



SW Chapter 2

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Vida set up the ironing board. Why the hospital had cut out the laundry service for everybody except "critical staff"-- doctors, nurses, lab technicians-- she couldn't fathom. Now the janitors, food handlers as well as the "comfort women" like herself, had to wash and press their own uniforms. Just like ~~it was~~ at the Cannery before Bill Cosey hired her for the first work she ever had that required hosiery. She needed hose at tk hospital, of course, but it was thick, white. Not the ^{lovely} elegant, sheer ones required behind the receptionist's desk at Cosey's Resort. Plus a real ^{by god} dress, ~~a good one~~, good enough for church. It was Bill Cosey who paid for two more, so she would have a change and the guests wouldn't confuse the wearing of one dress as a uniform. Vida thought he would deduct the cost from her pay, but he never did. His pleasure was in pleasing. "The best

good time," he used to say. That was the Resort's motto and what he promised every guest: "The best good time you ever had." So it was. And it was no accident that famous people kept coming back, even when little disturbances in the service or the atmosphere appeared, it didn't dissuade them from extending their stay or returning the next year. All because of the beaming Bill Cosey and the warm hospitality his place was known for. His laught, his embracing arm, his instinctive knowledge of his guest's needs smoothes over every crack or stumble. From an overheard argument among staff or a silly, overbearing wife-ignorant as a plate to petty theft and a broken fan. Bill Cosey's charm and L's food won out. When the lamps ringed the dance floor were lit and turning in the ocean air; when the band warmed up and the women, dressed in voile and crepe and trailing jasmine scents in their wake like moths or orange blossoms; when the men with beautiful shoes and perfect creases in their gabradine

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trousers held chairs for the women so they could sit knee to knee at the little tables, then a missing salt cellar or harsh words exchanged much too near the public didn't matter. Partners swayed under the stars and bore intermissions ^{fearfully?} languidly because ocean sound kept them jollier and kinder than their cocktails. Later in the evening, when those who were not playing whist, or telling stories ^s in the bar; when couples sneaked ^f of in the dark, the remaining dancers would do steps with outrageous names: boogie woogie, black bottom, jitterbug, sand, Lindy hop. Names musicians made up to control, humiliate and thrill their audiences all at the same time.

Vida believed she was a practical woman with as much sense as heart, more wary than dreamy. Yet she pursued with ^{delight} relish the memory of those nine years, beginning ~~early in her marriage~~ right after the birth of her first child, Dolly in 1962 to ~~tk~~ months after the Resort closed in 1971. Then ^{fx} Bill died and the Cosey girls fought over his coffin. Once again L restored

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order. Just as she always had. Two words ["I'll tell."] hissed into their

faces ^S stopped them cold. Christine put the switchblade back in her pocket

book; Heed, picking up her wide straw hat, moved to the other side of the

As they stood opposite one another
grave. ~~Right then~~ their faces, as different as honey from soot, looked

identical. Rage does that. Burns off everything but itself. ^{*} After that nobody

could doubt the best good times were ^{over} done with. If Heed had any notion of

keeping the place going she was quickly disabused of it when L quit ^{that} the very

^{HC?} day of Cosey's funeral. ^(over) A kid disc jockey working a tape machine appealed

to locals, but no one with real money would travel distance to hear it, would

book a room to listen to music they had at home; would seek on open air

dance floor crowded with teenagers doing dances they never heard of and

couldn't manage anyway. Especially if the meals, the service, the bed linen

were no longer what they had been

Vida slid the iron's nose around the buttons, annoyed once more by

** Their private hatred cut through and pierced
the solemnity of
a moment of public love.*

She lifted a lily from the beer
and ~~walked all the way to Upbeach~~
~~without returning to the hotel~~
~~to pack or retrieve her chef's hat~~

> Never set foot in the hotel again —
neither to ~~pack~~ or collect
~~not even to retrieve~~ her chef's hat
and her white Oxford shoes. Mrs.

Sunday shoes with 2 inch heels
She walked all the way to Up
beach, claimed her mother's shack
and lives there still. Heed
did what she had to and what she
could to maintain the Resort, but

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the stupid slot in the metal that some male idiot thought would actually work. The same fool who believed a three ounce iron was better ^{or} than a heavy one. Lighter, yes, but it didn't iron anything that needed it. Just things you could unwrinkled [✓] with your own warm hands: T shirts, towels, cheap pillow cases. But not a good cotton ^o uniform with twelve buttons, two cuffs, four pockets and a collar that was not a lazy extension of the lapels. This was what she had come to? Vida knew she was lucky to have ^{the hospital} this job, but that good fortune did not prevent her from loving the long ago one that ^z made less in every way but satisfaction. Cosey's Resort was more than a playground; it was an education and a ^h heaven where people debated death in the cities, murder in Mississippi and what they planned to do about it all other than grieve and stare at their children. Then the music started ^{*} tk.

She hung on, Heed did. For the five years before Cosey actually died—she paraded around like an ignorant, mean version of Jackie

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** and it seemed as though they could manage it all*

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Kennedy—refusing ~~all~~ advice, firing the loyal, hiring the trifling. ^{fighting} May was the ~~one~~ who gave her hives. She couldn't fire her step-daughter while the father was alive, even if he spent most days fishing and most nights singing Nat Cole tunes with tipsy friends. For it came to that: a commanding, beautiful man surrendering to feuding women, letting them take care of him and all he had built. How could they do that, she wondered. If they didn't love him, they had to love the place, what it has ^d been. How could they let gangster types, day workers, cannery scabs and payday migrants in there dragging police attention along with them like a smell. Vida wanted to blame the new clientele for May's kleptomania—Lord knows what those day workers took home—but May had been stealing long before Vida got there. In fact, her second day at work, standing behind the desk, was marked by May's habit. A family of four from Ohio was checking in. Vida opened the registration book for their signature. The date, last name and room number

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were neatly printed on the left. A space on the right for the ^{quest}payee to sign.

Vida reach toward the marble pen stand but found no pen there or anywhere near. Flustered, she rummaged in a drawer. Heed arrived just as she was about to hand the father a pencil.

"What ^{is} that? You're giving him a pencil?"

"The pen is missing, Mam."

"It can't be. Look again."

"I have. It's nowhere."

"Did you look in your purse?"

"Excuse me?"

"Your coat pocket, maybe?" Heed glanced at the quests and produced a resigned smile as if they all understood the burdens of inadequate help. Vida was seventeen years old and a new mother . The position Mr. Cosey had given her was a great and, she hoped, permanent

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leap out of the fish trough where she used to work and her husband still

did. Her mouth went dry and her fingers shook as Heed confronted her.

Tears were marshaling to humiliate her further when rescue arrived wearing

a puffy white hat. She held the fountain pen in her hand; stuck it in the

holder and, turning to Heed, said, "May. As you well know."

That's when Vida knew she had more to learn than money handling.

There were ^{old} alliances here, as in any workplace; negotiations, poisonous

battles and wan victories. Bill Cosey was royal; L, the woman in the chef's

hat, priestly. All the rest: Heed, Vida, May, waiters, cleaners were court

personnel.