



## Sp. W

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Sp. W. 2/00

from one  
compartment  
to another

[STORYVOICE]

We need a better story to explain what happened to the girl—and that boy too. The one about harpies bursting out of the ocean to harm loose women and eat disobedient children won't do anymore. It was an unappetizing tale anyway, but it emerged in the fifties fully formed and without source when a couple of "see, what'd I tell you?" events took place at the shore. Like that Up Beach woman who made love in the sand with her neighbor's husband and suffered a stroke right then and there. And she wasn't but 24 at the time. Or that other woman—she was from Harmony and wouldn't have anything to do with Up Beach people—who hid some letters and a purchase deed under her mother-in-law's porch only to have mud turtles dig them up. A few days later the greedy daughter-in-law broke her hip trying to keep the breezes and the neighbors away from the papers that damned her. Although no one actually saw the hags during the shame of these guilty women, we knew they were there and what they looked like

because one evening in 1948 some hard-headed children swam past the safety rope. As soon as they were pulled under, the dark clouds gathering above the heads of screaming parents, subdued siblings and picknickers became the profiles of old women in a spasm of open-mouthed joy. Some of us swore that what others took for thunder was a sneaky kind of laughter. From that time to the fifties the ~~beach~~  
~~water~~ crones pounced on the unsuspecting only after sunset (when lust was keenest, when turtles lay eggs and exhausted parents became negligent), and they seemed especially hungry when the hotel was full of visitors drunk with dance music, salt air and the temptation of deep water. Those were the days when Cosey's <sup>Resort</sup> ~~Rest.~~ was the best and best known vacation spot for colored folk on the east coast.

Everybody came: Lil green, Fatha Hines, etc. tk and guests as far away as Michigan and New York couldn't wait to get down here where Crooked Heart beach offered the best of everything. <sup>THEN</sup> ~~But~~ in 1958 the crones were spotted in bright daylight. A clarinet player and his bride drowned at noon. The inner tube raft they were floating on washed ashore and broke up into unmistakably geriatric faces crowned by streams of kelp hair. Whether the bride had played around during the



honeymoon was unclear but she certainly had every opportunity. ~~Bill~~

Cosey's resort had more handsome men per square foot than anyplace

outside St. Louis or even New Orleans. ~~From then on~~, women up to no

good and mule headed children didn't need further warning because

there was no escape: quick as lightening, night time or day, ancient

biddies shot up out of the waves to punish wayward women and

swallow the misbehaving young. We thought that would be work

enough for the she-devils, but it wasn't. It took twenty more years

and a boy and girl for us to acknowledge the reach as well as the point

of their appetite. All of Crooked Heart belongs to them now. Most of

us live in Harmony and except for a few fish shacks, Up Beach is

twenty feet under water. ~~Cosey's Rest~~ is still standing. Sort of

standing. Looks more like it's rearing backwards—away from hurricanes

and a steady blow of sand. ~~Odd~~ what ocean front can do to empty

buildings. Tk. see over)

In 1978 Bill Cosey's widow sold seventy-five of his inland acres to an

Equal Opportunity Housing developer for fifty homes so reasonably

priced and generously financed even Up Beach people could afford

\* 1 lb of sand piling in the porch corners and along the  
 banners are whiter than the beach, softer like flour & the  
 sifted for 20 years after 20 years of softing. The roses  
 which, <sup>now they</sup> hate, old soil ~~are~~ ~~about~~ ~~ragent~~ ~~are~~  
 short

More thorns  
 than  
 black = berries  
 and a flat  
 red  
 blossom with  
 or age  
 centers.

\*\* The wooden  
 riding looly silver  
 plated - its peeling  
 have begun  
 paint to the streaks  
 if unpainted  
~~temple~~  
 tea phrase.

Despite the noise  
 paneling, the  
 home promises  
 gifts and things  
 inside. ~~But~~  
 Secrets; maybe  
 in those long  
 corridors and  
 closed up rooms.  
 Music too. X's  
 trumpet ~~beginning~~  
 in the ~~is~~  
 the piano keys ~~with~~  
 wandering ~~to~~ ~~along~~  
~~mind~~ one note above the

You can see the  
 the prettiest shells appear  
 right up on the steps - <sup>(scattered</sup>  
 petals or cameos ~~from~~ <sup>like</sup> a Sunday dress.  
 And wonder how they got so far from  
 home. <sup>\*\*</sup> <sup>big</sup> The <sup>^</sup> double doors with their  
 etched glass panels are padlocked; and  
 (No body has broken ~~through~~) their  
 etched glass panels [because] No one  
 could <sup>you and</sup> would because they ~~are~~  
 mirror <sup>^</sup> the view behind your back:



honeymoon was unclear but she certainly had every opportunity. Cosey's Resort had more handsome men per square foot than anyplace outside St. Louis or even New Orleans. After the couple was separated--sent to different funeral parlors-- women up to no good and mule headed children didn't need further warning because there was no escape: quick as lightening, night time or day, ancient biddies shot up out of the waves to punish wayward women and swallow the misbehaving young. We thought that would be work enough for the she-devils, but it wasn't. It took twenty more years and a boy and girl for us to acknowledge the reach as well as the point of their appetite. All of Crooked Heart belongs to them now. Most of us live in Harmony and except for a few fish shacks, Up Beach is twenty feet under water. The main house of Cosey's Resort is still standing. Sort of standing. Looks more like it's rearing backwards--away from hurricanes and a steady blow of sand. Odd what ocean front can do to empty buildings. You can find the prettiest shells right up on the steps, scattered like petals or cameos from a Sunday dress and you wonder how they got so far from home. Hills of sand piling in porch corners and along the bannisters are whiter than the beach, soft like flour after twenty years

*That little piece of Harmony is*  
of sifting. Roses, which normally hate our soil, rage here. More thorns than blackberries and weeks of dark red blossoms. The wooden siding of the house looks silver plated, its peeling paint has become the streaks of an unpolished tea service. The big double doors are padlocked. Nobody has broken their etched glass panels. No one would because they mirror your own face and the view behind your back: a half acre of chive grass edging the glittery beach, the hungry sky and an ocean that wants you more than anything. Despite the outside loneliness, the house seems to promise gifts and toys inside. They are secrets, maybe, crowding those long corridors and closed up rooms. Music too. A trumpet keens; piano keys waver one note above the wind.

*That should have ended the story and would have except for the gift.*  
In 1978 Bill Cosey's widow sold seventy-five of his inland acres to an Equal Opportunity Housing developer for fifty homes so reasonably priced and generously financed even Up Beach people could afford them. *That section of Harmony is* ~~It's~~ called Oceanside—which it isn't—and is full of people who commute to offices and hospital labs twenty miles north as well as Up Beach folk. (It's easy to tell which is which by their hands.) The sale



*That little piece of Harmony is*

them. ~~It's~~ called Oceanside—which it isn't—and is full of people who commute to offices and hospital labs twenty miles north as well as Up Beach folk. (It's easy to tell which is which by their hands.) The sale

→ had just closed, the land barely plotted when mothers were pumping mud from their spigots. Dried up wells and degraded pipes encouraged the most stubborn Up Beach tenant to abandon the sight of the sea, its groovy breeze and apply for a HUD mortgage. So when everybody had pulled out we knew for certain the hags wanted the whole place for themselves. Accidents, hotel ruin, the sale of Bill Cosey's inland acres and unheard of drought turning marshland into mudcakes so dry even the mosquitoes quit—none of that was random. The crones had won: three and a half miles of Atlantic beach front was theirs alone for play. That should have ended the story and would have except for the girl, the boy and, of course, the Cosey widows. Their lives, their behavior and then their disappearance whipped up so much feeling that a grown up nursery story was all we had to explain what was known and to grasp what was hidden. Even though we knew in our hearts the story was trash: another wicked women tale made up to scare females and discipline children. But it doesn't work, doesn't explain. Even Eve,