

(Cont)

any place except right next door to them, to keep church people from feeling guilty. I know this is, I know this is the maddest he'll ever get, and

last time he moved all our stuff in a wheel-barrow to the other across Stateville, to make his point that the county and the Church was falling down in doing ~~govern~~ what was ~~not~~ right by poor people. And I wonder for the billionth time what happened between him & his daddy to cause the ~~and~~ ~~pa~~ that never claimed me to leave all his land to his son. Lieutenant ~~that~~ ~~was~~ the service station on the corner across from the post office court house.

He comes back to the table with his belt doubled like he's gone, let me have it instead. I back up. "We'll be ~~let~~ ~~back~~ back in school, first thing you know, old man, I ~~can't~~ call myself getting him since it's his pet baby. But I know it'll end up blabby to whole thing and ~~at~~ a sudden, I don't care. I don't care if he beats me & Mama & Lovie half to death, or if he gets her job & moves us clear across Stateville, right by the school house, if he gets drunk & murder Miss Ann & the principle both.

"I tell you what," I go, getting my teeth, walking toward him ~~the~~ tell I hear Mama's spoon clank on her two bottom teeth, "I tell you what, old man," and it's crying. "We got run off, me & Lovie both, cause they found out me got nigger blood."

Mama's wild eyes go up, the spoon in her mouth (I back & put spoon instead of fork by her plate), and feet in Black Draft, (with her old man), the old man drops to his belt, a dog slinks out from under the table, and I go on. I go on.

"That's what they said. I heard 'em talking about it"

the day of the Christmas party and I knowed it was coming
sure as Santa Claus. Now, you go on, Count Trevor,
do what you have to, and nothing you do want
surprise or bother me none. (Can I see?)
Got nothing now, me & Levi don't."

He just stands there, wall-eyed, while the
old lady sets & stares at her fence hays. Spoon
stuck up in her cold grates.

"Go on," I wave my hand, snout running
down to my mouth, "I don't care no more." I
suck cold upon my head & go to the kitchen looking
out the paint black window over the duck pond.

I can't hear nothing around my squalling
but in a minute the whole house shakes from
the slamming of the front door. The night
dark window shudder.

space
(during the night, fire, whole town up to fight it,
smoke red etc)

Somewhere out in the night I wake up to
a bunch of hollering, trucks & cars going past
the cross roads. I know it's something the
old man's done if I don't know what. And I
know it's big this time & I can't fess
what would be big enough for him to pay the bank. I
lay there, gravel & man mixed up, drawing in a bloom
of smoke the big for just the woodheats that half the time
don't draw ^{heat} another us.

I wake up, hearing the bed springs squeak, to come
 from walking up Louie, who's like sleeping with a
 teddy bear. I go to the window & draw back the
~~the~~ rather curtain & see lights ~~at the~~ of cars
 & truck going past in a hurry. I can see smoke
 in front of their head lights, wiggly out. I go
 out on the front porch and follow with my eye
 the way the traffic goes, then turning at the
 corner on 2 wheels west. And then I see a
 smoky red arch hanging over the place where the school
 house sits. "My Lord God in Heaven," I held to the
 screen frame, watching ~~the~~ ^{the fire} lights thru a round
 hole punched out in the screen. I can
 smell the smoke like a good fire in winter
 and keep looking from the hole to thru the screen
 like I'm fascinated in the ~~different~~ different streets
 of the fire straight on or looking thru the screen.
 I can smell the dog must around the smoke,
 the dust of the screen & the dust, and then
 smells ground me to the place, to ~~man~~
 the old man, and I know ~~what~~ I'll
 take his side and help him when it all comes
 down on us. I'll help him move in with a
 wheelbar and I might hate ~~Man's~~ Man's juice hairs but I
 won't hate her for playing it. Or for giving
 us nigger blood. And still, as I hear the back
 door ease open & shut, I know the old man
~~has~~ ^{has} burnt the school in name of Louie's best

interest, but to suit himself, to soothe that something that rears up in him from time to time. And it can go inside I feel him just as satisfied cause he's done got it into his system I had something to get excited over, making something happen in Staterville, and he won't never change, and all the excitement going on out there the cars & trucks and all, does seem a fine sight the wildest thing ever happened in this ~~dry~~ place.

It goes on. It goes in to the living room, searching the shadow for the old man, and hear him go shut in the kitchen door, ~~and~~ a queer silence coming out of his tugging around the creaky boards boards. It speak

It speak right up to the shadow on the door jamb. "Old man, you gone & done it now." It smile, it can feel him grinning.

He's breath hard, the laugh low in the throat.

"What you gone do when the law come."

"Babe, I burned it down." His voice catches like a cackle in his throat, "From the litard post to the fence to the school house I set fire to it. Ain't nobody gone run off my

god you're in." The last part he says like it's come to him it's somebody he's got to make it right with.

"And it ain't water right, ~~that's~~ ^{the} go, ~~that's~~ wrongs do & make a right."

"That's what they say," He steps out of the doorway & ^{trucks} lights for the highway picks up the ghost of his long skinny body as he turns & goes into the bedroom to the old lady.

And the next morning, while the smoke packs down over Statenville, the sheriff law comes. A big tall man that wears his britches hiked up, the sheriff stands off to the shoulder of the road. And the old man sets on the door steps with his elbows on his knobby knees. ^{His long legs hang out.} Both of 'em's got smut in their nose holes.

The old man mumble, snatches

The sheriff goes, "I hear you! Whuh!" He looks behind him where the sun coming up paints the town built around the cross of red.

"I ain't your man sheriff," The old man grunts & struggle up, stretchin' & yawning, then says it again like he's finally come up with something smart.

"But if you could pin it on me, I reckon you would."

"We got a kerosene can, for starters; state fire marshall's coming in."

"There's the oldest kerosene cook stove in the county." The old man's on the porch now, leaning down & talking thru the screen. His beard the same color as the wire

*She looks
wonder
at
the
wire*
"There's no truth in you, Count Trevor." "That's the truth," the old man says & ambles inside like he's on family man in his way to Sunday breakfast. ~~He shuts~~

He shuts the door. "Say somebody set fire to the school house last night, burnt it to the ground."

"Don't say," says the old lady, sitting by the wood stove. She spits into the can.

"Say ^{some scandal} they burnt litard fence posts & all."

"Well, it be dogged."

"I'll build it back," he says, taking on a dreamy look.

"That what they say."

"What I say."

present (Lance) 17

So me & Louie were the only one's out of school, and I reckon to some of the school youngsters Court Trevor, they 'd always made light of, was something of a hero, the kind that of hero that bumps into something heroic, what makes him one. Me & Louie didn't go out to play that ~~country~~ winter, not like we generally done at the cemetery or the Alapaha river. We kept to our selves & put out paper dolls from a Sears & Roebuck catalogue while Mama played the ~~mouth~~ juke harp, learning two more hell billy songs, and the old man worked where he was working. Trapping for all I know. Cause he didn't hear & take out -- didn't drink neither -- and ever night he'd come in grinning & showing his fangs, wore out to the bone. Summer come, and it was fudgy a little piece, though me & Louie didn't go out. We 'd been ~~watched~~ from the front porch while the other youngsters slammed in & out the screen door of Miss Keith's store, eating grape popsicle on their way by our house to the river to swim. We was quiet ^{just smelt} there for a spell. And all during the hot days, we could hear the woodpecker tapping of hammer ~~across the~~ on the air behind the courthouse & old two story hotel where they were putting up a new school. And the sound of the saws grinding with the

Present tense

Locusts felt like some order and newness in our lives. Which as I wanted something to read, I didn't go to the library, and I tried not to think about later, what we'd all do. I fed everybody and cut out a stack of paper dolls and kept them inside the cover of the catalogue, as smoothe mounded that smelled clean & dry. I didn't know what I'd do when the people in the catalogue run out, the women & men & children all smiling & posing.

A tent revival set up across the ~~the~~ oak shaded lot across the road, and I'd sit out at night & listen to the preaching & music and watch everybody coming & going. I stop rocking in the rocking chair when they walked past the house, ~~and~~ they couldn't see in thru the smoky screen, but I could see out. Mosquitoes whining to the rhythm of their shoes tapping on the hard road.

The old man come out of the dark house & pulled up a chair to the sand propped his crossed feet on the wood ledge of the screen. ("That's a sight of people, ain't it babe?") He rolled ~~out~~ some tobacco from the can in his shirt pocket to the waret paper, spit squawk & licked the side. Then he lit it, rearing back. "Yes sir." I start rocking, sliding my feet and traced the mound of the packed catalogue.

a

"You ain't going over there." He ~~butts~~ butts his cock
his long head toward the let tent.

"No sir, not this time."

"How come?"

"I don't want to."

"You ain't overed it, have you?"

"Yes sir, I just..."

"You ain't..." He stared thru the flying dark
at me. "You ain't never gone over it, but you
you do like me I find some how to go on."
You don't care, I think, and I feel mad and
open the catalogue, brush the paper doll to
the floor, real slow, my order falling apart
on the stack goes down. "You ain't never had
no care about you, Count Grevor, I think. The
I say it: "You ain't never had no care about you,
Count Grevor."

"Who you think's ~~you~~ been ~~bully~~ ~~power~~
a key of nuts on the school roof every day, huh?"

He gets up & slumps to the door and goes
inside.

Come September and a cool spell that colors Stateville more blue yellow than black, the principle & Miss Annie's both standing on the shoulder of the hard road. The old man sitting with his knees cocked on the door steps.

"We come to say your young'un can come on back to school," the principle, a fat toady man shifts feet in his Sunday shoes.

"I ain't shore & certain it be gone let em, ^{Berk} ^{Sermon} says the count.

"Law says you ain't got no choice."

"Well, you might noticed, it don't go by the law."

Miss Annie, short & round & funny looking but side the school room starts, "We held a meeting and decided to ~~take~~ them back."

"Integration's coming any how," Berk Sermon looks north up the hard road like he expects a busload of "integration" to show on the new concrete river bridge.

"It don't know nothing bout no integration, but my baby girl young'un don't go where they not wanted."

"They wanted," Miss Annie says, swaying with her hands behind her back.

I hold my breath when I'm peeping thru the bedroom window, Mama playing on the juke harp cutting out about half of what they say.

"Y'all gone have to beg my biggest god in there, I'd wager, The old man look back like he know I'm there."

I drop the curtain, listening and watching the old man, Mama, who look more yellow than brown, even her hair, turning gray look yellow.

"Get on out here, Barbaram," the old man holler.

I step to the side & lean against the wall and I know if I open the door the old dogs & cats will pour out with me, with my shame. I don't want to go back to school; I don't want to face them.

"Get on out here, girl!"

I go on. I go on 'cause I know it's a matter of pride with the old man, that the old woman setting there can't help what she is, ^{and for} and for Lorie who just might get accepted by the time integration make our way to school really alright, I go because ^{sure and} the old man ^{at the school, he} ^{just set there} ^{pondered}

a key of nails a day in the school house roof, just for me.

Old Man (Count Jackson)
Lorie
Julia
Shirley
Mamma
Mae Amare

could give more dimension
by making it a school paper
what she thought
happened in your life

Count No-account (mention that's what he's called in the story)
Lesson of Your Childhood?
Most Meaningful

Check prices
Carl correct
spelled
Mamma
Mamma

where - for what
what - for what
hair hit
hit

it's
across
while

Mamma
heard
knowed
seen - for saw
crop some
woodstone
winders

Mamma - one the old man's
faded red house
one the bitcher

Notes
he's burnt up one court house
to where nobody can keep
record of
- teacher tells of records
lost in fire

end - Mae Amare boasts
teaching Shirley
to pay work
instead of
work