

exterminator - \* don't <sup>notes</sup> go inside his head  
finding his own way to die through favorite dog  
"the daughter-in-law"  
wood pecker laughing out over the swamp -- stays in woods all night -  
nature

## \* Another recent story

70s Hunting  
Story

He was never one to stay <sup>in</sup> ~~inside~~, he was never one to be kept.  
He gets onto the track & steps around to the dog box or back and the old dog hound whines & ~~rests~~ <sup>whines</sup> the wood slats onto his tail.  
"Hold your horses," he says to the dog and leans on the box.  
"Ain't no rush, I'll know of."

Deepwood, prime coon country. Probably not a fox for twenty miles or more. But that's all right. Old dog likely won't know the difference anyway. Just the run, that's all he wants.  
A wood pecker cackles out over a cypress dew on his right.  
"Hear that?" he says and feels bad for trying to fool the old hound into believing it's a fox or a coon. But the hound is going wild, either from the excitement or his master's voice or the cackle of the wood pecker.

Walt Minor turns & eyes the dog thru the cracks and at eye him back. ~~watch~~ thru the slats: twitchy, rheumy eyes, practically hairless. Not mange, that's for sure, Walt has exhausted every remedy <sup>in the animal</sup> at Barber Drugs, downtown Valdosta. Had the whole house smelly like sulphur & pine tar. The daughter-in-law had a fit. A fit!  
"Ain't crazy about neither one of us," he tells the dog.

The dog whimpers.  
"And we ain't crazy bout her neither, 'Ere me, boy."  
Minor's arthritic knotted fingers work at the plastic coated wire securing the hasp of the dog box. While the old hound flattens himself



on the floor of the box and watch, Wait.

It's infallible, cool & dry in the flat woods, Sun  
going down & moon coming up -- silver in the east &  
gold in the west and up above a grainy sky losing  
its blue hue. Generally, Minor would be out with  
his fox hunting buddies running two dogs all night.  
Big pot of coffee at the camp & the hounds' singing  
out over the woods. Knowing each by voice especially  
this one. Especially One Blow. Raised him from a  
pup. But that was 15 odd years ago, and he's old  
now and all Minor's fox hunting buddies are either  
nearly home or cold in the grave. He's 92 ~~himself~~  
but can still get around. But the daughter in law  
beats him like an unwanted child. Tells his son  
everytime he steps out the door for a leak.

lots of atmosphere - # #  
nature of fresh

The old hound is asleep & the moon is shining  
thru the pines like a ~~by the time~~ Minor gets the  
vice off. He has to shake the old boy by the collar to get  
him up. Sanfury white the handsome old hound, sleek ~~very~~  
skint possum, pours thru the frame wire gate and tries to lurch  
lunge off the tailgate. Already ~~draying~~ howling in that hoarse  
hollow ~~no~~ voice, and Minor cackling out ~~and~~ ~~hanging~~ to the  
collar. Trying to hold him on the tailgate to save their  
last dusk, to make the dog suck in the twilight air & the  
Rat's teeth ringing from here to eternity. "Am? no rush, am? no  
rush. We get all night." The old hound sits with his long tail  
laid out on the tailgate, then stands, claws raking metal  
and his long body wiggling. He smells like carrion. Makes Minor



draw back when he licks his cheek with his <sup>gate</sup> sandpaper, tongue. He unbuttons the collar, still holding it closed, then yanks it free. "Get on, get on," he says and the old dog hops down from the tail gate with his nose to the ground, zigzagging across the bull grass and waxy palmets, heads out thru a stand of golden rod and circles back. Minor still sits on the tail gate, holding the worn leather collar with his name, address & telephone number on it. The address & telephone number he now thinks of as the daughter-in-law's. The dog sniffs around the ground to the driver's side corner back with his nose down till he gets to Minor's <sup>driver</sup> program surgery off the tail gate. Steps underneath the tail gate & his sprawls with his wrinkled face atop his big paws.

"Rest boy," Minor says & laughs. "You ~~was~~ earned it."

# # #

way

~~It is good dark~~

The moon is shining thru the top of an oak when ~~the~~ a pack of coyotes start up yipping <sup>& yodeling</sup> along the river in the east. A sound so shrill over the silent woods that the old hound leaps up & bumps his ~~body~~ <sup>body</sup> guff on the <sup>underside of the</sup> tail gate. Then shoots out beneath Minor's feet and wangles out with his head nose to the ground & his ears perked, vanishing from the circle of moon light & rusty palmettos & gallberry bushes where the oak is struck by moonlight. ~~the~~ Sonorous, hoarse hallowing toward the river with the coyotes lost in their own music



"Go blow!" Minor scoots down the tailgate  
Minor scoots down the tailgate and his knee buckle and  
he crumples in the heavy grass. "Go blow!" he calls  
again, but the ~~horse~~ dog is baying along the riverbank  
and the coyotes are thumping out in the south.

Minor sits & listens & watches the moon behind the  
bent oak branches, ~~where~~ the leaves rustle though there is  
barely any breeze. His new Medicare knee <sup>caps</sup> are  
biting him. Deep throbs & prickles like needles, but  
at least the daughter-in-law has yet to bring him  
a bed pan.

"Go, boy!" he yells & sits & scoots to a pine  
sapping, pulls up & stands like a baby learning to walk.  
He has pine tar on his ~~trucker~~ heavy behind  
pants legs. Then steps toward the back gate,  
him the voice of the hound, he's heard a thousand nights.

He starts the truck & drives forward, along the  
the path road with his head lights beaming over the  
split up grass of the middle street which scratches the  
straddle of the truck. But before he gets to the corner of

of the property he <sup>used to</sup> lease from the farmer, the old horse  
he sees in the rear view mirror the old dog galloping  
along in the red glare of the tail lights.

He stops, gets out open the door, and the old dog  
stands panting & staring up at him.  
"Thought you was after a fox," he says,  
lying & ashamed of lying, but he can't think of another way.



Last night his son had brought a message to her from the daughter-in-law. <sup>from the daughter-in-law</sup> ~~that she~~ <sup>to her apartment</sup> ~~Joe~~ <sup>that is what they now call the bedroom</sup> Blow had to go. <sup>put him to sleep, take him to the net</sup> and have him put to sleep. Minor had opted for a romp in the woods. Now he'd like to go. No doctors, no preaching, no daughter-in-law.

# #

Midnight & he is back in the clearing with the dog trotting behind the truck. He stops, gets out, pats the balding noggin & sits on the tailgate again with the dog <sup>snoring</sup> sleeping underneath. Strange, he'd never heard the dog snore before, or may be he had. Had woken & thought he was the one snoring.

"You & me both Joe Blow. And look at you going to sleep & it's a bond for the nursery home." The moon is riding westward in the stay sky, as he sits on the tailgate, this time swigging his feet to keep his breeches from freezing up. "It's to be every day," said the ~~therapist's~~ daughter-in-law. He hates her ~~has~~ heavy brown hair, the way she blowdries it straight in heavy bangs. Trying to look like those women from the county club who he has done plumbing work for. Don't his own money for. That's what really irks him.

An owl in the oak lets off one lingering yowl & the old hound lumber out into the moonlight, wags his long tail & stretches out on the ground at Minor's feet.



6

Then stands again & looks off barking thru the woods at  
~~the~~ another owl answer.

Minor listens & watches the owl, which turns out to be  
a clump of Spanish moss. The old hound is croaking like  
a bull-frog, but still running, trailing off along to  
river. He gives him 15 minutes, <sup>30</sup>, then  
stands on the road & walks to the truck cab,  
opens the door easy & closes it easy & starts the  
truck. This time leaving the <sup>head</sup> lights off & following  
the moonlight strip of packed green thru the  
woods to the corn patch. Withered wheat tan stalks,  
dried in the bent shapes of their blowing when they  
~~dried~~ died. He stops the truck & waits, staring all  
around & behind for the hound, then eases the  
truck around his land row on curving the side of  
the woods.

His eyes feel sandy, his lids heavy, as he'd  
like to be in his bed, in his apartment, but remember  
that he's usually awake & ready to go but weary  
by the time of night - morning. Waiting for daylight  
and the 6 o'clock weather TV.

He turns the truck, backing toward the woods &  
turning pulley up into the dry rusty corn & heads  
back toward the woods & the clearing, then  
turns on the head lights & any minute expects  
the old hound to show, to come panting toward him



7  
brown pined white with a brown saddle, the  
young Joe Blow he & his fox hunting buddies  
used to listen to all night just for the hell of  
it. Drunk coffee so thick it was like <sup>some butter</sup> jam, <sup>backing</sup>  
~~was~~ Waiting for daylight. Waiting for daylight.  
# # #

Down & dark with the moon behatted  
west woods, almost down, and then  
hears the old hound as yapping in the south  
woods, along the river. He thinks it's Joe  
Blow, but it sounds like any other hound,  
like the thousand hounds he's heard before.  
Before long, <sup>cold</sup> cold & itchy, but no longer sleepy,  
he hears that definite ~~fox~~ hiccupping between bays.  
~~that~~ Joe Blow onto a fox.  
He's certain it's a fox. He drops to the  
ground. His knees buckle.

And suddenly he realizes it's not just the  
hound he's come to set free: ~~of its collar~~.  
Joe Blow's collar is on the ground before  
him in the daylight. Like a soldier  
striper.