

Patterns of Wolfpen

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SYNOPSIS

In the year 1785 Saul Pattern of Virginia came into the beautiful virgin country of the Big Sandy valley in Kentucky. Chief of the perils were the Shawnees, who sought to hold their lands from the ever-encroaching whites. From a huge pinnacle Saul gazed upon the fat bottoms and the endless acres of forest in its primeval quietude at the mouth of the Wolfpen, and felt an eagerness to possess it, declaring it a place fit for a man to LIVE in! Five years later he returned with Barton, his fifteen-year-old son, and built a rude cabin. In Saul's absence the Indians attacked Barton and wounded him so badly Saul was forced to return with him to Virginia. In 1796, when it was reasonably safe, Saul returned with his family and a patent for 4,000 acres, this time to stay. He added to the cabin, planted crops and fattened his stock on the rich meadows. Soon other settlers arrived. A century later, in the spring of 1885, we find Cynthia Pattern, of the fifth generation following Saul, perched on the pinnacle from which her great-great-grandfather had first viewed Wolfpen Bottoms. The valleys, heretofore untouched by the waves of change sweeping the Republic, are at last beginning to feel that restless surge. Her dad, Sparrel, and her brothers, Jesse, Jasper and Abrial, have been busy converting the old water-wheeled mill to steam power. Sparrel's triumph is complete when the golden stream of meal pours forth at the turning on of the steam. Cynthia feels that something out of the past has been buried with Saul. Cynthia is a pretty and imaginative miss in her late teens, who often re-created Saul and her other forebears, and fancied them still living. Sparrel proudly brings home the first meal out of the steam mill, and Julia, his wife, is pleased. Generation after generation has added comforts and conveniences to Saul's homestead, and Sparrel has not shirked.

CHAPTER II—Continued

Much of Cynthia's dream-life centered about Sparrel and those two volumes. Long before she could read for herself, she had sat on his knees while he read the pictures to her, or she had laid propped on her elbows on the floor before the light of the log fire making stories of her own from the illustrations.

Through the long winter evenings of the years, these associations had built themselves into her concept of her father, and as he sat at the desk, while Julia sewed, and the boys ended the chores and life proceeded in its old established pattern, Cynthia's thoughts would play over these things.

"And there are his medicine books he doesn't like for me to bother, but he likes for me to gather up the green peach-tree leaves and pepper in and oil of sassafras and get the apple brandy and the brown sugar for him to make up his flux medicine with when people on the creek get sick with bloody-flux; and the yellow dock for the itch; and get the salt and turpentine ready when he pulls a tooth for a neighbor. I like to hear them say, 'Sparrel Pattern's the easiest hand in the world to take a feller's tooth out.' And it's a good thing he can make medicine and doctor people because nobody else on the creek knows how like he does."

She hung the dishpan on its nail in the wall over the stove. Julia came in from the milk-house. Then the boys came in.

"A family is a funny thing when it sits around the fire. There's Mother in her corner finishing up a new shirt for Daddy and her fingers flying about and she looks content and doesn't say anything. You have three brothers, they're all Patterns, but they're all different and you like them all but you like Jesse the best somehow. He sits and reads; when he talks, his voice is good and he may be right serious or he may say a funny thing. Jasper will sit with something on his mind and Abrial will go to sleep before he knows it. And Daddy writes things in his book and reads or cobbles or studies up something, always in good humor, silent, never speaking

hard of anybody. And then we'll all be a little sleepy and somebody will yawn and Daddy will wind up the weights on the clock. . . ."

After Sparrel had bathed his feet and felt the gentle friction of his nightshirt against his bare flesh, he lay by the window in their downstairs room on the soft feather-bed Julia had brought with her to Wolfpen after her wedding. Now that the new mill which he had planned during the winter was completed, and everything on Wolfpen orderly and in its place, and his children content with their life, he could rest in peace as he waited the coming of Julia and sleep.

"Things are about the way I want them around the place now. Everything is handy and we've got just about all we need to run a place on. We've been getting it brought up every year now since Saul's time. My boys won't have much more to do to it only keep it up and enjoy it. It's about as good a place as there is around here. It looks good and feels good. This house here, this Pattern house that took four beginnings of us to get built, it doesn't cower under the mountains nor cringe up a narrow hollow like lots of them do; it stands up and looks around at things coming into order out of the wilderness, the way a man's house ought to stand, like himself.

"April again, hurrying by as usual on wet feet. Getting time to put seed in the ground again. Fifty-three Aprils I've seen come and go, and forty-eight I remember. Each one is better, the good of all the past ones recollect in the new one. There are my sons going upstairs; they have many springs ahead of them on this place, and then their sons and grandsons. We old ones die but the feeling is passed on to the new ones. Jasper'll be marrying Jane Burden, I reckon, though he doesn't say much. Quiet boy, good about the work but takes things about as they come. Jesse, he must be twenty-one now. He reminds me of his Grandfather Tivis, only there isn't much more to do like building a siding house or a mill-wheel. He ought to take the Marebone farm and build it up like Wolfpen. He's a good hand to do it. And there's Abrial with enough fidgety energy to do two boys. They'll get along, my boys will. And next week we must all buckle in to work and get the crops down."

Julia came into the room after a little while, and lay beside him under the soft warmth of the sea-star, blue-and-white coverlet.

"You're not asleep, Sparrel?"

"No, Julia. It's quiet this time of night. I've been listening to it. I used to wonder if we'd be any better off to have stayed in Virginia. I don't any more. Sometimes it 'pears to me like this is what everything before it has been aiming at and now it's here and I'm looking at it and listening to it. That don't hardly sounds sensible, does it?"

"We've got about all a body could want here."

"It ain't things, exactly, Julia, it's . . . it's . . . well, something inside, like the drum on a banjo . . . it's like going around the hill in the evening to hunt up the cows and when you think you won't find them before dark you hear a bell and there they come out of a hollow along the path around the hill at the edge of the cleared line, one behind the other, and not a bit of hurry in them."

They went on again without words. They could hear Cynthia in the next room.

"Sparrel."

"Yes."

"I was thinking about Cynthia. She's eighteen. I'd just turned seventeen when you rode up to the gate and stared at me with my dress full of chips."

"You were taller than Cynthia."

"I didn't know much about books, Sparrel, like you do."

"There are better things for a woman than books, Julia. You know the way of a house and a family."

"A body can know both, Sparrel; and not be hurt by it. Cynthia's done all the books at the school and yours lots of times, and I reckon she knows as much about a house and family as I do myself. She ought to have a winter at books over at Pikeville Institute."

"The Pikeville Institute, Julia!"

"Yes, Sparrel. She ought to go over there a winter. It'd do a sight for her."

"I don't know if I favor that much, Julia. It might take her away from the place here and spoil her content with things. They look to town ways and make young folks want to go off some place instead of living better at home. Cynthia's getting



"You Are the Purtiest Sight I Ever Saw in My Born Days."

the learning she needs right here with you, Julia; it takes that kind of schooling to make a good woman on a big place like this and she's going to be a good one, like her mother. Anyway, it takes ready money, and how'd you be able to spare her?"

"It don't take much money, Sparrel. And one of the Wooton girls could come over and help along if I needed anybody. She ought to go."

"I don't favor it much."

Julia's head touched Sparrel's shoulder, and he touched her face with his hand.

"She's a fine girl, Julia. She takes a right smart after her mother."

Julia lay by his side feeling the old joy in his way of speaking to her and seeing in Cynthia herself projected into the books she had missed. They did not communicate any more in words but in a harmonious silence which united their separate bodies. Before the late moon could get through the window, they and all their household were fallen asleep in the night quiet of Wolfpen.

CHAPTER III

THE simple pattern of life designed so long ago on Wolfpen was again carrying the family easily into the work of the new season. There was a sense of peace and certainty which came from this yearly repetition of an old routine established by successive generations of men.

Cynthia sat in the sun-flooded weaving-room by the wooden loom which Tivis had made and Sparrel had improved, weaving her unworded thoughts into the blue cashmere twill growing into dress goods under her fingers as she tossed the

shuttle and worked the treadle and the beating sley.

"Shed, pick, beat; step two threads right; shed, pick, beat. Yellow in the harness, blue in the shuttle. Shed, pick, beat. Piling to the left, piling to the right. . . . Planting time is a good time, even when a body sits at a loom. You can look out over the long porch where the honeysuckle awning will arch above the steps, and across the gray pailings at the corner of the wood-lot and Mother's garden, and over the roof of the corn-crib and the elder mill and tan-bark shed, above the sea of peach tree buds, and the spring-tangled green of the willows. Daddy and the boys out in the bottoms and on the cleared edges of the hills with the mules turning over the rich soil, getting ready for me to drop the thick wax beans into the hills of corn and watch them lie there, pink and lavender and purple striped beads by the side of the yellow grains of corn. Covering them over with a brown blanket of earth and saying to them: 'Shut your eyes and go to sleep for a short spell, but don't fail to wake up with the sun when it is morning.'

"There'll be sugar-cane growing up like hearth brooms for thick brown sorghum, and big potatoes in Barn Hollow, and long yellow sweet potatoes in House Field, and peaches and apples for drying and to make butter of, and pears for preserves in Mother's spiced earthenware jars."

Outside, the hollow was full of life and sound as it always was, as it always had been in the spring: the chickens in the barnyard, the scream of the hawks darting across the hollow, the liquid notes of nesting cardinals, the dolorous cooling of doves in the tulip trees.

"There's Mother going into her garden. How she loves to pull a hoe through the ground and rake it alive into beds of parsnips and radishes and beets and lettuce, and build up little mounds exactly a hoe handle apart for muskmelons, and arranging everything according to its height in the sun and its shadow's length and decorating all the edges with flowers. It's like weaving a patterned blanket."

Passing slowly along a row, Julia framed herself in the window before Cynthia. She stooped in a graceful arc, bending to the hoe. Cynthia waved to her out of the bubble of joy that was within her.

"She keeps breaking up the clods and pounding at them until she has out every one that's bigger than a swallow's egg. She is pretty, Mother is."

"She was a whole lot purtier when she was eighteen than I am. She was taller and straighter and her hair was brown and her teeth whiter. Will I be standing in the wood-lot with a dress full of pine chips when a man comes riding up Wolfpen? I'll know him the minute I set eyes on him, just like Mother knew Daddy. I just stood there, Cynthia, and gawked right at him with my mouth gaping open, I reckon. He had ridden all the way from Wolfpen down to Scoto to see his sister, your Aunt Rachel. He was tall and straight, and his beard was silky and flax-colored. I just stared like an owl surprised by a light. He pulled up his horse right in front of the gate and his blue eyes looked agape at me. Then he said, 'You're the purtiest sight I ever saw in my born days.' Then I looked down, reddening to the roots of my hair, and saw me holding my dress up full of chips. I was so plagued I could have crawled in a pin-hole. I dropped the chips and ran like a scared rabbit back to the kitchen and looked back from the curtained window. He sat there on his big bay horse in a trance, and then rode on at a gallop to your Aunt Rachel's. And that's the first time I ever saw Sparrel Pattern."

"Some day he'll come riding up Wolfpen here on a bay mare that's fifteen hands or better, and I'll be there by the pear tree in my blue cashmere dress with one hand lifted to a branch of blossoms like this, and he'll stop his mare and look and look at me, and then say,

"Lady, you're the prettiest sight ever saw in my life."

While her fingers tossed delicately the shuttle of blue wool between the shed of golden thread in the harness, and the bolt of twill grew by the width of each strand, the smell of the pines on Craven Mountain was gathered up and blown lightly on the wind into her thoughts through the open window by the loom.

"People ought to have been born they live quiet and don't make trouble for other people. They say they are like dogs and chickens and such, but they're like me. Mother is a spray of April rain looking at herself in clear pools. Daddy is a good hickory, not too but straight and honest. I'll be pear tree by the well with paged blossoms and gold in the heart. . . ."

The days were growing longer over Wolfpen Hollow. Cynthia was about it, watching the long shadows going before the blaze of sun into the timber earlier in the morning, and coming out later in the afternoon. She was in the fields to the planting. She loved to see the changing moods of a day be the cool vigor of the early morning through the slowed pace under the hot sun of noon, then the sea of drowsiness of the first hour of dinner, the dreamy relaxing of fatigue in the afternoon, the joy of the end of day.

She liked best the long slow of the afternoon when the trees were scattered with her needles among the fields, near enough to be seen, far enough not to take the moment around her. Then it was a whispering in the trees on one slope of the hollow, and answering rustle from the opposite hillside. She thought of what the shadows which came after out of the woods and across the bottoms were the flags of tulip trees which would soon scattering honey-sweet brows from their bursting hearts' out.

The mood was different when she worked with some one, and it best when she helped Jesse set the sweet-potato plants.

They went to the bottom of the patch. They carefully pulled the sturdy sprouts for planting and laid them roots down in a shallow basket. Then Cynthia dropped the at ten-inch intervals on the ridge, and poured a quart of water on their roots in the Jesse had made with his long gers.

Cynthia filled the process with delicate mystery, imagining she was taking live people to dark beds where they were crawling one another to death, in great cities she had read about, giving them space to breathe in sunlight and a place for their roots in the ground.

When they had done with last row, and the sun had been behind the mountain so long a time that the dark was coming on, Jesse remained on his knees at last plant, rubbing his hands picking idly at the dirt on his

"Cynthia."

"What is it, Jesse?"

"Do you like this, Cynthia?"

"Do I like what?"

"Just being here all the time, way, planting, and tending, looking after stock, and laying grub and wood for the winter, and over the same thing?"

"Why, yes, Jesse; whatever I could a body do, anyway? I could live here forever and ever, about the best place in the world I reckon, to live in."

"I know it's a good place, but I don't like it like that. But I'd like to be something."

"Be something?"

"Yes. Be something. Live in town and have a profession. I want to just go on a place where everything is done and fired up. Dad and Granddad and the rest of them. I don't see why Jasper Abrial can't go on with the place they like, and I'd be something else."

"A doctor like Daddy?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)