



Sp. W: L's voice and Chapter 1

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Sp. W

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1

L's voice
[STORY VOICE]

The women ^{are spread} spread their legs wide open. It may look like an invite but
← [THE within reach that's out of reach.]
its mostly provocation. If you look at a magazine, a Sunday

supplement or watch tv you can't help noticing how these modern girls

do. Still, ^{straddling} spread-eagled in a chair or dancing crotch-out on tv, they're
an that much different ^{she} inside from women who lived around here once ¹

upon a time. You'd never see their ^{over thighs} knees—open or closed—and if they

^{dirty nasty} danced when they were young—well, it was a private affair—if you get
my meaning, ^{because the} although they had a recklessness any pimp could plunder. ^{in them that}

But then or now, long skirts or none, ^{not} they never could hide their

innocence—a kind of pity kitty hopefulness. Especially the tough ones

with their box cutters and bad language, or the glossy ones with two-

seated cars and a pocketbook lining full of ^{illegal medicine.} drugs who don't need to

watch their bank balances. ^(None of them can) They can't seem to hide the sugar, the

winsome baby girl curled up somewhere inside, near the spine, maybe,

* Any pimp could plunder that recklessness — so they kept it secret.

? Confuse you into thinking what's out of reach is within reach.

July 4

OK 5/15
earlier for
corrections

* The women's legs are
wide open now.

4

WAS
Secret.

there and
All^A Yours for the taking but not quite
better
do not touch

within reach and out of reach

The within reach that's out of reach

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or under the heart. Naturally all of them have a story. Too much notice, not enough, or the worst kind. Some tale about dragon daddies and ice-veined men, of love-blind mamas and friends who did them wrong. Each story has a monster in it that made them tough but not brave, so they open ^{their} legs instead of hearts ^{that} sheltering ^{where} a folded child. ^{Sometimes} But when the cut is ^{and} so deep ^{is sheltered} no woe-is-me story is enough, a big, country wide ^{one} is the only thing that does the trick, that explains the craziness heaping up and holding down ^{the women}. And a scarey story satisfies what a bitter one can't.

We ^{have} had a good one around here. It's old, though, and ^{close to forgotten} barely ^{remembered}

^{the widows} ~~remembered~~ until we had to haul it out to explain what happened to ^{girl} the ~~girl~~ and that ^{boy} too. ^{story} Ours is about ^{Some} hellions called ^{Claras} who ^{bust} busting up out of the ocean to harm loose women and eat disobedient children. ^{It's} A shivery ^{Kind of} tale that came out of nowhere back in the forties when a couple of "see there, what'd I tell you?" things happened at the shore.

Like that Up Beach woman who made love in the sand with her neighbor's husband and the very next day suffered a stroke at the

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tech term
cannery, the crab knife in her hand. 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—^{well, she} who hid some letters and a purchase deed
under her father-in-law's fishing shack only to have loggerheads dig
them up. Three suns hadn't set when the greedy daughter-in-law
broke her hip trying to keep the breezes and the neighbors away from
the papers that damned her. Although nobody flat out saw the
^{Claras} creatures during the shame of these guilty women, ^{we all} everybody knew
they were around and knew what they looked like ^{too} because, earlier, one
evening in 194⁵8, some hard-headed children swam past the safety
rope and drowned. As soon as they were pulled under, the dark clouds
gathering above the heads of screaming parents, ^{dumb struck} subdued siblings and ^{picknickers}
~~picknickers~~ turned into the profiles of gate-mouthed women whooping
fix for joy. Some ^{of us} took for thunder what others heard as laughter. From
that time to the fifties ^{the Claras} they were said to loiter ^{ed} in the surf or flop ^{ied} across
the beach ready to pounce around sunset (when lust ^{is} was keenest,
when ^{logger heads} turtles lay eggs and ^{fired-out} exhausted parents ^{get} became negligent).

*and
* Trembling brothers*

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~~Of course~~ All the best demons, of course are at supper time.

Naturally, like every demon we ever heard tell of, they were hungriest

~~But~~ though, ~~it~~ ^{or maybe just} ~~to~~ ^{the} ~~roll~~ at night when the hotel was full of visitors drunk with dance music, or

salt air and the temptation of starlit water. Those were the days when

Cosey's Resort 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 from as far away as Michigan and New York couldn't wait

to get down here where Crooked Beach swirled with young mothers

and brand new school teachers; where children rode their fathers' leg

shanks and buried uncles up to their necks in sand. Grandparents

watched over red thermos jugs with white handles, hampers and

orange crates full of crab meat salad, ham, chicken, yeast rolls and

loaves of lemon flavored cake. Then, all of a sudden, in 1958 the

~~fish~~ ^{* a pack of} ~~Clarass~~ ^{The Clarass} women, bold as Jezebel, showed up in bright daylight. A clarinet

player and his bride drowned at noon. The inner tube raft they were

floating on washed ashore dragging by streams of scale cluttered hair.

Whether the bride had played around during the honeymoon was

whispered about but the facts were ^{muddy} uncertain. She sure had every

* ? a school of Jezebels

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opportunity. Cosey's Resort had more handsome single men per square foot than anyplace outside St. Louis or even New Orleans. They came partly for the music but mostly to dance by the sea with pretty women.

After the drowned 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: fast as lightening, night time or day, ^{the Claras} ~~underwater~~ women could shoot up out of the waves to punish wayward women or swallow the misbehaving young. ~~When the~~ ⁴⁸ ~~Resort failed~~, ^{*} the story died ^{too} with it. A few people sinking crab castles in the back bays remembered it, but with no more ^{big} bands or honeymooners; with the beach picnics and swimmers gone; when Crooked Beach became a treasury ^{el?} of sea junk and Up Beach itself drowned, nobody needed or wanted to recall salt wet females with scaley legs and foaming hair. [It took thirty years, a boy and girl to ³ ~~bring them back alive~~ ^{fix} revive them.] .

Most of us live in Harmony now and, except for a few fish shacks,

* Lasted, it did, until the Resort went out of business. ~~When it died~~ (THEN)

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Up Beach is twenty feet under water, ^{and} ~~but~~ The hotel part 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, like scattered petals or cameos from a

Sunday dress and you wonder how they got so far from the ocean. (Sea?)

Hills of sand piling in porch corners and along the bannisters are whiter

than the beach, and soft, like flour after ^{seasons} years of sifting. Roses, which

all the time hate our soil, rage here. ^{with} More thorns than blackberries and

^{beet} weeks of dark red blossoms. The wooden siding of the hotel looks

silver plated, its peeling paint like the streaks on an unpolished tea

service. The big double doors are padlocked. Nobody has smashed

their glass panels. Nobody could stand to do it because the panels

mirror your own face as well as the view behind your back: ^san acre of

chive grass edging the ^{sparkly} ~~glittery~~ beach, ^a the movie screen sky and an

ocean that wants you more than anything. Despite the outside

loneliness, ^{was/were to} ~~if you look~~ inside, the hotel seems to promise gifts and ^{you} toys. ^{Good times.}

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Secrets, too, crowding those long corridors and closed up rooms. And music. The shift of a shutter hinge sounds like the cough of a trumpet; piano keys waver one note above the wind.

TRICK BACK
In 1978 Bill Cosey's widow sold seventy-five of his inland acres to an Equal Opportunity Housing developer for forty four homes so reasonably priced and generously financed even Up Beach people could afford them. That section of Harmony is called Oceanside—which it isn't—and is full of people who commute to offices and hospital labs twelve miles north, as well as former Up Beach folk. (It's easy to tell which is which by their hands.) The sale of Cosey land had just closed, the acres barely plotted when Up Beach mothers were pumping mud from their spigots. Dried up wells ^{stillthous} and ~~degraded pipes~~ ^{forced} helped the stubborn ones give up the sight of the sea, its groovy ^e breeze and apply for a two per cent HUD mortgage. When everybody had pulled out ~~we~~ ^{nobody gave the ~~fishermen~~ ^{Claras} a thought.} suspected for the first time that the fish women had what they ^{Claras} wanted all along. ^{Trouble} Accidents, hotel ruin, the sale of Bill Cosey's inland

>
insert
1.8.

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after flood
 flood followed by drought after
 acres, unheard of drought turning marshland into mud cakes so dry

We thought it was just life being original random. *
 even the mosquitoes quit - none of that was random. The women had

won: three and a half miles of Atlantic beach front ^{alone} was all theirs for

play. That ~~should have ended~~ ^{was dead to us stayed that way} the story and would have except for the

girl, the boy and, of course, the Cosey widows. ^{disappeared **} People said they

widows must have struck a deal, trading beach front for protection and ^{the Claras}

we waited to see if any good could come from that much sin. For a

long time it looked as though we would wait forever. Then the girl

came. After that, after all their business was in the street, they

disappeared from the face of the earth, whipping up so much feeling

folklore was all we had left to chew on. Even though we knew from

the beginning the story was trash: just another wicked women tale

made up to scare females and correct children. We knew it wouldn't

work, wouldn't explain. Even Eve, poor thing, can't carry this modern

world's ^{miserable} evil. We need something else. Better. A brand new tale.

→ * It didn't cross our minds that (p7 insert)

* * * Meaner than most and stand offish they were quickly
 missed because we paid them the constant attention disliked
 folks ~~people~~ always attract.

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CHAPTER ONE

The day she walked into Oceanside was peculiar for that part of the county. Chafing winds kept the temperature low and the sun was helpless to move outside thermometers more than a few degrees above freezing. Tiles of ice had formed at the shoreline and, inland, the thrown-together houses on Post road whined like puppies. Ice slick gleamed then disappeared in the early evening shadow causing the sidewalks she marched along to undermine even the most agile tread. She should have bent her head and closed her eyes to slits in that weather, but, being a stranger, she stared wide-eyed at each house searching for the address that matched the one in the advertisement: One Old Post Road. Finally she turned into a driveway where Sandler Gibbons stood in his garage door ripping the seam from a sack of Ice-Off. He remembers the crack of her heels on concrete as she approached; the angle of her hip as she stood there, the melon sun behind her, the

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garage light in her face. He remembers the pleasure of her voice when she asked for directions to the house of women he had known all their lives.

"You sure?" he asked when she told him the address.

She took a small square of paper from ^{her} a jacket pocket, held it with ungloved fingers and nodded.

Sandler Gibbons scanned her legs and reckoned her knees and thighs were stinging from the cold her tiny skirt exposed them to. Then he marveled at the height of her boot heels, the cut of her short leather jacket. At first he'd thought she wore a hat, something big and fluffy to keep her ears and neck warm. Then he realized that it was hair-blown forward in the wind and distracting him from her face. She looked to him like a sweet child, fine-boned, gently raised but lost.

"Cosey women," he said. "That's their place you looking for. It ain't been number one for a long time now, but you can't tell them that. Can't tell them nothing. It 1410 or 1401, probably."

Now it was her turn to question his certainty.

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"I'm telling you," he said, suddenly irritable—the wind, he thought, tearing his eyes. "Go on up that a way. You can't miss it 'less you try to. Big as a church."

She thanked him but did not turn around when he hollered at her back, "Or a jail house."

Sandler Gibbons didn't know what made him say that.

"Jailhouse." He believed his wife was on his mind. She would be off the bus by now, stepping carefully on slippery pavement until she got to their driveway. There she would be safe from falling because, with the forethought and common sense he was known for, he was prepared for freezing weather in a neighborhood that had no history of it. But the "jailhouse" comment meant he was really thinking of Romen, his grandson, who should have been home from school an hour and a half ago. Fourteen, way too tall and getting muscled, there was a skulk about him, something furtive that made Sandler Gibbons stroke his thumb every time the boy came into view. He and Vida Gibbons had been pleased to have him, raise him, when their daughter and son-

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in-law enlisted. Mother in the army; father in the merchant marines.

The best choice out of none when only pick-up work (house cleaning in Harbor City for the women, hauling road trash for the men) was left once the canneries closed. Parents idle, children idle, his own mother used to say. Getting regular yard work helped but not enough to keep Romen on the dime and out of the sight line of ambitious under occupied police.

He was wiping salt dust from his hands when the two people under his care arrived at the same time, one hollering "Hoo! Am I glad you did this! Thought I'd break my neck." The other saying "What you mean, Gran? I had your arm all the way from the bus."

"Course you did, baby." Vida Gibbons smiled, hoping to de-rail any criticism her husband might be gathering against her grandson.

At dinner, the hot food warming his mood, Sandler picked up the gossip he'd begun when the three of them were setting the table.

"What did you say she wanted?" Vida asked.

"Looking for those Cosey women I reckon. That was the address

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she had. The old address, I mean. When wasn't nobody out here but them."

"That was written on her paper?"

"I didn't look at it, woman. I just saw her check it. Little scrap of something looked like it came from a newspaper."

"You were concentrating on her legs, I guess. Lot of information there."

Romen covered his mouth and closed his eyes.

"Vida, don't belittle me in front of the boy."

"Well, the first thing you told me was about her skirt. I'm just following your list of priorities."

"I said it was short, that's all."

"How short?" Vida winked at Romen.

"They wear them up to here, Gran." Romen's hand disappeared under the table.

"Up to where?" Vida leaned sideways.

"Will you two quit? I'm trying to tell you something."

At Supper: bottom of p. 13

- (3) Any relatives left to the Caseys'?
- ~~Had~~^{Used} never had any children, but I ~~remember~~^{remember} she, her Mama had a million of em.
- (4) Nine. She had nine. I don't know how many still alive, though.
- (5) Well, some of them must have had kids, so ~~they~~^{there} will be nieces and nephews floating around, I expect.

What brought that up.

Didn't say a name but Young woman ^{stopped here} came by just before now. Wanted directions to their house. Called it 1 Post Road so I knew where she was headed.

- (1) You think she's a niece? ~~Could~~
- (2) ~~be~~ except ^{for size} he didn't look like one. though
look more like Christina's side people.
- (6) Maybe she's both. Said Roman (he just wanted to be in the conversation, but, as usual, they looked at him like he'd ^{his fly was open} ~~his grand method~~ ^a ~~idea~~ ^{his grand father} exchanged looks with Sandler. "Dear God," she said. "Watch your mouth," ^{he} said, ~~the~~ and Roman wandered

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12/TK
"Sandler, the less I hear about those Cosey girls, the better I like it."

"Girls?" Romen laughed.

"Well, that's how I think of them. Hincty, snotty girls with as much cause to look down on people as a pot looks down on a skillet."

"They're cool with me, The skinny one, anyway."

Uida frowned
"Don't you believe it. They pay you; that's all you need from them."

"Why you all make me work there if they that bad?"

"Make you?" Sandler scratched a thumb.

"Well, you know, send me over there."

"Drown this boy, Vida. He don't know a favor from a fart."

"We sent you because you need some kind of job, tk Romen. You've been here 4 months and it's time

Romen tried to get the conversation back to his employers' weaknesses and away from his own. "They used to give me lunch but they stopped."

"I don't want you eating off their stove."

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"Vida."

"I don't."

"Vida."

"You forgot?"

"Nobody knows for sure."

"Knows what?" asked Romen.

"Aw. Some old mess," said his grandfather.

^{Somebody}
"They killed him as sure as I'm sitting here. Wasn't a thing wrong with that man," said Vida

"What man?"

Mr.

"Sandler crumbled a bit of bread."

"Cosey. Bill Cosey. Used to own the hotel and a whole lot of other property, including the ground under this house."

Vida

"I saw him the day he died. Hale at breakfast; dead before lunch."

"He had a lot to answer for, Vida."

"Somebody answered for him. No lunch."

"You forgive that old reprobate anything."

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"He paid us well, Sand, and taught us, too. Things I never would have known about living in a stilt house. You know what my mother's hands looked like. None of us had to do that kind of work all because of Bill Cosey"

*TK
2 breath
of house
or Romen's
feeling.*

"It wasn't that bad. I miss it some times."

"Miss what? Chamber pots? Snakes?"

"The trees"

oh
"Shoot."

^
"Remember the summer storms? The light just after..."

"Get up, Romen. Help me with the dishes."

"I ain't finished."

"Yes you are. Up."

"I'm not saying I would move back."

"I sure hope not. You'd need gills."

"Miss Cosey said it was a paradise," *said Romen offered.*

"It was a plantation. And Bill Cosey took us off of it."

"The ones he wanted."

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"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing, Vida. ^{Like you said,} The man was a saint."

"There's no arguing with you."

Romen sloshed ~~his hands in~~ ^{hot} the soapy water. ~~It~~ ^{His hands} felt good ~~like~~ ^{in it} ~~that with the bubbles rising.~~ ^{hot, hidden in} Cleaned the fingernails too. But he wouldn't think about that, and now with his grandparents still fussing about the olden days, there was no space to tell them about the important errand.

* * *

The girl did not miss it and the man with the ~~ice~~ ^{off} ~~melt~~ was not wrong: the house was graceful, imposing, and its peaked third story roof did suggest a chapel. On either side of the walkway century old trees met the blasting wind with indifference. The steps to the porch, slanted and shiny with ice, encouraged caution for there was no railing. But the girl clicked along the walk and up the steps without hesitation. Seeing no bell, she started to knock, hesitating when she noticed a shaft of light below, to the right of the porch. She went back down

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the sloping steps, followed the curve marked by half-buried pieces of slate and descended a flight of iron stairs leading to a window—beyond it a door. No wind buffeted her there. The area had the look of what was called a garden apartment by some—by others a basement one. Pausing at the pane she saw a seated woman. On the table before her were a colander, newspapers and a mixing bowl. The girl tapped on the window and smiled when the woman looked up. She rose slowly but once on her feet moved rapidly to the door.

“What is it?” The door opened just wide enough to expose one gray eye.

“I came about the job,” said the girl. A marine odor hovered in the crack.

“Then you’re lost,” said the woman and slammed the door.

The girl banged on it, shouting, “But it says 1 Post Road! 1 Post Road!”

There was no answer so she went back to the window and pecked the glass with the nails of her left hand while her right pressed

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the tiny square of newsprint toward the light.

The woman came back to the window, her eyes flat with annoyance as they stared at the girl, then moved from the young face and its pleading smile to the piece of paper. She squinted at it, looked again at the face then back at the paper scrap. She motioned toward the door and disappeared from the window but not before something like panic glinted then died in her eyes.

When the girl was inside, the woman offered neither seat nor greeting. She took the advertisement and read. A pencilled circle separated the few lines of one help wanted notice from others above and below.

Companion, secretary sought ^{by} elderly woman. Light but highly confidential work. Apply to Mrs. H. Cosey. 1 Post Road, Harmony.

"Where did you get this?" The woman's voice was low, its tone accusatory.

"From the newspaper."

"I can see that. Which? The Harbor Journal?"

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"Yes, Mam."

"When?"

"Yesterday."

She handed back the advertisement. "Well. I guess you better sit down."

"Are you Mrs. H. Cosey?"

She gave the girl a look. "If I was I'd know about that little scrap of paper wouldn't I?"

The girl's laughter was the agitation of bells—a welcoming disruption on a silent night. "Oh, right. Sorry."

They both sat then and the woman returned to the work of deveining shrimp. Twelve rings, two on three fingers of each hand, snatched light from the ceiling fixture and seemed to elevate her task from drudgery to sorcery.

"You have a name, then?"

"Yes, Mam. ~~Toby.~~"

~~"Toby what?"~~

(over)

Junior

~~Junior?~~
~~what's that?~~ Your daddy's joke?

No ma'm. My mother's, I think.

Huh.

You can call me June if you want

I don't want. Your mamma give you a
last name? Poem, maybe?
or Choir?

Venton., said Junior

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~~"Skye. Toby Skye. With an 'e'."~~

^{all}
"You from around here?"
^

"Used to be. ~~I've been away.~~"

~~"Who're your people? I never heard tell of any family named~~
^{Venton.}
~~Skye with an 'e' or without one."~~

"Oh, they're not from here. Originally."

"Where then?"

Jacket leather purred as ^{Junior}~~Toby Skye~~ shrugged her shoulders and reached across the table to the colander. "Up north. Can I help you with that?" she asked. "I'm a pretty fair cook."

"No." The woman held up a staying hand. "Needs a certain rhythm."

A bouquet of steam wandered away from water lifting to a boil on the stove. Behind the table was a wall of cupboards, their surfaces as pale and handled as pastry dough. The silence stretching between the two tightened. ^{Junior}~~Toby Skye~~ fidgeted. Her jacket creaking over the tick of shrimp shells.

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"Is Mrs. ^{H.}Cosey here?"

"She is."

"May I speak to her?"

"Let me see that thing again." She wiped her hands on a dishtowel before touching the ad. "'Highly confidential,' huh?" She pursed her lips. "I believe that. I sure do," she said and dropped the paper [with thumb and forefinger] as though depositing a diaper into a soak pail. She wiped her hands again and selected a shrimp. There, just there, beneath the lucent flesh she held in her fingers crept a dark and tender line. Deft as a jeweler she removed it.

"Can I see Mrs. Cosey now, please?" ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~ sank her chin into her palm, underscoring her question with a smile.

"I guess. Sure. Up those stairs, then some more stairs. Bedroom at the end of the hall." She motioned toward a flight of stairs leading from an alcove near the stove. ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~ stood ^{up}.

^{Venton} "Miss ~~Sk~~ye. Miss ^{Junior Venton} ~~Toby Skye~~ with an 'e'. You not interested in my name?"

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^{Simon}
~~Toby~~ turned back, her grin a study in embarrassment and muddle.

"Oh, yes, Mam. I am. I'm just so nervous."

"Christine. Christine Cosey. If you get the job you'll need to know it."

"I hope so. Nice meeting you, Christine. Really. Second floor, you said?"

Her boots were loud on the stairs.

Christine glanced at the warming light on the rice cooker.

Gathering the shrimp shells she plopped them into the boiling water and adjusted the flame. Returning to the table she picked up a garlic paw and, enjoying as usual her bedizened hands, peeled away tissue from two of the cloves. These she diced ^{fine?} and left on the cutting board.

The old Philco refrigerator hummed and trembled a little. Christine gave it a ^{sympathetic} friendly pat before bending to a low cabinet, thinking, what's she up to now? Must be scared or fixing to make a move. What, though? And how did she manage to get a notice in the paper without me knowing? She took out a silver tureen with a fitted glass bowl,

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sighing at the stubborn tarnish in the crevices of the C's on its cover. Like all the carved letters in the house, the double C's went beyond ornate to illegible. Even on the handle of the spoon in her apron pocket, the initials, once hooked together for life, were hardly a trace. It was tiny, a toddler's first spoon, but Christine ate every meal she could with it just to hold close the child it was given to, and hold also the pictures it summoned. Scooping peach slices with it from home made ice cream, helpless in the thrill, never minding the grains of sand blowing over the dessert—the whole picnic lunch for that matter.

Soaping and rinsing the glass bowl Christine's thoughts skittered from beach picnics to Silver Dip, salt-spiced air to Q-tips and on to the interview being held at that moment in the bedroom of the meanest woman on the coast. While sitting across from the lying Miss ^{Venton} Skye, Christine had set her own body of forty—even thirty-- years ago next to the girl's and won. ^{Junior girl} ~~Miss Toby~~ Skye had good legs (well, knees and thighs were all she could see in those tall boots) and a white woman's narrow behind that was all the rage these days. But she had nothing

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to rival the Christine of the fifties when the beach was the color of cream but glittery and the sucking waves reached out from water so blue you had to turn away lest it hurt your eyes. It was the girl's face that struck gongs of envy. That and her Amazon hair. At first Christine had stared at her, then, rattled, concentrated on the newspaper clipping. The shrimp work gave her ample reason to sustain a lowered gaze because she did not like the heart jump that came when she looked in the girl's eyes. Clear, they were, and still, too still. And full of—what? What was that? Yearning? Trust? There was something frail under those double lashes. Like the unnerving look of a beautiful, underfed child. One you wanted to slap for being needy and kiss for being perfect.

Christine stirred the garlic into butter softening in a skillet, then set about making the roux. After a moment she sprinkled in flour and watched it bronze before loosening the paste with stock and whisking it smooth.

'I'm a pretty fair cook,' is what the ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~ girl had said, all the

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while reaching with dirty hands for the bowl of cleaned shrimp. And
'Used to be,' from around here she'd said, while sitting in front of the
best known woman in the county, a woman who knew every black
ever born from Niggerhead Rock to Sacker's Point, from Up Beach to
Harmony and half the ones in Harbor City as well since that was where
she had spent (or wasted) twenty years of her life. ~~Skye. Toby Skye.~~ *Junior. Junior Venton*
With an 'e'. She could have gotten that name from ~~True Confessions~~ *a wanted poster in the*
except she was too young to ~~have heard of, let alone read it, the lying~~ *be on one. Irar. post office*
~~bitch.~~ So what was the heart skip for? Was she afraid she would
blush any moment, sharpening her voice to a razor to cut off the
possibility? What did Heed want her for? How had she got an ad in
the newspaper without a working telephone? Had the Gibbons boy
helped her do it—adding that errand to others after working in the yard?
Whatever was going on was a trap laid by a high heeled snake. Some
new way to hurt her, to rob her future just as she had ripped off her
past.

"I'll be damned," she murmured. "Good and damned before I let

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her win this one."

Christine spread her fingers for the soothing her diamonds lent. Then she assembled the rice, the shrimp, the sauce, layering each meticulously, artfully in the casserole. It would remain warm while she tossed a light salad and, finally, arrange it all on a silver tray, take it up three flights of stairs where it would be ignored by the meanest thing on the coast.

"My Lord. Snow." She spoke without turning her head. Simply parted the draperies further. "Come over here and look. Here of all places."

Junior moved near
~~Toby joined~~ the tiny woman at the window and peered through wobbly glass trying but unable to see snowflakes. The small woman looked to be in her sixties at least but had something of a little girl smell: butter rum candy, grass juice and fur.

"Strange, don't you think? We never get snow. Never."

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"I saw a man sprinkling ice melt," said ^{Junior}~~Toby~~. "Since he already had it, he must have expected to use it."

Startled, the tiny woman turned. The girl had called her a liar before saying hello. "You're here for the job?" Heed Cosey's eyes swept ^{Junior's}~~Toby's~~ face then quickly examined her clothes.

"Yeah."

"Don't you mean 'yes'?"

This room, like the kitchen below, was over-bright, lit like a surgery. Climbing up the stairs, glancing around the rest of the house, ^{Junior}Toby had to guess what the rooms were for, because the darkness spreading away from the bannisters was thick. Here, however, ^{is the room} at the end of the hall, every lamp—six? ten?—was on, rivaling a ^{fat} huge chandelier. Now she waited for ^{the} [this pretentious] little woman to break the silence she herself had made.

"I'm Heed Cosey. And you are?"

^{Junior, but you can call me June.}
" ~~Toby. Toby-Skye.~~"

"Oh, dear," said Heed, and batted her lashes as if someone had

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spilled red wine on pale velvet: sorry, of course, and no fault, of course, but difficult to ^{Correct} take [get rid of?] nonetheless. As she moved away from the window she had to negotiate every step so full was the room with furniture. A chaise, two dressers, two writing tables, side tables, chairs high-backed and low seated. All under the influence of the great canopied bed against the far wall. Heed sat down finally at a small desk, gesturing with a twice-lotioned hand for the applicant to take the facing chair.

"Tell me where you have worked before. The notice didn't specify a resume' but I need to know your work history."

"I'm twenty-four and can do anything you want. Anything."

Heed smiled. "That's good to know, but references. Do you have any? Is there someone I can call?"

"Nope."

"Well how will I know you are honest? Discreet?"

"A letter won't tell you even if it says so. I say I am. Hire me and you'll see. If I'm not good enough—" ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~ turned her palms up.

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Heed touched the corners of her lips, her hand small as a child's.

"Let me tell you what this job calls for. The duties, I mean."

"Go ahead." ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~ shouldered out of her jacket, the cheap leather whining as though in ^{pain} ~~grief~~. Under it, her black T shirt gave no support to her breasts, but it was clear to Heed that they didn't need any: the nipples were high, militant. Without the jacket her hair seemed to spring into view. Layers of corkscrews, parted in the middle, glinted jet in the lamplight.

"I'm writing a book," said Heed, both satisfaction and giddiness lighting her face. Whatever restraint she had been under, whatever pose she'd assumed to manage an interview, dissolved with the mention of her book. "It's about my family. The Coseys. I've got all the material, but some things need checking, you know. Dates, spellings. I've got all the guest books from our hotel—except for two or three, I think—and some of those people, not many but some, had the worst handwriting. The worst. But most folks had perfect hands you know because that's the way we were taught. But Papa didn't make

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them print it the way they do now right alongside the signature. Didn't need to anyway because he knew every body who was anybody and could recognize ^{da} signature even if it was a X but no X type people ever came of course. Our guests, for the most part, had gorgeous handwriting because, between you and I, you had to be more than just literate, you have to have a position, an accomplishment, understand? You couldn't achieve nothing worthwhile if your handwriting was low. Nowadays people write with they feet."

Heed laughed, then said "Excuse me. You have no idea, do you, what I'm talking about. I get excited is all, just thinking about it." She straightened her shoulder pads. "But I want to hear about you. ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~, you said?"

"~~Toby~~. Right."

"Well now, ^{Junior} ~~Toby~~. You said you can do anything I want so you must have worked somewhere before. If you're going to help me with my book I need to know..."

"Look, Mrs. Cosey. I'm literate, Okay? I'm as smart as it gets.

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You want research, I'll do research. You want handwriting, typing, I'll do it. You want a bath, I'll give you one. I need a job and a place to stay. I'm real good, Mrs. Cosey."

Heed leaned toward her. "Can you keep a secret?"

"Like nobody you ever knew."

"Because the work is delicate. Nobody can know about it. Not nobody."

"You mean Christine?"

"I mean nobody."

"I'll take it."

"You don't even know what the pay is."

"I'll take the job. You'll pay. Should I start now or wait til tomorrow?"

Footsteps, slow and rhythmic sounded in the hall.

"Tomorrow," Heed said. She whispered ~~but~~ it came out like a hiss.

Christine entered carrying a tray. No knock preceded her and no

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word accompanied her. She placed the tray on the desk where Heed
and ^{Junior}Toby faced each other ^{then} and left without meeting a single eye.

Heed lifted the casserole lid then replaced it. "Anything to annoy
me," she said.

"Looks delicious," said ^{Junior}Toby.

"Then you eat it," said Heed.

^{Junior}Toby tasted the food and moaned, "God, she sure knows how to
cook."

"What she knows is I don't eat shellfish. That's what she
knows."

[They talk well into the night. So late it was too late to expect
Toby to go home and then come back the next morning. Heed talked
as though she had been deprived of a listener, a sympathetic one, for
most of her life. And the same impulse that made the story of her
family [the Coseys] so urgent informed her conversation: all about
Cosey's Resort. How she was left in charge of it after her husband

P.V. Girl who
is bed
asleep
he thinking the
garbled story
- who was
this "Papa"
etc.
Dexter

had no trouble finding
Easily ~~She found~~ the right face.

The big one, Christine, not so easy
The phoney one was easy.
~~One was a phoney~~

It T. sat on the bed
rubbing the toes of her left
foot

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died. The difficulty, the demands, everybody on her back or on her
case]

See notes re: Junior in bed
bath
closet
feet

recalling Heed
& Christina -

Also re: Heed's thoughts.

Chapter Two is Romen plus.

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[STORYVOICE]

The sign read^s "Maceo's Café..ria" but the diner belonged to ~~L~~ ^{me indeed} Indeed, if not in deed. ^I She was ^{for Bill Cosey} still cooking ^{he} there when Bill Cosey died but his funeral flowers were still fresh when ^I she fell out with his widow. Later, ^{ON} much to ~~Harmony's~~ ^{our} relief, ^I ~~L~~ gave in to Maceo's pleading. He had a certain reputation for fried fish (sooty black and crisp on the outside; flaky tender on the inside) but his side orders let you down every time. What ^{I do} ~~L~~ did with okra, with sweet potatoes, hopping john and almost anything you could name would have put this generation of take-out brides to shame if they had any. Every house had an ^{a serious} ~~L~~ kind of cook in it once. Now, well, it's all over. People wait for July 4 or Thanksgiving to give their kitchens proper respect. Otherwise they go to Maceo's Café Ria and hope ^{I haven't} ~~L~~ hasn't dropped dead at the stove. ^I She could. Probably will because nobody is older. Not an original tooth in ^{my} ^{I haven't} ~~her~~ head, so she hasn't eaten a thing but cornbread dipped in pot liquor