Diseree’s Baby

* A short story by Kate Chopin (Of *The Joy that Kills* fame) about a family experiencing the issues that prejudice can cause.
* Takes place in the southern US of either, the swampy area of Louisianna or the marshlands of something like Savannah Georgia.
* The story is from the viewpoint of Diseree and starts right after she has had a newborn child.
* Diseree is married to a prejudicial man named Armand, who causes the conflict of the story.
* The story begins with the arrival of Diseree’s mother to see the newborn baby.
* Mr. Armand was jovial when the baby is born, but sours after a few months, possibly indicating that the baby didn’t initially appear as it does later.
* He becomes distant from his wife, offering little discourse and giving an air of distrust in his treatment of her.
* Eventually Diseree confronts her husband about this odd behavior and he bluntly tells her that he believes that she has been unfaithful, or that she lied about her heritage.
* Diseree leaves their abode, passing people working in the field and thinking about how she couldn’t possibly share kinship with them, and heads to her mother to reaffirm this.
* Armand finds a letter many a day later after Diseree’s departure attesting to her not having any family that lent to what Mr. Armand hated, and that it was really himself that had ancestry with the slaves in his field.
* Mr. Armand was too assured of himself due to arrogance that he never suspected this possibility and failed to investigate it, thus destroying his own marriage over nothing.

“Sweetness”

* Sweetness is a short story from the perspective of a mother who has recently had her child.
* It is set in the early 1900s US likely in the inner city.
* The narrator is aghast at the sight of her own child due to her appearance being darker than both parents, as is the husband.
* She confirms to herself that the child is quite different from her in looks that she believes “Passes” for a lighter skinned person.
* The now unhappy marriage eventually leads to divorce and the narrator and her child move elsewhere to find work to support them both.
* The narrator’s hatred of the child doesn’t go away, as she attempts to smother her at one point and changes her mind, but she does lessen her ire as the years go on.
* The father might’ve felt ashamed as the narrator puts it, because he starts sending alimony payments to the mother to help them along.
* The mother begins to shape her child through cruel tutelage into what she sees as an ideal person that will be able to deal with the world that she believes will not be as kind to her.
* Because of this treatment the daughter leaves the mother forever and finds her own way in the world with her dream of an entertainment career.
* The mother doesn’t regret anything about how she raised her child and even attributes her success to what she deemed necessary about this upbringing.
* The daughter does show some amount of love, by sending her mother a stipend regularly.
* Ironically, the daughter received the cruel treatment of the world because of the color of her skin, but it only came from her mother as far as the story tells.