



Patricia

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Pat's notes:

✓ 1. The Sands seem to marry the Seawrights a lot. So they are careful that their children marry into other families.

✓ 2. Only glitch in the carefulness of blood lines seems to be in her own family. That is, in her husband's family: Billy Cato's mother, Fawn, was born a Blackhorse and married his grandmother's Uncle, August Cato. Or, to put it another way, ^{Billy's} his mother married her great uncle. Or another way: her husband's father, August Cato, is also his grandmother's, Bitty Cato Blackhorse's, uncle and therefore Billy's great granduncle as well. Since Bitty Cato's uncle August was her father's, Sterl Cato's, brother, and since Bitty Cato married Peter Blackhorse, and since her daughter, Fawn Blackhorse, married her mother's uncle, and since Peter Blackhorse is Billy Cato's grandfather-well. It was distant, and August Cato was an old man when he married Fawn Blackhorse. And maybe that's why she had just the one child: Billy. So the Blackhorse blood was there and that made her, Pat's, daughter, Billie-Delia a fifth? cousin to Soane and Dovey, because Peter Blackhorse was brother to Thomas Blackhorse and Sally Blackhorse, and Thomas Blackhorse was Soane's and Dovey's father.

Sally Blackhorse married Aaron Poole and had eleven children, two of whom her daughter, Billie-Delia, was in love with, and there was something, most probably, wrong with that but she couldn't figure out what.

3. Bitty Cato's father, Sterl Cato, married a woman named Honesty Jones. It must have been she who insisted on naming her daughter Friendship, and was probably riled at hearing the child called Bitty.

4. She [Pat] had no aunts or uncles. They all died when her father, Roger, was a boy in the ¹⁹²⁰ 1919 influenza epidemic: Richard, Henry, Jacob, Christine, and Dinah. ^{but which they CALLED "Rocking Pneumonia"}

4. Her mother, Delia, was an orphan with no last name, whom her father met in boot camp at an AME Zion picnic held for colored soldiers in Tennessee. She looked like a cracker and that was the real reason why she died. While the women begged--Kate's mother, Catherine Jury; Fanny DuPres; Dovey Morgan; and Anna Flood's mother, Charity--their husbands delayed: Harper Jury, Ace Flood, Steward Morgan. All of the excuses were valid, reasonable. But the

fact was that they had always looked down on Roger's wife of no name, wife without people, wife of sunlight skin, wife of racial tampering. Her father denied it, loudly, but Pat knew that no one ever said her mother's name aloud, except now when they spoke of Billie-Delia who was thinking of changing her name to Billie Best, or Billie Cato. No Delia at all. All the women wanted was to get somebody to go get one of the nuns at the Convent. The midwives were in trouble. One of the nuns was a nurse. But the men didn't want to bring a white into their town, or else they didn't want to go into a white

person's house asking, begging for help. So the mother without one died and the baby whom ^{you} she had planned to name Faustine if a girl,

^{or} and Richard, after her ^{daddy's} husband's oldest brother, if a boy, died too.

Faustine. ~~That would have been her~~ baby sister. ^{We would have grown up together} Patrica and Faustine.

Too light maybe, but together it would not have mattered. ^{to us *} ~~As it was~~

^{So I married} ~~she chose~~ Billy Cato ^{when I finished ~~that~~ Texas school in} to marry partly because he was beautiful, partly

because ^{made me laugh} his spirits were so high, and partly (mostly?) because he had

the midnight skin of the Cato's and Blackhorse's along with the

Blackhorse trait of stick straight hair. Like Soane's and Dovey's hair;

and like Easter and ^{Scout} ~~Worthy~~ had had. But he died, did Billy, and ~~she~~ ^{I took my lightish}

^{moved back} ~~came on home to live in her father's house~~ with the mortuary in back ^{your pretty white}

* We'd be together. I have no aunts or uncles ^{all 2} because ~~daddy's~~ ^{what they call} sisters & brothers died in the 1919 influenza ^{rocking pneumonia} but was probably the 1919 influenza epidemic.

~~skin~~ but not whitish skin baby and

^{have been}
and contented ~~herself~~ ^{with} teaching the children who called ^{me} ~~her~~ Mrs.
Best as [^] ~~and~~ ^{does} everybuddy else--so short was the time ^I ~~she~~ was Pat Cato.

(Billie TK)

PATRICIA

Handwritten signature

9/8

The bells and pine trees were done. Cut from green and red construction paper. Just the glitter left for the trim. Last year she had made a mistake letting the little ones do it. After cleaning their fingers and elbows of glue, picking the tiny specks of silver from their hair and faces, she had to do the decorations over anyway. This time she would hand out the bells and trees for the wrapping paper and monitor each dot of glue herself. Although the pot holders, pin cushions, the painted boxes and paper doilies were like all the Christmas presents she supervised, this was, for her, the best time of the year. The older ones rehearsed with Kate. The middle ones memorized their speeches. And the whole town helped or meddled: men repaired the platform, strung rope for sheetr curtains and Christmas lights. The women made cookies, punch, taffy and wrapped the peppermint sticks with big red bows. Each church had its own program, but the school program involved everybody.

The days were warm and windy; the sky behaving like a showgirl, its pale, melancholy mornings giving way to long ribbons of primary colors in the evening. A mineral scent was in the air, sweeping down from some Genesis time when volocanoes broke open the earth; when lava cooled quickly under relentless wind. wind that

scoured stone, sculpted it and, finally, crumbled it to the bits rockhounds loved. The same wind that once parted clumps of buffalo hair and lifted that of the Cheyenne / Arapaho, telling both when the other was near.

She had noticed the mineral smell all day and now, finished with grading papers and making decorations, checked the showgirl sky for a repeat performance. But it was gone now. Nothing spectacular left, nothing outrageously beautiful. Just some lilac shapes running after a day-glo sun.

Her father had gone to bed early, exhausted from the monologue he had delivered at the supper table. The gas station he was planning. Eagle Oil was encouraging him--no use to talk to the big oil companies. Deek and Steward were interested--approving the loan, selling him the property. The only question was where. Across from Anna's store? Good spot, but Holy Redeemer might not think so. North, then? Next to Sargeant's Feed and Seed? There would be plenty of customers--nobody would have to travel ninety miles for gasoline, or keep tanks of it where they lived. The roads? Something might be done to the two dirt ones that extended south and north of Ruby's paved road to the county's route 18. With the franchise, the

county might do them both. tarmac anyway. It would be a problem though, trying to get local people to agree to petition for it--the old ones would put up a fight. They liked being off the country road, accessible only to the lost and the knowledgeable. "But think of it, Patsy, just think of it. I could fix cars, engines; sell tires, batteries, fan belts. Soda pop too. Something Anna don't stock. No point in getting her riled up."

Patricia nodded. A very good idea, she thought, like all of his ideas. His veterinary practice (illegal, he had no license, but who knew or cared enough to drive a hundred miles to help Wisdom Poole yank on a foal stuck in its mother?); his butcher business (bring him the slaughtered steer--he'd skin, butcher, carve and refrigerate it for you); and of course the ambulance/ mortuary business. Because he wanted to be, studied to be, a doctor most of his enterprises had to do with operating on the sick or dead. The gas station idea was the first non-surgical proposal she could remember (though his eyes did fire when he spoke of taking apart engines). She wished he had been a doctor, had been accepted in a medical school. Chances are her mother would be alive today. Maybe not. Maybe he would have been away at that school instead of the mortuary one when Delia died.

As quickly as it had come, dazzling color disappeared on these short December days. The wind soughed trying to dislodge cold sequins from the black crepe sky. Pat climbed the atairs to her bedroom and decided to while away the rest of the evening on her history project. Rather what used to be a history project but was nothing of the sort now. It began as a gift to Ruby--a collection of family trees; the geneologies of each of the fifteen families. Upside down trees, the trunks sticking in the air, the branches arching down. When the trees were completed she began to supplement the brances of who begat whom with notes: what work they did, for example, where they lived, to what church they belonged. Some of the nicer touches ("Was Missey Rivers, wife of Thomas Blackhorse, born near the Mississippi river? Her names seems to suggest...") she had gotten from her students' autobiographical compositions. (Not anymore. Some parents complained about their children being asked to gossip, to divulge would could be private information, secrets, even.) Most of her notes came from talking to people, asking to see bibles and church records. But she didn't want or need further research. The trees required occasional additions now--births, marriages, deaths--but her interest in the supplementary notes grew as they did and she

gave up all pretense to objective historical comment.

Arnette and K.d., married last July, were expecting a child. Pat located the Morgan file and went to the limb that was, so far, one line:

Cato Smith (aka K.D. [as in Kentucky Derby] m. Arnette Fleetwood

There wasn't much space beneath, but they probably wouldn't need it for any descendents. Arnette's mother had only two children, one of whom had fathered only defectives. In addition these later Morgans were not as prolific as the earlier ones. Zecharah Morgan (aka Big Papa nee Coffee) m. Mindy Flood [note: Anna Flood's great aunt] and had nine children survive> Pat ran her finger over their names: Pryor Morgan, Rector Morgan, Shepherd Morgan, Ella Morgan, Loving Morgan, Selanie MOrgan, Governor Morgan, Queen Morgan and Scout Morgan. One of her notes said: "It took seven births for them to get around to given a female child an administrative, authoritative sounding name, and I bet they called her 'Queenie.'" Another comment, threading out from Zechariah's name was "He must have taken, invented, that name. Coffee was his birth name--a misspelling

of Kofi, certainly. And since no Louisiana Morgans owned him or any Haven people, he must have chosen it from something or someplace he liked. Zacharias, father of John the Baptist? or the Zechariah who had such strange visions? Scrolls of curses; women in baskets, and who saw Joshua's filthy clothes changed into rich ones. Zecharias who saw the horrible result of disobeying God. The punishment of not showing mercy or compassion was a scattering among all nations and land once pleasant made desolate. That would fit for Zechariah Morgan: the curse, the women in a basket, lidded with lead and taken to a house, but especially the scattering. it would be the scattering that would have frightened him. The break up of the group or tribe or consortia of families or, in Coffee's case, the splitting up of a contingent of families who had lived with or near each other since before Bunker Hill. Being thrown apart into foreign land becoming alien to each other. Not knowing a jawline that signified one family, a cast of eye or a walk that identified another. Not being able to see yourself duplicated in a third or fourth generation grandchild. Not knowing where the generations before him were buried or how to get in touch with them if you didn't know. That would be the Zechariah Coffee would chose for himself. That would have appealed

to him if he heard some mighty preacher tell that story of Joshua crowned. Not Joshua, the king, but the witness to whom God and angels spoke on a regular basis about things Coffee knew something about."

When she asked Steward where his grandfather got his name, either of them, he'd grunted and said he thought it was Moyne orginally, Le Moyne or something but "We called him Big Papa. Called my daddy Big Daddy" as though that ended it. Insulted-like. Because he himself wasn't a papa or a daddy, big or otherwise. So the Morgan line was slackening. One of Coffee's (Zechariah's) sons, named Rector, had seven children with his wife, Beck, but only four survived: Elder, the twins, Deacon and Steward and K.D.'s mother, Ruby. Elder died leaving his wife Susannah Smith with six children--all of whom moved from Haven to northern states. Zecharaiah would hate that. And sure enough from then on the fertility shrivelled even while the bounty multiplied. The more money, the fewer children; the fewer children, the more money to give them. Assuming you amassed enough of it which was why the richest ones--Deek and Steward--were so keen on the issue of K.D.'s marriage. Or so she supposed.

All of them, however, had the little sign she had chosen after

their names. 8-R. Signifying eight-rock. Those with blue black skin, tall and graceful, whose wide innocent eyes gave no sign of what they really felt about those who weren't 8-rock like them.

Descendents of those who had been in Louisiana when it was French, when it was Spanish, when it was French again, when it was sold to Jefferson as a territory and when it became a state in 1812.

Descendents of those who had defied or hid from whites who did all they could to force them to stay; who spoke a patois part Spanish, part French, part English and all their own. Descendents of those who had walked to the 'Run.' Walked, like pilgrims to Mecca, from Louisiana to Oklahoma in 1890 and got to the place described on advertisements folded into their shoes or creased into the brims of their hats only to be shooed away.

When the next generation of 8-rock males scattered--in the army--it could have been over and done with, just as Zechariah feared. should have been over and done with. The Rejection of the Pilgrims having outlived its time by 1949, hadn't it? No. those thost survived the war came right back home, saw what had become of Haven, heard about the testicles chopped off of other ex-colored soldiers; heard about medals being torn off by gangs of rednecks and

Sons of the Confederacy--that would have been Rejection Part Two. so they did it again. Just as the original pilgrims never sought another colored townsite, this generation joined no organization, fought no civil battle. They consolidated the 8-rock blood and, haughty as ever, moved further west. The New Fathers. Deacon Morgan, Steward Morgan, Cato Smith, Ace Flood, Aaron Poole, Senior Pulliam, Nathan DuPres, Moss DuPres, Arnold Fleetwood, Ossie Beauchamp, Harper Jury, Sargeant Person, John Seawright, Edwards Sands and her father, Roger Best who was the first to violate the blood rule. The one nobody admitted existed. The one established when the Louisiana Pilgrims noticed and remembered that the Rejection came from fair-skinned colored men. Blue-eyed, gray-eyed yellowmen in good suits. They reportedly were kind though. Gave them food and blankets; took up a collection for them, but were unmoving in their refusal to let them stay more than a night's rest. The story went that Zechariah and Drum Blackhorse forbade the women to eat the food. That August Cato left the blankets in the tent with the three dollars and nine cents neatly stacked on top. But Soane said her grandmother, Celeste Blackhorse, sneaked back and got the food secretly passing it to Bitty Cato, Praise Compton and her

sister Sally Blackhorse to distribute to the children.

So the rule was set and lived a permanent life because it was never spoken, except the hint in words Zechariah forged for the Oven. More than a rule. A curse. "Beware the furrow of his Brow" in which the You (understood) nominative case was not a command to the believers, the Pilgrims looking for Paradise, but a threat to those who had stood in the way. It must have taken him months to think up those words--just so--to have multiple meanings; to appear stern urging obedience to God, but benevolent, not specifying what the Furrow might cause to happen. So the teen-agers Misner organized who wanted "We Are the Furrow of his Brow" were more insightly that they knew. Look what they did to Menus, forcing him to give bacak or return the woman he brought home to marry. The pretty sandy-haired girl from Virginia. Menus hadn't been sober since. And though they attributed his weekend drunks to his Vietnam war memories, and they laughed with him as he cut their hair, Pat knew love in its desperate state when she saw it. She believed she had seen it in her father's eyes, poorly veiled by his business ventures.

Now in the margin next to

Roger Best m. Delia

she wrote: "Daddy, they don't hate us because Mama was your first client. They hate us because she looked like a cracker and was bound to have cracker-looking children like me and although I married Billy Cato who was an 8-rock like you, like them, I passed the skin onto my daughter. We were the first visible glitch, but there was an invisible one too. In Billy's family because his mother, Fawn, was born a Blackhorse and married his grandmother's uncle, August Cat. Or, to put another way, Billy's mother married her great uncle. Or another way: my husband's father, August Cato, is also his grandmother's (Bitty Cato Blackhorse's) uncle and therefore Billy's great granduncle as well. Since Bitty Cato married Peter Blackhorse, and since her daughter, Fawn Blackhorse, married her mother's uncle, and since Peter Blackhorse is Billy Cato's grandfather--well, you can see the problem with blood rules. It's distant, and August Cato was an old man when he married little Fawn blackhorse. And maybe that's why she had just the one child, my husband Billy. Still the Blackhorse boood is there and that makes my daughter, Billie Delia a fifth? cousin to Soane and dovey because Peter Blackhorse was brother to Thomas Blackhorse and Sally Blackhorse, and Thomas Blackhorse was Soane's and Dovey's father. Now Sally Blackhorse married Aaron Poole and had

eleven children, two of whom Billie Delia is in love with, and there was something, most probably, wrong with that but I can't figure out what."

Pat drew a line from her mother's name, tipped it with an arrow and wrote:

"The women really tried, Mama. They really did. Kate's mother, Catherine Jury, you remember her, and Fanny DuPres, the midwife who delivered me (she's dead now), Dovey Morgan and Charity Flood. But none of them could drive. You must have believed that deep down they hated you, but not all of them, maybe none of them, because they begged the men to go get help. I heard them. Dovey Morgan was crying as she left to find somebody, going from house to house: Harper Jury's, Flood's, Sargeant Person's (how come that ignorant Negro doesn't know his name is Pierson?) All of the excuses were valid, reasonable. Even with their wives begging they came up with excuses because they looked down on you Mama, and despised Daddy for marrying a wife of no last name, a wife without people, a wife of sunlight skin, a wife of racial tampering. The two midwives were in trouble and all they wanted was to get one of the nuns at the Convent. One of them was a nurse. They went to Soane's to see if

Deek was there. He wasn't, but dovey was. She went to get Ace flood, then Sargeant. Went to every house in walking distance. Finally they got Senior Pulliam to agree. But by the time he got his shoes tied it was too late. Charity hollered through his door--too frustrated to knock, too angry to step inside--and said "You can take your shoes back off Senior. Get your preacher clothes ready so you'll be in time for the funeral!" Then she was gone from there.

When Daddy got back everybody was worried sick about how long you and the baby's bodies could last before you both had to go in the ground, Roger or no Roger, husband or no husband. But you came back the second day. No time for a decent wake. So you were his first job. And a wonderful job he did too. You were beautiful. with Faustine by your side. You would have been proud of Daddy.

He doesn't blame anybody except himself for being at mortuary graduation. We have quarrelled about it and he doesn't agree with me that those 8-rock men didn't want to bring a white into town; or else didn't want to drive out to a white's house begging for help; or else they just despised your white skin so much they thought of reasons why they could not go. Daddy says more than one woman has died in childbirth and I say who? So the mother without one died and

the baby whom you planned to name Faustine if a girl, or Richard, after Daddy's oldest brother, if a boy, died too. Faustine. My baby sister. We would have grown up together. Patricia and Faustine. Too light, maybe but together it would not have mattered to us. We'd be a team. I have no aunts or uncles because all of Daddy's sisters and brothers died of what they called walking pneumonia but what must have been the 1919 influenza epidemic. so I married Billy Cato which I finished that school in Texas, partly because he was beautiful, partly because he made me laugh, and partly (mostly?) because he had the midnight skin of the Cato's and the Blackhorse's along with the Blackhorse feature of stick straight hair. Like Soane's and Dovey's hair, and like Easter and Scout had. But he died, did Billy, and I took my lightish but not white-ish baby and moved back in your pretty little house with the mortuary in back and have been contented teaching the children who call me Mrs. Best as everybody else does, so short was the time I was Pat Cato.