me when I grew up. You were going to wait. That’s what I mean, my dear Uncle Jefferson.” And he don't say nuthin. Just look at me real strange like he never saw me before in life. Like he lost in some weird town in the middle of night and lookin for directions and there’s no one to ask. Like it was me that messed up the maps and turned the road posts round. “Well, you said it, didn’t you?” And Baby Jason lookin back and forth like we playin ping-pong. Only I ain’t playin. I’m hurtin and I can hear that I am screamin. And Granddaddy Vale mumblin how we never gonna get to where we goin if I don’t turn around and take my navigator job serious.

“Well, for cryin out loud, Hazel, you just a little girl. And I was just teasin.”

“And I was just teasin,’ ” I say back just how he said it so he can hear what a terrible thing it is. Then I don’t say nuthin. And he don’t say nuthin. And Baby Jason don’t say nuthin nohow. Then Granddaddy Vale speak up. “Look here, Precious, it was Hunca Bubba what told you them things. This here, Jefferson Winston Vale.” And Hunca Bubba say, “That’s right. That was somebody else. I’m a new somebody.”

“You a lyin dog,” I say, when I meant to say treacherous dog, but just couldn’t get hold of the word. It slipped away from me. And I’m crying and crumplin down in the seat and just don’t care. And Granddaddy say to hush and steps on the gas. And I’m losin my bear ins and don’t even know where to look on the map cause I can’t see for cryin. And Baby Jason cryin too. Cause he is my blood brother and understands that we must stick together or be forever lost, what with grown-
ups playin change-up and turnin you round every which way so bad. And don’t even say they sorry.

ALICE MUNRO

Boys and Girls

My father was a fox farmer. That is, he raised silver foxes, in pens; and in the fall and early winter, when their fur was prime, he killed them and skinned them and sold their pelts to the Hudson’s Bay Company or the Montreal Fur Traders. These companies supplied us with heroic calendars to hang, one on each side of the kitchen door. Against a background of cold blue sky and black pine forests and treacherous northern rivers, plumed adventurers planted the flags of England or France; magnificent savages bent their backs to the portage.

For several weeks before Christmas, my father worked after supper in the cellar of our house. The cellar was white-washed, and lit by a hundred-watt bulb over the worktable. My brother Laird and I sat on the top step and watched. My father removed the pelt inside-out from the body of the fox, which looked surprisingly small, mean and rat-like, deprived of its arrogant weight of fur. The naked, slippery bodies were collected in a sack and buried at the dump. One time the hired man, Henry Bailey, had taken a swipe at me with this sack, saying, “Christmas present!” My mother thought that was not funny. In fact she disliked the whole pelting operation—that was what the killing, skinning, and preparation of the furs was called—and wished it did not have to take place in the house. There was the smell. After the pelt had been stretched inside-out on a long board my father scraped away delicately, removing the little clotted webs of blood vessels, the bubbles of fat; the smell of blood and animal fat, with the strong primitive odour of the fox itself, penetrated all parts of the house. I found it reassuringly seasonal, like the smell of oranges and pine needles.

Henry Bailey suffered from bronchial troubles. He would cough and cough until his narrow face turned scarlet, and his light blue, derisive eyes filled up with tears; then he took the lid off the stove, and, standing well back, shot out a great clot of phlegm—hss—straight into the heart of the flames. We admired him for this performance and for his ability to make his stomach growl at will, and for his laughter, which was full of high whistlings and gurglings and involved the whole faulty machinery of his chest. It was sometimes hard to tell what he was laughing at, and always possible that it might be us.

After we had been sent to bed we could still smell fox and still hear Henry’s laugh, but these things, reminders of the warm, safe, brightly lit downstairs world, seemed lost and diminished, floating on the stale cold air upstairs. We were afraid at night in the winter. We were not afraid of outside though this was the time of year when snowdrifts curled around our house like sleeping whales.