



L To follow Chapter 7

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Chapter 7.

The Ocean is my man now. He knows how to be ^{still} quiet, how to roar and hump his back. His heart is deep down there, but I pay attention and know it ^{better than} ~~as well as~~ he does. Such understanding can only come from practice and I had a lot of that with Bill Cosey whose heart I fathomed ^{well} ~~too~~. Not right away, of course. I was just a girl when I was introduced to him, a tk man with a little boy and a sick wife who needed care every minute of the day and night. He said her name, Julia, so softly you could hear the love ^{more than} ~~as well as~~ the sorrow. Their son, Billy Boy, was twelve when Julia Cosey passed and even though I was only fourteen it was the most natural thing in the world for me to stay on and care for the widower and his son.

Only a wide heart could hold all that love for a wife and have so much room left over. I tried to make Billy Boy understand ^{how} ~~now~~ big hearted his father was, but he never learned or believed it the way his wife, May, did. Billy Boy Cosey and May Hathaway got married—in a big hurry, I might add—and overnight the new bride and daughter-in-law understood what superior men require. If I was a servant in that place; May was its slave.

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Her whole life was making sure those Cosey men had what they wanted: the father more than the son; the father more than her own daughter. ~~And what Bill Cosey wanted~~ ^{in 1930} ~~changed our lives.~~ ^{was} That was the year the whole country began to live the way Up Beach people did—if they were lucky, that is. If not, they took to the road. Bill Cosey, however, took advantage. He bought a broke down failed tk club on Sooker Bay from a white man honest enough to say that although he swore to God and his pappy he would never sell to nigras, he was happy as a ram in heat to change his mind and take his family away from that gnat-infested sidewalk for hurricanes. So ~~Bill Cosey started in on his Big Idea.~~ Who would have thought that in the teeth of the Depression, colored people would want to play? Or if they did, how could they afford it? Bill cosey, that's who. Because he believed what harmonica players and fiddlers on street corners knew for sure: where there was music, there was money. Check out the churches if you don't think so. And he believed another thing. That if colored musicians were treated well, paid well, coddled and cared for, they would tell one another about such a place where they could walk in the front door, eat in the dining room instead of the kitchen; sit with the guests and sleep in beds not in their cars or a whore house across town. A place where their instruments

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were safe, their drinks unwatered, their talent honored so they didn't have to go to Copenhagen or Paris for love. A place where female vocalists—unmolested—could choose cold beer, solitude, bid whist, seduction, hush puppies or whatever they needed for the night. Flocks of colored folk would pay to be in that atmosphere. Those who had the money would ^{spend} pay it; those who didn't would find it.

May, a preacher's daughter bred to hard work and duty, took to the business like a bee to pollen. At first the two of us ran the kitchen—with Billy Boy waiting tables. When it became clear that the stove queen was me, May moved to housekeeping, bookkeeping, procuring, ^{and} as the hotel grew so did the staff. Billy Boy helped his father book and stroke the musicians. I think I deserve half the credit for the way the business grew—good food and S.S. Solomon is a once in a lifetime combination—but I had to admire May. She was the one who arranged the dining service, saw to the linen tk

We were like the back side of a clock—Bill Cosey the face telling you ^{every minute that} the time is now.

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Seemed that way too: the past was history; the future was too. Everything was now until the spring sprung and nobody could ^{tell} ~~read~~ the time. First Billy Boy was cut down. Next Cosey went berserk and married his granddaughter's best friend. Mind you, his daughter-in-law was 32 at the time; he was 52; his granddaughter was just 13. Among the problems his marriage caused was May having a 12 year old step mother; Christine having a grandmother younger than herself; and the bride having a step daughter older than her own mother.

I watch my man from the porch. Listen to his voice. You'd think, with all that strength, he'd be a bass, but no. My man is a tenor.