

... has gotten  
Roper's attention with something other than a switch. A shoe will



do.

She pats her <sup>white</sup> apron pocket, and the shoe in its newspaper

wrapping <sup>rattles</sup> she is slow-moving this morning, stove up from staying inside during the cold spat from Tuesday through Friday. The children are as wild as the sunflower dress she is wearing.

They scamp about the sunny yard, making games of Roper's junk: <sup>scamp about</sup> <sup>print pants</sup> <sup>hammer sawing</sup> <sup>inside tires</sup> <sup>rolling</sup> <sup>trampolining</sup> <sup>stashed bottles</sup> <sup>rainwater</sup> <sup>actual</sup> <sup>kittenwalkers</sup> <sup>painting</sup> <sup>rainbow on the blue sky with</sup> <sup>skilled little</sup> <sup>trails</sup> All except Little Angel, who is feverish with croup and <sup>trails</sup> sucking her thumb, behind Louise.

Saturday now and Roper is home from work, holed up in his trailer, maybe watching Louise creeping toward her collard patch beyond the yard space between trailers. She suspects he knows she has the shoe, because suddenly Bloop and Beanie are no longer <sup>salivating</sup> <sup>to himself --</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>likely</sup> <sup>staring</sup> <sup>likely</sup> <sup>probably</sup> <sup>starving</sup> <sup>probably</sup> <sup>wondering</sup> what Louise intends to do with the shoe. Maybe even thinking that she won't do anything with the

shoe, since so far she has failed to tell that on Halloween day he did go back to work after lunch.

She always knows what Roper and the boys are into or up to, and they always know she knows, but know she won't tell whoever <sup>she</sup> <sup>should tell</sup> <sup>important to be told</sup> they have that kind of hold on her. But this time she will tell; that is, if Roper doesn't do the right thing and tell Math Taylor the truth first. No, she doesn't believe that Roper killed <sup>Lora</sup> <sup>Taylor's</sup> wife, but she does believe that he knows more than he has told. It's been awhile since she believed in justice for a black man, and she's still not sure she does, but she does believe

Louise



in Jesus and the kind of compassion Jesus <sup>commanded</sup> expected of man, black,  
white or red. She's almost done waiting for Roper to feel compassion-  
-plain old pity <sup>would</sup> <sup>with</sup> do--for <sup>White</sup> Taylor, who she had wet-nursed  
<sup>next-breast to Roper,</sup> alongside Roper, which must make for some kind of bond between them,  
sharing the same milk, as well as blood. <sup>Other</sup> reasons for telling  
~~too~~ <sup>reasons</sup> so many they gell in her head, but as much as anything she wants  
to see something end, the end of something.

how many responsible men are left to set examples for the childrene,  
can't find one and means to make one out of Eugene. His fear of  
telling, she understands, she doesn't blame him, but he has to do the  
right thing for the grandboys--if he intends to stay here, he has to  
stand for something)

(have this come up in conversation with Roper or come back and  
add if it doesn't fit) But more than all those things she wants Eugene  
to stand for something in the quarters, to set an example for her

Daugharty 2

grandboys--headed fast down hell's path--by proving he didn't kill  
the woman. Louise has a feeling that killing for her grandboys is  
like stealing quarters from her change jar.

might need to change part about cleaning quarters etc

sights, smells, feel, hear

In the collard patch, she sidles between rows, cropping the



leathery silver sheened leaves, keeping her bad leg from touching the

plants and catching dew poisoning. Leaves tucked under her left arm, she

stands and peers back at the children making use of Roper's useless

junk, then down at Little Angel grafted to her right leg. From this

point Louise can see the entire loop of the quarters, quiet,

except for the children laughing and squealing; all the trailers and

shacks and the white frame church on the south curve facing Dreamer's

house; all the paper and bottles and tin cans. And Louise

would just as soon not see, but can look now without crying inside,

because in her head she can picture her place--twenty-five acres left

to her by Wainer Taylor--cleaned up, her people at last coming around--

maybe even registering to vote. But tallying each of them from

memory, inside the houses and trailers she scans, God-like,

she sums up only a couple of responsible, dependable, Christian old

grannies or aunties, who will take care of the children. Two, she

tallies up two, one of them her own self. Overlooking the houses,

she passes right over Sweet's house--woman won't never change--and on

Daugharty 3

use passive metaphor (mark down with blood)

free will: Roper has to come to her

no men

her mind marks his door with lamb's blood.

potentially responsible

next

which gives her less than six months to ~~leave~~ ~~leave~~ salvage Roper's soul.

as he's watching the industry of ants

right past him

rough silvery  
tucked  
with head-bound braids  
like a flower wine  
BERRYING  
has backdoor neighbor  
banked along the road  
the  
the  
with only a few who would might actually clean up or, note, and  
with  
with  
No man scanning  
Godlike  
no men



give him a week.

By eleven o'clock <sup>that morning</sup> she has collards and hamhocks stewing in her  
stewpot, wafting an armpit odor throughout the trailer, and knows  
Roper can smell the greens and almost regrets having painted her  
windows black, because to check on the children outside, as well as  
her progress with Roper, she has to keep going to the open door. The  
children are still playing in the junk heap, except for a couple of  
the older ones <sup>- five years old on fifteen -</sup> who are scrunched under the white table sniggering,  
playing at what she has to believe is innocent play because she  
✓ doesn't have time to check now, she doesn't have the mindset ~~to~~ for a  
lesson on being sweet. Roper has left his sunning spot on the  
doorstep, but the blue Isuzu is still parked in Sweet's yard, and  
✓ Louise <sup>can</sup> hear <sup>room</sup> him pacing inside his trailer.

Daugharty 4

Bloop and Beanie straggle through the hedge, eyeing Roper's  
trailer, then head for Louise's door. She steps inside, fanning  
houseflies with her dishrag on her way <sup>from the living room to the kitchen</sup> to the kitchen, and adds some  
water to the <sup>pot on</sup> shrinking greens. <sup>Living room and kitchen, one long room</sup>  
<sup>distinguished only by doll-horn apparatus and trailer-flimsy couch, table & couch.</sup>  
"Them boys know what from what," she mutters. "Would eat my big  
toe if I cooked it."

They bounce through the door, shaking her trailer. The stove-  
eye grills quiver, the walls creak. "Ain't nothing to do round this  
place, granmama," says Bloop. He hovers above her, sniffing at the  
spitting pot.



"Go pick you up some pecans," she says. "Say they bring a good price now."

"Ain't picking up no pecans," he says and snorts. "Back ain't up to it."

He sits at the kitchen table, knuckling the top, and Beanie sprawls on the couch, ~~switching the tv on~~ switching the tv on with the remote control, Louise's sole luxury.

*formica*

"My back ain't gone be up to gathering no greens next time," she says and shakes cornmeal from a great jar to a bowl.

"Put some cracklings in it," says Bloop. "Ain't had no crackling cornbread in a ~~month's~~ *month of Sunday.*"

"Not since middle of the week," she says. Though Bloop is no longer lovable, she finds it hard not to love him, not to be taken in by him--her first grand. "Quit that framing on that table fore I lose my mind."

*keep*

*Handwritten notes:*  
tell him to contact Sigmond  
Get my phone number  
Dustin is assistant  
interested in seeing  
mentor  
Necessary  
Daugherty 5  
mention new movie  
Sigmond could turn into a feature film (pay me double)  
then sell to TV  
sprawls next to Beanie

He springs up and bounces into the living room and sits with his ~~over~~ long legs stretched before him, *taking up half the floor* "Ain't nothing on that channel worth a damn," he says to Beanie.

"You want your mouth washed out with soap powder?" Louise *yells:* "Check on Little Angel for me. She napping on my bed."

He laughs. Snatches the remote from Beanie, who snatches it back. Somebody on tv laughs, ~~and~~ *then the group laugh.* Same laugh *on tape on* every program. Louise thinks that surely she's not the only one who has caught on to that fact--same woman's *crackle* laugh trails everytime. *They're like family.*


*Writes something in my mind about TV a book*

"How long fore dinner, Granmamma?" says Beanie.



"Bout thirty minutes, I guess," she says. She likes them there, though she never shows it, never says it--they know--especially to Roper, who it seems she has been trying all her life to ~~get~~<sup>make</sup> accept his own sons. She had almost given up when she came into possession of the shoe. But what Louise likes best, is not looking at the boys, just listening to them talk and pretending they are still chubby children with ~~curls~~<sup>curls like</sup> as glossy as black grapes. But lately she has quit pretending. She looks at them now, their great white shoes, Bloop's tomwalker legs. Body outgrowing his mind, what the ~~de~~<sup>re</sup> is of his mind. Mostly, he and Beanie both just ~~go~~<sup>function from</sup> by their senses--what can they see next, what can they taste next, feel next, smell next, touch next? ~~Not now.~~<sup>No now-time.</sup> Now is never enough. Same way with money. Louise figures if Roper doesn't take hold soon, the boys will become so jaded it'll take more and more jolts to their eyes, ears, ~~and so~~<sup>more</sup> ~~unmentionable~~<sup>unmentionable</sup> ~~forth~~, to produce thrills.

Daugharty 6



"One of you boys go bring the younguns in, <sup>"she calls,"</sup> and tell your daddy, I got the cornbread on." She slides the iron skillet into the oven, realizing what she has just said, and adds, "Never mind, <sup>but Roper,"</sup> The ~~boys~~<sup>boys</sup> weren't going any way, and she has to let Roper come to her. Of his own freewill.

By Monday, Louise figures she might have to extend her week's deadline for Roper to come to her. Lying in her bed, Monday morning, she hears the Isuzu jutter from ~~Sis~~<sup>Secret's</sup> yard, up the road to the highway. Yesterday, she'd been so sure he was coming around ~~all~~<sup>all</sup> day



*Sunday*  
moping about his trailer and yard, watching her from his recliner while she cleaned <sup>pipe</sup> fish on the <sup>white</sup> table in her front yard ~~and visited~~ ~~over the children.~~ Twice, she almost broke down and went over to his trailer with the paper-wrapped shoe in her apron pocket, but each time she rerouted her steps, pinching dead blooms from her mums and rearranging the junk in her yard. Not even a how-do-you-do from either of them. He knew.

✓ How long since he <sup>has</sup> been to see "the man"? <sup>(lying in her bed)</sup> She tries to remember, afraid Roper will miss one of his scheduled visits and end up in jail again. And then realizes how laughable her worry about the probation officer is under the circumstances--Louise is on the verge of sicking the law on Roper for what might mean a charge murder. She will do it. She has to do it. For her grandboys, who (~~see above notes~~) <sup>squate stealing quarters for her charge jar with murder</sup> the boys.

background on Louise driveled in--keep up momentum

Daugharty 7

What drives Louise crazy, during the deadline week, is how she changes day to day--by turns feeling guilty about even considering turning Roper in, and <sup>then</sup> feeling justified. And when Friday rolls around and he hasn't come to her for the shoe, she begins to wonder who she will tell, when she tells, who will be most merciful toward her only son--Little Taylor or the law?--and well understands what God went through when <sup>he sent his only</sup> his son Jesus was ~~nailed on~~ <sup>to</sup> the cross. A concept she doesn't come close to understanding, but believes in with all her heart to keep from winding up in hell. And finally she talks herself into feeling that to do otherwise, to not tell the truth, would be blasphemy. Forget for-the-good-of-the-grandboys, forget for the good of Roper <sup>and Matt Taylor,</sup> Louise's is a holy mission. Though she doesn't really fool herself, she is just keeping to what she's promised herself,



blasphemy. Forget for-the-good-of-the-grandboys, forget for the good  
of Roper <sup>and Matt Taylor,</sup> Louise's is a holy mission. Though she doesn't really  
fool herself, she is just keeping to what she's promised herself,  
anyway ~~that~~ she can.

She will go to Little Taylor, she decides. Three reasons: One,  
he is nearby, and she believes he is a merciful man, <sup>certainly</sup> ~~will be~~ more  
merciful than the sheriff. Two, she knows he respects her, ~~possibly~~  
even <sup>trusts</sup> loves her, and might believe her if she tells him that Roper  
didn't kill his wife but evidently knows something about her  
disappearance. Number three and most important, Louise is betting on  
the influence and inspiration of Wainer Taylor's ghost; she has  
always relied on feelings, and she has a feeling that Little Taylor  
will know without knowing, will sense, that his daddy loved Louise,  
that Roper is <sup>Big</sup> Wainer Taylor's own son, ~~making him~~ <sup>Little half-</sup> ~~Nath's~~ <sup>Taylor's</sup> brother.

Daugharty 8

Decide on Little Taylor  
or Nath

<sup>Frankly</sup> ~~Truthfully~~, when she starts toward her old white stationwagon,  
on the following Saturday morning, eyeing Roper sitting on his  
doorstep, she is not fully convinced that she will go to <sup>Meth</sup> ~~Little~~  
Taylor, but is hoping Roper will believe she is going. To make sure  
he knows what her mission is, <sup>about,</sup> that cloudy warm Saturday morning, she  
takes the shoe from her apron pocket, unwraps it and holds it up.

His droopy eyes stretch and he stands, <sup>limping</sup> ~~walking~~ barefoot toward  
the car. Not the way it should have been, true, not the way she'd  
planned. When he gets to the front of the car, he holds out his  
right hand.



She shakes her head and sticks the shoe back into her pocket and drops the newspaper to the dirt, *with the rest of the trash,*

"What you up to, Mama?" he says.

*Monterio*  
*hanging*  
"Up to making you own up to what you know bout Lora Taylor," she says. "Up to making you stand for something."

"How's that?"

*[also sympathy for Little Taylor]*

"I be on my way to take this shoe to Little Taylor, that what."

She places *one* her hand on top of her bristly gray head. "Hear on the tv last night he ~~been~~ getting back in ~~from~~ another trip looking at dead bodies."

✓ "You think I kill that woman?"

"Nope. I think you didn't."

"I don't get it." He scratches his head.

✓ "Gone make you face up to Little Taylor, gone make you prove to them boys in there you ain't kill nobody."

He laughs, *props his* ~~hand~~ on the car hood, sounds like he's crying.

"Ain't nobody gone believe I ain't ~~done~~ done it, you know that."

Daugharty 9

"I don't know that."

"I messed up." He doesn't look at her, looks down at his long thin feet in the damp dirt.

"What you do?"

"*ind* Found her dead that day. *ind* Found her passed-out dead on a road through that field I been mowing seems like since I was born."

"What kill her?"

"Don't know," he says, looking up now. "Don't look like nothing kill her, I mean, no blood on her body."

*Turned to stone*  
Petrified by what the answer might be to her next question, she



asks anyway. If she be laying in a road in that field, how come nobody ain't <sup>find</sup> her?"

"That where I mess up," he says, crying for real now, low like a man choking. <sup>He turns his back to her.</sup> His shoulders quake. "I get scared somebody think I <sup>do</sup> done it--I mean <sup>and</sup> with me on probation and all. So I take up her body and chunk it in a old well ~~across~~ the field."

Louise waits, <sup>holding</sup> the shoe, trying to picture him doing <sup>that,</sup> it, but can't.

"Chunk bricks in on top of the body's what I done. Later I ~~done~~ that." He turns around, facing her square. "I ain't kill that lady, you know that. But gone look like I do it if that shoe turn up now."

"You find the shoe later?" says Louise, <sup>Where</sup> it fall off, right?"

"Yessum," he says, "and then them boys get hold <sup>d</sup> of it and <sup>go</sup> to blackmailing me."

Daugharty 10

"I know the rest of it," she says, patting the shoe in her pocket. "You do too. Them boys belief you kill her, don't see nothing wrong in that; killing ain't no more to them than stealing quarters out of my change jar."

"I ain't their mama," he says, drying up, <sup>putting up.</sup> "What I know bout raising younguns?"

"You bout to mess up worser now," she says and opens the squeaky car door. "You bout to get on my badside for shore."

"So what you wanting me to do is turn myself in and prove something they ain't no way a-proving?"



She just stands there, knowing he is right, but knowing she is right too.

"Give me the shoe, Mama." He holds out his hand, starts around the car. "Ain't no way without that shoe anybody gone blame me. That lady ain't gone come back alive just cause I tell, get it?"

"Then how you gone make them boys know you ain't kill her, how you gone shut them up?"

"I done shut 'em up."

"How's that?"

"~~Find~~ drugs on 'em."

She has to ~~lean~~ <sup>with both hands on bar</sup> against the car to keep from falling. "Just what I mean," she says. "Somebody gotta stand for something, somebody gotta take a hold."

"Why me, Mama?"

"Ain't nobody else."

*Peep*  
(might need to go back and change what she hopes to achieve at this point--about cleaning up quarters).

Daugharty 11

Janice Daugharty Route 1, Box 595 Stockton, GA 31649 912-242-5917

#### The First Nudist

It could have been the summer after the spring that my younger sister and I went to visit Gransallie in Florida and almost starved to death on one of her low-calorie diets, which I prefer to remember as a kind of pre-Easter fasting, rather than admit that my grandmother had once again failed. To me, she was proudly stout and