

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ms. Patty

Chenel King · Wednesday, April 21st, 2021

(Excerpt from the novel manuscript *Esther Days*)

I'm twenty years old and the only one in my family to finish high school and then a typing class directly following. It was something that connected me to the world or maybe disconnected me from it. Typing was something quiet, something simple. Sweetie always told me to keep my head down; my mouth was too slick for the shade of color my skin provided. Keep your head down and work and nobody'll bother you she always said. Pa, Jr., and I worked at the Hattiesburg Zoo. Pa and Jr. did maintenance work in the stables and me in the back office of the front office. Growing up Pa was taught to be a peanut farmer and stable hand, his father was a sharecropper and his father a slave. He never taught us how to farm as he was too tired to teach our fingers the Earth. As I was not engaged to a man and refused to do house work it only made sense that I work in a professional setting. Pa didn't like that I was so close to his life outside of Sweetie, his outside life being the other typist. I typically watched whenever she wrote Pa a love note. There was such a shift in her movement when she wrote to him. Her delicate long brown fingers would press passionately on the keys, and she'd let out a little moan when she finished. She would slowly fold the piece of paper into a tight triangle, kissing the paper and then writing a red "J" on it. Her name, Ms. Patty, ten years my senior and a fully formed woman. I'll never forget the way she walked. Time froze when she moved. Her hips oars in this deep sea of air and space. As if there was a gentle current pushing her forward, she slowly and romantically took wide strides as she glided in and out of rooms. She wore a small scarf around her neck, tied and draped over her right shoulder, she said it romantic. Ms. Patty told me she liked to sleep with jasmine in her sleeping cap to keep her hair smelling good. Sometimes accidentally I would catch them whispering into each other's necks, never actually touching one another. I watched Ms. Patty and always thought to myself how much prettier she was than Sweetie. I can't describe the feelings I had toward my father for being with another woman, but at the same time, I understood him as well. I think he's a good husband and provider, but maybe he's a good lover too. And maybe he couldn't be all those things to one woman, or maybe he couldn't be all those things to Sweetie.

One day Ms. Patty looked at me as if she was fixing to do something. I was working on copying transcripts, and I could feel her eyes on me. Almost an hour had gone by, and I still hadn't looked up. I was afraid to at this point. She hummed and then shuffled in her seat loudly. My neck was starting to hurt, as I was straining to make sure our eyes didn't meet. The hum got louder, and soon she broke out into a full song. I heard her get out of her creaky wooden seat, before I knew it, her

brown delicate fingers wrapped around my arm and she walked me to the bathroom. My head stayed down, and I admired the way her softness protruded out of her dress. When we got there, my head still to the ground, now studying her shoes.

“Girl child pick your head up, it gonna fall to the floor.”

She put her small pocketbook on the sink and began to unload. She unpacked blush, eyeshadow, and several different types of lipsticks. I had now come to the conclusion that she had brought me in here to play.

“Let me try something.” She said

She turned me towards the mirror and pulled my dress close to my body, it clung like wet clothes.

“Look at you. Look at this shape, you’re a killah and don’t even know it. It’s good. Sometimes boys run too hot fuh ya and there ain’t nothing you can say, do or go to cool them down.”

Ms. Patty looked down for a second unaware I was staring at her. When she looked up again, we were in each other’s eyes. She smiled and spun me around towards her. She stood close to my face and began to use light strokes to create some other creature. I felt her warm breath on my nose and eyelids. She darkened my eyebrows and put red lipstick on me and light pink speckles of blush.

“You’re very sexy Esther.”

“Thank you?” I said

Ms. Patty later told me she saw too much of my father in me, even with the makeup. After I washed my face and fixed my dress, she kissed me, moaning as she tugged on my bottom lip. When she pulled away, she looked at me for a minute.

“Our little secret.” She said

I nodded. She was the first person I ever kissed and sometimes the last thing I thought about before I went to bed. I became infatuated with her; she was the epitome of me and my father’s desires. Ms. Patty was so different from Sweetie. Sweetie was just dark brown skin filled with warm water. She wasn’t sexy, she wasn’t alluring, she was just Sweetie. She was my mother and a wife, she made pies and cleaned other people’s dirty draws and scrubbed their toilets. Ms. Patty wore silk undergarments and heels and smoked long cigarettes, she went out dancing and drank beer and ate sweets from Paris.

I wanted to be like Ms. Patty, she was wanted and adored. I imaged Pa and Ms. Patty drinking lilac wine in her small room, I saw flowers painted on colorful plates and teacups from France. I imagined my father undressing her slowly and him kissing her neck and her always smelling of jasmine.

(Featured photo from [Black History Album](#) and [Of_Another_Fashion](#) IG archive.)

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