



Corrections pp. 1-8 reprinted

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Corrections
pp 1-8
reprinted

THE OCEAN IS MY MAN NOW. HE KNOWS WHEN TO REAR AND HUMP HIS BACK. WHEN TO BE QUIET AND SIMPLY WATCH A WOMAN. HE IS NOT A FALSE-HEARTED MAN. HIS SOUL IS DEEP DOWN THERE AND SUFFERING. I PAY ATTENTION AND KNOW ALL ABOUT HIM. THAT KIND OF UNDERSTANDING CAN ONLY COME FROM PRACTICE AND I HAD A LOT OF THAT WITH MR. COSEY. YOU COULD SAY I FATHOMED HIS MIND. NOT RIGHT AWAY, OF COURSE, I WAS JUST A GIRL WHEN I WAS INTRODUCED TO HIM--A MARRIED MAN WITH A SON AND A SICK WIFE WHO NEEDED CARE EVERY MINUTE OF THE DAY AND NIGHT. HE SAID HER NAME, JULIA, SO SOFT YOU COULD HEAR THE LOVE IN IT AS WELL AS THE APOLOGY. 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 LOOK AFTER THE TWO OF THEM. ONLY A WIDE HEART COULD HOLD THAT MUCH LOVE FOR A WIFE AND HAVE SO MUCH ROOM LEFT OVER. IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO LEARN THAT. WHEN JULIA COSEY DIED MR. COSEY TRANSFERRED ALL OF WHAT HE FELT TO HIS SON. LUCKY FOR HIM, THE BOY HAD THAT INSIGHT CHILDREN HAVE TO USE WITH GROWN UPS TO STAY LOVED. NOT BY DOING WHAT THEY SAY, BUT FIGURING OUT WHAT THEY REALLY WANT. A DADDY CAN SAY "FEND FOR YOURSELF, BOY" WHILE HE MEANS "DON'T SHOW ME UP; HURRY UP AND FAIL." OR HE CAN SAY "I'LL TEACH YOU THE WORLD," MEANING "I'M SCARED TO DEATH OF YOU." I DON'T KNOW WHAT MR. COSEY SAID TO HIS SON ALONG THOSE LINES, BUT WHATEVER IT WAS, BILLY BOY UNDERSTOOD IT TO MEAN "BE SOMETHING I CAN GET UP FOR IN THE MORNING; GIVE ME SOMETHING TO DO WHILE I PADDLE ALONG." SO IT DIDN'T MATTER MUCH IF HE WAS A VERY GOOD SON OR A REALLY BAD ONE. HE ONLY HAD TO BE INTERESTING. JUST BY LUCK, I SUSPECT, HE CHOSE THE FORMER. MR. COSEY WAS PLEASED WITH EVERYTHING BILLY BOY DID AND SAID. HE LAVISHED MONEY ON HIM AND TOOK HIM EVERYWHERE. WITH HIS

HAIR PARTED IN THE MIDDLE AND A CAP JUST LIKE HIS FATHER'S—WHAT A PAIR THEY MUST HAVE BEEN SITTING IN THE BLEACHERS AT EAGLE GAMES, ON CAMP STOOLS AT SING-OUT COMPETITIONS, AT NARROW TABLES IN JOINTS WHERE THE BEST UNKNOWN MUSICIANS PLAYED. THEY SLEPT IN ROOMING HOUSES OR JUST KNOCKED ON A DOOR. MR. COSEY SAID HE WANTED BILLY BOY TO SEE MEN ENJOY THE PERFECTION OF THEIR WORK SO THEY WENT TO PERDIDO STREET FOR KING OLIVER, MEMPHIS FOR THE TIGERS, BIRMINGHAM FOR THE BARONS. THEY WATCHED HOW COOKS EXAMINED MARKET PRODUCE, WATERMEN SORT OYSTERS, BARTENDERS, POOL HALL RASCALS, PICK-POCKETS AND CHOIRMASTERS. EVERYTHING WAS A LABOR LESSON FROM SOMEONE WHO LOVED HIS SKILL THE WAY A MAN LOVES A WOMAN—WHICH IS TO SAY EVERY WHICH WAY (PROVIDED HE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE ONE). MR. COSEY SAID IT WAS LIFE'S REAL EDUCATION, BUT IT LOOKED TO ME LIKE TRUANCY FROM HIS OWN FATHER'S SCHOOL. [A WAY TO FLUNK THE LESSONS DARK TAUGHT HIM.]

besotted
ALL THAT ATTENTION DIDN'T SPOIL THE BOY. HE KNEW HIS DUTY AND SPLASHED IN IT, COULD SMILE EVEN AS HIS FATHER BRAGGED

to patiently smiling
ABOUT HIM ~~IN FRONT OF BORED~~ FRIENDS. BRAGGED ABOUT HIS ARM
WITH A BALL, HIS COOL HEAD IN EMERGENCY. HOW HE HAD
EXTRACTED A BENT NAIL ~~FISH HOOK~~ STUCK IN A LITTLE GIRL'S FACE
BETTER THAN ANY DOCTOR COULD HAVE. I SAW THAT ONE MYSELF.
I'D BROUGHT THE LUNCH THEY WANTED ONE DAY WHILE THEY
WASTED TIME ~~PRACTICING~~ ON THE BEACH-KNOCKING PEBBLES INTO
THE SEA WITH BASEBALL BATS. DOWN A WAYS A GIRL, MAYBE NINE OR
TEN YEARS OLD, WAS CASTING INTO THE WAVES. FOR WHAT, WHO
KNOWS. NOTHING WITH SCALES SWIMS THIS CLOSE TO THE SHORE.
ON THE SECOND THROW ~~THE~~ ^{her} HOME MADE ^{fish} HOOK HOOKED HER.
HER FINGERS WERE DRIPPING RED WHEN BILLY BOY GOT TO HER. HE
WAS DEFT ENOUGH AND SHE WAS GRATEFUL STANDING THERE
CUPPING HER FACE WITH OUT A TEAR OR A MOAN. BUT WE TOOK HER
BACK TO THE HOTEL ANYWAY. I SAT HER IN THE GAZEBO, CLEANED
HER CHEEK AND SPREAD ALOE GUM AND HONEY ON THE WOUND,
HOPING SHE WAS TOO STRONG FOR LOCKJAW. OVER TIME, AS
USUAL, MR. COSEY PLUMPED UP THE STORY. DEPENDING ON HIS
MOOD AND HIS AUDIENCE YOU WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE CHILD

WAS ABOUT TO BE DRAGGED INTO THE WATER BY A SWORDFISH IF
 BILLY BOY HADN'T SAVED HER. OR THAT BILLY HAD REMOVED A HOOK
 FROM A BABY'S EYEBALL. BILLY BOY SMILED AT THESE FAT, LOVABLE
 LIES, AND TOOK HIS FATHER'S ADVICE IN EVERYTHING INCLUDING
 MARRIAGE: TO MARRY A DEVOTED NOT CALCULATING GIRL. SO BILLY
 BOY CHOSE ^{as anyone could see,} MAY WHO WOULD NEITHER ^{disrupt} ~~INTERFERE~~ WITH NOR RIVAL
 THE ~~CLOSE RELATIONSHIP~~ ^{bond} BETWEEN FATHER AND SON. MR. COSEY
 WAS ALARMED AT FIRST NOT BEING PRIVY TO HIS SON'S SELECTION,
 BUT WAS MADE EASY WHEN THE BRIDE NOT ONLY FELL IN LOVE WITH
 THE HOTEL, BUT SHOWED SIGNS OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT
 SUPERIOR MEN REQUIRE. IF I WAS A SERVANT IN THAT PLACE, ¹ MAY WAS
 ITS SLAVE. 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 MR. COSEY,
 WIDOWER, WANTED IN 1930 SHOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE. THAT
 WAS THE YEAR THE WHOLE COUNTRY BEGAN TO LIVE ON RELIEF THE
 WAY UP BEACH PEOPLE DID-IF THEY WERE LUCKY, THAT IS. IF NOT,
 THEY KILLED THEMSELVES OR TOOK TO THE ROAD. MR. COSEY,

HOWEVER, TOOK ADVANTAGE. HE BOUGHT A BROKE DOWN 'WHITES ONLY' CLUB AT SOOKER BAY FROM A MAN HONEST ENOUGH TO SAY THAT ALTHOUGH HE SWORE TO GOD AND HIS PAPPY HE WOULD NEVER SELL TO NIGGERS, HE WAS HAPPY AS A CLAM TO BREAK HIS OATH AND TAKE HIS FAMILY AWAY FROM THAT BIRD-INFESTED SIDEWALK FOR HURRICANES.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT IN THE TEETH OF THE DEPRESSION COLORED PEOPLE WOULD WANT TO PLAY, OR IF THEY DID HOW COULD THEY PAY FOR IT? MR. COSEY, THAT'S WHO. BECAUSE HE KNEW WHAT A HARMONICA PLAYER ON A STREET CORNER KNEW: WHERE THERE WAS MUSIC THERE WAS MONEY. CHECK THE CHURCHES IF YOU DOUBT IT. AND HE BELIEVED SOMETHING ELSE. IF COLORED MUSICIANS WERE TREATED WELL, PAID WELL AND CODDLED, THEY WOULD TELL ONE ANOTHER ABOUT SUCH A PLACE WHERE THEY COULD WALK IN THE FRONT DOOR NOT THE SERVICE ENTRANCE; EAT IN THE DINING ROOM NOT THE KITCHEN; SIT WITH THE GUESTS, SLEEP IN BEDS NOT THEIR AUTOMOBILES OR IN A WHORE HOUSE ACROSS TOWN. A PLACE WHERE THEIR INSTRUMENTS WERE SAFE, THEIR DRINKS

UN-WATERED, THEIR TALENT HONORED SO THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO GO TO COPENHAGEN OR PARIS FOR LOVE. FLOCKS OF COLORED PEOPLE WOULD PAY TO BE IN THAT ATMOSPHERE. THOSE WHO HAD THE MONEY WOULD PAY IT; THOSE WHO DIDN'T WOULD FIND IT. IT COMFORTS EVERYBODY TO THINK OF ALL NEGROES AS DIRT POOR, AND OF THOSE WHO WERE NOT, WHO EARNED GOOD MONEY AND KEPT IT, AS SOME KIND OF SHAMEFUL, MIRACLE. WHITE PEOPLE LIKED IT BECAUSE NEGROES WITH MONEY AND SENSE MAKE THEM NERVOUS. COLORED PEOPLE LIKED IT BECAUSE, IN THOSE DAYS, THEY TRUSTED POVERTY, BELIEVED IT WAS A SIGN OF ~~HONESTY~~^{Virtue}. TOO MUCH MONEY HAD A WHIFF OF EVIL AND SOMEBODY ELSE'S BLOOD. MR. COSEY DIDN'T CARE. HE WANTED A PLAYGROUND FOR FOLK WHO FELT THE WAY HE DID, WHO STUDIED WAYS TO CONTRADICT HISTORY.

BUT IT HAD TO BE SPECIAL: EVENING DRESS IN THE EVENING; SPORT CLOTHES FOR SPORT. AND NO ZOOT SUITS. FLOWERS IN THE BEDROOMS, CRYSTAL ON THE TABLE. MUSIC, DANCING AND, IF YOU WANTED TO, YOU COULD JOIN A PRIVATE CARD GAME WHERE MONEY

CHANGED HANDS AMONG A FEW FRIENDS, MUSICIANS, DOCTORS WHO ENJOYED THE EXCITEMENT OF LOSING WHAT MOST PEOPLE COULDN'T EARN.

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 MANAGED THE KITCHEN, WITH BILLY BOY WAITING TABLES. WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE QUEEN AT THE STOVE WAS ME, SHE MOVED TO HOUSEKEEPING, BOOKKEEPING, PROCURING AND HER HUSBAND BOOKED THE MUSICIANS. I THINK I DESERVE HALF THE CREDIT FOR THE WAY THE ~~BUSINESS~~ ^{Hotel} GREW. GOOD FOOD AND FATS WALLER IS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME COMBINATION. STILL, YOU HAD TO ADMIRE MAY. SHE WAS THE ONE WHO ARRANGED EVERYTHING, SAW TO THE LINEN, PAID THE BILLS, CONTROLLED THE HELP. THE TWO OF US WERE LIKE THE BACK OF A CLOCK. MR. COSEY WAS ITS FACE TELLING YOU THE TIME WAS NOW.

WHEN WE WERE JUST THE TWO FEMALES, THINGS WENT ALONG FINE. IT WAS WHEN THE GIRLS GOT IN THE PICTURE—CHRISTINE AND