



"I be there, Miss Best."

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"I be there, Miss Best."

"Is that 'I'll'? 'I'll be there'?"

"Yes ma'am, Miss Best. I will."

In the kitchen heating water for tea, Pat banged the cupboard door so hard the cups rattled. It was a toss up as to whose behavior had annoyed her most: Anna's or her own. At least she could understand Anna: protecting her stake. But why had she defended people and things and ideas with a passion she did not feel? The deep weeping pleasure the audience took from the play disgusted her. All that nonsense she had grown up with seemed to her like an excuse to be hateful. Richard was right to ask. Why seven and not nine? Pat had seen the play all her life although she had never been chosen for any part other than the choir. That was when Soane taught school--before she even noticed a change in the numbers. It was sometime later--when exactly?--that she saw there were only eight. By the time she understood that the Cato line was cut there was another erasure. Who? There were only two families who were not part of the original nine, but had come to Haven early enough to have a kind of associate status: The Jury's (their grandson, Harper, had married a

Blackhorse--good for him); and her father's father: Fulton Best. They didn't count so it had to be--who? Fleetwood because of the broken babies? ^{(over) 1 & 2} ~~The Poole's because of Billie Dellia?~~ ~~But Richard didn't count~~ Surely not the Floods if Anna married Richard Misner? If that was the case the Morgans themselves were in grave danger until K.D. married Arnette. And if she had had a son rather than a daughter how much safer their position would be. ~~*~~ (Insert) ~~fed drinking~~

~~Pat was frowning in her efforts to puzzle it out, but suddenly~~ ^{she} she began to laugh. Did they really think they could keep this up? The numbers, the bloodlines, the who fucks who? Well, to stay alive maybe they could, maybe they should, since nobody dies in Ruby.

~~*~~ Slowly Pat ~~spotted~~ ^{her} ~~the~~ ^{cup} ~~with~~ ^{her} ~~squeezed~~ ^{black} leaves clushed in its well. More hot broking water, a little steeping and the black leaves would yield ^{more} ~~another~~ strong cup. ~~Even~~ ^{more} ~~another~~, until.

So that was the ~~it~~ ^{formula}. Unadulterated and unadultery-ied 8-Rock blood ^{held its} ~~was~~ magic as long as it ~~resided~~ ^{resided} in Ruby. ~~They had found~~ ^{That was the} ~~formula~~ ^{formula}. Immortality.

(2)

Or
was
it

The Poole's because of Billie Delia. That would be
proof of dalliance, but if that were the case the
Morgans themselves etc.

Or was there some other measure?

① Surely not the floods if Anna married
Richard Misner. Would that count? Could
Richard save the flood line?

~~Suddenly she got it: as obvious as a~~

the