

Sartoris WILLIAM FAULKNER

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his ineradicable bones as though in enduring stone, like the creatures of that prehistoric day that were too grandly conceived and executed either to exist very long or to vanish utterly when dead from an earth shaped and furnished for punier things. Old Bayard sat holding the pipe in his hand.

"What are you giving it to me for, after all this time?" he had asked.

"Well, I reckon I've kept it long as Cunnel aimed for me to," old man Falls answered. "A po'house ain't no fitten place for anything of his'n, Bayard. And I'm gwine on ninety-fo' year old."

Later he gathered up his small parcels and left, but still old Bayard sat for some time, the pipe in his hand, rubbing the bowl slowly with his thumb. After a while John Sartoris departed also, withdrawn rather to that place where the peaceful dead contemplate their glamorous frustrations, and old Bayard rose and thrust the pipe into his pocket and took a cigar from the humidor on the mantel. As he struck the match the door across the room opened and a man wearing a green eyeshade entered and approached.

"Simon's here, Colonel," he said in a voice utterly without inflection.

"What?" old Bayard said across the match.

"Simon's come."

"Oh. All right."

The other turned and went out. Old Bayard flung the match into the grate and put the cigar in his pocket and closed his desk and took his black felt hat from the top of it and followed the other from the room. The man in the eveshade and the cashier were busy beyond the grille. Old Bayard stalked on through the lobby and passed through the door with its drawn green shade and emerged upon the street, where Simon in a linen duster and an ancient top hat held the matched geldings glittering in the spring afternoon, at the curb. There was a hitching-post there, which old Bayard retained with a testy disregard of industrial progress, but Simon never used it. Until the door opened and Bayard emerged from behind the drawn shades bearing the words "Bank Closed" in cracked gold leaf Simon retained his seat, the reins in his left hand and the thong of the whip caught smartly back in his right and usually the unvarying and seemingly incombustible fragment of a cigar at a swaggering

angle in his black face, talking to the shining team in a steady, loverlike flow. He spoiled horses. He admired Sartorises and he had for them a warmly protective tenderness, but he loved horses and beneath his hands the sorriest beast bloomed and acquired comeliness like a caressed woman, temperament like an opera star.

Old Bayard closed the door behind him and crossed to the carriage with that stiff erectness which, as a countryman once remarked, if he ever stumbled, would meet itself falling down. One or two passers and a merchant or so in the adjacent doorways saluted him with a sort of florid servility.

Nor did Simon dismount even then. With his race's fine feeling for potential theatrics he drew himself up and arranged the limp folds of the duster, communicating by some means the histrionic moment to the horses so that they too flicked their glittering coats and tossed their leashed heads, and into Simon's wizened black face there came an expression indescribably majestical as he touched his whiphand to his hat-brim. Bayard got into the carriage and Simon clucked to the horses, and the onlookers, halted to admire the momentary drama of the departure, fell behind.

There was something different in Simon's air today, in the very shape of his back and the angle of his hat; he appeared to be bursting with something momentous and illcontained. But he withheld it for the time being and at a dashing, restrained pace he drove among the tethered wagons about the square and swung into a broad street where what Bayard called paupers sped back and forth in automobiles; withheld it until the town was behind and they trotted on across burgeoning countryside cluttered still with gasoline-propelled paupers but at greater intervals, and his employer had scttled back for the changing and peaceful monotony of the four-mile drive. Then Simon checked the team to a more sedate pace and turned his head.

His voice was not particularly robust nor resonant, yet somehow he could talk to old Bayard without difficulty. Others must shout in order to penetrate that wall of deafness within which Bayard lived, yet Simon could and did hold long, rambling conversations with him in that monotonous, rather high singsong of his, particularly while in the

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This was Virginia Du Pre, who came to them two years a wife and seven years a widow at thirty-a slender woman with a delicate replica of the Sartoris nose and that expression of indomitable and utter weariness which all Southern women had learned to wear, bringing with her the clothing in which she stood and a wicker hamper filled with colored glass. It was she who told them of the manner of Bayard Sartoris' death prior to the second battle of Manassas. She had told the story many times since (at eighty she still told it, on occasions usually inopportune) and as she grew older the tale itself grew richer and richer, taking on a mellow splendor like wine; until what had been a harebrained prank of two heedless and reckless boys wild with their own youth had become a gallant and finely tragical focal point to which the history of the race had been raised from out the old miasmic swamps of spiritual sloth by two angels valiantly fallen and strayed, altering the course of human events and purging the souls of men.

That Carolina Bayard had been rather a handful even for Sartorises. Not so much a black sheep as a nuisance, all of whose qualities were positive and unpredictable. His were merry blue eyes, and his rather long hair fell in tawny curls about his temples. His high-colored face wore that expression of frank and high-hearted dullness which you imagine Richard First as wearing before he went Crusading, and once he hunted a pack of fox hounds through a rustic tabernacle in which a Methodist revival was being held; and thirty minutes later (having caught the fox) he returned alone and rode his horse into the ensuing indignation meeting. In a spirit of fun, purely: he believed too firmly in Providence. as all his actions clearly showed, to have any religious convictions whatever. So when Fort Moultrie fell and the governor refused to surrender it, the Sartorises were privately a little glad, for now Bayard would have something to do.

In Virginia, as an A.D.C. of Jeb Stuart's, he found plenty to do. As the A.D.C. rather, for though Stuart had a large military family, they were soldiers trying to win a war and needing sleep occasionally: Bayard Sartoris alone was willing, nay eager, to defer sleep to that time when monotony should return to the world. But this was a holiday.

The war was a godsend to Jeb Stuart also, and shortly thereafter, against the dark and bloody obscurity of the

northern Virginia campaigns, Stuart at thirty and Bayard Sartoris at twenty-three stood briefly like two flaming stars garlanded with Fame's burgeoning laurel and the myrtle and roses of Death, incalculable and sudden as meteors in General Pope's troubled military sky; thrusting upon him like an unwilling garment that notoriety which his skill as a soldier could never have won him. And still in a spirit of pure fun: neither Jeb Stuart nor Bayard Sartoris, as their actions clearly showed, had any political convictions involved at all.

Aunt Jenny told the story first shortly after she came to them. It was Christmas time and they sat before a hickory fire in the rebuilt library—Aunt Jenny with her sad resolute face and John Sartoris bearded and hawklike, and his three children and a guest, a Scottish engineer whom John Sartoris had met in Mexico in '45 and who was now helping him to build his railroad.

Work on the railroad had ceased for the holiday season and John Sartoris and his engineer had ridden in at dusk from the suspended railhead in the hills to the north, and they now sat after supper in the firelight. The sun had set ruddily, leaving the air brittle as thin glass with frost, and presently Joby came in with an armful of firewood. He put a fresh billet on the fire, and in the dry air the flames crackled and snapped, popping in fading embers outward upon the hearth.

"Chris'mus!" Joby exclaimed, with the grave and simple pleasure of his race, prodding at the blazing logs with the Yankee musket barrel which stood in the chimney corner until sparks swirled upward into the dark maw of the chimney in wild golden veils. "Y'ear dat, chilluns?" John Sartoris' eldest daughter was twenty-two and would be married in June, Bayard was twenty, and the younger girl seventeen; and so Aunt Jenny, for all her widowhood, was one of the chilluns too, to Joby. Then he replaced the musket barrel in its niche and fired a long pine sliver at the hearth in order to light the candles. But Aunt Jenny stopped him, and he was gone—a shambling figure in an old formal coat too large for him, stooped and gray with age; and Aunt Jenny, speaking always of Jeb Stuart as Mister Stuart, told her story.

It had to do with an April evening, and coffee. Or the lack of it, rather; and Stuart's military family sat in the

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picket fired his piece from the roadside and dashed into the woods, shouting the alarm. Immediately other muskets exploded on all sides, and from the forest to the right came the sound of a considerable body put suddenly into motion, and behind them in the direction of the invisible knoll a volley crashed. A third officer spurred up and caught Stuart's bridle.

"Sir, sir!" he exclaimed. "What would you do?"

Stuart held his mount rearing, and another volley rang behind them, dribbling off into single scattered reports, crashed again, and the noise to the right swelled nearer. "Let go, Alan," Stuart said. "He is my friend."

But the other clung to the bridle. "It is too late," he cried. "Sartoris can only be killed; you would be captured."

"Forward, sir, I beg," the captive major added. "What is one man to a renewed belief in mankind?"

"Think of Lee, for God's sake, General!" the aide implored. "Forward!" he shouted to the troop, spurring his own mount and dragging the General's onward as a body of Federal horse broke from the woods behind them.

"And so," Aunt Jenny finished, "Mister Stuart went on and Bayard rode back after those anchovies, with all Pope's army shooting at him. He rode yelling, 'Yaaaiiiiih, Yaaaiiiih, come on, boys!' right up the knoll and jumped his horse over the breakfast table and rode it into the wrecked commissary tent, and a cook who was hidden under the mess stuck his arm out and shot Bayard in the back with a derringer.

"Mister Stuart fought his way out and got back home without losing but two men. He always spoke well of Bayard. He said he was a good officer and a fine cavalryman, but that he was too reckless."

They sat quietly for a time in the firelight. The flames leaped and popped on the hearth and sparks soared in wild swirling plumes up the chimney, and Bayard Sartoris' brief career swept like a shooting star across the dark plain of their mutual remembering and suffering, lighting it with a transient glare like a soundless thunder-clap, leaving a sort of radiance when it died. The guest, the Scottish engineer, had sat quietly, listening. After a time he spoke.

"When he rode back, he was no actually certain there were anchovies, was he?"

"The Yankee major said there were," Aunt Jenny replied.

"Ay." The Scotsman pondered again. "And did Muster Stuart return next day, as he said in's note?"

"He went back that afternoon," Aunt Jenny answered, "looking for Bayard." Ashes soft as rosy feathers shaled glowing on to the hearth and faded to the softest gray. John Sartoris leaned forward into the firelight and punched at the blazing logs with the Yankee musket barrel.

"That was the goddamnedest army the world ever saw, I reckon," he said.

"Yes," Aunt Jenny agreed. "And Bayard was the goddamnedest man in it."

"Yes," John Sartoris admitted soberly, "Bayard was wild."

The Scotsman spoke again. "This Muster Stuart, who said your brother was reckless—who was he?"

"He was the cavalry general Jeb Stuart," Aunt Jenny answered. She brooded for a while upon the fire; her pale indomitable face held for a moment a tranquil tenderness. "He had a strange sense of humor," she said. "Nothing ever seemed quite so diverting to him as General Pope in his night-shirt." She dreamed once more on some far-away place beyond the rosy battlements of the embers. "Poor man," she said; then she said quietly, "I danced a valse with him in Baltimore in '58," and her voice was proud and still as banners in the dust.

But the door was closed now, and what light passed through the colored panes was richly solemn. To Bayard's left was his grandson's room, the room in which his grandson's wife and her child had died last October. He stood beside this door for a moment, then he opened it quietly. The blinds were closed and the room had that breathless tranquillity of unoccupation, and he closed the door and tramped on with that heavy-footed obliviousness of the deaf and entered his own bedroom and crashed the door behind him, as was his way of shutting a door.

He sat down and removed his shoes, the shoes that were made to his measure twice a year by a St. Louis house, and in his stockings he went to the window and looked down upon his saddled mare tethered to a mulberry tree in the back vard and a Negro lad lean as a hound, richly static beside

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it. From the kitchen, invisible from this window, Elnora's endless minor ebbed and flowed, unheard by Bayard, upon the lazy scene.

He crossed to the closet and drew out a pair of scarred riding-boots and stamped into them and took a cigar from the humidor on his night table, and he stood for a time with the cold cigar between his teeth. Through the cloth of his pocket his hand had touched the pipe there, and he took it out and looked at it again, and it seemed to him that he could still hear old man Fall's voice in roaring recapitulation: "Cunnel was settin' thar in a cheer, his sock feet propped on the po'ch railin', smokin' this hyer very pipe. Old Louvinia was settin' on the steps, shellin' a bowl of peas fer supper. And a feller was glad to git even peas sometimes, in them days. And you was settin' back again' the post. They wa'n't nobody else thar 'cep' you' aunt, the one 'fo' Miss Jenny come. Cunnel had sont them two gals to Memphis to yo' gran'pappy when he fust went to Virginny with that 'ere regiment that turnt right around and voted him outen the colonelcy. Voted 'im out because he wouldn't be Tom, Dick and Harry with ever' skulkin' camp-robber that come along with a salvaged muskit and claimed to be a sojer. You was about half-grown then, I reckon. How old was you then, Bayard?"

"Fourteen."

"Hev?"

"Fourteen. Do I have to tell you that every time you tell me this damn story?"

"And thar you was a-settin' when they turned in at the gate and come trottin' up the carriage drive.

"Old Louvinia drapped the bowl of peas and let out one squawk, but Cunnel shet her up and told her to run and git his boots and pistols and have 'em ready at the back do', and you lit out ter the barn to saddle that stallion. And when them Yankees rid up and stopped—they stopped right whar that flower bed is now—they wa'n't nobody in sight but Cunnel, a-settin' thar like he never even heerd tell of no Yankees.

"The Yankees they sot thar on the hosses, talkin' 'mongst theyselves if this was the right house or not, and Cunnel settin' thar with his sock feet on the railin', gawkin' at 'em like a hill-billy. The Yankee officer he tole one man to

ride back to the barn and look fer that 'ere stallion, then he says to Cunnel:

"'Say, Johnny, whar do the rebel John Sartoris live?'

"'Lives down the road a piece,' Cunnel says, not battin' a eye even. 'Bout two mile,' he says. 'But you won't find 'im now. He's away fightin' the Yanks agin.'

"'Well, I reckon you better come and show us the way, anyhow,' the Yankee officer says.

"So Cunnel he got up slow and tole 'em to let 'im git his shoes and walkin'-stick, and limped into the house, leavin' 'em settin' thar waitin'.

"Soon's he was out of sight he run. Old Louvinia was waitin' at the back do' with his coat and boots and pistols and a snack of cawn bread. That 'ere other Yankee had rid into the barn, and Cunnel taken the things from Louvinia and wropped 'em up in the coat and started acrost the back yard like he was jest takin' a walk. 'Bout that time the Yankee come to the barn do'.

"'They ain't no stock hyer a-tall,' the Yank says.

"'I reckon not,' Cunnel says. 'Cap'm says fer you to come on back,' he says, goin' on. He could feel that 'ere Yank a-watchin' him, lookin' right 'twixt his shoulder blades whar the bullet would hit. Cunnel says that was the hardest thing he ever done in his life, walkin' on thar acrost that lot with his back to'a'ds that Yankee without breakin' into a run. He was aimin' to'a'ds the corner of the barn, where he could put the house between 'em, and Cunnel says hit seemed like he'd been walkin' a year without gittin' no closer and not darin' to look back. Cunnel says he wa'n't even thinkin' of nothin' 'cep' he was glad the gals wa'n't at home. He says he mever give a thought to you' aunt back thar in the house, because he says she was a fullblood Sartoris and she was a match fer any jest a dozen Yankees.

"Then the Yank hollered at him, but Cunnel kep' right on, not lookin' back nor nothin'. Then the Yank hollered agin and Cunnel says he could hyear the hoss movin' and he decided hit was time to stir his shanks. He made the corner of the barn jest as the Yank shot the fust time, and by the time the Yank got to the corner, he was in the hawglot, tearin' through the jimson weeds to'a'ds the creek whar you was waitin' with the stallion hid in the willers.

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'ere Yankee patrol yellin' up behind, until Cunnel got his boots on. And then he tole you to tell yo' aunt he wouldn't be home fer supper."

"But what are you giving it to me for, after all this time?" he had asked, fingering the pipe, and old man Falls had said a poorhouse was no fit place for it.

"A thing he toted in his pocket and got enjoyment outen, in them days. Hit 'ud be different, I reckon, while we was abuildin' the railroad. He said often enough in them days we was all goin' to be in the po'house by Sat'd'y night. Only I beat him, thar. I got thar fo' he did. Or the cemetery he meant mo' likely, him ridin' up and down the survey with a saddle-bag of money night and day, keepin' jest one cross tie ahead of the po'house, like he said. That 'us when hit changed. When he had to start killin' folks. Them two cyarpet-baggers stirrin' up niggers, that he walked right into the room whar they was a-settin' behind a table with they pistols layin' on the table, and that robber and that other feller he kilt, all with the same dang der'nger. When a feller has to start killin' folks, he 'most always has to keep on killin' 'em. And when he does, he's already dead hisself."

It showed on John Sartoris' brow, the dark shadow of fatality and doom, that night when he sat beneath the candles in the dining-room and turned a wineglass in his fingers while he talked to his son. The railroad was finished, and that day he had been elected to the state legislature after a hard and bitter fight, and doom lay on his brow, and weariness.

"And so," he said, "Redlaw'll kill me tomorrow, for I shall be unarmed. I'm tired of killing men. . . . Pass the wine, Bayard."

And the next day he was dead, whereupon, as though he had but waited for that to release him of the clumsy cluttering of bones and breath, by losing the frustration of his own flesh he could now stiffen and shape that which sprang from him into the fatal semblance of his dream; to be evoked like a genie or a deity by an illiterate old man's tedious reminiscing or by a charred pipe from which even the rank smell of burnt tobacco had long since faded away.

Old Bayard roused himself and went and laid the pipe on his chest of drawers. Then he quitted the room and

tramped heavily down the stairs and out through the back.

The Negro lad waked easily and untethered the mare and held the stirrup. Old Bayard mounted and remembered the cigar at last and fired it. The Negro opened the gate into the lot and trotted on ahead and opened the second gate and let the rider into the field beyond. Bayard rode on, trailing his pungent smoke. From somewhere a ticked setter came up and fell in at the mare's heels.

Elnora stood barelegged on the kitchen floor and soused her mop into the pail and thumped it on the floor again.

Sinner riz fum de moaner's bench, Sinner jump to de penance bench; When de preacher ax 'im whut de reason why, Say, "Preacher got de women jes' de same ez I." Oh, Lawd, oh, Lawd! Dat's whut de matter wid de church today.

2

Simon's destination was a huge brick house set well up to the street. The lot had been the site of a fine old colonial house which stood among magnolias and oaks and flowering shrubs. But the house had burned, and some of the trees had been felled to make room for an architectural garbling so imposingly terrific as to possess a kind of majesty. It was a monument to the frugality (and the mausoleum of the social aspirations of his women) of a hill-man who had moved in from a small settlement called Frenchman's Bend and who, as Miss Jenny Du Pre put it, had built the handsomest house in Frenchman's Bend on the most beautiful lot in Jefferson. The hill-man had stuck it out for two years, during which his womenfolk sat on the veranda all morning in lace-trimmed "boudoir caps" and spent the afternoons in colored silk, riding about town in a rubber-tired surrey; then the hill-man sold his house to a newcomer to the town and took his women back to the country and doubtless set them to work again.

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A number of motor cars ranked along the curb lent a formally festive air to the place, and Simon with his tilted cigar stub wheeled up and drew rein and indulged in a brief, colorful altercation with a Negro sitting at the wheel of a car parked before the hitching-block. "Don't block off no Sartoris ca'iage, black boy," Simon concluded, when the other had moved the motor and permitted him access to the post. "Block off de commonality, ef you wants, but don't intervoke no equipage waitin' on Cunnel er Miss Jenny. Dey won't stan' fer it."

He descended and tethered the horses, and his spirit mollified by the rebuke administered and laved with the beatitude of having gained his own way, Simon paused and examined the motor car with curiosity and no little superciliousness tinged faintly with respectful envy, and spoke affably with its conductor. But not for long, for Simon had sisters in the Lord in this kitchen, and presently he let himself into the yard and followed the gravel driveway around to the back. He could hear the party going on as he passed beneath the windows-that sustained, unintelligible gabbling with which white ladies could surround themselves without effort and which they seemed to consider a necessary (or unavoidable) adjunct to having a good time. The fact that it was a card-party would have seemed neither paradoxical nor astonishing to Simon, for time and much absorbing experience had taught him a fine tolerance of white folks' vagaries and for those of ladies of any color.

The hill-man had built his house so close to the street that the greater part of the original lawn with its fine old trees lay behind it. There were once crape myrtle and syringa and lilac and jasmine bushes without order, and massed honeysuckle on fences and tree trunks; and after the first house had burned, these had taken the place and made of its shaggy informality a mazed and scented jungle loved of mocking-birds and thrushes, where boys and girls lingered on spring and summer nights among drifting fireflies and choiring whippoorwills and usually the liquid tremolo of a screech owl. Then the hill-man had bought it and cut some of the trees in order to build his house near the street after the country fashion, and chopped out the jungle and whitewashed the remaining trees and ran his baru- and hog- and

Miss Jenny found her nephew with two bird dogs in his office. The room was lined with bookcases containing rows of heavy legal tomes bound in dun calf and emanating an atmosphere of dusty and undisturbed meditation, and a miscellany of fiction of the historical-romantic school (all Dumas was there, and the steady progression of the volumes now constituted Bayard's entire reading, and one volume lay always on the night table beside his bed) and a collection of indiscriminate objects-small packets of seed, old rusted spurs and bits and harness buckles, brochures on animal and vegetable diseases, ornate tobacco containers which people had given him on various occasions and anniversaries and which he had never used, inexplicable bits of rock and desiccated roots and grain pods-all collected one at a time and for reasons which had long since escaped his memory, yet preserved just the same. The room contained an enormous closet with a padlocked door, and a big table littered with yet more casual objects, and a locked roll-top desk (keys and locks were an obsession with him), and a sofa and three big leather chairs. This room was always referred to as the office, and Bavard now sat here with his hat on and still in his riding boots, transferring bourbon whisky from a small rotund keg to a silver-stoppered decanter, while the two dogs watched him with majestic gravity.

One of the dogs was quite old and nearly blind. It spent most of the day lying in the sun in the back yard or, during the hot summer day, in the cool dusty obscurity beneath the kitchen. But toward the middle of the afternoon it went around to the front and waited there quietly and gravely until the carriage came up the drive; and when Bayard had descended and entered the house it returned to the back and waited again until Isom led the mare up and Bayard came out and mounted. Then together they spent the afternoon going quietly and unhurriedly about the meadows and fields and woods in their seasonal mutations—the man on his horse and the ticked setter gravely beside him, while the descending evening of their lives drew toward its peaceful close upon the kind land that had bred them both.

The young dog was not yet two years old; his net was too hasty for the sedateness of their society overlong, and though at times he set forth with them or came quartering up, splashed and eager, from somewhere to join them in

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midfield, it was not for long, and soon he must dash away with his tongue flapping and the tense, delicate feathering of his tail in pursuit of the maddening elusive smells with which the world surrounded him and tempted him from every thicket and copse and ravine.

Bayard's boots were wet to the tops and the soles were caked with mud, and he bent with intent preoccupation over his keg and the bottle under the sober curiosity of the dogs. The keg was propped bung-upward in a second chair and he was siphoning the rich brown liquor delicately into the decanter by means of a rubber tube. Miss Jenny entered with her black bonnet still perched on the exact top of her trim white head and the dogs looked up at her, the older with grave dignity, the younger more quickly, tapping his tail on the floor with fawning diffidence. But Bayard didn't raise his head. Miss Jenny closed the door and stared coldly at his boots.

"Your feet are wet," she stated. Still he didn't look up, but held the tube delicately in the bottle-neck while the liquor mounted steadily in the decanter. At times his deafness was very convenient, more convenient than actual, perhaps; but who could know certainly? "You go upstairs and get those boots off," Miss Jenny commanded, raising her voice; "I'll fill the decanter."

But within the serene walled tower of his deafness his imperturbability did not falter until the decanter was full and he pinched the tube and raised it and drained it back into the keg. The older dog had not moved, but the younger one had retreated beyond Bayard, where it lay motionless and alert, its head on its crossed forepaws, watching Miss Jenny with one melting, unwinking eye. Bayard drew the tube from the keg and looked at her for the first time. "What did you say?"

But Miss Jenny returned to the door and opened it and shouted into the hall, eliciting an alarmed response from the kitchen, followed presently by Simon in the flesh. "Go up and get Colonel's slippers," she directed. When she turned into the room again neither Bayard nor the keg was visible, but from the open closet door there protruded the young dog's interested hindquarters and the tense feathering of his barometric tail; then Bayard thrust the dog out of the closet

with his foot and emerged himself and locked the door behind him.

"Has Simon come in yet?" he asked.

"He's coming now," she answered; "I just called him. Sit down and get those wet boots off." At that moment Simon entered with the slippers, and Bayard sat obediently and Simon knelt and drew his boots off under Miss Jenny's martinet eye. "Are his socks dry?" she asked.

"No'm, dey ain't wet," Simon answered. But she bent and felt them herself.

"Here," Bayard said testily, but Miss Jenny ran her hand over both his feet with brusque imperturbability.

"Precious little fault of his if they ain't," she said across the topless wall of his deafness. "And then you have to come along with that fool yarn of yours."

"Section han' seed 'im," Simon repeated stubbornly, thrusting the slippers on Bayard's feet; "I ain't never said I seed him." He stood up and rubbed his hands on his thighs.

Bayard stamped into the slippers. "Bring the toddy fixings, Simon." Then to his aunt, in a tone which he contrived to make casual: "Simon says Bayard got off the train this afternoon." But Miss Jenny was storming at Simon again.

"Come back here and get these boots and set 'em behind the stove," she said. Simon returned and sidled swiftly to the hearth and gathered up the boots. "And take these dogs out of here, too," she added. "Thank the Lord he hasn't thought about bringing his horse in with him." Immediately the old dog came to his feet, and followed by the younger one's diffident alacrity, departed with that same assumed deliberation with which both Bayard and Simon obeyed Miss Jenny's brisk implacability.

"Simon says-"" Bayard repeated.

"Simon says fiddlesticks," Miss Jenny snapped. "Have you lived with Simon sixty years without learning that he don't know the truth when he sees it?" And she followed Simon from the room and on to the kitchen, and while Simon's tall yellow daughter bent over her biscuit board and Simon filled a glass pitcher with fresh water and sliced lemons and set them and a sugar bowl and two tall glasses on a tray, Miss Jenny stood in the doorway and curled Simon's grizzled remaining hair into tighter kinks yet. She had a fine command

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of language at all times, but when her ire was aroused she soared without effort to sublime heights. Hers was a forceful clarity and a colorful simplicity and a bold use of metaphor that Demosthenes would have envied and which even mules comprehended and of whose intent the most obtuse persons remained not long in doubt; and beneath it Simon's head bobbed lower and lower and the fine assump-

Simon's head bobbed lower and lower and the fine assumption of detached preoccupation moulted like feathers from about him, until he caught up the tray and ducked from the room. Miss Jenny's voice followed him, descending easily with a sweeping comprehensiveness that included a warning and a suggestion for future conduct for Simon and Elnora and all their descendants, actual and problematical, for some vears.

"And the next time," she concluded, "you, or any section hand, or brakeman, or delivery boy either, sees or hears anything you think will be of interest to Colonel, you tell me about it first; I'll do all the telling after that." She gave Elnora another glare for good measure and returned to the office, where her nephew was stirring sugar and water carefully in the two glasses.

Simon in a white jacket officiated as butler—doubled in brass, you might say. Only it was not brass, but silver so fine and soft that some of the spoons were worn now almost to paper thinness where fingers in their generations had held them; silver which Simon's grandfather Joby had buried on a time beneath the ammoniac barn floor while Simon, aged three, in a single filthy garment, had looked on with a child's grave interest in the curious game.

An effluvium of his primary calling clung about him always, however, even when he was swept and garnished for church and a little shapeless in a discarded Prince Albert coat of Bayard's; and his every advent into the dining-room with dishes brought with him, and the easy attitudes into which he fell near the sideboard while answering Miss Jenny's abrupt questions or while pursuing some fragmentary conversation which he and Bayard had been engaged in earlier in the day, disseminated, and his exits left behind him, a faint nostalgia of the stables. But tonight he brought the dishes in and set them down and scuttled immediately

back to the kitchen: Simon realized that again he had talked too much.

Miss Jenny, with a shawl of white wool about her shoulders against the evening's coolness, was doing the talking tonight, immersing herself and her nephew in a wealth of trivialities—petty doings and sayings and gossip—a behavior which was not like Miss Jenny at all. She had opinions, and a pithy, savagely humorous way of stating them, but it was very seldom that she descended to gossip. Meanwhile Bayard had shut himself up in that walled tower of his deafness and raised the drawbridge and clashed the portcullis to, where you never knew whether he heard you or not, while his corporeal self ate its supper steadily. Presently they had done, and Miss Jenny rang the little silver bell at her hand and Simon opened the pantry door and received again the cold broadside of her displeasure, and shut the door and lurked behind it until they had left the room.

Bayard lit his cigar in the office and Miss Jenny followed him there and drew her chair to the table beneath the lamp and opened the daily Memphis newspaper. She enjoyed humanity in its more colorful mutations, preferring lively romance to the most impeccable of dun fact, so she took in the more lurid afternoon paper, even though it was yesterday's when it reached her, and read with cold avidity accounts of arson and murder and violent dissolution and adultery; in good time and soon the American scene was to furnish her with diversion in the form of bootleggers' wars, but this was not yet. Her nephew sat beyond the mellow downward pool of the lamp, his feet braced against the corner of the hearth, from which his boot-soles and the bootsoles of John Sartoris before him had long since worn the varnish away, puffing his cigar. He was not reading, and at intervals Miss Jenny glanced above her glasses and across the top of the paper at him. Then she read again, and there was no sound in the room save the sporadic rustling of the page.

After a time he rose, with one of his characteristic plunging movements, and she watched him as he crossed the room and passed through the door and banged it behind him. She read on for a while longer, but her attention had followed the heavy tramp of his feet up the hall, and when this

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ceased she rose and laid the paper aside and followed him to the front door.

The moon had got up beyond the dark eastern wall of hills and it lay without emphasis upon the valley, mounting like a child's balloon behind the oaks and locusts along the drive. Bayard sat with his feet on the veranda rail, in the moonlight. His cigar glowed at special intervals, and a shrill monotone of crickets rose from the immediate grass, and further away, from among the trees, a fairylike piping of young frogs like endless silver small bubbles rising. A thin, sourceless odor of locust drifted up, intangible as fading tobacco-wraiths, and from the rear of the house, up the dark hall, Elnora's voice floated in meaningless minor suspense.

Miss Jenny groped in the darkness beside the door, and from beside the yawning lesser obscurity of the mirror she took Bayard's hat from the hook and carried it out to him and put it in his hand. "Don't sit out here too long, now. It ain't summer yet."

He grunted indistinguishably, but he put the hat on and she turned and went back to the office, and finished the paper and folded it and laid it on the table. She snapped the light off and mounted the dark stairs to her room. The moon shone above the trees at this height and fell in broad silver bars through the eastern windows.

Before turning on the light she crossed to the southern wall and raised a window there, upon the crickets and frogs and somewhere a mocking-bird. Outside the window was a magnolia tree, but it was not in bloom yet, nor had the honeysuckle massed along the garden fence flowered. But this would be soon, and from here she could overlook the garden, could look down upon Cape jasmine and syringa and callacanthus where the moon lay upon their bronze and yet unflowered sleep, and upon other shoots and graftings from the far-away Carolina gardens she had known as a girl.

Just beyond the corner, from the invisible kitchen, Elnora's voice welled in mellow, falling suspense. "All folks talkin' 'bout heaven ain't gwine dar," Elnora sang, and presently she and Simon emerged into the moonlight and took the path to Simon's cabin below the barn. Simon had fired his cigar at last, and the evil smoke of it trailed behind him, fading. But when they had gone the rank pungency of it seemed still to

linger within the sound of the crickets and of the frogs upon the silver air, mingled and blended inextricably with the dying fall of Elnora's voice: "All folks talkin' 'bout heaven ain't gwine dar."

His cigar was cold, and he moved and dug a match from his waistcoat and relit it and braced his feet again upon the railing, and again the drifting sharpness of tobacco lay along the windless currents of the silver air, straying and fading slowly with locust-breaths and the ceaseless fairy reiteration of crickets and frogs. There was a mockingbird somewhere down the valley, and after a while another sang from the magnolia at the corner of the garden fence. An automobile passed along the smooth valley road, slowed for the railway crossing, then sped on. Before the sound of it had died away the whistle of the nine-thirty train drifted down from the hills.

Two long blasts with dissolving echoes, two short following ones, but before it came in sight his cigar was cold again and he sat holding it in his fingers and watched the locomotive drag its string of yellow windows up the valley and into the hills once more, where after a time it whistled again, arrogant and resonant and sad. John Sartoris had sat so on this veranda and watched his two dâily trains emerge from the hills and cross the valley into the hills, with lights and smoke and a noisy simulation of speed. But now the railway belonged to a syndicate and there were more than two trains on it that ran from Lake Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico, completing his dream, while John Sartoris slept among martial cherubim and the useless vainglory of whatever God he did not scorn to recognize.

Old Bayard's cigar was cold again. He sat with it dead in his fingers and watched a tall shape emerge from the lilac bushes beside the garden fence and cross the patchy moonlight toward the veranda. His grandson wore no hat and he came on and mounted the steps and stood with the moonlight bringing the hawklike planes of his face into high relief while his grandfather sat with his dead cigar and looked at him.

"Bayard, son?" old Bayard said. Young Bayard stood in the moonlight. His eyesockets were cavernous shadows.

"I tried to keep him from going up there on that goddam

"Stood there and let him do it, did you, when you could 'a' telephoned Jenny or walked across the square to the bank and got Bayard? You stood there and never opened your mouth, did you?"

"Yes," Narcissa answered. Stood there beside Horace in the slow, intent ring of country people, watching the globe swelling and tugging at its ropes, watched John Sartoris in a faded flannel shirt and corduroy breeches while the carnival man explained the rip-cord and the parachute to him; stood there feeling her breath going out faster than she could draw it in again, and watched the thing lurch into the air with John sitting on a frail trapeze bar swinging beneath it, with eyes she could not close; saw the balloon and people and all swirl slowly upward and then found herself clinging to Horace behind the shelter of a wagon, trying to get her breath.

He landed three miles away in a brier thicket and disengaged the parachute and regained the road and hailed a passing Negro in a wagon. A mile from town they met old Bayard driving furiously in the carriage, and the two vehicles stopped side by side in the road while old Bayard in the one exhausted the accumulate fury of his rage and in the other his grandson sat in his shredded clothes, and on his scratched face that look of one who had gained for an instant a desire so fine that its escape was a purification, not a loss.

The next day, as she was passing a store, he emerged with that abrupt violence which he had in common with his brother, pulling short up to avoid a collision with her.

"Oh, ex— Why, hello," he said. Beneath the crisscrosses of tape his face was merry and bold and wild, and he wore no hat. For a moment she gazed at him with wide, hopeless eyes, then she clapped her hand to her mouth and went swiftly on, almost running.

Then he was gone, with his brother, shut away by the war as two noisy dogs are penned in a kennel far away. Miss Jenny gave her news of them, of the dull, dutiful letters they sent home at sparse intervals; then he was dead—but away beyond the seas, and there was no body to be returned clumsily to earth, and so to her he seemed still to be laughing at that word as he had laughed at all the other mouth-sounds that stood for repose, who had not waited

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dry and rigid embrace yet other ghosts—a fitting place for dead Sartorises to gather and speak among themselves of glamorous and old disastrous days. The unshaded light swung on a single cord from the center of the ceiling. He unknotted it and drew it across to a nail in the wall above a cedar chest and fastened it here, and drew a chair to the chest and sat down.

The chest had not been opened since 1901, when his son John had succumbed to yellow fever and an old Spanish bullet-wound. There had been two occasions since, in July and in October of last year, but the other grandson still possessed quickness and all the incalculable portent of his heritage. So he had forborne for the time being, expecting to be able to kill two birds with one stone, as it were.

The lock was stiff, and he struggled patiently with it for some time. Rust shaled off, rubbed off onto his hands, and he desisted and rose and rummaged about and returned to the chest with a heavy, cast-iron candlestick and hammered the lock free and removed it and raised the lid. From the chest there rose a thin exhilarating odor of cedar, and something else: a scent drily and muskily nostalgic, as of old ashes. The first object was a garment. The brocade was richly hushed, and the fall of fine Mechlin was dustily yellow, pale and textureless as February sunlight. He lifted the garment carefully out. The lace cascaded mellow and pale as spilled wine upon his hands, and he laid it aside and lifted out next a rapier. It was a Toledo, a blade delicate and fine as the prolonged stroke of a violin bow, in a velvet sheath. The sheath was elegant and flamboyant and soiled, and the seams had cracked drily.

Old Bayard held the rapier upon his hands for a while, feeling the balance of it. It was just such an implement as a Sartoris would consider the proper equipment for raising tobacco in a virgin wilderness, it and the scarlet heels and the ruffled wristbands in which he broke the earth and fought his stealthy and simple neighbors.

He laid it aside. Next came a heavy cavalry saber, and a rosewood case containing two dueling pistols with silver mountings and the lean, deceptive delicacy of race-horses, and what old man Falls had called "that 'ere dang der'nger." It was a stubby, evil-looking thing with its three barrels, viciously and coldly utilitarian, and between the other two

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weapons it lay like a cold and deadly insect between two flowers.

He removed next the blue army forage-cap of the 'forties and a small pottery vessel and a Mexican machete, and a long-necked oil-can such as locomotive drivers use. It was of silver, and engraved upon it was the picture of a locomotive with a huge bell-shaped funnel and surrounded by an ornate wreath. Beneath it, the name "Virginia" and the date "August 9, 1873."

He put these aside and with sudden purposefulness he removed the other objects-a frogged and braided coat of Confederate gray and a gown of sprigged muslin scented faintly of lavender and evocative of old formal minuets and drifting honevsuckle among steady candle-flames-and came upon a conglomeration of yellowed papers neatly bound in packets, and at last upon a huge, brass-bound Bible. He lifted this to the edge of the chest and opened it. The paper was brown and mellow with years, and it had a texture like that of slightly moist wood-ashes, as though each page were held intact by its archaic and fading print. He turned the pages carefully back to the fly-leaves. Beginning near the bottom of the final blank page a column of names and dates rose in stark and fading simplicity, growing fainter and fainter where time had lain upon them. At the top they were still legible, as they were at the foot of the preceding page. But halfway up this page they ceased, and from there on the sheet was blank save for the faint, soft mottlings of time and an occasional brownish pen-stroke.

Old Bayard sat for a long time, regarding the stark dissolving apotheosis of his name. Sartorises had derided Time, but Time was not vindictive, being longer than Sartorises. And probably unaware of them. But it was a good gesture, anyway.

"In the nineteenth century," John Sartoris said, "genealogy is poppycock. Particularly in America, where only what a man takes and keeps has any significance and where all of us have a common ancestry and the only house from which we can claim descent with any assurance is the Old Bailey. Yet the man who professes to care nothing about his forebears is only a little less vain than the man who bases all his actions on blood precedent. And I reckon a Sartoris can have a little vanity and poppycock, if he wants it."

Yes, it was a good gesture, and old Bayard sat and mused quietly on the tense he had unwittingly used. Was. Fatality; the augury of a man's destiny peeping out at him from the roadside hedge, if he but recognize it, and again he ran panting through undergrowth while the fading thunder of the smoke-colored stallion swept on in the dusk and the Yankee patrol crashed behind him, crashed fainter and fainter until he crouched with spent, laboring lungs in a brier thicket and heard the pursuit rush on. Then he crawled forth and went to a spring he knew that flowed from the roots of a beech, and as he leaned down to it the final light of day was reflected on to his face, bringing into sharp relief forehead and nose above the cavernous sockets of his eyes and the panting snarl of his teeth, and from the still water there stared back at him, for a sudden moment, a skull.

The unturned corners of man's destiny. Well, heaven, that crowded place, lay just beyond one of them, they claimed; heaven filled with every man's illusion of himself and with the conflicting illusions of him that parade through the minds of other illusions. . . He stirred and sighed quietly, and took out his fountain pen. At the foot of the column he wrote:

"John Sartoris. July 5, 1918."

and beneath that:

"Caroline White Sartoris and son. October 27, 1918."

When the ink was dry he closed the book and replaced it and took the pipe from his pocket and put it in the rosewood case with the dueling pistols and the derringer and replaced the other things and closed the chest and locked it.

Miss Jenny found old Bayard in his tilted chair in the bank door. He looked up at her with a fine assumption of surprise and his deafness seemed more pronounced than usual. But she got him up with cold implacability and led him, still grumbling, down the street where merchants and others spoke to her as to a martial queen, old Bayard stalking along beside her with sullen reluctance.

They turned presently and mounted a narrow stairway

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wart off his face? Will Falls didn't need any telephone to find that out."

"It tells more than that," Dr. Peabody answered. "It tells how Bayard'll get rid of all his troubles, if he keeps on riding in that hellion's automobile."

"Fiddlesticks," Miss Jenny said, "Bayard's a good driver. I never rode with a better one."

"It'll take more'n a good driver to keep this"—he tapped Bayard's chest with his blunt finger—"goin', time that boy whirls that thing around another curve or two like I've seen him do."

"Did you ever hear of a Sartoris dying from a natural cause, like anybody else?" Miss Jenny demanded. "Don't you know that heart ain't going to take Bayard off before his time? You get up from there, and come on with me," she added to her nephew. Bayard buttoned his shirt. Dr. Peabody sat on the sofa and watched him quietly.

"Bayard," he said suddenly, "why don't you stay out of that damn thing?"

"What?"

"If you don't stay out of that car, you ain't goin' to need me nor Will Falls, nor that boy in yonder with all his handboiled razors, neither."

"What business is it of yours?" old Bayard demanded. "By God, can't I break my neck in peace if I want to?" He rose. He was trembling, fumbling at his waistcoat buttons, and Miss Jenny rose also and made to help him, but he put her roughly aside. Dr. Peabody sat quietly, thumping his fat fingers on one fat knee. "I have already outlived my time," old Bayard continued more mildly. "I am the first of my name to see sixty years that I know of. I reckon Old Marster is keeping me for a reliable witness to the extinction of it."

"Now," Miss Jenny said icily, "you've made your speech, and Loosh Peabody has wasted the morning for you, so I reckon we can leave now and let Loosh go out and doctor mules for a while, and you can sit around the rest of the day, being a Sartoris and feeling sorry for yourself. Good morning, Loosh."

"Make him let that place alone, Jenny," Dr. Peabody said. "Ain't you and Will Falls going to cure it for him?"

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Dr. Peabody repeated equably. "It's all right. Just leave it alone."

"We're going to a doctor, that's what we're going to do," Miss Jenny replied. "Come on here."

When the door had closed, he sat motionless and heard them quarreling beyond it. Then the sound of their voices moved on down the corridor toward the stairs, and still quarreling loudly and, on old Bayard's part, with profane emphasis, the voices died away. Then Dr. Peabody lay back on the sofa shaped already to the bulk of him, and with random deliberation he reached a nickel thriller blindly from the stack at the head of the couch.

As they neared the bank Narcissa Benbow came along from the opposite direction, and they met at the door, where he made her a ponderous compliment on her appearance while she stood in her pale dress and shouted her grave voice into his deafness. Then he took his tilted chair, and Miss Jenny followed her into the bank and to the teller's window. There was no one behind the grille at the moment save the bookkeeper. He looked at them briefly and covertly across his shoulder, then slid from his stool and crossed to the window, but without raising his eyes again.

He took Narcissa's check, and while she listened to Miss Jenny's recapitulation of Bayard's and Loosh Peabody's stubborn masculine stupidity she remarked the reddish hair which clothed his arms down to the second joints of his fingers, and remarked with a faint yet distinct distaste, and a little curiosity since it was not particularly warm, the fact that his hands and arms were beaded with perspiration.

Then she made her eyes blank again and took the notes which he pushed under the grille to her and opened her bag. From its blue satin maw the corner of an envelope and some of its superscription peeped suddenly, but she crumpled it quickly from sight and put the money in and closed the bag. They turned away, Miss Jenny still talking, and she paused at the door again, clothed in her still aura of quiet-

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ness, while old Bayard twitted her heavily on imaginary affairs of the heart which furnished the sole theme of conversation between them, shouting serenely at him in return. Then she went on, surrounded by tranquillity like a visible presence or an odor or a sound.

As long as she was in sight the bookkeeper stood at the window. His head was bent and his hand made a series of neat, meaningless figures on the pad beneath it. Then she went on and passed from sight. He moved, and in doing so he found that the pad had adhered to his damp wrist, so that when he moved his arm it came also. Then its own weight freed it and it fell to the floor.

After the bank closed that afternoon Snopes crossed the square and entered a street and approached a square frame building with a double veranda, from which the mournful cacophony of a cheap talking-machine came upon the afternoon. He entered. The music came from the room to the right and as he passed the door he saw a man in a collarless shirt sitting in a chair with his sock feet on another chair, smoking a pipe, the evil reek of which followed him down the hall. The hall smelled of damp, harsh soap, and the linoleum carpet gleamed, still wet. He followed it and approached a sound of steady, savage activity, and came upon a woman in a shapeless gray garment, who ceased mopping and looked at him across her gray shoulder, sweeping her lank hair from her brow with a reddened forearm.

"Evenin', Miz Beard," Snopes said. "Virgil come home yet?"

"He was through here a minute ago," she answered. "If he ain't out front, I reckon his paw sent him on a arr'nd. Mr. Beard's takin' one of his spells in the hip agin. He might 'a' sent Virgil on a arr'nd." Her hair fell lankly across her face again. Again she brushed it aside with a harsh gesture. "You got some mo' work fer him?"

"Yessum. You don't know which-a-way he went?"

"Ef Mr. Beard ain't sont him nowheres he mought be in the back yard. He don't usually go fur away." Again she dragged her lank hair aside; shaped so long to labor, her muscles were restive under inaction. She grasped the mop again.

Snopes went on and stood on the kitchen steps above an

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enclosed space barren of grass and containing a chicken pen, also grassless, in which a few fowls huddled or moved about in forlorn distraction in the dust. On one hand was a small kitchen garden of orderly, tended rows. In the corner of the yard was an outhouse of some sort, of weathered boards.

"Virgil," he said. The yard was desolate with ghosts; ghosts of discouraged weeds, of food in the shape of empty tins, broken boxes and barrels; a pile of stove wood and a chopping-block across which lay an ax whose helve had been mended with rusty wire amateurishly wound. He descended the steps and the chickens raised a discordant clamor, anticipating food.

"Virgil."

Sparrows found sustenance of some sort in the dust among the fowls, but the fowls themselves, perhaps with a foreknowledge of frustration and of doom, huddled back and forth along the wire, discordant and distracted, watching him with predatory, importunate eyes. He was about to turn and reënter the kitchen when the boy appeared silently and innocently from the outhouse, with his straw-colored hair and his bland eyes. His mouth was pale and almost sweet, but secretive at the corners. His chin was negligible. "Hi, Mr. Snopes, You calling me?"

"Yes. If you ain't doing anything special," Snopes answered.

"I ain't," the boy said. They entered the house and passed the room where the woman labored with drab fury. The reek of the pipe, the lugubrious reiteration of the phonograph, filled the hall, and they mounted stairs carpeted also with linoleum fastened to each step by a treacherous sheetiron strip treated to resemble brass and scuffed and scarred by heavy feet. The upper hall was lined by two identical rows of doors. They entered one of these.

The room contained a bed, a chair, a dressing-table, and a wash-stand with a slop-jar beside it. The floor was covered with straw matting, frayed in places. The single light hung unshaded on a greenish-brown cord. Upon the wall above the paper-filled fireplace a framed lithograph of an Indian maiden in immaculate buckskin leaned her naked bosom above a formal moonlit pool of Italian marble. She held a guitar

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come to town. That's the reason I'm 'tending to his business for him. I'll see about that air gun, all right."

The boy opened the door, then he paused again. "They got 'em at Watts' hardware store. Good ones. I'd sure like to have one of 'em. Yes, sir, I sure would."

"Sure, sure," Snopes repeated. "Ourn'll be here tomorrow. You just wait; I'll see you git that gun."

The boy departed. Snopes locked the door, and for a while he stood beside it with his head bent, his hands slowly knotting and writhing together. Then he took up the folded sheet and burned it over the hearth and ground the carbonized ash to dust under his heel. With his knife he cut the address from the top of the first sheet and the signature from the bottom of the second, and folded them and inserted them in a cheap envelope. He sealed this and stamped it, and took out his pen and with his left hand he addressed the envelope in labored printed characters. That night he took it to the station and mailed it on the train.

The next afternoon Virgil Beard killed a mocking-bird. It was singing in the peach tree that grew in the corner of the chicken-yard.

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At times, as Simon puttered about the place during the day, he could look out across the lot and into the pasture and see the carriage horses growing daily shabbier and less prideful with idleness and lack of their daily grooming, or he would pass the carriage motionless in its shed, its tongue propped at an accusing angle, and in the harness room the duster and the top hat gathered slow dust on the nail in the wall, holding too in their mute waiting a patient and questioning uncomplaint. And at times, when he stood shabby and stooped a little with stubborn bewilderment and age, on the veranda with its ancient roses and wistaria and all its spacious and steadfast serenity, and watched Sartorises come and go in a machine a gentleman of his day would have scorned and which any pauper could own and any fool would ride in, it seemed to him that John Sartoris stood be-

side him, with his bearded and hawklike face and an expres-

And as he stood so, with afternoon slanting athwart the southern end of the porch and the heady and myriad odors of the waxing spring and the drowsy humming of insects and the singing of birds steady upon it, Isom within the cool doorway or at the corner of the house would hear his grandfather mumbling in a monotonous singsong in which was incomprehension and petulance and querulousness; and Isom would withdraw to the kitchen where his mother with her placid yellow face and her endless crooning labored steadily.

"Pappy out dar talkin' to Ole Marster again," Isom told her. "Gimme dem cole 'taters, mammy."

"Ain't Miss Jenny got some work fer you dis evenin"?" Elnora demanded, giving him the potatoes.

"No'm. She gone off in de cyar again."

"Hit's de Lawd's blessin' you and her ain't bofe gone in it, like you is whenever Mist' B'ayard'll let you. You git on outen my kitchen, now. I got dis flo' mopped and I don't want it tracked up."

Quite often these days Isom could hear his grandfather talking to John Sartoris as he labored about the stable or the flower beds or the lawn, mumbling away to that arrogant shade which dominated the house and the life that went on there and the whole scene itself, across which the railroad he had built ran punily with distance. But distinct with miniature verisimilitude, as though it were a stage set for the diversion of him whose stubborn dream, flouting him so deviously and cunningly while the dream was impure, had shaped itself fine and clear, now that the dreamer was purged of the grossness of pride with that of flesh.

"Gent'mun equipage," Simon mumbled. He was busy again with his hoe in the salvia bed at the top of the drive. "Ridin' in dat thing, wid a gent'mun's proper equipage goin' ter rack en ruin in de barn." He wasn't thinking of Miss Jenny. It didn't make much difference what women rode in, their menfolks permitting. They only showed off a gentleman's equipage, anyhow; they were but the barometers of his establishment, the glass of his gentility: horses themselves knew it. "Yo' own son, yo' own twin grandson, ridin' right up in yo' face in a contraption like dat," he continued, "and you lettin' 'um do it. You bad ez dey is. You jes' got ter lay down

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tied it on the floor. The other watched him quietly while he poured his glass half full of raw liquor and sloshed a little water into it and tilted it down his throat. "I've been good too damn long," he said aloud, and he fell to talking of the war. Not of combat, but rather of a life peopled by young men like fallen angels, and of a meteoric violence like that of fallen angels, beyond heaven or hell and partaking of both: doomed immortality and immortal doom.

MacCallum sat and listened quietly, drinking his whisky steadily and slowly and without appreciable effect, as though it were milk he drank, and Bayard talked on and presently found himself without surprise eating food. The bottle was now less than half full. The Negro Houston had brought the food in and had his drink, taking it neat and without batting an eye. "Ef I had a cow dat give dat, de calf wouldn't git no milk a-tall," he said, "and I wouldn't never churn. Thanky, Mr. MacCallum, suh."

Then he was out, and Bayard's voice went on, filling the cubbyhole of a room, surmounting the odor of cheap food too quickly cooked and of sharp, spilt whisky with ghosts of a thing high-pitched as a hysteria, like a glare of fallen meteors on the dark retina of the world. Again a light tap at the door, and the proprietor's egg-shaped head and his hot, diffident eyes.

"You gentlemen got everything you want?" he asked, rubbing his hands on his thighs.

"Come and get it," MacCallum said, jerking his head toward the bottle, and the other made himself a toddy in his stale glass and drank it, while Bayard finished his tale of himself and an Australian major and two ladies in the Leicester lounge one evening (the Leicester lounge being out of bounds, and the Anzac lost two teeth and his girl, and Bayard himself got a black eye), watching the narrator with round, melting astonishment.

"Great Savior," he said, "them av'aytors was sure some hell-raisers, wasn't they? Well, I reckon they're wanting me up front again. You got to keep on the jump to make a living, these days." And he scuttled out again.

"I've been good too goddam long," Bayard repeated harshly, watching MacCallum fill the two glasses. "That's the only thing Johnny was ever good for. Kept me from getting in a rut. Bloody rut, with a couple of old women nagging at

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and where dusk was denser and more palpable, Suratt stopped the car and climbed out over the door.

"You fellers set still," he said. "I won't be but a minute. Got to fill that 'ere radiator." They heard him at the rear of the car; then he reappeared with a tin bucket and let himself gingerly down the roadside bank beside the bridge. Water chuckled and murmured beneath the bridge, invisible in the twilight, its murmur burdened with the voice of cricket and frog. Above the willows that marked the course of the stream gnats still spun and whirled, for bull bats appeared from nowhere in long swoops, in mid-swoop vanished, then appeared again swooping against the serene sky, silent as drops of water on a window-pane; swift and noiseless and intent as though their wings were feathered with twilight and with silence.

Suratt scrambled up the bank with his pail and removed the cap and tilted the bucket above the radiator. The moon stood without emphasis overhead; yet a faint shadow of Suratt's head and shoulders fell upon the hood of the car, and upon the pallid planking of the bridge the leaning willow fronds were faintly and delicately penciled in shadow. The last of the water gurgled with faint rumblings into the engine's interior and Suratt replaced the pail and climbed over the blind door. The lights were operated from a generator; he switched these on now. While the car was in low speed, the lights glared to crescendo, but when he let the clutch in they dropped to a wavering glow no more than a luminous shadow.

Night was fully come when they reached town. Across the land the lights on the courthouse clock were like yellow beads above the trees, and upon the green afterglow a column of smoke stood like a balanced plume. Suratt put them out at the restaurant and drove on, and they entered and the proprietor raised his conical head and his round, melting eyes from behind the soda-fountain.

"Great Savior, boy," he exclaimed, "ain't you gone home yet? Doc Peabody's been huntin' you ever since four o'clock, and Miss Jenny drove to town in the carriage, looking for you. You'll kill yourself."

"Get to hell on back yonder, Deacon," Bayard answered, "and bring me and Hub about two dollars' worth of ham and eggs."

Later they returned for the jug in Bayard's car, Bayard and Hub and a third young man, freight agent at the railway station, with three Negroes and a bull fiddle in the rear seat. But they drove no farther than the edge of the field above the house and stopped there while Hub went on afoot down the sandy road toward the barn. The moon stood pale and cold overhead, and on all sides insects shrilled in the dusty undergrowth. In the rear seat the Negroes murmured among themselves.

"Fine night," Mitch, the freight agent, suggested. Bayard made no reply. He smoked moodily, his head closely helmeted in its white bandage. Moon and insects were one, audible and visible, dimensionless and without source.

After a while Hub materialized against the dissolving vagueness of the road, crowned by the silver slant of his hat, and he came up and swung the jug on to the door and removed the stopper. Mitch passed it to Bayard.

"Drink," Bayard said, and Mitch did so. The others drank. "We ain't got nothin' for the niggers to drink out of," Hub said.

"That's so," Mitch agreed. He turned in his seat. "Ain't one of you boys got a cup or something?" The Negroes murmured again, questioning one another in mellow consternation.

"Wait," Bayard said. He got out and lifted the hood and removed the cap from the breather-pipe. "It'll taste a little like oil for a drink or two. But you boys won't notice it after that."

"Naw, suh," the Negroes agreed in chorus. One took the cup and wiped it out with the corner of his coat, and they too drank in turn, with smacking expulsions of breath. Bayard replaced the cap and got in the car.

"Anybody want another right now?" Hub asked, poising the corn cob.

"Give Mitch another," Bayard directed. "He'll have to catch up."

Mitch drank again. Then Bayard took the jug and tilted it. The others watched him respectfully.

"Dam'f he don't drink it," Mitch murmured. "I'd be afraid to hit it so often, if I was you."

"It's my damned head." Bayard lowered the jug and

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"Dey wouldn't let you in heaven, wid likker on yo' breaf and no hat, feller," another said.

"Ef de Lawd don't take no better keer of me dan He done of dat hat, I don't wanter go dar, noways," the first rejoined.

"Mmmmmmm," the second agreed, "when us come down dat 'ere las' hill, dis yere cla'inet almos' blowed clean outen my han', let 'lone my hat."

"And when us jumped over dat 'ere lawg er whutever it wuz back dar," the third one added, "I thought fer a minute dis whole auto'bile done blowed outen my han'."

They drank again. It was high here, and the air moved with grave coolness. On either hand lay a valley filled with silver mist and with whippoorwills; beyond these valleys the silver earth rolled on into the sky. Across it, mournful and far, a dog howled. Bayard's head was as cool and clear as a clapperless bell. Within it that face emerged clearly at last: those two eyes round with grave astonishment, winged serenely by two dark wings of hair. It was that Benbow girl, he said to himself, and he sat for a while, gazing into the sky. The lights on the town clock were steadfast and yellow and unwinking in the dissolving distance, but in all other directions the world rolled away in slumbrous ridges, milkily opaline.

Her appetite was gone at supper, and Aunt Sally Wyatt mouthed her soft prepared food and mumbled querulously at her because she wouldn't eat.

"My mother saw to it that I drank a good cup of bark tea when I come sulking to the table and wouldn't eat," Aunt Sally stated, "but folks nowadays think the good Lord's going to keep 'em well and them lifting no finger."

"I'm all right," Narcissa insisted. "I just don't want any supper."

"That's what you say. Let yourself get down, and Lord knows, I ain't strong enough to wait on you. In my day young folks had more consideration for their elders." She mouthed her food unprettily, querulously and monotonously retrospective, while Narcissa toyed restively with the food she could not eat. Later Aunt Sally continued her monologue while she rocked with her interminable fancy-work on her lap. She would never divulge what it was to be when com-

pleted, nor for whom, and she had been working on it for fifteen years, carrying about with her a shapeless bag of dingy, threadbare brocade containing odds and ends of colored fabric in all possible shapes. She could never bring herself to trim them to any pattern; so she shifted and fitted and mused and fitted and shifted them like pieces of a patient puzzle-picture, trying to fit them to a pattern or create a pattern about them without using her scissors; smoothing her colored scraps with flaccid, putty-colored fingers, shifting and shifting them. From the bosom of her dress the needle Narcissa had threaded for her dangled its spidery skein.

Across the room Narcissa sat with a book. Aunt Sally's voice droned on with querulous interminability while Narcissa read. Suddenly she rose and laid the book down and crossed the room and entered the alcove where her piano sat. But she had not played four bars before her hands crashed in discord, and she shut the piano and went to the telephone.

Miss Jenny thanked her tartly for her solicitude, and dared to say that Bayard was all right: still an active member of the so-called human race, that is, since they had received no official word from the coroner. No, she had heard nothing of him since Loosh Peabody 'phoned her at four o'clock that Bayard was on his way home with a broken head. The broken head she readily believed, but the other part of the message she had put no credence in whatever, having lived with those damn Sartorises eighty years and knowing that home would be the last place in the world a Sartoris with a broken head would ever consider going. No, she was not even interested in his present whereabouts, and she hoped he hadn't injured the horse. Horses were valuable animals.

Narcissa returned to the living-room and explained to Aunt Sally whom she had been talking to and why, and drew a low chair to the lamp and took up her book.

"Well," Aunt Sally said after a time, "if you ain't going to talk any . . ." She fundbled her scraps together and crammed them into the bag. "I thank the Lord sometimes you and Horace ain't any blood of mine, the way you all go on. But if you'd drink it, I don't know who's to get sassaftas for you: I ain't able to, and you wouldn't know it from dog feanel or multein, yourself."

"I'm all right," Narcissa protested.

"Go ahead," Aunt Sally repeated, "get flat on your back, with me and that trifling nigger to take care of you. She ain't wiped off a picture frame in six months, to my certain knowledge. And I've done everything but beg and pray." She rose and said good night and hobbled from the room. Narcissa sat and turned the pages on, hearing the other mount the stairs with measured, laborious tappings of her stick, and for a while longer she sat and turned the pages of her book.

But presently she flung the book away and went to the piano again, but Aunt Sally thumped on the floor overhead with her stick, and she desisted and returned to her book. So it was with actual pleasure that she greeted Dr. Alford a moment later.

"I was passing and heard your piano," he explained. "You haven't stopped?"

She explained that Aunt Sally had gone to bed, and he sat formally and talked to her in his stiff, pedantic way on cold and erudite subjects for two hours. Then he departed and she stood in the door and watched him down the drive. The moon stood overhead; along the drive the cedars in a rigid curve were pointed against the pale, faintly spangled sky.

She returned to the living-room and got her book and turned out the lights and mounted the stairs. Across the hall Aunt Sally snored with genteel placidity, and Narcissa stood for a moment, listening to the homely noise. "I will be glad when Horry gets home," she thought, going on.

She turned on her light and undressed and took her book to bed, where she again held her consciousness submerged deliberately, as you hold a puppy under water until its struggles cease. And after a time her mind surrendered to the book and she read on, pausing from time to time to think warmly of sleep, reading again. And so when the Negroes first blended their instruments beneath the window she paid them only the most perfunctory notice. "Why in the world are those jellybeans serenading me?" she thought with faint amusement, visioning immediately Aunt Sally in her nightcap leaning from a window and shouting them away. And she lay with the book open, seeing upon the spread page the picture she had created while the plaintive rhythm of the strings and clarinet drifted into the open window.

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on ahead to a small garage in which stood a Ford. He backed this out and motioned Bayard forward. The garage was built to the Ford's dimensions and about a third of Bayard's car stuck out the door of it.

"Better'n nothin', though," the marshal said. "Come on." They entered through the kitchen, into the jail-keeper's living-quarters, and Bayard waited in a dark passage until the other found a light. Then he entered a bleak, neat room, containing spare conglomerate furnishings and a few scattered articles of masculine apparel.

"Say," Bayard objected, "aren't you giving me your bed?" "Won't need it befo' mawnin'," the other answered. "You'll be gone, then. Want me to he'p you off with yo' clothes?"

"No. I'm all right." Then, more graciously: "Good night, Buck. And much obliged."

"Good night," the marshal answered.

He closed the door behind him and Bayard removed his coat and shoes and his tie and snapped the light off and lay on the bed. Moonlight seeped into the room impalpably, refracted and sourceless; the night was without any sound. Beyond the window a cornice rose in a succession of shallow steps against the opaline and dimensionless sky. His head was clear and cold; the whisky he had drunk was completely dead. Or rather, it was as though his head were one Bayard who lay on a strange bed and whose alcohol-dulled nerves radiated like threads of ice through that body which he must drag forever about a bleak and barren world with him. "Hell," he said, lying on his back, staring out the window where nothing was to be seen, waiting for sleep, not knowing if it would come or not, not caring a particular damn either way. Nothing to be seen, and the long, long span of a man's natural life. Three score and ten years to drag a stubborn body about the world and cozen its insistent demands. Three score and ten, the Bible said. Seventy years. And he was only twenty-six. Not much more than a third through it. Hell.

At the top of the drive, where it curved away descending again, sat the brick doll's house in which Horace and Narcissa lived, surrounded always by that cool, faintly astringent odor of cedar trees.

It was trimmed with white and it had mullioned casements brought out from England; along the veranda eaves and above the door grew a wistaria vine like heavy tarred rope and thicker than a man's wrist. The lower casements stood open on gently billowing curtains; on the sill you expected to see a scrubbed wooden bowl, or at least an immaculate and supercilious cat. But the window sill held only a wicker work-basket from which, like a drooping poinsettia, spilled an end of patchwork in crimson and white; and in the doorway Aunt Sally, a potty little woman in a lace cap, leaned on a gold-headed ebony walking-stick.

Just as it should be, and Horace turned and looked back at his sister crossing the drive with the parcels he had forgotten again.

He banged and splashed happily in his bathroom, shouting through the door to his sister where she sat on his bed. His discarded khaki lay on a chair, holding yet through long association, in its harsh drab folds, something of that taut and delicate futility of his. On the marble-topped dresser lay the crucible and tubes of his glass-blowing outfit, the first one he had bought, and beside it the vase he had blown on shipboard-a small chaste shape in clear glass, not four inches tall, fragile as a silver lily and incomplete.

"They work in caves," he was shouting through the door, "down flights of stairs underground. You feel water seeping under your foot while you're reaching for the next step; and when you put your hand out to steady yourself against the wall, it's wet when you take it away. It feels just like blood." "Florace!"

"Yes, magnificent. And 'way ahead you see the glow. All of a sudden the tunnel comes glimmering out of nothing; then you see the furnace, with things rising and falling before it, shutting off the light, and the walls go glimmering again. At first they're just shapeless things hunching about. Antic, with shadows on the bloody walls, red shadows. A glare, and black shapes like paper dolls weaving and rising and falling in front of it, like a magic-lantern shutter. And

Glass & Sumpes

then a face comes out, blowing, and other faces sort of swell out of the red dark like painted balloons.

"And the things themselves. Sheerly and tragically beautiful. Like preserved flowers, you know. Macabre and inviolate; purged and purified as bronze, yet fragile as soap bubbles. Sound of pipes crystallized. Flutes and oboes, but mostly reeds. Oaten reeds. Damn it, they bloom like flowers right before your eyes. Midsummer Night's Dream to a salamander." His voice became unintelligible, soaring into measured phrases which she did not recognize, but which from the pitch of his voice she knew to be Milton's archangels in their sonorous plunging ruin.

He emerged at last, in a white shirt and serge trousers, but still borne aloft on his flaming verbal wings, and while his voice chanted in measured syllables she fetched a pair of shoes from the closet, and while she stood holding the shoes in her hands he ceased chanting and touched her face again with his hands after that fashion of a child.

At supper Aunt Sally broke into his staccato babbling: "Did you bring your Snopes back with you?" she asked. This Snopes was a young man, member of a seemingly inexhaustible family which for the last ten years had been moving to town in driblets from a small settlement known as Frenchman's Bend. Flem, the first Snopes, had appeared unheralded one day behind the counter of a small restaurant on a side street, patronized by country folk. With this foothold and like Abraham of old, he brought his blood and legal kin household by household, individual by individual, into town, and established them where they could gain money. Flem himself was presently manager of the city light and water plant, and for the following few years he was a sort of handy man to the municipal government; and three years ago, to old Bayard's profane astonishment and unconcealed annoyance, he became vice president of the Sartoris bank, where already a relation of his was a bookkeeper.

He still retained the restaurant, and the canvas tent in the rear of it, in which he and his wife and baby had passed the first few months of their residence in town; and it served as an alighting-place for incoming Snopeses, from which they spread to small third-rate businesses of various kinds—grocery stores, barbershops (there was one, an invalid of some sort, who operated a second-hand peanut roaster)—

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where they multiplied and flourished. The older residents from their Jeffersonian houses and genteel stores and offices, looked on with amusement at first. But this was long since become something like consternation.

The Snopes to which Aunt Sally referred was named Montgomery Ward, and just before the draft law went into operation in '17 he applied to a recruiting officer in Memphis and was turned down for military service because of his heart. Later, to every one's surprise, particularly that of Horace Benbow's friends, he departed with Horace to a position in the Y.M.C.A. Later still, it was told of him that he had traveled all the way to Memphis on that day when he had offered for service, with a plug of chewing tobacco beneath his left armpit. But he and his patron were already departed when that story got out.

"Did you bring your Snopes back with you?" Aunt Sally asked.

"No," he answered, and his thin, nerve-sick face clouded over with a fine cold distaste. "I was very much disappointed in him. I don't even care to talk about it."

"Anybody could have told you that when you left." Aunt Sally chewed slowly and steadily above her plate. Horace brooded for a moment; his thin hand tightened slowly upon his fork.

"It's individuals like that, parasites----" he began, but his sister interrupted.

"Who cares about an old Snopes, anyway? Besides, it's too late at night to talk about the horrors of war."

Aunt Sally made a moist sound through her food, a sound of vindicated superiority.

"It's the generals they have nowadays," she said. "General Johnston or General Forrest wouldn't have took a Snopes in his army at all." Aunt Sally was no relation whatever. She lived next door but one with two maiden sisters, one younger and one older than she. She had been in and out of the house ever since Horace and Narcissa could remember, having arrogated to herself certain rights in their lives before they could walk; privileges which were never definitely expressed and of which she never availed herself, yet the mutual admission of whose existence she never permitted to fall into abeyance. She would walk into any room in the house unannounced, and she liked to talk tediously and a little

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tactlessly of Horace's and Narcissa's infantile ailments. It was said that she had once "made eyes" at Will Benbow, although she was a woman of thirty-four or -five when Will married; and she still spoke of him with a faintly disparaging possessiveness, and of his wife she always spoke pleasantly too. "Julia was a right sweet-natured girl," she would say.

So when Horace went off to the war Aunt Sally moved over to keep Narcissa company: no other arrangement had. ever occurred to any of the three of them; the fact that Narcissa must have Aunt Sally in the house for an indefinite year or two or three appeared as unavoidable as the fact that Horace must go to the war. Aunt Sally was a good old soul, but she lived much in the past, shutting her mind with a bland finality to anything which had occurred since 1901. For her, time had gone out drawn by horses, and into her stubborn and placid vacuum the squealing of automobile brakes had never penetrated. She had a lot of the crudities which old people are entitled to. She liked the sound of her own voice and she didn't like to be alone at any time, and as she had never got accustomed to the false teeth which she had bought twelve years ago and so never touched them. other than to change weekly the water in which they reposed, she ate unprettily of unprepossessing but easily malleable foods.

Narcissa reached her hand beneath the table and touched her brother's knee again. "I am glad you're home, Horry."

He looked at her quickly, and the cloud faded from his face as suddenly as it had come, and his spirit slipped, like a swimmer into a tideless sea, into the serene constancy of her affection again.

He was a lawyer, principally through a sense of duty to the family tradition, and though he had no particular affinity to it other than a love for printed words, for the dwelling-places of books, he contemplated returning to his musty office with a glow of . . . not eagerness, no: of deep and abiding unreluctance, almost of pleasure. The meaning of peace. Old unchanging days; unwinged perhaps, but undisastrous, too. You don't see it, feel it, save with perspective. Fireflies had not yet come, and the cedars flowed unbroken on either hand down to the street, like a curving ebony wave with rigid unbreaking crests pointed on the sky. Light fell out-

ward from the window, across the porch and on a bed of cannas, hardy, bronzelike—none of your flowerlike fragility, theirs; and within the room Aunt Sally's quavering monotone. Narcissa was there too, beside the lamp with a book, filling the room with her still and constant presence like the odor of jasmine, watching the door through which he had passed; and Horace stood on the veranda with his cold pipe, surrounded by that cool astringency of cedars like another presence. "The meaning of peace," he said to himself once more, releasing the grave words one by one within the cool bell of silence into which he had come at last again, hearing them linger with a dying fall pure as silver and crystal struck lightly together.

"How's Belle?" he asked on the evening of his arrival.

"They're all right," his sister answered. "They have a new car."

"Dare say," Horace agreed with detachment. "The war should certainly have accomplished that much."

Aunt Sally had left them at last and tapped her slow bedward way. Horace stretched his serge legs luxuriously, and for a while he ceased striking matches to his stubborn pipe and sat watching his sister's dark head bent above the magazine upon her knees, lost from lesser and inconstant things. Her hair was smoother than any reposing wings, sweeping with burnished unrebellion to a simple knot low in her neck.

"Belle's a rotten correspondent," he said. "Like all women." She turned a page, without looking up.

"Did you write to her often?"

"It's because they realize that letters are only good to bridge intervals between actions, like the interludes in Shakespeare's plays," he went on, oblivious. "And did you ever know a woman who read Shakespeare without skipping the interludes? Shakespeare himself knew that, so he didn't put any women in the interludes. Let the men bombast to one another's echoes while the ladies are backstage washing the dinner dishes or putting the children to bed."

"I never knew a woman that read Shakespeare at all," Narcissa corrected. "He talks too much."

Horace rose and stood above her and patted her dark head. "O profundity," he said, "you have reduced all wisdom

to a phrase, and measured your sex by the stature of a star."

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dom tar." "Well, they don't," she repeated, raising her face.

"No? Why don't they?" He struck another match to his pipe, watching her across his cupped hands as gravely and with poised eagerness, like a striking bird. "Your Arlens and Sabatinis talk a lot, and nobody ever had more to say and more trouble saying it than old Dreiser."

"But they have secrets," she explained. "Shakespeare doesn't have any secrets. He tells everything."

"I see. Shakespeare had no sense of discrimination and no instinct for reticence. In other words, he wasn't a gentleman," he suggested.

"Yes. . . . That's what I mean."

"And so, to be a gentleman, you must have secrets."

"Oh, you make me tired." She returned to her magazine and he sat beside her on the couch and took her hand in his and stroked it upon his cheek and upon his wild hair.

"It's like walking through a twilit garden," he said. "The flowers you know are all there, in their shifts and with their hair combed out for the night, but you know all of them. So you don't bother 'em, you just walk on and sort of stop and turn over a leaf occasionally, a leaf you hadn't noticed before; perhaps you find a violet under it, or a bluebell or a lightning bug; perhaps only another leaf or a blade of grass. But there's always a drop of dew on it." He continued to stroke her hand upon his face. With her other hand she turned the magazine slowly on, listening to him with fond and serene detachment.

"Did you write to Belle often?" she repeated. "What did you say to her?"

"I wrote what she wanted to read. What all women want in letters. People are really entitled to half of what they think they should have."

"What did you tell her?" Narcissa persisted, turning the pages slowly, her passive hand in his, following the stroking movement of his.

"I told her I was unhappy. Perhaps I was," he added. His sister freed her hand quietly and laid it on the page. He said:

"I admire Belle. She's so cannily stupid. Once I feared her. Perhaps . . . No, I don't. I am immune to destruction: I have a magic. Which is a good sign that I am due for it, say the sages," he added. "But then, acquired wisdom is a dry thing; it has a way of crumbling to dust where a sheer and

blind coursing of stupid sap is impervious." He sat without touching her, in rapt and instantaneous repose. "Not like yours, O Serene," he said, waking again. Then he fell to saying "Dear old Narcy," and again he took her hand. It did not withdraw; neither did it wholly surrender.

"I don't think you ought to say I'm dull so often, Horry," she said.

"Neither do I," he agreed. "But I must take some sort of revenge on perfection."

Later she lay in her dark room. Across the corridor Aunt Sally snored with placid regularity; in the adjoining room Horace lay while that wild, fantastic futility of his voyaged in lonely regions of its own beyond the moon, about meadows nailed with firmamented stars to the ultimate roof of things, where unicorns filled the neighing air with galloping, or grazed or lay supine in golden-hoofed repose.

Horace was seven when she was born. In the background of her sober babyhood were three beings-a lad with a wild. thin face and an unflagging aptitude for tribulation; a darkly gallant shape romantic with smuggled edibles, with strong, hard hands that smelled always of a certain thrilling carbolic soap-a being something like Omnipotence but without awesomeness; and lastly a gentle figure without legs or any inference of locomotion whatever, like a minor shrine, surrounded always by an aura of gentle melancholy and an endless and delicate manipulation of colored silken thread. This last figure was constant with gentle and melancholy unassertion; the second revolved in an orbit which bore it at regular intervals into outer space, then returned it with its strong and jolly virility into her intense world again. But the first she had made her own by a sober and maternal perseverance, and so by the time she was five or six people coerced Horace by threatening to tell Narcissa on him.

Julia Benbow died genteelly when Narcissa was seven, had been removed from their lives as a small sachet of lavender might be removed from a chest of linen, leaving a delicate lingering impalpability, and through the intense maturity of seven and eight and nine she cajoled and commanded the other two. Then Horace was in school at Sewanee and later at Oxford, from which he returned just in time to see Will Benbow join his wife among pointed cedars and carven doves and other serene marble shapes; later Horace was separated

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from her again by a stupid mischancing of human affairs. But now he lay in the adjoining room, voyaging in safe and glittering regions beyond the moon, and she lay in her dark bed, quiet, peaceful, a little too peaceful to sleep.

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He was settled soon and easily into the routine of days between his office and his home. The musty, solemn familiarity of calf-bound and never-violated volumes, on whose dusty bindings prints of Will Benbow's dead fingers might probably yet be found; a little tennis in the afternoons, usually on Harry Mitchell's fine court; cards in the evenings, also with Belle and Harry as a general thing, or again and better still, with the ever-accessible and never-failing magic of printed pages, while his sister sat across the table from him or played softly to herself in the darkened room across the hall. Occasionally men called on her; Horace received them with unfailing courtesy and a little exasperation, and departed soon to tramp about the streets or to read in bed. Dr. Alford came stiffly once or twice a week, and Horace, being somewhat of an amateur casuist, amused himself by blunting delicately feathered metaphysical darts upon the doctor's bland scientific hide for an hour or so; it would not be until then that they realized that Narcissa had not spoken a word for sixty or seventy or eighty minutes. "That's why they come to see you," Horace told her-"for an emotional mudhath."

Aunt Sally had returned home, with her bag of colored scraps and her false teeth, leaving behind her a fixed impalpability of a nebulous but definite obligation discharged at some personal sacrifice, and a faint odor of old female flesh which faded slowly from the premises, lingering yet in unexpected places so that at times Narcissa, waking and lying for a while in the darkness, in the sensuous pleasure of having Horace home again, imagined that she could hear yet, in the dark myriad silence of the house, Aunt Sally's genteel and placid snores.

At times it would be so distinct that she would pause sud-

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denly and speak Aunt Sally's name into an empty room. And sometimes Aunt Sally replied, having availed herself again of her prerogative of coming in at any hour the notion took her, unannounced, to see how they were getting along and to complain querulously of her own household. She was old, too old to react easily to change, and it was hard for her to readjust herself to her sisters' ways again after her long sojourn in a household where every one gave in to her regarding all domestic affairs. At home her elder sister ran things in a capable, shrewish fashion; she and the third sister persisted in treating Aunt Sally like the child she had been sixty-five years ago, whose diet and clothing and hours must be rigorously and pettishly supervised.

"I can't even go to the bathroom in peace," she complained querulously. "I'm a good mind to pack up and move back over here and let 'em get along the best they can." She rocked fretfully in the chair which by unspoken agreement was never disputed her, looking about the room with bleared, protesting old eyes. "That nigger don't half clean up, since I left. That furniture, now . . . a damp cloth . . ."

"I wish you would take her back," Miss Sophia, the elder sister, told Narcissa. "She's got so crochety since she's been with you that there's no living with her. What's this I hear Horace has taken up—making glassware?"

His proper crucibles and retorts had arrived intact. At first he had insisted on using the cellar, clearing out the lawn mower and the garden tools and all the accumulate impedimenta, and walling up the windows so as to make a dungeon of it. But Narcissa had finally persuaded him upon the upper floor of the garage and here he had set up his furnace and had set fire to the building once and had had four mishaps and produced one almost perfect vase of clear amber, larger, more richly and chastely serene, which he kept always on his night table and called by his sister's name in the intervals of apostrophizing both of them impartially in his moments of rhapsody over the realization of the meaning of peace and the unblemished attainment of it, as "Thou still unravished bride of quietness."

Bareheaded, in flannels and a blue jacket with his Oxford club insignia embroidered on the pocket and his racket under his arm, Horace passed on around the house, and the court

came into view with its two occupants in fluid violent action. Beneath an arcade of white pilasters and vine-hung beams, Belle, surrounded by the fragile, harmonious impedimenta of the moment, was like a butterfly. Two sat with her, in bright relief against the dark foliage of a crape myrtle not yet in flower. The other woman (the third member of the group was a young girl in white, with a grave molasses bang, and a tennis racket across her knees) spoke to him, and Belle greeted him with a sort of languid possessive desolation. Her hand was warm, prehensile, like mercury in his palm exploring softly, with delicate bones and petulant scented flesh. Her eyes were like hothouse grapes and her mouth was redly mobile, rich with discontent.

She had lost Meloney, she told him.

"Meloney saw through your gentility," Horace said. "You grew careless, probably. Your elegance is much inferior to Meloney's. You surely didn't expect to always deceive any one who can lend as much rigid discomfort to the function of eating and drinking as Meloney could, did you? Or has she got married some more?"

"She's gone in business," Belle answered fretfully. "A beauty shop. And why, I can't for the life of me see. Those things never do last, here. Can you imagine Jefferson women supporting a beauty shop, with the exception of us three? Mrs. Marders and I might; I'm sure we need it, but what use has Frankie for one?"

"What seems curious to me," the other woman said, "is where the money came from. People thought that perhaps you had given it to her, Belle."

"Since when have I been a public benefactor?" Belle said coldly. Horace grinned faintly. Mrs. Marders said:

"Now, Belle, we all know how kind-hearted you are; don't be modest."

"I said a public benefactor," Belle repeated. Horace said quickly:

"Well, Harry would swap a handmaiden for an cx, any day. At least, he can save a lot of wear and tear on his cellar, not having to counteract your tea in a lot of casual masculine tummies. I suppose there'll be no more tea out here, will there?" he added.

"Don't be silly," Belle said.

Horace said: "I realize now that it is not tennis that I

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come here for, but for the incalculable amount of uncomfortable superiority I always feel when Meloney serves me tea... I saw your daughter as I came along."

"She's around somewhere, I suppose," Belle agreed indifferently. "You haven't had your hair cut yet," she stated. "Why is it that men have no sense about barbers?" she said generally. The older woman watched Belle and Horace brightly, coldly, across her two flaccid chins. The young girl sat quietly in her simple, virginal white, her racket on her lap and one brown hand lying upon it like a sleeping tan puppy. She was watching Horace with sober interest but without rudeness, as children do. "They either won't go to the barber at all, or they insist on having their heads all gummed up with pomade and things," Belle added.

"Horace is a poet," the other woman said. Her flesh draped loosely from her cheekbones like rich, slightly soiled velvet; her eyes were like the eyes of an old turkey, predatory, unwinking; a little obscene. "Poets must be excused for what they do. You should remember that, Belle."

Horace bowed toward her. "Your race never fails in tact, Belle," he said. "Mrs. Marders is one of the few people I know who give the law profession its true evaluation."

"It's like any other business, I suppose," Belle said. "You're late today. Why didn't Narcissa come?"

"I mean, dubbing me a poet," Horace explained. "The law, like poetry, is the final resort of the lame, the halt, the imbecile, and the blind. I dare say Caesar invented the law business to protect himself against poets."

"You're so clever," Belle said.

The young girl spoke suddenly: "Why do you bother about what men put on their hair, Miss Belle? Mr. Mitchell's bald."

The other woman laughed, unctuously, steadily, watching them with her lidless unlaughing eyes. She watched Belle and Horace and still laughed steadily, brightly and cold. "Out of the mouths of babes——" "she said. The young girl glanced from one to another with her clear, sober eyes. She rose.

"I guess I'll see if I can get a set now," she said.

Horace moved also. "Let's you and I----" he began. Without turning her head Belle touched him with her hand.

"Sit down, Frankie," she commanded. "They haven't finished the game yet. You shouldn't laugh so much on an

He obeyed; she on the piano bench was in half shadow. Twilight was almost accomplished; only the line of her bent head and her back, tragic and still, making him feel young again. We do turn corners upon ourselves, like suspicious old ladies spying on servants, Horace thought. No, like boys trying to head off a parade. "There's always divorce," he said.

"To marry again?" Her hands trailed off into chords; merged, faded again into a minor in one hand. Overhead Harry moved with his heavy staccato tread, shaking the house. "You'd make a rotten husband."

"I won't as long as I'm not married," Horace answered. She said, "Come here," and he went to her, and in the dusk she was again tragic and young and familiar with a haunting sense of loss, and he knew the sad fecundity of the world and time's hopeful unillusion that fools itself. "I want to have your child, Horace," she said, and then her own child came up the hall and stood diffidently in the door.

For a moment Belle was an animal awkward and mad with fear. She surged away from him in a mad, spurning movement; her hands crashed on the keys as she controlled her instinctive violent escape that left in the dusk a mindless protective antagonism, pervading, in steady cumulate waves, directed at Horace as well.

"Come in, Titania," Horace said.

The little girl stood diffidently in silhouette. Belle's voice was sharp with relief. "Well, what do you want? Sit over there," she hissed at Horace. "What do you want, Belle?" Horace drew away a little, but without rising.

"I've got a new story to tell you, soon," he said. But little Belle stood yet, as though she had not heard, and her mother said:

"Go on and play, Belle. Why did you come in the house? It isn't suppertime yet."

"Everybody's gone home," she answered. "I haven't got anybody to play with."

"Go to the kitchen and talk to Rachel, then," Belle said. She struck the keys again, harshly. "You worry me to death, hanging around the house." The little girl stood for a moment longer; then she turned obediently and went away. "Sit over there," Belle repeated. Horace resumed his chair and Belle played again, loudly and swiftly, with cold hysterical skill. Overhead Harry thumped again across the floor;

persuaded old Bayard to buy: for the time being he had become almost civilized again. He went to town only occasionally now, and often on horseback, and all in all his days had become so usefully innocuous that both his aunt and his grandfather were growing a little nervously anticipatory.

"Mark my words," Miss Jenny told Narcissa on the day she drove out again, "he's storing up devilment that's going to burst loose all at once, some day. And then there'll be hell to pay. Lord knows what it'll be-maybe he and Isom will take his car and that tractor and hold a steeple-chase with 'em. . . . What did you come out for? Got another letter?"

"I've got several more," Narcissa answered lightly. "I'm saving them until I get enough for a book; then I'll bring them all out for you to read." Miss Jenny sat opposite her, erect as a crack guardsman, with that cold briskness of hers that caused agents and strangers to stumble through their errands with premonitions of failure before they began. The guest sat motionless, her limp straw hat on her knees. "I just came to see you," she added, and for a moment her face held such grave and still despair that Miss Jenny sat more erect yet and stared at her guest with her piercing gray eyes.

"Why, what is it, child? Did the man walk into your house?"

"No, no." The look was gone, but still Miss Jenny watched her with those keen old eyes that seemed to see so much more than you thought-or wished. "Shall I play a while? It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

"Well," Miss Jenny agreed, "if you want to." There was dust on the piano. Narcissa opened it with a fine gesture. "If you'll let me get a cloth-"

"Here, lemme dust it." Miss Jenny said, and she caught up her skirt by the hem and mopped the keyboard violently. "There, that'll do." Then she drew her chair from behind the instrument and seated herself. She still watched the other's profile with speculation and a little curiosity, but presently the old tunes stirred her memory again, and in a while her eyes softened, and the other and the trouble that had shown momentarily in her face were lost in Miss Jenny's own vanquished and abiding dead days, and it was some time before she realized that Narcissa was weeping quietly while she played.

Then he would seek her through the house, and cross the drive and descend the lawn in the sunny afternoon to where she sat in the white dresses he loved beneath the oak, into which a mocking-bird came each afternoon to sing, bringing her the result of his latest venture in glass-blowing. He had five now, in different colors and all nearly perfect, and each of them had a name. And as he finished them and while they were scarce cooled, he must bring them across the lawn to where she sat with a book or with a startled caller perhaps-in his stained disheveled clothes and his sooty hands in which the vase lay demure and fragile as a bubble, and with his face blackened too with smoke and a little mad, passionate and fine and austere.

Barran 4 For a time the earth held him in a hiatus that might have been called contentment. He was up at sunrise, planting things in the ground and watching them grow and tending them; he cursed and harried niggers and mules into motion and kept them there, and put the grist mill into running shape and taught Caspey to drive the tractor, and came in at mealtimes and at night smelling of machine oil and of stables and of the earth, and went to bed with grateful muscles and with the sober rhythms of the earth in his body and so to sleep. But he still waked at times in the peaceful darkness of his room and without previous warning, tense and sweating with old terror. Then, momentarily, the world was laid away and he was a trapped beast in the high blue, mad for life, trapped in the very cunning fabric that had betraved him who had dared chance too much, and he thought again if, when the bullet found you, you could only crash upward, burst; anything but earth. Not death, no: it was the crash you had to live through so many times before you struck that filled your throat with vomit.

But his days were filled, at least, and he discovered pride again. Nowadays he drove the car into town to fetch his grandfather from habit alone, and though he still considered forty-five miles an hour merely cruising speed, he no longer

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took cold and fiendish pleasure in turning curves on two wheels or detaching mules from wagons by striking the whiffletrees with his bumper in passing. Old Bayard still insisted on riding with him when he must ride, but with freer breath, and once he aired to Miss Jenny his growing belief that at last young Bayard had outworn his seeking for violent destruction.

Miss Jenny, being a true optimist—that is, expecting the worst at all times and so being daily agreeably surprised promptly disillusioned him. Meanwhile she made young Bayard drink plenty of milk and otherwise superintended his diet and hours in her martinetish way, and at times she entered his room at night and sat for a while beside the bed where he slept.

Nevertheless young Bayard improved in his ways. Without being aware of the progress of it he had become submerged in a monotony of days, had been snared by a rhythm of activities repeated and repeated until his muscles grew so familiar with them as to get his body through the days without assistance from him at all. He had been so neatly tricked by earth, that ancient Delilah, that he was not aware that his locks were shorn, was not aware that Miss Jenny and old Bayard were wondering how long it would be before they grew out again. "He needs a wife," was Miss Jenny's thought; "then maybe he'll stay sheared. A young person to worry with him," she said to herself; "Bayard's too old, and I've got too much to do to worry with the long devil."

He saw Narcissa about the house now and then, sometimes at the table these days, and he still felt her shrinking and her distaste, and at times Miss Jenny sat watching the two of them with a sort of speculation and an exasperation with their seeming obliviousness of one another. "He treats her like a dog would treat a cut-glass pitcher, and she looks at him like a cut-glass pitcher would look at a dog," she told herself.

Then sowing-time was over and it was summer, and he found himself with nothing to do. It was like coming dazed out of sleep, out of the warm, sunny valleys where people lived into a region where cold peaks of savage despair stood bleakly above the lost valleys, among black and savage stars.

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she stopped and leaned against it, throttling her laughter and her trembling. Then she entered the room, where Miss Jenny stood beside the bed, watching her.

There was a sickish-sweet lingering of ether in the room, and she approached the bed blindly and stood beside it with her hidden clenched hands. Bayard's head was pallid and calm, like a chiseled mask brushed lightly over with his spent violence, and he was watching her, and for a while she gazed at him; and Miss Jenny and the room and all, swam away.

"You beast, you beast," she cried thinly, "why must you always do these things where I've got to see you?"

"I didn't know you were there," Bayard answered mildly, with weak astonishment.

Every few days, by Miss Jenny's request, she came out and sat beside his bed and read to him. He cared nothing at all about books; it is doubtful if he had ever read a book on his own initiative, but he would lie motionless in his cast while her grave contralto voice went on and on in the quiet room. Sometimes he tried to talk to her, but she ignored his attempts and read on; if he persisted, she went away and left him. So he soon learned to lie, usually with his eyes closed, voyaging alone in the bleak and barren regions of his despair, while her voice flowed on and on above the remoter sounds that came up to them -Miss Jenny scolding Isom or Simon downstairs or in the garden, the twittering of birds in the tree just beyond the window, the ceaseless groaning of the water pump below the barn. At times she would cease and look at him and find that he was peacefully sleeping.

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Old man Falls came through the lush green of early June, came into town through the yet horizontal sunlight of morning, and in his dusty, neat overalls he now sat opposite old Bayard in immaculate linen and a geranium like a merry wound. The room was cool and still, with the clear morning

light and the casual dust of the Negro janitor's infrequent disturbing. Now that old Bayard was aging and what with the deaf tenor of his stiffening ways, he was showing more and more a preference for surrounding himself with things of a like nature; showing an incredible aptitude for choosing servants who shaped their days to his in a sort of pottering and hopeless futility. The janitor, who dubbed old Bayard General, and whom old Bayard, and the other clients for whom he performed seemingly interminable duties of a slovenly and minor nature, addressed as Doctor Jones, was one of these. He was black and stooped with guerulousness and age, and he took advantage of every one who would permit him, and old Bayard swore at him all the time he was around and allowed him to steal his tobacco and the bank's winter supply of coal by the scuttleful and peddle it to other Negroes.

The window behind which old Bayard and his caller sat gave upon a vacant lot of rubbish and dusty weeds. It was bounded by weathered rears of sundry one-story board buildings in which small businesses—repair- and junk-shops and such—had their lowly and ofttimes anonymous being. The lot itself was used by day by country people as a depot for their teams. Already some of these were tethered somnolent and ruminant there, and about the stale ammoniac droppings of their patient generations sparrows swirled in garrulous clouds, or pigeons slanted with sounds like rusty shutters and strode and preened in burnished and predatory pomposity, crooning among themselves with guttural unemphasis.

Old man Falls sat on the opposite side of the trashfilled fireplace, mopping his face with a clean blue bandana.

"It's my damned old legs," he roared, faintly apologetic. "Used to be I'd walk twelve-fifteen mile to a picnic or a singin' with less study than what that 'ere little old three mile into town gives me now." He mopped the handkerchief about that face of his, browned and cheerful these many years with the simple and abounding earth. "Looks like they're fixin' to give out on me, and I ain't but ninetythree, neither." He held his parcel in his other hand, but he continued to mop his face, making no motion to open it.

"Why didn't you wait on the road until a wagon came along?" Old Bayard shouted. "Always some damn feller with a fieldful of weeds coming to town."

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"I reckon I mought," the other agreed. "But gittin' here so quick would sp'ile my holiday. I ain't like you town folks. I ain't got so much time I kin hurry it." He stowed the handkerchief away and rose and laid his parcel carefully on the mantel, and from his shirt pocket he produced a small object wrapped in a clean, frayed rag. Beneath his tedious and unhurried fingers there emerged a tin snuff-box polished long since to the dull, soft sheen of silver by handling and age. Old Bayard sat and watched, watched quietly as the other removed the cap of the box and put this, too, carefully aside.

"Now, turn yo' face up to the light," old man Falls directed.

"Loosh Peabody says that stuff will give me blood-poisoning, Will."

The other continued his slow preparations, his blue innocent eyes raptly preoccupied. "Loosh Peabody never said that," he corrected quietly. "One of them young doctors told you that, Bayard. Lean yo' face to the light." Old Bayard sat tautly back in his chair, his hands on the arms of it, watching the other with his piercing old eyes soberly, a little wistfully; eyes filled with unnamable things, like the eyes of old lions, and intent.

Old man Falls poised a dark gob of his ointment on one finger and set the box carefully on his vacated chair, and put his hand on old Bayard's face. But old Bayard still resisted, though passively, watching him with unutterable things in his eyes. Old man Falls drew his face firmly and gently into the light from the window.

"Come on here. I ain't young enough to waste time hurtin' folks. Hold still, now, so I won't spot yo' face up. My hand ain't steady enough to lift a rifle-ball offen a hot stove-led no mo'."

Bayard submitted then, and old man Falls patted the salve on to the spot with small deft touches. Then he took the bit of cloth and removed the surplus from Bayard's face and wiped his fingers and dropped the rag onto the hearth and knelt stiffly and touched a match to it. "We allus do that," he explained. "My granny got that 'ere from a Choctow woman nigh a hundred and thutty year ago. Ain't none of us never told what hit air, nor left no after-trace." He rose stiffly and dusted his knees. He recapped the box

with the same unhurried care and put it away, and picked up his parcel from the mantel and resumed his chair.

"Hit'll turn black tomorrer, and long's hit's black, hit's workin'. Don't put no water on yo' face befo' mawnin', and I'll come in again in ten days and dose hit again, and on the"—he mused a moment, counting slowly on his gnarled fingers; his lips moved, but with no sound—"the ninth day of July, hit'll drap off. And don't you let Miss Jenny nor none of them doctors worry you about hit."

He sat with his knees together. The parcel lay on his knees and he now opened it after the ancient laborious ritual, picking patiently at the pink knot until a younger person would have screamed at him. Old Bayard merely lit a cigar and propped his feet against the fireplace, and in good time old man Falls solved the knot and removed the string and laid it across his chair-arm. It fell to the floor and he bent and fumbled it into his blunt fingers and laid it again across the chair-arm and watched it a moment lest it fall again; then he opened the parcel. First was his carton of tobacco, and he removed a plug and sniffed it, turned it in his hand and sniffed it again. But without biting into it he laid it and its fellows aside and delved yet further. He spread open the throat of the resulting paper bag, and his innocent boy's eyes gloated soberly into it.

"I'll declare," he said, "sometimes I'm right ashamed for havin' sech a consarned sweet tooth. Hit don't give me no rest a-tall." Still carefully guarding the other objects on his knees, he tilted the sack and shook two or three of the striped, shrimplike things into his palm, and returned all but one, which he put in his mouth. "I'm a-feard now I'll be losin' my teeth some day and I'll have to start gummin' 'em or eatin' soft ones. I never did relish soft candy." His leathery cheek bulged slightly with slow regularity like a respiration. He peered into the sack again, and he sat weighing it in his hand.

"They was times back in sixty-three and -fo' when a feller could 'a' bought a section of land and a couple of niggers with this here bag of candy. Lots of times I mind, with ever'thing goin' agin us like, and sugar and cawfee gone and food sca'ce, eatin' stole cawn when they was any to steal, and ditch weeds ef they wa'n't; bivouackin' at night in the rain, more'n like . .." His voice trailed away among

ancient phantoms of the soul's and body's fortitudes, in those regions of glamorous and useless striving where such ghosts abide. He chuckled and mouthed his peppermint again.

"I mind that day we was a-dodgin' around Grant's army, headin' nawth. Grant was at Grenada then, and Cunnel had rousted us boys out and we taken hoss and jined Van Dorn down that-a-way. That was when Cunnel had that 'ere silver stallion. Grant was still at Grenada, but Van Dorn lit out one day, headin' nawth. Why, us boys didn't know. Cunnel mought have knowed, but he never told us. Not that we keered much, long's we was headin' to'a'ds home.

"So our boys was ridin' along to ourselves, goin' to jine up with the balance of 'em later. Leastways the rest of 'em thought we was goin' to jine 'em, But Cunnel never had no idea of doin' that; his cawn hadn't been laid by yit, and he was goin' home fer a spell. We wa'n't runnin' away," he explained. "We knowed Van Dorn could handle 'em all right fer a week or two. He usually done it. He was a putty good man," old man Falls said, "a putty good man."

"They were all pretty good men in those days," old Bayard agreed. "But you damn fellers quit fighting and went home too often."

"Well," old man Falls rejoined defensively, "even ef the hull country's overrun with bears, a feller can't hunt bears all the time. He's got to quit once in a while, ef hit's only to rest up the dawgs and hosses. But I reckon them dawgs and hosses could stay on the trail long as any," he added with sober pride. "'Course ever'body couldn't keep up with that 'ere mist-colored stallion. They wasn't but one animal in the Confedrit army could tech him—that last hoss Zeb Fothergill fotch back outen one of Sherman's cavalry pickets on his last trip into Tennessee.

"Nobody never did know what Zeb done on them trips of hisn. Cunnel claimed hit was jest to steal hosses. But he never got back with less 'en one. One time he come back with seven of the orneriest critters that ever walked, I reckon. He tried to swap 'em fer meat and cawn-meal, but wouldn't nobody have 'em. Then he tried to give 'em to the army, but even the army wouldn't have 'em. So he finally turned 'em loose and requisitioned to Joe Johnston's haidquarters fer ten hosses sold to Forrest's cavalry. I don't know ef he ever got air answer. Nate Forrest wouldn't 'a' had them hosses. I

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feller ggers with gone ny to night mong doubt ef they'd even 'a' et 'em in Vicksburg. . . . I never did put no big reliability in Zeb Fothergill, him comin' and goin' by hisself like he done. But he knowed hosses, and he usually fotch a good 'un home ever' time he went away to'a'ds the war. But he never got another'n like this befo'."

The bulge was gone from his cheek, and he produced his pocket knife and cut a neat segment from his plug of tobacco and lipped it from the knife-blade. Then he rewrapped his parcel and tied the string about it. The ash of old Bayard's cigar trembled delicately about its glowing heart, but did not yet fall.

Old man Falls spat neatly and brownly into the cold fireplace. "That day we was in Calhoun county," he continued. "Hit was as putty a summer mawnin' as you ever see; men and hosses rested and fed and feelin' peart, trottin' along the road through the woods and fields whar birds was a-singin' and young rabbits lopin' acrost the road. Cunnel and Zeb was ridin' along side by side on them two hosses, Cunnel on Jupiter and Zeb on that sorrel two-yearold, and they was a-braggin' as usual. We all knowed Cunnel's Jupiter, but Zeb kep' a-contendin' that he wouldn't take no man's dust. The road was putty straight across the bottom to'a'ds the river and Zeb kep' a-aggin' the Cunnel fer a race, until Cunnel says 'All right.' He told the boys to come on and him and Zeb would wait fer us at the river bridge 'bout fo' mile ahead, and him and Zeb lined up and lit out.

"Them hosses was the puttiest livin' things I ever see. They went off together like two hawks, neck and neck. They was outen sight in no time, with dust swirlin' behind, but we could foller 'em fer a ways by the dust they left, watchin' it kind of suckin' on down the road like one of these here ottomobiles was in the middle of it. When they come to whar the road drapped down to the river, Cunnel had Zeb beat by about three hundred yards. Thar was a spring-branch jest under the ridge, and when Cunnel sailed over the rise, thar was a comp'ny of Yankee cavalry with their hosses picketed and their muskets stacked, eatin' dinner by the spring. Cunnel says they was a-settin' thar gapin' at the rise when he come over hit, holdin' cups of cawfee and hunks of bread in their hands and their muskets stacked about fo'ty foot away, buggin' their eyes at him.

"It was too late fer him to turn back, anyhow, but I don't

reckon he would have ef they'd been time. He jest spurred down the ridge and rid in amongst 'em, scatterin' cook-fires and guns and men, shoutin', 'Surround 'em, boys! Ef you move, you air dead men.' One or two of 'em made to break away, but Cunnel drawed his pistols and let 'em off, and they come back and scrouged in amongst the others, and thar they set, still a-holdin' their dinner, when Zeb come up. And that was the way we found 'em when we got thar ten minutes later." Old man Falls spat again, neatly and brownly, and he chuckled. His eyes shone like periwinkles. "That cawfee was sho' mighty fine," he added.

"And thar we was, with a passel of prisoners we didn't have no use fer. We held 'em all that day and et their grub; and when night come we taken and throwed their muskets into the branch and taken their ammunition and the rest of the grub and put a gyard on their hosses; then the rest of us laid down. And all that night we laid thar in them fine Yankee blankets, listenin' to them prisoners sneakin' away one at a time, slippin' down the bank into the branch and wading off. Time to time one would slip er make a splash er somethin'; then they'd all git right still fer a spell. But putty soon we'd hear 'em at it again, crawlin' through the bushes to'a'ds the water, and us layin' thar with blanketaidges held agin our faces. Hit was nigh dawn 'fore the last one had snuck off in a way that suited 'em.

"Then Cunnel from whar he was a-layin' let out a yell them pore critters could hear fer a mile.

"'Go it, Yank,' he says, 'and look out fer moccasins!'

"Next mawnin' we saddled up and loaded our plunder and ever' man taken him a hoss and lit out fer home. We'd been home two weeks and Cunnel had his cawn laid by, when we heard 'bout Van Dorn ridin' into Holly Springs and burnin' Grant's sto's. Seems like he never needed no help from us, noways." He chewed his tobacco for a time, quietly retrospective, reliving, in the company of men now dust with the dust for which they had, unwittingly perhaps, fought, those gallant, pinch-bellied days into which few who now trod that earth could enter with him.

Old Bayard shook the ash from his cigar. "Will," he said, "what the devil were you folks fighting about, anyhow?"

"Bayard," old man Falls answered, "be damned ef I ever did know."

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After old man Falls had departed with his small parcel and his innocently bulging cheek, old Bayard sat and smoked his cigar. Presently he raised his hand and touched the wen on his face, but lightly, remembering old man Falls' parting stricture; and recalling this, the thought that it might not yet be too late, that he might yet remove the paste with water, followed.

He rose and crossed to the lavatory in the corner of the room. Above it was fixed a small cabinet with a mirror in the door, and in it he examined the black spot on his cheek, touching it again with his fingers, then examining his hand. Yes, it might still come off. . . . But be damned if he would; be damned to a man who didn't know his own mind. He flung his cigar away and quitted the room and tramped through the lobby toward the door where his chair sat. But before he reached the door he turned about and came up to the cashier's window, behind which the cashier sat in a green eyeshade.

"Res," he said.

The cashier looked up. "Yes, Colonel?"

"Who is that damn boy that hangs around here, looking through that window all day?" Old Bayard lowered his voice within a pitch or so of an ordinary conversational tone.

"What boy, Colonel?"

Old Bayard pointed, and the cashier raised himself on his stool and peered over the partition and saw, beyond the indicated window, a boy of ten or twelve watching him with an innocent and casual air. "Oh. That's Will Beard's boy, from up at the boarding-house," he shouted. "Friend of Byron's, I think."

"What's he doing around here? Every time I walk through here, there he is looking in that window. What does he want?"

"Maybe he's a bank robber," the cashier suggested.

"What?" Old Bayard cupped his ear fiercely in his palm. "Maybe he's a bank robber," the other shouted, leaning forward on his stool. Old Bayard snorted and tramped violently on and slammed his chair back against the door. The cashier sat lumped and shapeless on his stool, rumbling deep within his gross body. He said without turning his head: "Colonel's let Will Falls treat him with that salve." Snopes at his desk made no reply; did not raise his head.

After a time the boy moved, and drifted casually and innocently away.

Virgil Beard now possessed a pistol that projected a stream of ammoniac water excruciatingly painful to the eyes, a small magic lantern, and an ex-candy showcase in which he kept birds' eggs and an assortment of insects that had died slowly on pins, and a modest hoard of nickels and dimes.

In July Snopes had changed his domicile. He avoided Virgil on the street and so for two weeks he had not seen the boy at all, until one evening after supper he emerged from the front door of his new abode and found Virgil sitting blandly and politely on the front steps.

"Hi, Mr. Snopes," Virgil said.

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Miss Jenny's exasperation and rage when old Bayard arrived home that afternoon was unbounded. "You stubborn old fool," she stormed, "can't Bayard kill you fast enough that you've got to let that old quack of a Will Falls give you blood poisoning? After what Dr. Alford told you, when even Loosh Peabody, who thinks a course of quinine or calomel will cure anything from a broken neck to chilblains, agreed with him? I'll declare, sometimes I just lose patience with you folks; wonder what crime I seem to be explating by having to live with you. Soon as Bayard sort of quiets down and I can quit jumping every time the 'phone rings, you have to go and let that old pauper daub your face up with axle grease and lampblack. I'm a good mind to pack up and get out, and start life over in some place where they never heard of a Sartoris." She raged and stormed on; old Bayard raged in reply, with violent words and profane, and their voices swelled and surged through the house until Elnora and Simon in the kitchen moved furtively, with cocked ears. Finally old Bayard tramped from the house and mounted his horse and rode away, leaving Miss Jenny to wear her rage

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out upon the empty air, and then there was peace for a time.

But at supper the storm brewed and burst again. Behind the swing door of the butler's pantry Simon could hear them, and young Bayard too, trying to shout them down. "Let up, let up," he howled, "for God's sake. I can't hear myself chew, even."

"And you're another one." Miss Jenny turned promptly upon him. "You're just as trying as he is. You and your stiff-necked, sullen ways. Helling around the country in that car just because you think there may be somebody who cares a whoop whether or not you break your worthless neck, and then coming in to the supper-table smelling like a stable hand! Just because you went to a war. Do you think you're the only person in the world that ever went to a war? Do you reckon that when my Bayard came back from The War that he made a nuisance of himself to everybody that had to live with him? But he was a gentleman: he raised the devil like a gentleman, not like you Mississippi country people. Clod-hoppers. Look what he did with just a horse," she added. "He didn't need any flying-machine."

"Look at the little two-bit war he went to," young Bayard rejoined, "a war that was so sorry that grandfather wouldn't even stay up there in Virginia where it was."

"And nobody wanted him at it," Miss Jenny retorted, "a man that would get mad just because his men deposed him and elected a better colonel in his place. Got mad and came back to the country to lead a bunch of red-neck brigands."

"Little two-bit war," young Bayard repeated, "and on a horse. Anybody can go to a war on a horse. No chance for him to do much of anything."

"At least he got himself decently killed," Miss Jenny snapped. "He did more with a horse than you could do with that aeroplane."

"Sho'," Simon breathed against the pantry door, "Ain't dev gwine it? Takes white folks to sho' 'nough quoil."

And so it surged and ebbed through the succeeding days; wore itself out, then surged again when old Bayard returned home with another application of salve. But by this time Simon was having troubles of his own, troubles on which he finally consulted old Bayard one afternoon. Young

Bayard was laid up in bed with his crushed ribs, with Miss Jenny mothering him with savage and cherishing affection and Miss Benbow to visit with him and read aloud to him, and Simon had come into his own again. The top hat and the duster came down from the nail, and old Bayard's cigars depleted daily by one, and the fat matched horses spent their accumulated laziness between home and the bank, before which Simon swung them to a halt each afternoon as of old, with his clamped cigar and smartly-furled whip and all the theatrics of the fine moment. "De ottomobile," Simon philosophized, "is all right fer pleasure en excitement, but fer de genu-wine gentlemun tone, dey ain't but one thing: dat's hosses."

Thus Simon's opportunity came ready to his hand, and once they were clear of town and the team had settled into its gait, he took advantage of it.

"Well, Cunnel," he began, "looks like me en you's got to make some financial 'rangements."

"What?" Old Bayard brought his attention back from where it wandered about the familiar planted fields and the blue, shining hills beyond.

"I says it looks like me en you's got to arrange erbout a little cash money."

"Much obliged, Simon," old Bayard answered, "but I don't need any money right now. Much obliged, though."

Simon laughed heartily. "I declare, Cunnel, you sho' is comical. Rich man like you needin' money!" Again he laughed, with unctuous and abortive heartiness. "Yes, suh, you sho' is comical." Then he ceased laughing and became engrossed with the horses for a moment. Twins they were: Roosevelt and Taft, with sleek hides and broad, comfortable buttocks. "You, Taf', lean on dat collar! Laziness gwine go in on you some day en kill you, sho'." Old Bayard sat watching his apelike head and the swaggering tilt of the top hat. Simon turned his wizened, plausible face over his shoulder again. "But sho' nough, now, we is got to quiet dem niggers somehow."

"What have they done? Can't they find anybody to take their money?"

"Well, suh, hit's like dis," Simon explained. "Hit's kind of all 'round cu'i's. You see, dey been collectin' buildin' money fer dat church whut burnt down, en ez dey got de

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money up, dey turnt hit over ter me, whut wid my 'ficial position on de church boa'd en bein' I wuz a member of de bes' fambly round here. Dat 'uz erbout las' Chris'mus time, en now dey wants de money back."

"That's strange," old Bayard said.

"Yessuh," Simon agreed readily. "Hit struck me jes' 'zackly dat way."

"Well, if they insist, I reckon you'd better give it back to 'em."

"Now, you's gittin' to it." Simon turned his head again; his manner was confidential, and he exploded his bomb in a hushed, melodramatic tone: "De money's gone."

"Dammit, I know that," old Bayard answered, his levity suddenly gone. "Where is it?"

"I went and put it out," Simon told him, and his tone was still confidential, with a little pained astonishment at the world's obtuseness. "And now dem niggers 'cusin' me of stealin' it."

"Do you mean to tell me you took charge of money belonging to other people, and then went and loaned it to somebody else?"

"You does de same thing ev'ry day," Simon answered. "Ain't lendin' money yo' main business?"

Old Bayard snorted violently. "You get that money back and give it to those niggers, or you'll be in jail, you hear?"

"You talks jes' like dem uppity town niggers," Simon told him in a pained tone. "Dat money done been put out, now," he reminded his patron.

"Get it back. Haven't you got collateral for it?"

"Is I got which?"

"Something worth the money, to keep until the money is paid back."

"Yessuh, I got dat." Simon chuckled again, unctuously, a satyrish chuckle rich with complacent innuendo. "Yessuh, I got dat, all right. Only I never heard hit called collateral befo'. Naw, suh, not dat."

"Did you give that money to some nigger wench?" old Bayard demanded.

"Well, suh, hit's like dis-" Simon began. But the other interrupted him.

"Ah, the devil. And now you expect me to pay it back, do you? How much was it?"

"I don't rightly ricollick. Dem niggers claims hit wuz sevumty er ninety dollars er somethin'. But don't you pay 'um no mind; you jes' give 'um whutever you think is right: dey'll take it."

"I'm damned if I will. They can take it out of your worthless hide, or send you to jail—whichever they want to, but I'm damned if I'll pay one cent of it."

"Now, Cunnel," Simon said, "you ain't gwine let dem town niggers 'cuse a member of yo' fambly of stealin', is you?"

"Drive on!" old Bayard shouted. Simon turned on the seat and clucked to the horses and drove on, his cigar tilted toward his hat-brim, his elbows out and the whip caught smartly back in his hand, glancing now and then with tolerant and easy scorn at the field niggers laboring among the cotton-rows.

Old man Falls replaced the cap on his tin of salve, wiped the tin carefully with the bit of rag, then knelt on the cold hearth and held a match to the rag.

"I reckon them doctors air still a-tellin' you hit's gwine to kill you, ain't they?" he asked.

Old Bayard propped his feet against the hearth, cupping a match to his cigar, cupping two tiny match-flames in his eyes. He flung the match away and grunted.

Old man Falls watched the rag take fire sluggishly, with a pungent pencil of yellowish smoke that broke curling in the still air. "Ever' now and then a feller has to walk up and spit in deestruction's face, sort of, fer his own good. He has to kind of put a aidge on hisself, like he'd hold his ax to the grindstone," he said, squatting before the pungent curling of the smoke as though in a pagan ritual in miniature. "Ef a feller'll show his face to deestruction ever' now and then, deestruction'll leave 'im be 'twell his time comes. Deestruction likes to take a feller in the back."

"What?" old Bayard said.

Old man Falls rose and dusted his knees carefully.

"Deestruction's like airy other coward," he roared. "Hit won't strike a feller that's a-lookin' hit in the eye lessen he pushes hit too clost. Your paw knowed that. Stood in the do' of that sto' the day them two cyarpetbaggers brung them niggers in to vote 'em that day in '72. Stood thar in his

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Prince Albert coat and beaver hat, with his arms folded, when ever'body else had left, and watched them two Missouri fellers herdin' them niggers up the road to'ds the sto'; stood right in the middle of the do' while them two cyarpetbaggers begun backin' off with their hands in their pockets until they was cl'ar of the niggers, and cussed him. And him standin' thar jest like this." He crossed his arms on his breast, his hands in sight, and for a moment old Bayard saw, as through a cloudy glass, that arrogant and familiar shape which the old man in shabby overalls had contrived in some way to immolate and preserve in the vacuum of his own abnegated self.

"Then, when they was gone on back down the road, Cunnel reached around inside the do' and taken out the ballot-box and sot hit between his feet.

"'You niggers come hyer to vote, did you?' he says. 'All right, come up hyer and vote.'

"When they had broke and scattered he let off that 'ere dang der'nger over their heads a couple of times; then he loaded hit agin and marched down the road to Miz Winterbottom's, whar them two fellers boa'ded.

"'Madam,' he says, liftin' his beaver, 'I have a small matter of business to discuss with yo' lodgers. Permit me,' he says, and he put his hat back on and marched up the stairs steady as a parade, with Miz Winterbottom gapin' after him with her mouth open. He walked right into the room whar they was a-settin' behind a table facin' the do', with their pistols layin' on the table.

"When us boys outside heard the three shots we run in. Thar wuz Miz Winterbottom standin' thar, gapin' up the stairs, and in a minute hyer come Cunnel with his hat cocked over his eye, marchin' down steady as a co't jury, breshin' the front of his coat with his hank'cher. And us standin' thar, a-watchin' him. He stopped in front of Miz Winterbottom and lifted his hat agin.

"'Madam,' he says, 'I was fo'ced to muss up yo' guestroom right considerable. Pray accept my apologies, and have yo' nigger clean it up and send the bill to me. My apologies again, madam, fer havin' been put to the necessity of exterminatin' vermin on yo' premises. Gentlemen,' he says to us, 'good mawnin'.' And he cocked that 'ere beaver on his head and walked out.

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"And, Bayard," old man Falls said, "I sort of envied them two Nawthuners, be damned ef I didn't. A feller kin take a wife and live with her fer a long time, but after all they ain't no kin. But the feller that brings you into the world or sends you outen hit..."

Where he lurked behind the pantry door Simon could hear the steady storming of Miss Jenny's and old Bayard's voices; later when they had removed to the office and Elnora and Caspey and Isom sat about the table in the kitchen waiting for him, the concussion of Miss Jenny's raging and old Bayard's rocklike stubbornness came in muffled surges, as of far-away surf.

"What de quoilin' erbout now?" Caspey asked. "Is you been and done somethin'?" he demanded of his nephew.

Isom rolled his eyes quietly above his steady jaws. "Naw, suh," he mumbled. "I ain't done nuthin'."

"Seems like dey'd git wo' out, after a while. What's pappy doin', Elnora?"

"Up dar in de hall, listenin'. Go tell 'im to come on and git his supper, so I kin git done, Isom."

Isom slid from his chair, still chewing, and left the kitchen. The steady raging of the two voices increased; where the shapeless figure of his grandfather stood like a disreputable and ancient bird in the dark hallway, Isom could distinguish words: poison . . . blood . . . think you can cut your head off and cure it . . . fool put it on your foot but . . . face head . . . dead and good riddance . . . fool of you dying because of your own bullheaded folly . . . you first lying on your back though . . .

"You and that damn doctor are going to worry me to death." Old Bayard's voice drowned the other temporarily. "Will Falls won't have a chance to kill me. I can't sit in my chair in town without that damn squirt sidling around me and looking disappointed because I'm still alive on my feet. And when I get home, get away from him, you can't even let me eat supper in peace. Have to show me a lot of damn colored pictures of what some fool thinks a man's insides look like."

"Who gwine die, pappy?" Isom whispered.

Simon turned his head. "Whut you hangin' eround here fer, boy? Go'n back to dat kitchen, whar you belongs,"

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"Oh, stop swearing at me," she interrupted him at last. "You can't walk out now. Here, here's the morning paper take it, and be quiet."

Then the specialist entered briskly and went to the switchboard woman, where Dr. Alford saw him and rose and went to him. The specialist turned—a brisk, dapper man, who moved with arrogant, jerky motions, as though he were exercising with a smallsword, and who in turning almost stepped on Dr. Alford. He gave Dr. Alford a glassy, impatient stare; then he shook his hand and broke into a high, desiccated burst of words. "On the dot, I see. Promptness. Promptness. That's good. Patient here? Stood the trip all right, did she?"

"Yes, Doctor, he's----"

"Good; good. Undressed and all ready, eh?"

"The patient is a m-"

"Just a moment." The specialist turned. "Oh, Mrs. Smith." "Yes, Doctor." The woman at the switchboard did not raise her head, and at that moment another specialist of some kind, a large one, with a majestic, surreptitious air like a royal undertaker, entered and stopped Dr. Alford, and for a while the two of them rumbled and rattled at one another while Dr. Alford stood ignored near by, fuming stiffly and politely, feeling himself sinking lower and lower in Miss Jenny's opinion of his professional status. Then the two specialists had done, and Dr. Alford led his man toward the patient.

"Got the patient all ready, you say? Good; good; save time. Lunching down town today. Had lunch yourself?"

"No, Doctor. But the patient is a----"

"Dare say not," the specialist agreed. "Plenty of time, though." He turned briskly toward a curtained exit, but Dr. Alford took his arm firmly but courteously and halted him. Old Bayard was reading the paper. Miss Jenny was watching them frigidly, her bonnet on the exact top of her head.

"Mrs. Du Pre; Colonel Sartoris," Dr. Alford said, "this is Dr. Brandt. Colonel Sartoris is your p----"

"How d'ye do? How d'ye do? Come along with the patient, eh? Daughter? Granddaughter?" Old Bayard looked up.

"What?" he said, cupping his ear, and found the specialist staring at his face.

"What's that on your face?" he demanded, jerking his

hand forth and touching the blackened excrescence. When he did so the thing came off in his fingers, leaving on old Bayard's withered but unblemished cheek a round spot of skin rosy and fair as any baby's.

On the train that evening old Bayard, who had sat for a long time in deep thought, spoke suddenly.

"Jenny, what day of the month is this?"

"The ninth," Miss Jenny answered. "Why?"

Old Bayard sat for a while longer. Then he rose. "Think I'll go up and smoke a cigar," he said. "I reckon a little tobacco won't hurt me, will it, Doctor?"

Three weeks later they got a bill from the specialist for fifty dollars. "Now I know why he's so well known," Miss Jenny said acidly. Then to her nephew: "You better thank your stars it wasn't your hat he lifted off."

Toward Dr. Alford her manner is fiercely and belligerently protective; to old man Falls she gives the briefest and coldest of nods and sails on with her nose in air; but to Loosh Peabody she does not speak at all.

She passed from the fresh, hot morning into the cool hall, where Simon, uselessly and importantly proprietorial with a duster, bobbed his head to her. "Dey done gone to Memphis today," he told her. "But Mist' Bayard waitin' fer you. Walk right up, Missy."

"Thank you," she answered, and she went on and mounted the stairs and left him busily wafting dust from one surface to another and then back again. She mounted into a steady draft of air that blew through the open doors at the end of the hall. Through these doors she could see a segment of blue hills and salt-colored sky. At Bayard's door she stopped and stood there for a time, clasping the book to her breast.

The house, despite Simon's activity in the hall below, was a little portentously quiet without the reassurance of Miss Jenny's bustling presence. Faint sounds reached her from far away—out-of-door sounds whose final drowsy rever-

perate eyes. "Why do you come when you don't want to?" he persisted.

"I don't mind," she answered. She opened the book. "The name of this one____"

"Don't," he interrupted. "I'll have to listen to that damn thing all day. Let's talk a while." But her head was bent and her hands were still on the open book. "What makes you afraid to talk to me?"

"Afraid?" she repeated. "Had you rather I'd go?"

"What? No, damn it. I want you to be human for one time and talk to me. Come over here." She would not look at him, and she raised her hands between them as though he did not lie helpless on his back two yards away. "Come over here closer," he commanded. She rose, clutching the book.

"I'm going," she said. "I'll tell Simon to stay where he can hear you call. Good-bye."

"Here," he exclaimed. She went swiftly to the door. "Good-bye."

"After what you just said, about leaving me alone with just niggers on the place?" She paused at the door, and he added with cold cunning: "After what Aunt Jenny told you —what'll I tell her, tonight? Why are you afraid of a man flat on his back, in a damn cast-iron strait-jacket, anyway?" But she only looked at him with her sober hopeless eyes. "All right, damn it," he said violently. "Go, then." And he jerked his head on the pillow and stared again out the window while she returned to her chair. He said, mildly, "What's the name of this one?" She told him. "Let her go, then. I reckon I'll be asleep soon, anyway."

She opened the book and began to read, swiftly, as though she were crouching behind the screen of words her voice raised between them. She read steadily on for some time, while he on the bed made no movement, her head bent over the book, aware of time passing, as though she were in a contest with time. She finished a sentence and ceased, without raising her head, but almost immediately he spoke.

"Go on; I'm still here. Better luck next time."

The forenoon passed on. Somewhere a clock rang the quarter hours, but saving this there was no other sound in the house. Simon's activity below stairs had ceased long since, but a murmur of voices reached her at intervals

from somewhere, murmurously indistinguishable. The leaves on the branch beyond the window did not stir, and upon the hot air myriad noises blended in a drowsy monotone the Negroes' voices, sounds of animals in the barnyard, the rhythmic groaning of the water pump, a sudden cacophony of fowls in the garden beneath the window, interspersed with Isom's meaningless cries as he drove them out.

Bayard was asleep now, and as she realized this she realized also that she did not know just when she had stopped reading. And she sat with the page open on her knees, a page whose words left no echoes whatever in her mind, looking at his calm face. It was again like a bronze mask, purged by illness of the heat of its violence, yet with the violence still slumbering there and only refined a little. ... She looked away and sat with the book open, her hands lying motionless on the page, gazing out the window. The curtains hung without motion. On the branch athwart the window the leaves hung motionless beneath the intermittent fingers of the sun, and she sat also without life, the fabric of her dress unstirred by her imperceptible breathing, thinking that there would be peace for her only in a world where there were no men at all.

The clock rang twelve times. Immediately after, preceded by stertorous breathing and surreptitious sounds as of a huge rat, and yet other furtive ratlike sounds in the hall, Simon thrust his head around the door, like the grandfather of all apes.

"Is he 'sleep yit?" he said in a rasping whisper.

"Shhhhhh," Narcissa said, lifting her hand. Simon entered on tiptoe, breathing heavily, scraping his feet on the floor. "Hush," Narcissa said quickly, "you'll wake him."

"Dinner ready," Simon said, still in that rasping whisper.

"You can keep his warm until he wakes up, can't you?" Narcissa whispered. "Simon!" she whispered. She rose, but he had already crossed to the table, where he fumbled clumsily at the stack of books and contrived at last to topple it to the floor in a random crash. Bayard opened his eyes.

"Good God," he said, "are you here again?"

"Well, now," Simon exclaimed with ready dismay, "ef me en Miss Benbow ain't waked him up."

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to resume, he opened his eyes and asked for a cigarette. She laid the book aside and struck the match for him, and picked up the book again.

The afternoon wore away. The Negroes had gone, and there was no sound about the house save her voice, and the clock at quarter-hour intervals; outside, the shadows slanted more and more, peaceful harbingers of evening. He was asleep now, despite his contrary conviction, and after a while she stopped and laid the book away. The long shape of him lay stiffly in its cast beneath the sheet, and she sat and looked at his bold, still face and the broken travesty of him and her tranquil sorrow overflowed in pity for him. He was so utterly without any affection for anything at all; so so . . . hard . . . No, that's not the word. But "cold" eluded her; she could comprehend hardness, but not coldness. . . .

Afternoon drew on; evening was finding itself. She sat musing and still and quiet, gazing out of the window where no wind yet stirred the leaves, as though she were waiting for some one to tell her what to do next, and she had lost all account of time other than as a dark unhurrying stream into which she gazed until the mesmerism of water conjured the water itself away.

He made an indescribable sound, and she turned her head quickly and saw his body straining terrifically in its cast and his clenched hands and his teeth beneath his lifted lip, and as she sat blanched and incapable of further movement he made the sound again. His breath hissed between his teeth and he screamed, a wordless sound that merged into a rush of profanity, and when she rose at last and stood over him with her hands against her mouth, his body relaxed and from beneath his sweating brow he watched her with wide intent eyes in which terror lurked, and mad, cold fury, and despair.

"He damn near got me, then," he said in a dry, light voice, still watching her from beyond the fading agony in his wide eyes. "There was a sort of loop of 'em around my chest, and every time he fired, he twisted the loop a little tighter. . . ." He fumbled at the sheet and tried to draw it up to his face. "Can you get me a handkerchief? Some in that top drawer there."

"Yes," she said, "yes," and she went to the chest of drawers and held her shaking body upright by clinging to it,

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think of that yourself." She lay with her book half raised, watching him. He took her hand roughly; she tried to free it, but vainly. "Who was it?" he demanded.

"Nobody told me. Don't, Horace."

He released her hand. "I know who it was. It was Mrs. Du Pre."

"It wasn't anybody," she repeated. "Go away and leave me alone, Horace." And behind the antagonism her eyes were hopeless and desperate. "Don't you see that talking doesn't help any?"

"Yes," he said wearily, but he sat for a while yet, stroking her knee. Then he rose and thrust his hands into his gown, but turning he paused again and drew forth an envelope from his pocket. "Here's a letter for you. I forgot it this afternoon. Sorry."

She was reading again. "Put it on the table," she said, without raising her eyes. He laid the letter on the table and quitted the room. At the door he looked back, but her head was bent over her book.

As he removed his clothes it did seem that that heavy fading odor of Belle's body clung to them, and to his hands even after he was in bed; and clinging, shaped in the darkness beside him Belle's rich voluptuousness until within that warm, not-yet-sleeping region where dwells the mother of dreams, Belle grew palpable in ratio as his own body slipped away from him. And Harry too, with his dogged inarticulateness and his hurt groping which was partly damaged vanity and shock, yet mostly a boy's sincere bewilderment that freed itself terrifically in the form of movie subtitles. Just before he slept, his mind, with the mind's uncanny attribute for irrelevant recapitulation, reproduced with the startling ghostliness of a dictaphone an incident which at the time he had considered trivial. Belle had freed her mouth, and for a moment, her body still against his, she held his face in her two hands and stared at him with intent, questioning eyes. "Have you plenty of money, Horace?" And "Yes," he had answered immediately, "of course I have." And then Belle again, enveloping him like a rich and fatal drug, like a motionless and cloying sea in which he watched himself drown.

The letter lay on the table that night, forgotten; it was

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not until the next morning that she discovered it and opened it.

"I am trying to forget you I cannot forget you Your big eyes your black hair how white your black hair make you look. And how you walk I am watching you a smell you give off like a flowr. Your eyes shine with mistry and how you walk makes me sick like a fevver all night thinking how you walk. I could touch you you would not know it. Every day But I can not I must pore out on paper must talk You do not know who. Your lips like cupids bow when the day comes when I press it to mine. Like I dreamed in a fevver from heaven to Hell. I know what you do I know more than you think I see men visit you with bitter twangs. Be care full I am a desprate man Nothing any more to me now If you unholy love a man I will kill him.

"You do not anser. I know you got it I saw one in your hand bag. You better anser soon I am desprate man eat up with fevver I can not sleep for. I will not hurt you but I am desprate. Do not forget I will not hurt you but I am a desprate man."

Meanwhile the days accumulated. Not sad days nor lonely: they were too feverish to be sorrowful, what with her nature torn in two directions and the walls of her serene garden cast down and she herself like a night animal or bird caught in a beam of light and trying vainly to escape. Horace had definitely gone his way, and like two strangers they followed the routine of their physical days, in an unbending estrangement of long affection and similar pride beneath a shallow veneer of trivialities. She sat with Bayard almost every day now, but at a discreet distance of two yards.

At first he had tried to override her with bluster, then with cajolery. But she was firm, and at last he desisted and lay gazing quietly out the window or sleeping while she read. From time to time Miss Jenny would come to the door and look in at them and go away. Her shrinking, her sense of anticipation and dread while with him, was gone now, and at times instead of reading they talked, quietly and impersonally, with the ghost of that other afternoon between them, though neither ever referred to it. Miss Jenny had been a little curious about that day, but Narcissa was gravely and demurely noncommittal about it, nor had Bayard ever talked of it. And

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so there was another bond between them, but unirksome. Miss Jenny had heard gossip about Horace and Belle, but on this subject also Narcissa had nothing to say.

"Have it your own way," Miss Jenny said tartly; "I can draw my own conclusions. I imagine Belle and Horace can produce quite a mess together. And I'm glad of it. That man is making an old maid out of you. It isn't too late now, but if he'd waited five years later to play the fool, there wouldn't have been anything left for you except to give music lessons. But you can get married, now."

"Would you advise me to marry?" Narcissa asked.

"I wouldn't advise anybody to marry. You won't be happy, but then, women haven't got civilized enough yet to be happy unmarried, so you might as well try it. We can stand anything, anyhow. And change is good for folks. They say it is, at least."

But Narcissa didn't believe that. "I shall never marry," she told herself. Men . . . that was where unhappiness lay, getting men into your life. "And if I couldn't keep Horace, loving him as I did . . ." Bayard slept. She picked up the book and read on to herself, about antic people in an antic world where things happened as they should happen. The shadows lengthened eastward. She read on, lost from mutable things.

After a while Bayard waked, and she fetched him a cigarette and a match. "You won't have to do this any more," he said. "I reckon you're sorry."

His cast would come off tomorrow, he meant, and he lay smoking his cigarette and talking of what he would do when he was about again. He would see about getting his car repaired first thing; have to take it in to Memphis, probably. And he planned a trip for the three of them—Miss Jenny, Narcissa and himself—while the car was in the shop. "It'll take about a week," he added. "She must be in pretty bad shape. Hope I didn't hurt her guts any."

"But you aren't going to drive it fast any more," she reminded him. He lay still, his cigarette burning in his fingers. "You promised," she insisted.

"When did I promise?"

"Don't you remember? That . . . afternoon, when they were . . ."

"When I scared you?" She sat watching him with her

grave, troubled eyes. "Come here," he said. She rose and went to the bed and he took her hand.

"You won't drive it fast again?" she persisted.

"No," he answered, "I promise." And they were still so, her hand in his. The curtains stirred in the breeze, and the leaves on the branch beyond the window twinkled and turned and lisped against one another. Sunset was not far away. The breeze would cease then. He moved.

"Narcissa," he said. She looked at him. "Lean your face down here."

She looked away, and for a while there was no movement, no sound between them.

"I must go," she said at last, quietly, and he released her hand.

His cast was gone, and he was up and about again, moving a little gingerly, to be sure, but already Miss Jenny was beginning to contemplate him a little anxiously. "If we could just arrange to have one of his minor bones broken every month or so, just enough to keep him in the house . . ."

"That won't be necessary," Narcissa told her. "He's going to behave from now on."

"How do you know?" Miss Jenny demanded. "What in the world makes you think that?"

"He promised he would."

"He'll promise anything when he's flat on his back," Miss Jenny retorted. "They all will; always have. But what makes you think he'll keep it?"

"He promised me he would," Narcissa replied serenely.

His first act was to see about his car. It had been pulled into town and patched up after a fashion until it would run under its own power, but it would be necessary to take it to Memphis to have the frame straightened and the body repaired. Bayard was all for doing this himself, fresh-knit ribs and all, but Miss Jenny put her foot down, and after a furious half hour he was vanquished. And so the car was driven in to Memphis by a youth who hung around one of the garages in town. "Narcissa'll take you driving in her car, if you must ride," Miss Jenny told him.

"In that little peanut-parcher?" Bayard said derisively. "It won't do better than twenty-one miles."

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jerked the throttle down the ratchet, and she clutched him and tried to scream. But she could make no sound, nor could she close her eyes as the narrow bridge hurtled dancing toward them. And then her breath stopped and her heart as they flashed, with a sharp reverberation like hail on a tin roof, between willows and a crashing glint of water and shot on up the next hill. The small car swayed on the curve, lost its footing and went into the ditch, bounded out and hurled across the road. Then Bayard straightened it out and with diminishing speed it rocked on up the hill, and stopped. She sat beside him, her bloodless mouth open, beseeching him with her wide, hopeless eyes. Then she caught her breath, wailing.

"I didn't mean——" he began awkwardly. "I just wanted to see if I could do it," and he put his arms around her and she clung to him, moving her hands crazily about his shoulders. "I didn't mean——" he essayed again, and then her crazed hands were on his face and she was sobbing wildly against his mouth.

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All the forenoon he bent over his ledgers, watching his hand pen the neat figures into the ruled columns with a sort of astonishment. After his sleepless night he labored in a kind of stupor, his mind too spent even to contemplate the coiling images of his lust, thwarted now for all time, save with a dull astonishment that the images no longer filled his blood with fury and despair, so that it was some time before his dulled nerves reacted to a fresh threat and caused him to raise his head. Virgil Beard was just entering the door.

He slid hurriedly from his stool and slipped around the corner and darted through the door of old Bayard's office. He crouched within the door, heard the boy ask politely for him, heard the cashier say that he was there a minute ago but that he reckoned he had stepped out; heard the boy say, well, he reckoned he'd wait for him. And he crouched within the door, wiping his drooling mouth with his handkerchief.

After a while he opened the door cautiously. The boy

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"No, thank God," Miss Jenny answered. "And I've written to Memphis and asked 'em to fix yours so it'll run just like that, too."

Bayard stared at her with humorless bleakness. "Did you do any such damn thing as that?"

"Oh, take him away, Narcissa," Miss Jenny exclaimed. "Get him out of my sight. I'm so tired looking at you."

But he wouldn't ride in Narcissa's car at first. He missed no opportunity to speak of it with heavy, facetious disparagement, but he wouldn't ride in it. Dr. Alford had evolved a tight elastic bandage for his chest so that he could ride his horse, but he had developed an astonishing propensity for lounging about the house when Narcissa was there. And Narcissa came quite often. Miss Jenny thought it was on Bayard's account and pinned the guest down in her forthright way; whereupon Narcissa told her about Horace and Belle while Miss Jenny sat indomitably erect on her straight chair beside the piano.

"Poor child," she said, and: "Lord, ain't they fools?" And then: "Well, you're right; I wouldn't marry one of 'em either."

"I'm not," Narcissa answered. "I wish there weren't any of them in the world."

Miss Jenny said "Hmph."

And then one afternoon they were in Narcissa's car and Bayard was driving, over her protest at first. But he was behaving himself quite sensibly, and at last she relaxed. They drove down the valley road and turned into the hills and she asked where they were going, but his answer was vague. So she sat quietly beside him and the road mounted presently in long curves among dark pines in the slanting afternoon. The road wound on, with changing sun-shot vistas of the valley and the opposite hills at every turn, and always the somber pines and their faint, exhilarating odor. After a time they topped a hill and Bayard slowed the car. Beneath them the road sank, then flattened away toward a line of willows, crossed a stone bridge, and rose again, curving redly from sight among the dark trees.

"There's the place," he said.

"The place?" she repeated dreamily; then as the car rolled forward again, gaining speed, she roused herself and understood what he meant. "You promised!" she cried, but he

Miss Jenny worked in a sweater these days, and her trowel glinted in her earthy glove.

"It's like some women I've known," she said. "It just don't know how to give up gracefully and be a grandmamma."

"Let it have the summer out," Narcissa in her dark woolen dress protested. She had a trowel too, and she pottered serenely after Miss Jenny's scolding and brisk impatience, accomplishing nothing. Worse than nothing, worse than Isom even, because she demoralized Isom, who had immediately given his unspoken allegiance to the left, or passive, wing. "It's entitled to its summer."

"Some folks don't know when summer's over," Miss Jenny rejoined. "Indian summer's no excuse for senile adolescence."

"It isn't senility, either."

"All right. You'll see, some day."

"Oh, some day. I'm not quite prepared to be a grandmother, yet."

"You're doing pretty well." Miss Jenny troweled a tulip bulb carefully and expertly up and removed the clotted earth from its roots. "We seem to have pretty well worn out Bayard, for the time being," she continued. "I reckon we'd better name him John this time."

"Yes?"

"Yes," Miss Jenny repeated. "We'll name him John. You, Isom!"

The gin had been running steadily for a month, now, what with the Sartoris cotton and that of other planters further up the valley, and of smaller croppers with their tilted fields among the hills. The Sartoris place was farmed on shares. Most of the tenants had picked their cotton, and gathered the late corn; and of late afternoons, with Indian summer on the land and an ancient sadness sharp as wood-smoke on the windless air, Bayard and Narcissa would drive out where, beside a spring on the edge of the woods, the Negroes brought their cane and made their communal winter sorghum molasses. One of the Negroes, a sort of patriarch among the tenants, owned the mill and the mule that furnished the motive power. He did the grinding and superintended the cooking of the sap for a tithe, and when Bayard and Narcissa arrived the mule would be plodding in its monotonous and patient circle, its feet rustling in the

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dried cane-pith, while one of the patriarch's grandsons fed the cane into the crusher.

Round and round the mule went, setting its narrow, deerlike feet delicately down in the hissing cane-pith, its neck bobbing limber as a section of rubber hose in the collar. with its trace-galled flanks and flopping, lifeless ears and its half-closed eyes drowsing venomously behind pale lids, apparently asleep with the monotony of its own motion, Some Homer of the cotton fields should sing the saga of the mule and of his place in the South. He it was, more than any other one creature or thing, who, steadfast to the land when all else faltered before the hopeless juggernaut of circumstance, impervious to conditions that broke men's hearts because of his venomous and patient preoccupation with the immediate present, won the prone South from beneath the iron heel of Reconstruction and taught it pride again through humility, and courage through adversity overcome; who accomplished the well-nigh impossible despite hopeless odds, by sheer and vindictive patience. Father and mother he does not resemble, sons and daughters he will never have; vindictive and patient (it is a known fact that he will labor ten years willingly and patiently for you, for the privilege of kicking you once); solitary but without pride, self-sufficient but without vanity; his voice is his own derision. Outcast and pariah, he has neither friend, wife, mistress, nor sweetheart; celibate, he is unscarred, possesses neither pillar nor desert cave, he is not assaulted by temptations nor flagellated by dreams nor assuaged by vision; faith, hope and charity are not his. Misanthropic, he labors six days without reward for one creature whom he hates, bound with chains to another whom he despises, and spends the seventh day kicking or being kicked by his fellows. Misunderstood even by that creature, the nigger who drives him, whose impulses and mental processes most closely resemble his, he performs alien actions in alien surroundings; he finds bread not only for a race, but for an entire form of behavior; meek, his inheritance is cooked away from him along with his soul in a glue factory. Ugly, untiring and perverse, he can be moved neither by reason, flattery, nor promise of reward; he performs his humble monotonous duties without complaint, and his meed is blows. Alive, he is haled through the world, an object of general derision; unwept, unhonored

and unsung, he bleaches his awkward accusing bones among rusting cans and broken crockery and worn-out automobile tires on lonely hillsides while his flesh soars unawares against the blue in the craws of buzzards.

As they approached, the groaning and creaking of the mill would be the first intimation, unless the wind happened to blow toward them; then it would be the sharp, subtly exciting odor of fermentation and of boiling molasses. Bayard liked the smell of it and they would drive up and stop for a time while the boy rolled his eyes covertly at them as he fed cane into the mill, while they watched the patient mule and the old man stooped over the simmering pot. Sometimes Bayard got out and went over and talked to him, leaving Narcissa in the car, lapped in the ripe odors of the failing year and all its rich, vague sadness, her gaze brooding on Bayard and the old Negro—the one lean and tall and fatally young and the other stooped with time, and her spirit went out in serene and steady waves, surrounding him unawares.

Then he would return and get in beside her and she would touch his rough clothing, but so lightly that he was not conscious of it, and they would drive back along the faint, uneven road, beside the flaunting woods, and soon, above turning locusts and oaks, the white house simple and huge and steadfast, and the orange disk of the harvest moon getting above the ultimate hills, ripe as cheese.

Sometimes they went back after dark. The mill was still then, its long arm motionless across the firelit scene. The mule was munching in stable, or stamping and nuzzling its empty manger, or asleep standing, boding not of tomorrow; and against the firelight many shadows moved. The Negroes had gathered now: old men and women sitting on crackling cushions of cane about the blaze which one of their number fed with pressed stalks until its incense-laden fury swirled licking at the boughs overhead, making more golden still the twinkling golden leaves; and young men and girls, and children squatting and still as animals, staring into the fire. Sometimes they sang—quavering, wordless chords in which plaintive minors blent with mellow bass in immemorial and sad suspense, their grave dark faces bent to the flames and with no motion of lips.

But when the white folks arrived the singing ceased, and

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"How do you know he's there tonight, Caspey?" Narcissa asked.

"He be back," Caspey answered confidently. "He right dar now, watchin' dis lantern wid his eyes scrooched up, listenin' to hear ef de dawgs wid us."

They climbed through a fence and Caspey stooped and set the lantern down. The dogs moiled and tugged about his legs with sniffings and throaty growls at one another as he unleashed them, "You, Ruby! Stan' still, dar. Hole up here, you potlickin' fool." They whimpered and surged, their eyes melting in fluid brief gleams; then they faded soundlessly and swiftly into the darkness. "Give 'urn a little time," Caspey said; "let 'um see ef he dar yit." From the darkness ahead a dog yapped three times on a high note. "Dat's dat young dog," Caspey said. "Jes' showin' off. He ain't smelt nothin'." Overhead the stars swam vaguely in the hazy sky; the air was not yet chill, the earth still warm to the touch. They stood in a steady oasis of lantern light in a world of but one dimension, a vague cistern of darkness filled with meager light and topped with an edgeless canopy of ragged stars. The lantern was smoking and emanating a faint odor of heat, Caspey raised it and turned the wick down and set it at his feet again. Then from the darkness there came a single note, resonant and low and grave.

"Dar he," Isom said,

"Hit's Ruby," Caspey agreed, picking up the lantern. "She got 'im." The young dog yapped again, with fierce hysteria; then the single low cry chimed. Narcissa slid her arm through Bayard's. "'Tain't no rush," Caspey told her. "Dey ain't treed yit. Whooy. H'mawn, dawg." The young dog had ceased its yapping, but still at intervals the other one bayed her single timbrous note, and they followed it. "H'mawn, dawg!"

They stumbled a little over fading plow scars, after Caspey's bobbing lantern, and the darkness went suddenly crescendo with short, steady cries in four keys. "Dey got 'im," Isom said.

"Dat's right," Caspey agreed. "Le's go. Hold 'im, dawg!" They trotted now, Narcissa clinging to Bayard's arm, and plunged through rank grass and over another fence and so among trees. Eyes gleamed fleetingly from the darkness ahead; another gust of barking interspersed with tense.

could hear him moving the branches cautiously. "Here he," he called suddenly. "Hole dem dawgs, now."

"Little 'un, ain't he?" Caspey asked.

"Can't tell. Can't see nothin' but his face. Watch dem dawgs." The upper part of the sapling burst into violent and sustained fury; Isom whooped louder and louder as he shook the branches. "Whooy, here he comes," he shouted, and something dropped sluggishly and reluctantly from branch to invisible branch, stopped; and the dogs set up a straining clamor. The thing fell again, and Bayard's light followed a lumpy object that plumped with a resounding thud to the ground and vanished immediately beneath a swirl of hounds.

Caspey and Bayard leaped among them with shouts and at last succeeded in dragging them clear, and Narcissa saw the creature in the pool of the flash light, lying on its side in a grinning curve, its eyes closed and its pink, babylike hands doubled against its breast. She looked at the motionless thing with pity and distinct loathing—such a paradox, its vulpine, skull-like grin and those tiny, human-looking hands, and the long ratlike tail of it. Isom dropped from the tree and Caspey turned the three straining clamorous dogs he held over to his nephew and picked up the ax, and while Narcissa watched in shrinking curiosity, he laid the ax across the thing's neck and put his foot on either end of the helve, and grasped the animal's tail. . . . She turned and fled, her hand to her mouth.

But the wall of darkness stopped her and she stood trembling and a little sick, watching them as they moved about the lantern. Then Caspey drove the dogs away, giving Uncle Henry's octogenarian a hearty and resounding kick that sent him homeward with blood-curdling and astonished wails, and Isom swung the lumpy sack to his shoulder and Bayard turned and looked for her. "Narcissa?"

"Here," she answered. He came to her.

"That's one. We ought to get a dozen, tonight."

"Oh, no," she shuddered. "No." He peered at her; then he snapped his flash light full on her face. She lifted her hand and put it aside.

"What's the matter? Not tired already, are you?"

"No." She went on, "I just . . . Come on: they're leaving us."

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hand. She looked at his bleak profile against the lantern glow and moved closer against him. But he did not respond, and she slid her hand in his. But it too was cold, and again he had left her for the lonely heights of his despair. Caspey was speaking again, in his slow, consonantless voice with its overtones of mellow sadness. "Mist' Johnny, now, he sho' could shoot. You 'member dat time me and you and him wuz____"

Bayard rose. He dropped his cigarette and crushed it carefully with his heel. "Let's go," he said. "They ain't going to tree." He drew Narcissa to her feet and turned and went on. Caspey got up and unslung his horn and put it to his lips. The sound swelled about them, grave and clear and prolonged; then it died into echoes and so into silence again, leaving no ripple in the still darkness.

It was near midnight when they left Caspey and Isom at their cabin and followed the lane toward the house. The barn loomed presently beside them, and the house among its thinning trees, against the hazy sky. He opened the gate and she passed through and he followed and closed it, and turning he found her beside him, and stopped. "Bayard?" she whispered, leaning against him, and he put his arms around her and stood so, gazing above her head into the sky. She took his face between her palms and drew it down, but his lips were cold and upon them she tasted fatality and doom, and she clung to him for a time, her head bowed against his chest.

After that she would not go with him again. So he went alone, returning anywhere between midnight and dawn, ripping his clothing off quietly in the darkness and sliding cautiously into bed. But when he was still she would touch him and speak his name in the dark beside him, and turn to him warm and soft with sleep. And they would lie so, holding to one another in the darkness and the temporary abeyance of his despair and the isolation of that doom he could not escape.

"Oh, yes, I did. Only I did it on John Sartoris' account. He said he was havin' mo' trouble than he could stand with politics outside his home. And, do you know----"

"Loosh Peabody, you're the biggest liar in the world!"

"—I pretty near had her persuaded for a while? It was that first spring them weeds she brought out here from Ca'lina bloomed, and there was a moon and we were in the garden and there was a mockin'-bird——"

"No such thing!" Miss Jenny shouted. "There never was----"

"Look at her face, if you believe I'm lyin'," Dr. Peabody said.

"Look at her face," young Bayard echoed rudely. "She's blushing!"

And she was blushing, but her cheeks were like banners, and her head was still high amid the gibing laughter. Narcissa rose and came to her and laid her arm about her trim erect shoulders. "You all hush this minute," she said. "You'd better consider yourselves lucky that any of us ever marry you, and flattered even when we refuse."

"I am flattered," Dr. Peabody rejoined, "or I wouldn't be a widower now."

"Who wouldn't be a widower, the size of a hogshead and living on cold fish and turnip greens?" Miss Jenny said. "Sit down, honey. I ain't scared of any man alive."

Narcissa resumed her seat, and Simon appeared again, with Isom in procession now, and for the next few minutes they moved steadily between kitchen and dining-room with a roast turkey and a smoked ham and a dish of quail and another of squirrels, and a baked 'possum in a bed of sweet potatoes and squash and pickled beets, and sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes, and rice and hominy, and hot biscuit and beaten biscuit and delicate long sticks of cornbread, and strawberry and pear preserves, and quince and apple jelly, and stewed cranberries and pickled peaches.

Then they ceased talking for a while and really ate, glancing now and then across the table at one another in a rosy glow of amicability and steamy odors. From time to time Isom entered with hot bread, while Simon stood overlooking the field somewhat as Caesar must have stood looking down into Gaul, once it was well in hand, or the Lord God Him-

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self when He contemplated his latest chemical experiment and saw that it was good.

"After this, Simon," Dr. Peabody said, and he sighed a little, "I reckon I can take you on and find you a little side meat now and then."

"I 'speck you kin," Simon agreed, watching them like an eagle-eyed general who rushes reserves to the threatened points, pressing more food upon them as they faltered. But even Dr. Peabody allowed himself vanquished after a time, and then Simon brought in pies of three kinds, and a small, deadly plum pudding, and a cake baked cunningly with whisky and nuts and fruits and ravishing as odors of heaven and treacherous and fatal as sin; and at last, with an air sibylline and solemnly profound, a bottle of port. The sun lay hazily in the glowing west, falling levelly through the windows and on the silver arrayed on the sideboard, dreaming in mellow gleams among its placid rotundities and on the colored panes in the fanlight high in the western wall.

But that was November, the season of hazy, languorous days, when the first flush of autumn is over and winter beneath the sere horizon breathes yet a spell—November, when like a shawled matron among her children, the year dies peacefully, without pain and of no disease. Early in December the rains set in and the year turned gray beneath the season of dissolution and of death. All night long and all day it whispered on the roof and along the eaves. The trees shed their final stubborn leaves in it and gestured their black and sorrowful branches against ceaseless vistas; only a lone hickory at the foot of the park kept its leaves, gleaming like a sodden flame on the eternal azure, and beyond the valley the hills were hidden by a swaddling of rain.

Almost daily, despite Miss Jenny's strictures and commands and the grave protest in Narcissa's eyes, Bayard went forth with a shotgun and the two dogs, to return just before dark, wet to the skin. And cold; his lips would be chill on hers and his eyes bleak and haunted, and in the yellow firelight of their room she would cling to him, or lie crying quietly in the darkness beside his rigid body, with a ghost between them.

"Look here," Miss Jenny said, coming on her as she sat brooding before the fire in old Bayard's den, "you spend

too much time this way; you're getting moony. Stop worrying about him; he's spent half his life soaking wet, yet neither one of 'em ever had a cold even, that I can remember."

"Hasn't he?" she answered listlessly. Miss Jenny stood beside her chair, watching her keenly. Then she laid her hand on Narcissa's head, quite gently for a Sartoris.

"Are you worrying because maybe he don't love you like you think he ought to?"

"It isn't that," she answered. "He doesn't love anybody. He won't even love the baby. He doesn't seem to be glad, or sorry, or anything."

"No," Miss Jenny agreed. The fire crackled and leaped among the resinous logs. Beyond the gray window the day dissolved endlessly. "Listen," Miss Jenny said abruptly. "Don't you ride in that car with him any more. You hear?"

"No. It won't make him drive slowly. Nothing will."

"Of course not. Nobody believes it will, not even his grandfather. He goes along for the same reason that boy himself does. Sartoris. It's in the blood. Savages, every one of 'em. No earthly use to anybody." Together they gazed into the leaping flames, Miss Jenny's hand still lying on Narcissa's head. "I'm sorry I got you into this."

"You didn't do it. Nobody got me into it. I did it myself." "H'm," Miss Jenny said. And then: "Would you do it over again?" The other did not reply, and she repeated the question. "Would you?"

"Yes," Narcissa answered. "Don't you know I would?" Again there was silence between them, in which without words they sealed their hopeless pact with that fine and passive courage of women. Narcissa rose.

"I believe I'll go in and spend the day with Horace, if you don't mind," she said.

"All right," Miss Jenny agreed. "I believe I would, too. Horace probably needs a little looking after, by now. He looked sort of gaunt when he was out here last week. Like he wasn't getting proper food."

When she entered the kitchen door Eunice, the cook, turned from the bread board and lifted her hands in a soft, dark gesture. "Well, Miss Narcy," she said, "we ain't seed you in a mont'. Is you come all de way in de rain?" "I came in the carriage. It was too wet for the car." She

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came into the room. Eunice watched her with grave pleasure. "How are you all getting along?"

"He gits enough to eat," Eunice answered; "I sees to dat. But I has to make him eat it. He needs you back here."

"I'm here, for the day, anyhow. What have you got for dinner?" Together they lifted lids and peered into the simmering vessels on the stove and in the oven. "Oh, chocolate pie!"

"I has to toll 'im wid dat," Eunice explained. "He'll eat anything, ef I jes' makes 'im a chocolate pie," she added proudly.

"I bet he does," Narcissa agreed. "Nobody can make chocolate pies like yours."

"Dis one ain't turnt out so well," Eunice said, deprecatory. "I ain't so pleased wid it."

"Why, Eunice! It's perfect."

"No'm, it ain't up to de mark," Eunice insisted. But she beamed, gravely diffident, and for a few minutes the two of them talked amicably while Narcissa pried into cupboards and boxes.

Then she returned to the house and mounted to her room. The dressing-table was bare of its intimate silver and crystal, and the drawers were empty, and the entire room, with its air of still and fading desolation, reproached her. Chill too; there had been no fire in the grate since last spring, and on the table beside the bed, forgotten and withered and dead, was a small bunch of flowers in a blue vase. Touching them, they crumbled in her fingers, leaving a stain, and the water in the vase smelled of rank decay. She opened the window and threw them out.

The room was too chill to stop in long, and she decided to ask Eunice to build a fire on the hearth for the comfort of that part of her which still lingered here, soberly and a little sorrowful in the chill and reproachful desolation. At her chest of drawers she paused again and remembered those letters, fretfully and with a little musing alarm, deprecating anew her carelessness in not destroying them. But maybe she had, and so she entered again into the closed circle of her bewilderment and first fear, trying to remember what she had done with them. But she was certain that she had left them in the drawer with her under things, positive that she had put them there. Yet she had never been able

to find them, nor had Eunice nor Horace seen them. The day she had missed them was the day before her wedding, when she had packed her things. That day she had missed them, finding in their stead one in a different handwriting, which she did not remember having received. The gist of it was plain enough, although she had not understood some of it literally. But on that day she had read it with tranquil detachment: it and all it brought to mind was definitely behind her now. And lacking even this, she would not have been shocked if she had comprehended it. Curious a little, perhaps, at some of the words, but that is all.

But what she had done with those other letters she could not remember, and not being able to gave her moments of definite fear when she considered the possibility that people might learn that some one had had such thoughts about her and put them into words. Well, they were gone; there was nothing to do save hope that she had destroyed them as she had the last one, or if she had not, to trust that they would never be found. Yet that brought back the original distaste and dread: the possibility that the intactness of her deep and heretofore inviolate serenity might be the sport of circumstance; that she must trust to chance against the eventuality of a stranger casually picking a stray bit of paper from the ground....

But she would put this firmly aside, for the time being, at least. This should be Horace's day, and her own tooa surcease from that ghost-ridden dream to which she clung. waking. She descended the stairs. There was a fire in the living-room. It had burned down to embers, however, and she put coal on it and punched it to a blaze. That would be the first thing he'd see when he entered; perhaps he'd wonder, perhaps he'd know before he entered, having sensed her presence. She considered telephoning him, and she mused indecisively for a moment before the fire, then decided to let it be a surprise. But supposing he didn't come home to dinner because of the rain. She considered this, and pictured him walking along a street in the rain, and immediately and with instinctive foreknowledge, she went to the closet beneath the stairs and opened the door. It was as she had known; his overcoat and his raincoat both hung there, and the chances were he didn't even have an umbrella; and again irritation and exasperation and untroubled af-

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fection welled within her and it was as it had been of old again, and all that had since come between them rolled away like clouds.

Heretofore her piano had always been rolled into the living-room when cold weather came. But now it stood vet in the smaller alcove. There was a fireplace here, but no fire had been lighted yet, and the room was chilly. Beneath her hands the cold keys gave forth a sluggish chord, accusing, reproving too, and she returned to the fire and stood where she could see, through the window, the drive beneath its somber, dripping cedars. The small clock on the mantel behind her chimed twelve, and she went to the window and stood with her nose touching the chill glass and her breath frosting it over. Soon, now; he was erratic in his hours, but never tardy, and every time an umbrella came into sight her heart leaped a little. But it was not he, and she followed the bearer's plodding passage until he shifted the umbrella enough for her to recognize him, and so she did not see Horace until he was halfway up the drive. His hat was turned down about his face and his coat collar was hunched to his ears, and as she had known, he didn't even have an umbrella.

"Oh, you idiot," she said and ran to the door and through the curtained glass she saw his shadowy shape come leaping up the steps. He flung the door open and entered, whipping his sodden hat against his leg, and so did not see her until she stepped forth. "You idiot," she said, "where's your raincoat?"

For a moment he stared at her with his wild and diffident unrepose; then he said "Narcy!" and his face lighted and he swept her into his wet arms.

"Don't," she cried. "You're wet!" But he swung her from the floor, against his sopping chest, repeating "Narcy, Narcy"; then his cold nose was against her face and she tasted rain.

"Narcy," he said again, hugging her, and she ceased resisting and clung to him. Then abruptly he released her and jerked his head up and stared at her with sober intensity. "Narcy," he said, still staring at her, "has that surly blackguard——"

"No, of course not," she answered sharply. "Have you gone crazy?" Then she clung to him again, wet clothes and all, as though she would never let him go. "Oh, Horry," she said, "I've been a beast to you!"

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This time it was a Ford car, and Bayard saw its wild skid as the driver tried to jerk it across the treacherous, thawing road, and in the flashing moment and with swift amusement, he saw, between the driver's cravatless collar and the woman's stocking bound around his head beneath his hat and tied under his chin, his Adam's apple like a scared puppy in a tow sack. This flashed on and behind, and Bayard wrenched the wheel. The stalled Ford swam sickeningly into view again as the big car slewed on the greasy surface, its declutched engine roaring. Then the Ford swam from sight again as he wrenched the wheel over and slammed the clutch in for more stability; and once more that sickening, unhurried rush as the car refused to regain its feet and the frosty December world swept laterally across his vision. Old Bayard lurched against him; from the corner of his eye he could see the old fellow's hand clutching the top of the door. Now they were facing the bluff on which the cemetery lay; directly above them John Sartoris' effigy lifted its florid stone gesture and from amid motionless cedars gazed out on the valley where for two miles the railroad he had built ran beneath his carven eyes. Bayard wrenched the wheel once more.

On the other side of the road a precipice dropped sheer away, among scrub cedars and corroded ridges skeletoned brittlely with frost and muddy ice where the sun had not yet reached. The rear end of the car hung timelessly over this before it swung again, with the power full on, swung on until its nose pointed downhill again, with never a slackening of its speed. But still it would not come into the ruts, and it had lost the crown of the road, and although they had almost reached the foot of the hill, Bayard saw that they would not make it. Just before they slipped off he wrenched the steering-wheel over and swung the nose straight over the bank, and the car poised lazily for a moment, as though taking breath. "Hang on," he shouted to his grandfather; then they plunged.

An interval utterly without sound, in which all sensation

of motion was lost. Then scrub cedar burst crackling about them and whipping branches of it exploded on the radiator and slapped viciously at them as they leaned with braced feet, and the car slewed in a long bounce. Another vacuumlike interval, then a shock that banged the wheel into Bayard's chest and jerked it in his tight hands, wrenching his arm-sockets. Beside him his grandfather lurched forward and Bayard threw out his arm just in time to keep the other from crashing through the windshield. "Hang on," he shouted. The car had never faltered and he dragged the leaping wheel over and swung it down the ravine and opened the engine, and with the engine and the momentum of the plunge, they rocked and crashed on down the ditch and turned and heaved up the now shallow bank and on to the road again. Bayard brought it to a stop.

He sat motionless for a moment. "Whew," he said. And then, "Great God in the mountain." His grandfather sat motionless beside him, his hand still clutching the door and his head bent a little. "Think I'll have a cigarette after that," Bayard added. He dug one from his pocket, and a match; his hands were shaking. "I thought of that damn concrete bridge again, just as we went over," he explained, apologetically. He took a deep draught at his cigarette and glanced at his grandfather. "Y'all right?" Old Bayard made no reply, and with his cigarette poised Bayard looked at him. He sat as before, his head bent a little and his hand on the door. "Grandfather?" Bayard said sharply. Still old Bayard didn't move, even when his grandson flung the cigarette away and shook him roughly.

Up the last hill the tireless pony bore him and in the low December sun their shadow fell long across the ridge and into the valley beyond, from which the high shrill yapping of the dogs came on the frosty, windless air. Young dogs, Bayard told himself, and he sat his horse in the faint scar of the road, listening as the high-pitched hysteria of them swept echoing across his aural field. Motionless, he could feel frost

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in the air. Above him the pines, though there was no wind in them, made a continuous dry, wild sound, as though the frost in the air had found voice; above them, against the high evening blue, a shallow V of geese slid. "There'll be ice tonight," he thought, watching them and thinking of black backwaters where they would come to rest, of rank bayonets of dead grass about which water would shrink soon in fixed glassy ripples in the brittle darkness. Behind him the earth rolled away ridge on ridge blue as wood-smoke, on into a sky like thin congealed blood. He turned in his saddle and stared unwinking into the sun that spread like a crimson egg broken on the ultimate hills. That meant weather; he snuffed the still, tingling air, hoping he smelled snow.

The pony snorted and tossed his head experimentally and found the reins slack and lowered his nose and snorted again into the dead leaves and delicate sere needles of pine beneath his feet. "Come up, Perry," Bayard said, jerking the reins. Perry raised his head and broke into a stiff, jolting trot, but Bayard lifted him smartly out of it and into his steady fox trot again.

He had not gone far when the dogs broke again into clamorous uproar to his left and suddenly near, and as he reined Perry back and peered ahead along the fading scar of the road, he saw the fox trotting sedately toward him in the middle of it. Perry saw it at the same time and laid his fine ears back and rolled his young eyes. But the animal came on unawares at its steady, unhurried trot, glancing back over its shoulder from time to time. "Well, I'll be damned," Bayard whispered, holding Perry rigid between his knees. The fox was not forty yards away; still it came on, seemingly utterly unaware of the horseman. Then Bayard shouted.

The animal glanced at him; the level sun swam redly and fleetingly in its eyes; then with a single modest flash of brown it was gone. Bayard expelled his breath: his heart was thumping against his ribs. "Whooy," he yelled. "Come on, dogs!" The din of them swelled to a shrill pandemonium and the pack boiled into the road in a chaos of spotted hides and flapping tongues and ears. None of them was more than half grown, and ignoring the horse and rider they surged still clamoring into the undergrowth where the fox had vanished and shrieked frantically on; and as Bayard stood in his stirrups and gazed after them, preceded by yapping in a still

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"Yes, sir," he answered quietly. Then they would know. He stared into the fire for a time, rubbing his hands slowly on his knees, and for an instant he saw the recent months of his life coldly in all their headlong and heedless wastefulness; saw its entirety like the swift unrolling of a film, culminating in that which he had been warned against and that any fool might have foreseen. Well, damn it, suppose it had: was he to blame? Had he insisted that his grandfather ride with him? Had he given the old fellow a burn heart? and then, coldly: You were afraid to go home. You made a nigger sneak your horse out to you. You, who deliberately do things your judgment tells you may not be successful, even possible, are afraid to face the consequences of your own acts. Then again something bitter and deep and sleepless in him blazed out in vindication and justification and accusation; what, he knew not, blazing out at what, Whom, he did not know: You did it! You caused it all; you killed Johnny.

Henry had drawn a chair up to the fire, and after a while the old man tapped his clay pipe carefully out against his palm and drew a huge, turnip-shaped silver watch from his corduroy vest. "Half after five," he said. "Ain't them boys got in yet?"

"They're here," Henry answered briefly. "Heard 'em takin' out when I put out the dawgs."

"Git the jug, then," his father ordered. Henry rose and departed again, and presently feet clumped heavily on the porch and Bayard turned in his chair and stared bleakly at the door. It opened and Rafe and Lee entered.

"Well, well," Rafe said, and his lean, dark face lighted a little. "Got here at last, did you?" He shook Bayard's hand, and Lee followed him. Lee's face, like all of them, was a dark, saturnine mask. He was not so stocky as Rafe, and least talkative of them all. His eyes were black and restless; behind them lurked something wild and sad. He shook Bayard's hand without a word.

But Bayard was watching Rafe. There was nothing in Rafe's face; no coldness, no questioning. Was it possible that he could have been to town, yet not heard? Or had Bayard himself dreamed it? But he remembered that unmistakable feel of his grandfather when he had touched him; remembered how he had slumped suddenly as though the very fiber of him, knit so erect and firm for so long by pride and the

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perverse necessity of his family doom, had given way all at once, letting his skeleton rest at last. Mr. MacCallum spoke.

"Did you git to the express office?"

"We never got to town," Rafe answered. "Axletree broke just this side of Vernon. Had to uncouple the wagon and drive to Vernon and get it patched up. Too late to go in, then. We got our supplies there and come on home."

"Well, hit don't matter. You'll be goin' in next week, for Christmas," the old man said. Bayard drew a long breath and lit a cigarette, and on a draft of vivid darkness Buddy entered and came and squatted leanly in the shadowy chimney corner.

"Got that fox you were telling me about hid out yet?" Bayard asked Rafe.

"Sure. And we'll get him, this time. Maybe tomorrow. Weather's changin'."

"Snow?"

"Might be. What's it goin' to do tonight, pappy?"

"Rain," the old man answered. "Tomorrow, too. Scent won't lay good till We'n'sday. Henry!" After a moment he shouted "Henry" again, and Henry entered with a blackened kettle trailing a faint plume of vapor and a stoneware jug and a thick tumbler with a metal spoon in it. There was something domestic, womanish, about Henry, with his squat, slightly tubby figure and his mild brown eyes and his capable, unhurried hands. He it was who superintended the kitchen (he was a better cook now than Mandy) and the house, where he could be found most of the time, pottering soberly at some endless task. He visited town almost as infrequently as his father; he cared little for hunting, and his sole relaxation was making whisky, good whisky and for family consumption alone, in a secret fastness known only to his father and the Negro who assisted him, after a recipe handed down from lost generations of his usquebaugh-bred forebears. He set the kettle and the jug and the tumbler on the hearth and took the clay pipe from his father's hand and put it on the mantel and reached down a cracked cup of sugar and seven tumblers, each with a spoon in it. The old man leaned forward into the firelight and made the toddies one by one, with tedious and solemn deliberation. When he had made one around, there were two glasses left. "Ain't them other boys come in

yet?" he asked. Nobody answered, and he corked the jug. Henry set the two glasses back on the mantel.

Mandy came to the door presently, filling it with her homely calico expanse. "Y'all kin come on in now," she said, and as she turned, waddling, Bayard spoke to her and she stopped as the men rose and trooped from the room. The old man was straight as an Indian, and with the exception of Buddy's lean and fluid length, he towered above his sons by a head. Mandy waited beside the door and gave Bayard her hand. "You ain't been out in a long while, now," she said. "And I bet you ain't fergot Mandy, neither."

"Sure I haven't," Bayard answered. But he had. Money, to Mandy, did not compensate for some trinket of no value which John never forgot to bring her when he came. He followed the others into the frosty darkness. Beneath his feet the ground was already stiffening; overhead the sky was brilliant with stars. He stumbled a little behind the crowding backs until Rafe opened a door into a separate building and stood aside until they had entered. This room was filled with warmth and a thin blue haze pungent with cooking odors, in which a kerosene lamp burned steadily on a long table. At one end of the table was a single chair; the other three sides were paralleled by backless wooden benches. Against the further wall was the stove, and a huge cupboard of split planks, and a woodbox. Behind the stove two Negro men and a half-grown boy sat, their faces shining with heat and their eyeballs rolling whitely; about their feet five puppies snarled with mock savageness at one another or chewed damply at the Negroes' motionless ankles or prowled about beneath the stove and the adjacent floor with blundering, aimless inquisitiveness.

"Howdy, boys," Bayard said, calling them by name, and they bobbed their heads at him with diffident flashes of teeth and polite murmurs.

"Put dem puppies up, Richud," Mandy ordered. The Negroes gathered the puppies up one by one and tumbled them into a smaller box behind the stove, where they continued to move about with sundry scratchings and bumpings and an occasional smothered protest. From time to time during the meal a head would appear, staring above the rim of the box with blinking and solemn curiosity, then vanish with an abrupt scuffling thump and more protests, and the moiling,

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infantlike noises rose again. "Hush up, dawgs! G'wan to sleep now," Richard would say, rapping on the box with his knuckles. After a while the noises ceased.

The old man took the lone chair, his sons around him and the guest; some coatless, all collarless, with their dark, saturnine faces all stamped clearly from the same die. They ate-sausage and spare ribs, and a dish of hominy and one of fried sweet potatoes, and corn bread and a molasses jug of sorghum, and Mandy poured coffee from a huge enamelware pot. In the middle of the meal the two missing ones came in-Jackson, the eldest, a man of fifty-two, with a broad, high forehead and thick brows and an expression at once dreamy and intense-a sort of shy and impractical Cincinnatus: and Stuart, forty-four and Rafe's twin. Although they were twins, there was no closer resemblance between them than between any two of the others, as though the die were too certain and made too clean an imprint to be either hurried or altered, even by nature. Stuart had none of Rafe's easy manner (Rafe was the only one of them that, by any stretch of the imagination, could have been called loquacious); on the other hand, he had much of Henry's placidity. He was a good farmer and a canny trader, and he had a respectable bank account of his own. Henry, fifty, was the second son.

They ate with silent and steady decorum, with only the barest essential words, but amicably. Mandy moved back and forth between table and stove.

Before they had finished a sudden bell-like uproar of dogs floated up from the night and seeped through the tight walls into the room. "Dar, now." The Negro Richard cocked his head. Buddy poised his coffee cup.

"Where are they, Dick?"

"Right back of de spring-house. Dey got 'im, too." Buddy rose and slid leanly from his corner.

"I'll go with you," Bayard said, rising also. The others ate steadily. Richard got a lantern down from the top of the cupboard and lit it, and the three of them passed out of the room and into the chill darkness, across which the baying of the dogs came in musical gusts, ringing as frosty glass. It was chill and dark. The house loomed, its rambling low wall broken only by the ruddy glow of the window. "Ground's about hard already," Bayard remarked.

"'Twon't freeze tonight," Buddy answered. "Will it, Dick?" "Naw, suh. Gwine rain."

"Go on," Bayard said. "I don't believe it."

"Pappy said so," Buddy replied. "Warmer'n 'twas at sundown."

"Don't feel like it, to me," Bayard insisted. They passed the wagon, motionless in the starlight, its tires glinting like satin ribbons; and the long rambling stable, from which placid munchings came and an occasional snuffing snort as the lantern passed. Then the lantern twinkled among tree trunks as the path descended. The clamor of the dogs swelled just beneath them and the ghostly shapes of them shifted in the faint glow, and in a sapling just behind the spring-house they found the 'possum curled motionless and with its eyes tightly shut, in a fork not six feet from the ground. Buddy lifted it down by the tail, unresisting. "Hell," Bayard said.

Buddy called the dogs away, and they mounted the path again. In a disused shed behind the kitchen what seemed like at least fifty eyes gleamed in matched red points as Buddy swung the lantern in and flashed it on to a cage screened with chicken wire, from which rose a rank, warm odor and in which grizzled, furry bodies moved sluggishly or swung sharp, skull-like faces into the light. He opened the door and dumped his latest captive in among its fellows and gave the lantern to Richard. They emerged. Already the sky was hazed over a little, losing some of its brittle scintillation,

The others sat in a semicircle before the blazing fire; at the old man's feet the blue-ticked hound dozed. They made room for Bayard, and Buddy squatted again in the chimney corner.

"Git 'im?" Mr. MacCallum asked.

"Yes, sir," Bayard answered. "Like lifting your hat off a nail in the wall."

The old man puffed at his pipe. "We'll give you a sho' 'nough hunt befo' you leave."

Rafe said, "How many you got now, Buddy?"

"Ain't got but fo'teen," Buddy answered.

"Fo'teen?" Henry repeated. "We won't never eat fo'teen 'possums."

"Turn 'em loose and run 'em again, then," Buddy answered, The old man puffed slowly at his pipe. The others

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smoked or chewed also, and Bayard produced his cigarettes and offered them to Buddy. Buddy shook his head.

"Buddy ain't never started yet," Rafe said.

"You haven't?" Bayard asked. "What's the matter, Buddy?" "Don't know," Buddy answered, from his shadow. "Just ain't had time to learn, I reckon."

The fire crackled and swirled; from time to time Stuart, nearest the woodbox, put another log on. The dog at the old man's feet dreamed, snuffed; soft ashes swirled on the hearth at its nose and it sneezed, waking itself, and raised its head and blinked up at the old man's face, then dozed again. They sat without words and with very little movement, their grave, aquiline faces as though carved by the firelight out of the shadowy darkness, shaped by a single thought and smoothed and colored by the same hand. The old man tapped his pipe out carefully on his palm and consulted his fat silver watch. Eight o'clock.

"We 'uns gits up at fo' o'clock, Bayard," he said. "But you don't have to git up till daylight. Henry, git the jug."

"Four o'clock," Bayard repeated, as he and Buddy undressed in the lamplit chill of the lean-to room in which, in a huge wooden bed with a faded patchwork quilt, Buddy slept. "I don't see why you bother to go to bed at all." As he spoke his breath vaporized in the chill air.

"Yes," Buddy agreed, ripping his shirt over his head and kicking his lean, race-horse shanks out of his shabby khaki pants. "Don't take long to spend the night at our house. You're comp'ny, though," he added, and in his voice was just a trace of envy and of longing. Never again after twenty-five will sleep in the morning be so golden. His preparations for slumber were simple; he removed his boots and pants and shirt and went to bed in his woolen underwear, and he now lay with only his round head in view, watching Bayard, who stood in a sleeveless jersey and short thin trunks. "You ain't goin' to sleep warm that-a-way," Buddy said. "You want one o' my heavy 'uns?"

"I'll sleep warm, I guess," Bayard answered. He blew the lamp out and groped his way to the bed, his toes curling away from the icy floor, and got in. The mattress was filled with corn shucks: it rattled beneath him, drily sibilant, and whenever he or Buddy moved at all or took a deep breath

even, the shucks shifted with small ticking sounds.

"Git that 'ere quilt tucked in good over there," Buddy advised from the darkness, expelling his breath in a short explosive sound of relaxation. He yawned, audible but invisible. "Ain't seen you in a long while," he suggested.

"That's right. Let's see, when was it? Two-three years, isn't it?"

"Nineteen fifteen," Buddy answered, "last time you and him . . ." Then he added quietly "I seen in a paper when it happened. The name. Kind of knowed right off 'twas him. It was a limey paper."

"You did? Where were you?"

"Up there," Buddy answered, "where them limeys was. Where they sent us. Flat country. Don't see how they ever git it drained enough to make a crop, with all that rain."

"Yes." Bayard's nose was like a lump of ice. He could feel his breath warming his nose a little, could almost see the pale smoke of it as he breathed; could feel the inhalation chilling his nostrils again. It seemed to him that he could feel the planks of the ceiling as they sloped down to the low wall on Buddy's side, could feel the atmosphere packed into the low corner, bitter and chill and thick, too thick for breathing, like invisible slush, and he lay beneath it. . . . He was aware of the dry ticking of shucks beneath him and discovered, so, that he was breathing in deep, troubled drafts and he wished dreadfully to be up, moving, before a fire, light; anywhere, anywhere. Buddy lay beside him in the oppressive, half-congealed solidity of the chill, talking in his slow, inarticulate idiom of the war. It was a vague, dreamy sort of tale, without beginning or end and filled with stumbling references to places wretchedly mispronounced-you got an impression of people, creatures without initiative or background or future, caught timelessly in a maze of solitary conflicting preoccupations, like bumping tops, against an imminent but incomprehensible nightmare.

"How'd you like the army, Buddy?" Bayard asked.

"Not much," Buddy answered. "Ain't enough to do. Good life for a lazy man." He mused a moment. "They gimme a charm," he added in a burst of shy, diffident confidence and sober pleasure.

"A charm?" Bayard repeated.

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"Uhuh. One of them brass gimcracks on to a colored ribbon. I aimed to show it to you, but I fergot. Do it tomorrow. That 'ere flo's too dang cold to tech till I have to. I'll watch a chance tomorrow when pappy's outen the house."

"Why? Don't he know you got it?"

"He knows," Buddy answered. "Only he don't like it because he claims it's a Yankee charm. Rafe says pappy and Stonewall Jackson ain't never surrendered."

"Yes," Bayard repeated. Buddy ceased talking and presently he sighed again, emptying his body for sleep. But Bayard lay rigidly on his back, his eyes wide open. It was like being drunk; whenever you close your eyes, the room starts going round and round, and so you lie rigid in the dark with your eyes wide open, not to get sick. Buddy had ceased talking and his breathing had become longer, steady and regular. The shucks shifted with sibilant complaint as Bayard turned slowly on to his side.

Buddy breathed on in the darkness, steadily and peacefully. Bayard could hear his own breathing also, but above it, all around it, enclosing him, that other breathing. As though he were one thing breathing with restrained, laboring pants, within himself breathing with Buddy's breathing; using up all the air so that the lesser thing must pant for it. Meanwhile the greater thing breathed deeply and steadily and unawares, asleep, remote; ay, perhaps dead. Perhaps he was dead, and he recalled that morning, relived it with strained attention from the time he had seen the first tracer-smoke until, from his steep bank, he watched the flame burst like the gay flapping of an orange pennon from the nose of John's Camel and saw his brother's familiar gesture and the sudden awkward sprawl of his plunging body as it lost equilibrium in mid-air; relived it again as you might run over a printed, oft-read tale, trying to remember, feel, a bullet going into his own body or head that might have slain him at the same instant. That would account for it, would explain so much; that he too was dead and this was hell, through which he moved for ever and ever with an illusion of quickness, seeking his brother who in turn was somewhere seeking him, never the two to meet. He turned on to his back again; the shucks whispered beneath him with dry derision.

The house was full of noises; to his sharpened senses the

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silence was myriad: the dry agony of wood in the black frost; the ticking of shucks as he breathed; the very atmosphere itself like slush ice in the vise of the cold, oppressing his lungs. His feet were cold, his limbs sweated with it, and about his hot heart his body was rigid and shivering, and he raised his naked arms above the covers and lay for a time with the cold like a leaden cast on them. And all the while Buddy's steady breathing and his own restrained and panting breath, both sourceless yet involved one with the other.

Beneath the covers again his arms were cold across his chest and his hands were like ice on his ribs, and he moved with infinite caution while the chill encroached from his shoulders downward and the hidden shucks chattered at him, and swung his legs to the floor. He knew where the door was and he groped his way to it on curling toes. It was fastened by a wooden bar, smooth as ice, and fumbling at it he touched something else beside it, something chill and tubular and upright, and his hand slid down it and then he stood for a moment in the icy pitch darkness with the shotgun in his hands, and as he stood so, his numb fingers fumbling at the breech, he remembered the box of shells on the wooden box on which the lamp sat. A moment longer he stood so, his head bent a little and the gun in his numb hands; then he leaned it again in the corner and lifted the wooden bar from its slots carefully and without noise. The door sagged from the hinges, and after the first jarring scrape, he grasped the edge of it and lifted it back, and stood in the door.

In the sky no star showed, and the sky was the sagging corpse of itself. It lay on the earth like a deflated balloon; into it the dark shape of the kitchen rose without depth, and the trees beyond, and homely shapes like sad ghosts in the chill corpse-light---the wood-pile; a farming tool; a barrel beside the broken stoop at the kitchen door where he had stumbled, supperward. The gray chill seeped into him like water into sand, with short trickling runs; halting, groping about an obstruction, then on again, trickling at last along his unimpeded bones. He was shaking slowly and steadily with cold; beneath his hands his flesh was rough and without sensation; yet still it jerked and jerked as though something within the dead envelope of him strove to free itself. Above

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his head, on the plank roof, there sounded a single light tap, and as though at a signal the gray silence began to dissolve. He shut the door silently and returned to bed.

In the bed he lay shaking more than ever, to the cold derision of the shucks beneath him, and he lay quietly on his back, hearing the winter rain whispering on the roof. There was no drumming, as when summer rain falls through the buoyant air, but a whisper of unemphatic sound, as though the atmosphere lying heavily on the roof dissolved there and dripped sluggishly and steadily from the eaves. His blood ran again, and the covers felt like iron or like ice; while he lay motionless beneath the rain his blood warmed yet more, until at last his body ceased trembling and he lay presently in something like a tortured and fitful doze, surrounded by coiling images and shapes of stubborn despair and the ceaseless striving for . . . not vindication so much as comprehension; a hand, no matter whose, to touch him out of his black chaos. He would spurn it, of course, but it would restore his cold sufficiency again.

The rain dripped on, dripped and dripped; beside him Buddy breathed placidly and steadily: he had not even changed his position. At times Bayard dozed fitfully: dozing, he was wide awake; waking, he lay in a hazy state filled with improbable moiling, in which there was neither relief nor rest: drop by drop the rain wore the night away, wore time away. But it was so long, so damn long. His spent blood, wearied with struggling, moved through his body in slow beats, like the rain, wearing his flesh away. It comes to all . . . Bible . . . some preacher, anyway. Maybe he knew. Sleep. It comes to all.

At last, through the walls, he heard movement. It was indistinguishable; yet he knew it was of human origin, made by people whose names and faces he knew, waking again into the world he had not been able even temporarily to lose; people to whom he was . . . and he was comforted. The sounds continued; unmistakably he heard a door, and a voice which, with a slight effort of concentration, he knew he could name; and best of all, knew that now he could rise and go where they were gathered about a crackling fire, where light was, and warmth. And he lay, at ease at last, intending to rise and go to them the next moment, putting it off a little longer while his blood beat slowly

through his body and his heart was quieted. Buddy breathed steadily beside him, and his own breath was untroubled now as Buddy's while the human sounds came murmurously into the cold room with grave and homely reassurance. It comes to all, it comes to all, his tired heart comforted him, and at last he slept.

He waked in the gray morning, his body weary and heavy and dull; his sleep had not rested him. Buddy was gone, and it still rained, though now it was a definite, purposeful sound on the roof and the air was warmer, with a rawness that probed to the very bones of him; and in his stockings and carrying his boots in his hand, he crossed the cold room where Lee and Rafe and Stuart slept, and found Rafe and Jackson before the living-room fire.

"We let you sleep," Rafe said; then he said, "Good Lord, boy, you look like a ha'nt. Didn't you sleep last night?"

"Yes, I slept all right," Bayard answered. He sat down and stamped into his boots and buckled the thongs below his knees. Jackson sat at one side of the hearth. In the shadowy corner near his feet a number of small, living creatures moiled silently, and still bent over his boots, Bayard said:

"What you got there, Jackson? What sort of puppies are them?"

"New breed I'm tryin'," Jackson answered. Rafe returned with a half a tumbler of Henry's pale amber whisky.

"Them's Ellen's pups," he said. "Git Jackson to tell you about 'em after you eat. Here, drink this. You look all wore out. Buddy must 'a' kept you awake talkin'," he added with dry irony.

Bayard drank the whisky and lit a cigarette. "Mandy's got yo' breakfast on the stove," Rafe said.

"Ellen?" Bayard repeated. "Oh, that fox. I aimed to ask about her, last night. Y'all raise her?"

"Yes. She growed up with last year's batch of puppies. Buddy caught her. And now Jackson aims to revolutionize the huntin' business with her. Aims to raise a breed of animals with a hound's wind and bottom and a fox's smartness and speed."

Bayard approached the corner and examined the small creatures with interest and curiosity. "I never saw many fox pups," he said at last, "but I never saw anything that looked like them."

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"That's what Gen'ral seems to think," Rafe answered. Jackson spat into the fire and stooped over the creatures. They knew his hands, and the moiling of them became more intense, and Bayard then noticed that they made no sound at all, not even puppy whimperings. "Hit's a experiment," Jackson explained. "The boys makes fun of 'em, but they hain't no more'n weaned, yit. You wait and see."

"Don't know what you'll do with 'em," Rafe said brutally. "They won't be big enough for work stock. Better go git yo' breakfast, Bayard."

"You wait and see," Jackson repeated. He touched the scramble of small bodies with his hands in a gentle, protective gesture. "You can't tell nothin' 'bout a dawg 'twell hit's at least two months old, can you?" he appealed to Bayard, looking up at him with his vague, intense gaze from beneath his shaggy brows.

"Go git yo' breakfast, Bayard," Rafe insisted. "Buddy's done gone and left you."

He bathed his face with icy water in a tin pan on the porch, and ate his breakfast—ham and eggs and flapjacks and sorghum—while Mandy talked to him about his brother. When he returned to the house old Mr. MacCallum was there. The puppies moiled inextricably in their corner, and the old man sat with his hands on his knees, watching them with bluff and ribald enjoyment, while Jackson sat near by in a sort of hovering concern, like a hen.

"Come hyer, boy," the old man ordered when Bayard appeared. "Hyer, Rafe, git me that 'ere bait line." Rafe went out, returning presently with a bit of pork rind on the end of a string. The old man took it and hauled the puppies ungently into the light, where they crouched abjectly-as strange a litter as Bayard had ever seen. No two of them looked alike, and none of them looked like any other living creature-neither fox nor hound, partaking of both, yet neither; and despite their soft infancy there was about them something monstrous and contradictory and obscene, here a fox's keen, cruel muzzle between the melting, sad eyes of a hound and its mild ears, there limp ears tried valiantly to stand erect and failed ignobly in flapping points; and limp, brief tails brushed over with a faint golden fuzz like the insides of chestnut burrs. As regards color, they ranged from reddish brown through an indiscriminate

brindle to pure ticked beneath a faint dun cast, and one of them had, feature for feature, old General's face in comical miniature, even to his expression of sad and dignified disillusion. "Watch 'em now," the old man directed.

He got them all facing forward; then he dangled the meat directly behind them. Not one became aware of its presence; he swept it back and forth just above their heads; not one looked up. Then he swung it directly before their eyes; still they crouched diffidently on their young, unsteady legs and gazed at the meat with curiosity but without any personal interest whatever, and fell again to moiling soundlessly among themselves.

"You can't tell nothin' about dawgs-" Jackson began. His father interrupted him.

"Now, watch." He held the puppies with one hand and with the other he forced the meat into their mouths. Immediately they surged clumsily and eagerly over his hand, but he moved the meat away and at the length of the string he dragged it along the floor just ahead of them until they had attained a sort of scrambling lope. Then in mid-floor he flicked the meat slightly aside, but without swerving the puppies blundered on and into a shadowy corner, where the wall stopped them and from which there rose presently the patient, voiceless confusion of them. Jackson crossed the floor and picked them up and brought them back to the fire.

"Now, what do you think of them, fer a pack of huntin' dawgs?" the old man demanded. "Can't smell, can't bark, and damn ef I believe they kin see."

"You can't tell nothin' about a dawg——" Jackson essayed patiently.

"Gen'ral kin," his father interrupted. "Hyer, Rafe, call Gen'ral in hyer."

Rafe went to the door and called, and presently General entered, his claws hissing a little on the bare floor and his ticked coat beaded with rain, and he stood and looked into the old man's face with grave inquiry. "Come hyer," Mr. MacCallum said, and the dog moved again, with slow dignity. At that moment he saw the puppies beneath Jackson's chair. He paused in mid stride and for a moment he stood looking at them with fascination and bafflement and a sort of grave horror; then he gave his master one hurt, reproachful look and turned and departed, his tail between his

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legs. Mr. MacCallum sat down and rumbled heavily within himself.

"You can't tell about dawgs-----" Jackson repeated. He stooped and gathered up his charges, and rose.

Mr. MacCallum continued to rumble and shake. "Well, I don't blame the old feller," he said. "Ef I had to look around on a passel of chaps like them and say to myself, 'Them's my boys'——" But Jackson was gone. The old man sat and rumbled again, with heavy enjoyment. "Yes, suh, I reckon I'd feel 'bout as proud as Gen'ral does. Rafe, han' me down my pipe."

All that day it rained, and the following day and the one after that. The dogs lurked about the house all morning, underfoot, or made brief excursions into the weather, returning to sprawl before the fire drowsing and malodorous and steaming until Henry came along and drove them out; twice from the door Bayard saw the fox, Ellen, fading with brisk diffidence across the yard. With the exception of Henry and Jackson, who had a touch of rheumatism, the others were somewhere out in the rain most of the day. But at mealtime they gathered again, shucking their wet outer garments on the porch and stamping in to thrust their muddy, smoking boots to the fire while Henry fetched the kettle and the jug. And last of all, Buddy, soaking wet.

Buddy had a way of getting his lean length up from his niche beside the chimney at any hour of the day and departing without a word, to return in two hours or six or twelve or forty-eight, during which periods and despite the presence of Jackson and Henry and usually Lee, the place had a vague air of desertion, until Bayard realized that the majority of the dogs were absent also. Hunting, they told him, when Buddy had been missing since breakfast.

"Why didn't he let me know?" Bayard demanded.

"Maybe he thought you wouldn't keer to be out in the weather," Jackson suggested.

"Buddy don't mind weather," Henry explained. "One day's like another to him."

"Nothin' ain't anything to Buddy," Lee said, in his bitter, passionate voice. He sat brooding over the fire, his womanish hands moving restlessly on his knees. "He'd spend his whole life in that 'ere river bottom, with a hunk of cold cawn bread

starts out."

to eat and a passel of dawgs fer comp'ny." He rose abruptly and quitted the room. Lee was in the late thirties. As a child he had been sickly. He had a good tenor voice and was much in demand at Sunday singings. He was supposed to be keeping company with a young woman living in the hamlet of Mount Vernon, six miles away. He spent much of his time tramping moodily and alone about the countryside.

Henry spat into the fire and jerked his head after the departing brother. "He been to Vernon lately?"

"Him and Rafe was there two days ago," Jackson answered. Bayard said, "Well, I won't melt. I wonder if I could catch

up with him now?" They pondered for a while, spitting gravely into the fire. "I misdoubt it," Jackson said at last. "Buddy's liable to be ten mile away by now. You ketch 'im next time befo' he

After that Bayard did so, and he and Buddy tried for birds in the skeletoned fields in the rain in which the guns made a flat, mournful sound that lingered in the streaming air like a spreading stain, or tried the stagnant backwaters along the river channel for duck and geese; or, accompanied now and then by Rafe, hunted 'coon and wildcat in the bottom. At times and far away, they would hear the shrill yapping of the young dogs in mad career. "There goes Ellen," Buddy would remark. Then toward the end of the week the weather cleared, and in a twilight imminent with frost and while the scent lay well on the wet earth, old General started the red fox that had baffled him so many times.

All through the night the ringing, bell-like tones quavered and swelled and echoed among the hills, and all of them save Henry followed on horseback, guided by the cries of the hounds but mostly by the old man's and Buddy's uncanny and seemingly clairvoyant skill in anticipating the course of the race. Occasionally they stopped while Buddy and his father wrangled about where the quarry would head next, but usually they agreed, apparently anticipating the animal's movements before it knew them itself; and once and again they halted their mounts on a hill and sat in the frosty starlight until the dogs' voices welled out of the darkness mournful and chiming, swelled louder and nearer and swept invisibly past, not half a mile away; faded diminishing and

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down river on that 'ere drift lawg, and him singin' away loud as he could yell."

"That 'uz Johnny, all over," Jackson agreed. "Gittin' a whoppin' big time outen ever'thing that come up."

"He was a fine boy," Mr. MacCallum said again. "Listen."

Again the hounds gave tongue in the darkness below them. The sound floated up on the chill air, died into echoes that repeated the sound again until its source was lost and the very earth itself might have found voice, grave and sad, and wild with all regret.

Christmas was two days away, and they sat again about the fire after supper; again old General dozed at his master's feet. Tomorrow was Christmas Eve and the wagon was going into town, and although with that grave and unfailing hospitality of theirs, no word had been said to Bayard about his departure, he believed that in all their minds it was taken for granted that he would return home the following day for Christmas; and, since he had not mentioned it himself, a little curiosity and quiet speculation also.

It was cold again, with a vivid chill that caused the blazing logs to pop and crackle with vicious sparks and small embers that leaped out on the floor, to be crushed out by a lazy boot, and Bayard sat drowsily, his tired muscles relaxed in cumulate waves of heat as in a warm bath and his stubborn, wakeful heart glozed over too, for the time being. Time enough tomorrow to decide whether to go or not. Perhaps he'd just stay on, without even offering that explanation which would never be demanded of him. Then he realized that Rafe, Lee, whoever went, would talk to people, would learn about that which he had not the courage to tell them.

Buddy had come out of his shadowy niche and he now squatted in the center of the semicircle, his back to the fire and his arms around his knees, with his motionless and seemingly tireless ability for sitting timelessly on his heels. He was the baby, twenty years old. His mother had been the old man's second wife, and his hazel eyes and the reddish thatch cropped close to his round head was a noticeable contrast to his brothers' brown eyes and black hair. But the old man had stamped Buddy's face as clearly as any one of the other

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boys', and despite its youth it too was like the others—aquiline and spare, reserved and grave, though a trifle ruddy with his fresh coloring and finer skin.

The others were of medium height or under, ranging from Jackson's faded, vaguely ineffectual lankness, through Henry's placid rotundity and Rafe's—Raphael Semmes he was and Stuart's poised and stocky muscularity, to Lee's thin and fiery restlessness; but Buddy with his saplinglike leanness stood eye to eye with that father who wore his seventy-seven years as though they were a thin coat. "Long, spindlin' scoundrel," the old man would say, with bluff derogation. "Keeps hisself wore to a shadder totin' around all that grub he eats." And they would sit in silence, looking at Buddy's jack-knifed length with the same identical thought; a thought which each believed peculiar to himself and which none ever divulged—that some day Buddy would marry and perpetuate the name.

Buddy also bore his father's name, though it is doubtful if any one outside the family and the War Department knew it. He had run away at seventeen and enlisted; at the infantry concentration camp in Arkansas to which he had been sent, a fellow recruit called him Virge and Buddy had fought him steadily and without anger for seven minutes: at the New Jersey embarkation depot another man had done the same thing, and Buddy had fought him, again steadily and thoroughly and without anger. In Europe, still following the deep but uncomplex compulsions of his nature, he had contrived, unwittingly perhaps, to perpetrate something which was later ascertained by Authority to have severely annoyed the enemy, for which Buddy had received his charm, as he called it. What it was he did, he could never be brought to say, and the gaud not only failing to placate his father's anger over the fact that a son of his had joined the Federal army, but on the contrary adding fuel to it, the bauble languished among Buddy's sparse effects, and his military career was never mentioned in the family circle; and now as usual Buddy squatted among them, his back to the fire and his arms around his knees, while they sat about the hearth with their bedtime toddies, talking of Christmas.

"Turkey," the old man was saying, with fine and rumbling disgust. "With a pen full of 'possums, and a river

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bottom full of squir'l and ducks, and a smokehouse full of hawg meat, you damn boys have got to go clean to town and buy a turkey fer Christmas dinner."

"Christmas ain't Christmas lessen a feller has a little somethin' different from ever' day," Jackson pointed out mildly,

"You boys jest wants a excuse to git to town and loaf all day and spend money," the old man retorted. "I've seen a sight mo' Christmases than you have, boy, and ef hit's got to be sto' bought, hit ain't Christmas."

"How 'bout townfolks?" Rafe asked. "You ain't allowin' them no Christmas a-tall."

"Don't deserve none," the old man snapped, "livin' on a little two-by-fo' lot, jam right up again' the next feller's back do', eatin' outen tin cans."

"'Sposin' they all broke up in town," Stuart said, "and moved out here and took up land; you'd hear pappy cussin' town then. You couldn't git along without town to keep folks bottled up in, pappy, and you know it."

"Buyin' turkeys," Mr. MacCallum repeated with savage disgust. "Buyin' 'em. I mind the time when I could take a gun and step out that 'ere do' and git a gobbler in thutty minutes. And a ven'son ham in a hour mo'. Why, you fellers don't know nothin' about Christmas. All **you** knows is sto' winders full of cocoanuts and Yankee popguns and sich."

"Yes, suh," Rafe said, and he winked at Bayard. "That was the biggest mistake the world ever made, when Lee surrendered. The country ain't never got over it."

The old man snorted. "I be damned ef I ain't raised the damnedest, smartest set of boys in the world. Can't tell 'em nothin', can't learn 'em nothin', can't even set in front of my own fire fer the whole passel of 'em tellin' me how to run the whole damn country. Hyer, you boys, git on to bed."

Next morning Jackson and Rafe and Stuart and Lee left for town at sunup in the wagon. Still none of them had made any sign, expressed any curiosity as to whether they would find him there when they returned that night or whether it would be another three years before they saw him again. And Bayard stood on the frost-whitened porch, smoking a cigarette in the chill, vivid sunrise, and looked after the wagon with its four muffled figures and wondered if it would be three years again, or ever. The hounds came and nuzzled about him and he dropped his hand among their icy noses

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Darkness overtook him soon, but he rode on beneath the leafless trees, along the pale road in the gathering starlight. Already Perry was thinking of stable and supper and he went on with tentative, inquiring tossings of his head, but obediently and without slackening his gait, knowing not where they were going nor why, save that it was away from home, and a little dubious, though trustfully. The chill grew in the silence and the loneliness and the monotony. Bayard reined Perry to a halt and untied the jug and drank, and fastened it to the saddle again.

The hills rose wild and black about them. No sign of any habitation, no trace of man's hand did they encounter. On all sides the hills rolled blackly away in the starlight, or when the road dipped into valleys where the ruts were already stiffening into ironlike shards that clattered beneath Perry's hooves, they stood darkly towering and sinister overhead, lifting their leafless trees against the spangled sky. Where a stream of winter seepage trickled across the road Perry's feet crackled brittlely in thin ice and Bayard slacked the reins while the pony snuffed at the water. He drank from the jug again.

He fumbled a match clumsily in his numb fingers and lit a cigarette, and pushed his sleeve back from his wrist. Eleven-thirty. "Well, Perry," his voice sounded loud and sudden in the stillness and the darkness and the cold, "I reckon we better look for a place to hole up till morning." Perry raised his head and snorted, as though he understood the words, as though he would enter the bleak loneliness in which his rider moved if he could. They went on, mounting again.

The darkness spread away, lessening a little presently where occasional fields lay in the vague starlight, breaking the monotony of trees; and after a time during which he rode with the reins slack on Perry's neck and his hands in his pockets, seeking warmth between leather and groin, a cotton house squatted beside the road, its roof dusted over with a frosty sheen as of silver. Not long, he told himself, leaning forward and laying his hand on Perry's neck, feeling the warm, tireless blood there. "House soon, Perry, if we look sharp."

Again Perry whinnied a little, as though he understood, and presently he swerved from the road, and as Bayard SAI rei aw Pe

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but still his body lay shivering and jerking with weariness and with cold. Below him Perry munched steadily and peacefully in the darkness, occasionally he stamped, and gradually the jerking of Bayard's body ceased. Before he slept he uncovered his arm and looked at the luminous dial on his wrist. One o'clock. It was already Christmas.

The sun waked him, falling in red bars through the cracks in the wall, and he lay for a while in his hard bed, with chill, bright air on his face like icy water, wondering where he was. Then he remembered, and moving, found that he was stiff with stale cold and that his blood began to move through his limbs in small pellets like bird-shot. He dragged his legs from his odorous bed, but within his boots his feet were dead, and he sat flexing his knees and ankles for some time before his feet waked as with stinging needles.

His movements were stiff and awkward and he descended the ladder slowly and gingerly into the red sun that fell like a blare of trumpets into the hallway. The sun was just above the horizon, huge and red, and housetop, fenceposts, the casual farming tools rusting about the barnyard and the dead cotton stalks where the Negro had farmed his land right up to his back door, were dusted over with frost which the sun changed to a scintillant rosy icing like that of a festive cake. Perry thrust his slender muzzle across the stall door and whinnied at his master with vaporous salutation, and Bayard spoke to him and touched his cold nose. Then he untied the sack and drank from the jug. The Negro with a milk pail appeared in the door.

"Chris'mus' gif', white folks," he said, eying the jug. Bayard gave him a drink. "Thanky, suh. You g'awn to de house to de fire. I'll feed yo' hawss. De ole woman got yo' breakfast ready." Bayard picked up the sack; at the well behind the cabin he drew a pail of icy water and splashed his face.

A fire burned on the broken hearth, amid ashes and charred wood-ends and a litter of cooking-vessels. Bayard shut the door behind him on the bright cold, and warmth and rich, stale rankness enveloped him like a drug. A woman, bent over the hearth, replied to his greeting diffidently. Three pickaninnies became utterly still in a corner and watched him with rolling eyes. One of them was a girl, in greasy

this morning and take my horse back to Mr. MacCallum's some day this week?"

"My brudder-in-law bor'd my mules," the Negro replied readily. "I ain't got but de one span, and he done bor'd dem."

"I'll pay you five dollars."

The Negro set the pail down and the woman came and got it. He scratched his head slowly. "Five dollars," Bayard repeated.

"You's in a pow'ful rush fer Chris'mus, white folks."

"Ten dollars," Bayard said impatiently. "Can't you get your mules back from your brother-in-law?"

"I reckon so. I reckon he'll bring 'em back by dinnertime. We kin go den."

"Why can't you get 'em now? Take my horse and go get 'em. I want to catch a train."

"I ain't had no Chris'mus yit, white folks. Feller workin' ev'y day of de year wants a little Chris'mus."

Bayard swore shortly and bleakly, but he said: "All right, then. Right after dinner. But you see your brother-in-law has 'em back in plenty of time."

"Dey'll be here; don't you worry about dat."

"All right. You and aunty help yourselves to the jug." "Thanky, suh."

The stale, air-tight room dulled him; the warmth was insidious to his bones, wearied and stiff after the chill night. The Negroes moved about the single room, the woman busy at the hearth with her cooking, the pickaninnies with their frugal and sorry gewgaws and filthy candy. Bayard sat in his hard chair and dozed the morning away—not asleep, but time was lost in a timeless region where he lingered unawake and into which he realized after a long while that something was trying to penetrate; watched its vain attempts with peaceful detachment. But at last it succeeded and reached him: a voice. "Dinner ready."

The Negroes drank with him, amicably, a little diffidently—two opposed concepts antipathetic by race, blood, nature and environment, touching for a moment and fused within an illusion—humankind forgetting its lust and cowardice and greed for a day. "Chris'mus," the woman murmured shyly. "Thanky, suh."

Then dinner: 'possum with yams, more gray ash cake, the dead and tasteless liquid in the coffee-pot; a dozen ba-

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Negro there nanas and jagged shards of cocoanut, the children crawling about his feet like animals, scenting the food. He realized at last that they were holding back until he had done, but he overrode them and they dined together; and at last (the mules having been miraculously returned by a yet incorporeal brother-in-law), with his depleted jug between his feet in the wagon bed, he looked once back at the cabin, at the woman standing in the door and a pale, windless drift of smoke above its chimney.

Against the mules' gaunt ribs the broken harness rattled and jingled. The air was warm, yet laced too with a thin distillation of chill that darkness would increase. The road went on across the bright land. From time to time across the shining sedge or from beyond brown and leafless woods, came the flat reports of guns; occasionally they passed other teams or horsemen or pedestrians who lifted dark, restful hands to the Negro buttoned into an army overcoat, with brief covert glances for the white man on the seat beside him. "Heyo, Chris'mus!" Beyond the yellow sedge and brown ridges the ultimate hills stood bluely against the plumbless sky. "Heyo."

They stopped and drank, and Bayard gave his companion a cigarette. The sun behind them now; no cloud, no wind, no bird in the serene pale cobalt. "Shawt days! Fo' mile mo'. Come up, mules." Between motionless willows, stubbornly green, a dry clatter of loose planks above water in murmurous flashes. The road lifted redly; pines stood against the sky in jagged bastions. They crested this, and a plateau rolled away before them with its pattern of burnished sedge and fallow, dark fields and brown woodland and now and then a house, on into shimmering azure haze, and low down on the horizon, smoke. "Two mile, now." Behind them the sun was a copper balloon tethered an hour up the sky. They drank again.

It had touched the horizon when they looked down into the final valley where the railroad's shining threads vanished among roofs and trees, and along the air to them distantly came a slow, heavy explosion. "Still celebratin'," the Negro said.

Out of the sun they descended into violet shadow where windows gleamed behind wreaths and paper bells, across stoops littered with spent firecrackers. Along the streets chil-

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dren in bright sweaters and jackets sped on shiny coasters and skates and wagons. Again a heavy explosion in the dusk ahead, and they debouched on to the square with its Sabbath calm. littered too with shattered scraps of paper. It looked the same way at home, he knew, with men and youths he had known from boyhood lounging the holiday away, drinking a little and shooting fireworks and giving nickels and dimes and quarters to Negro lads who shouted "Chris'mus gif'! Chris'mus gif'!" as they passed. And out home the tree in the parlor and the bowl of eggnog before the fire, and Simon entering his and Johnny's room on tense and clumsy tiptoe and holding his breath above the bed where they lay feigning sleep until his tenseness relaxed, whereupon they both roared "Christmas gift!" at him, to his pained disgust. "Well, I'll de-clare, ef dey ain't done caught me ag'in!" But by mid-morning he would be recovered, by dinnertime he would be in a state of affable and useless loquacity, and by nightfall completely hors de combat, with Aunt Jenny storming about the house and swearing that never again should it be turned into a barroom for trifling niggers as long as she had her strength, so help her Jupiter. And after dark, somewhere a dance, with holly and mistletoe and paper streamers, and the girls he had always known with their new bracelets and watches and fans amid lights and music and glittering laughter...

A small group stood on a corner, and as the wagon passed and preceded by an abrupt scurrying, yellow flame was stenciled on the twilight and the heavy explosion reverberated in sluggish echoes between the silent walls. The mules quickened against the collars and the wagon rattled on. Through the dusk now, from lighted doorways where bells and wreaths hung, voices called with mellow insistence; children's voices replied, expostulant, reluctantly regretful. Then the station, where a 'bus and four or five cars stood, and Bayard descended and the Negro lifted down the sack.

"Much obliged," Bayard said. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, white folks."

In the waiting-room a stove glowed red hot, and about the room stood cheerful groups in sleek furs and overcoats, but he did not enter. He set the sack against the wall and tramped up and down the platform, warming his blood again. In both directions along the tracks green switch-lights

were steady in the dusk; a hands-breadth above the western trees the evening star was like an electric bulb in a glass wall. He tramped back and forth, glancing into the ruddy windows, into the waiting-room where the cheerful groups in their furs and overcoats gesticulated with festive and soundless animation, and into the colored waiting-room, whose occupants sat patiently and murmurously about the stove in the dingy light. As he turned here a voice spoke diffidently from the shadow beside the door. "Chris'mus gif', boss." He took a coin from his pocket without stopping. Again from the square a firecracker exploded heavily, and above the trees a rocket arced, hung for a moment, then opened like a fist, spreading its golden and fading fingers on the tranquil indigo sky without a sound.

Then the train came and brought its lighted windows to a jarring halt, and he picked up his sack again and in the midst of a cheerful throng shouting good-byes and holiday greetings and messages to absent ones, he got aboard. Unshaven, in his scarred boots and stained khaki pants, and his shabby, smokecolored tweed jacket and his disreputable felt hat, he found a vacant seat and stowed the jug away beneath his legs.

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PART FIVE

". . . and since the essence of spring is loneliness and a little sadness and a sense of mild frustration, I suppose you do get a keener purification when a little nostalgia is added in for good measure. At home I always found myself remembering apple trees or green lanes or the color of the sea in other places, and I'd be sad that I couldn't be everywhere at once, or that all the spring couldn't be one spring, like Byron's ladies' mouths. But now I seem to be unified and projected upon one single and very definite object, which is something to be said for me, after all." Horace's pen ceased and he gazed at the sheet scrawled over with his practically illegible script, while the words he had just written echoed yet in his mind with a little gallant and whimsical sadness, and for the time being he had quitted the desk and the room and the town and all the crude and blatant newness into which his destiny had brought him, and again that wild and fantastic futility of his roamed unchallenged through the lonely region into which it had at last concentrated its conflicting parts. Already the thick cables along the veranda eaves would be budding into small lilac match-points, and with no effort at all he could see the lawn below the cedars, splashed with random narcissi among random jonguils, and gladioli waiting in turn to bloom.

But his body sat motionless, its hand with the arrested pen lying on the scrawled sheet. The paper lay on the yellow varnished surface of his new desk. The chair in which he sat was new too, as was the room with its dead white walls and imitation oak woodwork. All day long the sun fell on it, untempered by any shade. In the days of early spring it had been pleasant, falling as it now did through his western win-

dow and across the desk where a white hyacinth bloomed in a bowl of glazed maroon pottery. But as he sat musing, gazing out the window where, beyond a tarred roof that drank heat like a sponge and radiated it, against a brick wall a clump of ragged trees of heaven lifted shabby, diffident bloom, he dreaded the long, hot summer days of sunlight on the roof directly over him; remembered his dim and musty office at home, in which a breeze seemed always to move, with its serried rows of books dusty and undisturbed that seemed to emanate coolness and quietude even on the hottest days. And thinking of this, he was lost again from the harsh newness in which his body sat. The pen moved again.

"Perhaps fortitude is a sorry imitation of something worth while, after all, to the so many who burrow along like moles in the dark, or like owls, to whom a candle-flame is a surfeit. But not to those who carry peace along with them as the candle-flame carries light. I have always been ordered by words, but it seems that I can even restore assurance to my own cowardice by cozening it a little. I dare say you cannot read this, as usual, or reading it, it will not mean anything to you. But you will have served your purpose anyway, thou still unravished bride of quietness."-""Thou wast happier in thy cage, happier?" Horace thought, reading the words he had written and in which, as usual, he was washing one woman's linen in the house of another. A thin breeze blew suddenly into the room; there was locust on it, faintly sweet, and beneath it the paper stirred on the desk, rousing him, and suddenly, as a man waking, he looked at his watch and replaced it and wrote rapidly:

"We are glad to have little Belle with us. She likes it here; there is a whole family of little girls next door; stair-steps of tow pigtails before whom, it must be confessed, little Belle preens just a little; patronizes them, as is her birthright. Children make all the difference in the world about a house. Too bad agents are not wise enough to provide rented houses with them. Particularly one like little Belle, so grave and shining and sort of irrelevantly and intensely mature, you know. But then, you don't know her very well, do you? But we are both very glad to have her with us. I believe that Harry"—— The pen ceased, and still poised, he sought the words that so rarely eluded him, realizing as he did so that, though one can lie about others with ready and extemporaneous prompti-

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tude, to lie about oneself requires deliberation and a careful choice of expression. Then he glanced again at his watch and crossed that out and wrote: "Belle sends love, O Serene," and blotted it and folded it swiftly into an envelope and addressed and stamped it, and rose and took his hat. By running he could get it on the four o'clock train.

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In January his aunt received a post card from Bayard mailed at Tampico; a month later, from Mexico City, a wire for money. And that was the last intimation he gave that he contemplated being at any given place long enough for a communication to reach him, although from time to time he indicated by gaudy postals where he had been, after the bleak and brutal way of him. In April the card came from Rio, followed by an interval during which he seemed to have completely vanished and which Miss Jenny and Narcissa passed quietly at home, their days centered placidly about the expected child which Miss Jenny had already named John.

Miss Jenny felt that old Bayard had somehow flouted them all, had committed lese majesty toward his ancestors and the lusty glamour of the family doom by dying, as she put it, practically from the "inside out." Thus he was in something like bad odor with her, and as young Bayard was in more or less abeyance, neither flesh nor fowl, she fell to talking more and more of John. Soon after old Bayard's death, in a sudden burst of rummaging and prowling which she called winter cleaning, she had found among his mother's relics a miniature of John done by a New Orleans painter when John and Bayard were about eight. Miss Jenny remembered that there had been one of each and it seemed to her that she could remember putting them both away together when their mother died. But the other she could not find. So she left Simon to gather up the litter she had made and brought the miniature downstairs to where Narcissa sat in the office, and together they examined it.

The hair even at that early time was of a rich tawny shade, and rather long. "I remember that first day," Miss Jenny

said, "when they came home from school. Bloody as hogs, both of 'em, from fighting other boys who said they looked like girls. Their mother washed 'em and petted 'em, but they were too busy bragging to Simon and Bayard about the slaughter they had done to mind it much. 'You ought to seen the others,' Johnny kept saying. Bayard blew up, of course; said it was a damn shame to send a boy out on the street with curls down his back, and finally he bullied the poor woman into agreeing to let Simon barber 'em. And do you know what? Neither of 'em would let his hair be touched. It seems there were still a few they hadn't licked yet, and they were going to make the whole school admit that they could wear hair down to their heels if they wanted to. And I reckon they did, because after two or three more bloody days they came home once without any fresh wounds and then they let Simon cut it off while their mother sat behind the piano in the parlor and cried. And that was the last of it as long as they were in school here. I don't know what they kept on fighting folks about after they went away to school, but they found some reason. That was why we finally had to separate 'em while they were at Virginia and send Johnny to Princeton. They shot dice or something to see which one would be expelled, I think, and when Johnny lost they used to meet in New York every month or so. I found some letters in Bayard's desk that the chief of police in New York wrote to the professors at Princeton and Virginia, asking 'em not to let Bayard and Johnny come back there any more, that the professors sent on to us. And one time Bayard had to pay fifteen hundred dollars for something they did to a policeman or a waiter or something."

Miss Jenny talked on, but Narcissa was not listening. She was examining the painted face in the miniature. It was a child's face that looked at her, and it was Bayard's too, yet there was already in it, not that bleak arrogance she had come to know in Bayard's, but a sort of frank spontaneity, warm and ready and generous; and as Narcissa held the small oval in her hand while the steady blue eyes looked quietly back at her and from the whole face among its tawny curls, with its smooth skin and child's mouth, there shone like a warm radiance something sweet and merry and wild, she realized as she never had before the blind tragedy of human events. And while she sat motionless with the medallion in

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her hand and Miss Jenny thought she was looking at it, she was cherishing the child under her own heart with all the aroused constancy of her nature: it was as though already she could discern the dark shape of that doom which she had incurred, standing beside her chair, waiting and biding its time. "No, no," she whispered with passionate protest, surrounding her child with wave after wave of that strength which welled so abundantly within her as the days accumulated, manning her walls with invincible garrisons. She was even glad Miss Jenny had shown her the thing: she was now forewarned as well as forearmed.

Meanwhile Miss Jenny continued to talk about the child as Johnny and to recall anecdotes of that other John's childhood, until at last Narcissa realized that Miss Jenny was getting the two confused; and with a sort of shock she knew that Miss Jenny was getting old, that at last even her indomitable old heart was growing a little tired. It was a shock, for she had never associated senility with Miss Jenny, who was so spare and erect and brusque and uncompromising and kind, looking after the place which was not hers and to which she had been transplanted when her own alien roots in a far-away place, where customs and manners and even the very climate itself were different, had been severed violently; running it with tireless efficiency and with the assistance of only a doddering old Negro as irresponsible as a child.

But run the place she did, just as though old Bayard and young Bayard were there. But at night, when they sat before the fire in the office, while the year drew on and the night air drifted in again heavy with locust and with the song of mocking-birds and with all the renewed and timeless mischief of spring and at last even Miss Jenny admitted that they no longer needed a fire; when at these times she talked, Narcissa noticed that she no longer talked of her far-off girlhood and of Jeb Stuart with his crimson sash and his garlanded bay and his mandolin, but always of a time no further back than Bayard's and John's childhood. As though her life were closing, not into the future, but out of the past, like a spool being rewound.

And Narcissa would sit, serene again behind her forewarned bastions, listening, admiring more than ever that indomitable spirit that, born with a woman's body into a heritage of rash and heedless men and seemingly for the sole

purpose of cherishing those men to their early and violent ends, and this over a period of history which had seen brothers and husband slain in the same useless mischancing of human affairs; had seen, as in a nightmare not to be healed by either waking or sleep, the foundations of her life swept away and had her roots torn bodily from that soil where her forefathers slept trusting in the integrity of mankind-a period at which the men themselves, for all their headlong and scornful rashness, would have quailed had their parts been passive parts and their doom been waiting. And she thought how much finer that gallantry which never lowered blade to foes no sword could find; that uncomplaining steadfastness of those unsung (ay, unwept too) women than the fustian and useless glamour of the men that obscured it. "And now she is trying to make me one of them; to make of my child just another rocket to glare for a moment in the sky, then die away."

But she was serene again, and her days centered more and more as her time drew nearer, and Miss Jenny's voice was only a sound, comforting but without significance. Each week she received a whimsical, gallantly humorous letter from Horace: these too she read with tranquil detachment what she could decipher, that is. She had always found Horace's writing difficult, and parts that she could decipher meant nothing to her. But she knew that he expected that.

Then it was definitely spring again. Miss Jenny's and Isom's annual vernal altercation began, pursued its violent but harmless course in the garden beneath her window. They brought the tulip bulbs up from the cellar and set them out, Narcissa helping, and spaded up the other beds and unswaddled the roses and the transplanted jasmine. Narcissa drove into town, saw the first jonquils on the deserted lawn blooming as though she and Horace were still there, and she sent Horace a box of them, and later, of narcissi. But when the gladioli bloomed she was not going out any more save in the late afternoon or early evening, when with Miss Jenny she walked in the garden among burgeoning bloom and mocking-birds and belated thrushes where the long avenues of gloaming twilight reluctant leaned, Miss Jenny still talking of Johnny, confusing the unborn with the dead.

Early in June they received a request for money from Bayard in San Francisco, where he had at last succeeded in

being robbed. Miss Jenny sent it. "You come on home," she wired him, not telling Narcissa. "He'll come home, now," she did tell her; "you see if he don't. If for nothing else than to worry us for a while."

But a week later he still had not come home, and Miss Jenny wired him again, a night letter. But when the wire was dispatched he was in Chicago, and when it reached San Francisco he was sitting among saxophones and painted ladies and middle-aged husbands at a table littered with soiled glasses and stained with cigarette ash and spilt liquor, accompanied by two men and a girl. One of the men wore whipcord, with an army pilot's wings on his breast. The other was a stocky man in shabby serge, with gray temples and intense, visionary eyes. The girl was a slim long thing, mostly legs apparently, with a bold red mouth and cold eyes, in an ultrasmart dancing-frock, and when the other two men came across the room and spoke to Bayard she was cajoling him to drink with thinly concealed insistence. She and the aviator now danced together, and from time to time she looked back to where Bayard sat drinking steadily while the shabby man talked to him. She was saying, "I'm scared of him."

The shabby man was talking with leashed excitability, using two napkins folded lengthwise into narrow strips to illustrate something, his voice hoarse and importunate against the meaningless pandemonium of horns and drums. For a while Bayard had half listened, staring at the man with his cold eyes, but now he was watching something or some one across the room, letting the man talk on unheeded. He was drinking whisky and soda steadily, with the bottle beside him. His hand was steady enough, but his face was dead white and he was quite drunk; and looking across at him from time to time, the girl was saying to her partner: "T'm scared, I tell you. God, I didn't know what to do when you and your friend came over. Promise you won't go and leave us."

"You scared?" the aviator repeated in a jeering tone, but he too glanced back at Bayard's white, arrogant face. "I bet you don't even need a horse."

"You don't know him," the girl rejoined, and she clutched his hand and struck her body shivering against him, and though his arm tightened and his hand slid down her back a little, it was under cover of the shuffling throng in which they were wedged, and a little warily, and he said quickly:

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along the street in the June sunlight, in his slovenly alpaca coat, carrying a newspaper.

"You look like a frog, Simon," he said. "Where's Miss Jenny?"

"Yessuh," Simon agreed, "yessuh. Dey's swellin' en rejoicin' now. De little marster done arrive. Yessuh, de little marster done arrive en de ole times comin' back."

"Where's Miss Jenny?" Dr. Peabody repeated impatiently. "She in dar, tellygraftin' dat boy ter come on back here whar he belong at."

Dr. Peabody turned away and Simon watched him, a little fretted at his apathy in the face of the event. "Takes it jes' like trash," Simon mused aloud, with annoyed disparagement. "Nummine; we gwine wake 'um all up, now. Yessuh, de olden times comin' back ergain, sho'. Like in Mars' John's time, when de Cunnel wuz de young marster en de niggers fum de quawters gethered on de front lawn, wishin' Mistis en de little marster well." And he watched Dr. Peabody enter the door, and through the plate-glass window he saw him approach Miss Jenny as she stood at the counter with her message.

"Come home you fool and see your family or I will have you arrested," the message read in her firm, lucid script. "It's more than ten words," she told the operator, "but that don't matter this time. He'll come now; you watch. Or I'll send the sheriff after him, sure as his name's Sartoris."

"Yes, ma'am," the operator said. He was apparently having trouble reading it, and he looked up after a moment and was about to speak, when Miss Jenny remarked his distraction and repeated the message briskly.

"And make it stronger than that, if you want to," she added.

"Yes, ma'am," he said again, and he ducked down behind his desk, and presently and with a little mounting curiosity and impatience Miss Jenny leaned across the counter with a silver dollar in her fingers and watched him count the words three times in a sort of painful flurry.

"What's the matter, young man?" she demanded. "The government don't forbid the mentioning of a day-old child in a telegram, does it?"

The operator looked up. "Yes, ma'am, it's all right," he said at last, and she gave him the dollar and as he sat holding it

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in his hand and Miss Jenny watched him with yet more impatience, Dr. Peabody came in and touched her arm.

"Come away, Jenny," he said.

"Good morning," she said, turning at his voice. "Well, it's about time you took notice. This is the first Sartoris you've been a day late on in how many years, Loosh? And soon as I get that fool boy home, it'll be like old times again, as Simon says."

"Yes. Simon told me. Come along here."

"Let me get my change." She turned to the counter, where the operator stood with the message in one hand and the coin in the other. "Well, young man? Ain't a dollar enough?"

"Yes, ma'am," he repeated, turning on Dr. Peabody his dumb, distracted eyes. Dr. Peabody reached fatly and took the message and the coin from him.

"Come along, Jenny," he said again. Miss Jenny stood motionless for a moment, in her black silk dress and her black bonnet set squarely on her head, staring at him with her piercing old eyes that saw so much and so truly. Then she walked steadily to the door and stepped into the street and waited until he joined her, and her hand was steady too as she took the folded paper he offered. MISSISSIPPI AVIATOR it said in discreet capitals, and she returned it to him immediately and from her waist she took a small sheer handkerchief and wiped her fingers lightly.

"I don't have to read it," she said. "They never get into the papers but one way. And I know that he was somewhere he had no business being, doing something that wasn't any affair of his."

"Yes," Dr. Peabody said. He followed her to the carriage and put his hands clumsily on her as she mounted.

"Don't paw me, Loosh," she snapped; "I'm not a cripple." But he supported her elbow with his huge, gentle hand until she was seated; then he stood with his hat off while Simon laid the linen robe across her knees.

"Here," he said, extending her the silver dollar. She returned it to her bag and clicked it shut and wiped her fingers again on her handkerchief.

"Well," she said. Then: "Thank God that's the last one. For a while, anyway. Home, Simon."

Simon sat magnificently, but under the occasion he unbent

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a little. "When you gwine come out en see de young marster, Doctuh?"

"Soon, Simon," he answered, and Simon clucked to the horses and wheeled away with a flourish, his hat tilted and the whip caught smartly back. Dr. Peabody stood in the street, a shapeless hogshead of a man in a shabby alpaca coat, his hat in one hand and the folded newspaper and the yellow unsent message in the other, until Miss Jenny's straight slender back and the square indomitable angle of her bonnet had passed from sight.

But that was not the last one. One morning a week later, Simon was found in a Negro cabin in town, his grizzled head crushed in by a blunt instrument anonymously wielded.

"In whose house?" Miss Jenny demanded into the telephone. In that of a woman named Meloney Harris, the voice told her. Meloney . . . Mel . . . Belle Mitchell's face flashed before her mind, and she remembered: the mulatto girl whose smart cap and apron and lean, shining shanks had lent such an air to Belle's parties, and who had quit Belle in order to set up a beauty parlor. Miss Jenny thanked the voice and hung up the receiver.

"The old gray-headed reprobate," she said, and she went into old Bayard's office and sat down. "So that's where that church money went that he 'put out.' I wondered. . . ." She sat stiffly and uncompromisingly erect in her chair, her hands idle on her lap. "Well, that is the last one of 'em," she thought. But no, he was hardly a Sartoris: he had at least some shadow of a reason, while the others . . ."I think," Miss Jenny said, who had not spent a day in bed since she was forty years old, "that I'll be sick for a while."

And she did just exactly that. Went to bed, where she lay propped on pillows in a frivolous lace cap, and would permit no doctor to see her save Dr. Peabody, who called once informally and sat sheepishly for thirty minutes while Miss Jenny vented her invalid's spleen and the recurred anger of the salve fiasco on him. And here she held daily councils with Isom and Elnora, and at the most unexpected moments she would storm with unimpaired vigor from her window at Isom and Caspey in the yard beneath.

The child and the placid, gaily turbaned mountain who superintended his hours, spent most of the day in this room, and presently Narcissa herself; and the three of them would sit for rapt, murmurous hours in a sort of choral debauch of abnegation while the object of it slept digesting, waked, stoked himself anew, and slept again.

"He's a Sartoris, all right," Miss Jenny said, "but an improved model. He hasn't got that wild look of 'em. I believe it was the name. Bayard. We did well to name him Johnny."

"Yes," Narcissa said, watching her sleeping son with grave and tranquil serenity.

And there Miss Jenny stayed until her while was up. Three weeks it was. She set the date before she went to bed and held to it stubbornly, refusing even to rise and attend the christening. That day fell on Sunday. It was late in June and jasmine drifted into the house in steady waves. Narcissa and the nurse, in an even more gaudy turban, had brought the baby, bathed and garnished and scented in his ceremonial robes, in to her, and later she heard them drive away in the carriage, and then the house was still again. The curtains stirred peacefully at the windows, and all the peaceful scents of summer came up on the sunny breeze, and sounds-birds, somewhere a Sabbath bell, and Elnora's voice, chastened a little by her recent bereavement but still rich and mellow as she went about getting dinner. She sang sadly and endlessly and without words as she moved about the kitchen, but she broke off short when she looked around and saw Miss Jenny, looking a little frail but dressed and erect as ever, in the door.

"Miss Jenny! Whut in de worl'! You git on back to yo' bed. Here, lemme he'p you back." But Miss Jenny came firmly on.

"Where's Isom?" she demanded.

"He at de barn. You come on back to bed. I'm gwine tell Miss Narcissa on you."

"Get away," Miss Jenny said. "I'm tired of staying in the house. I'm going to town. Call Isom." Elnora protested still, but Miss Jenny insisted coldly, and Elnora went to the door and called Isom and returned, portentous with pessimistic warnings, and presently Isom entered.

"Here," Miss Jenny said, handing him the keys. "Get the car out." Isom departed and Miss Jenny followed more slowly. Elnora would have followed too, darkly solicitous,

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but Miss Jenny sent her back to her kitchen; and she crossed the yard and got in beside Isom. "And you drive this thing careful, boy," she told him, "or I'll get over there and do it myself."

When they reached town, from slender spires rising among trees, against the puffy clouds of summer, bells were ringing lazily. At the edge of town Miss Jenny bade Isom turn into a grassy lane and they followed this and stopped presently before the iron gates to the cemetery. "I want to see if they fixed Simon all right," she explained. "I'm not going to church today: I've been shut up between walls long enough." Just from the prospect she got a mild exhilaration, like that of a small boy playing out of school.

The Negro burying-ground lay beyond the cemetery proper, and Isom led her to Simon's grave. Simon's burying society had taken care of him, and after three weeks the mound was still heaped with floral designs from which the blooms had fallen, leaving a rank, lean mass of stems and peacefully rusting wire skeletons. Elnora, some one, had been before her, and the grave was bordered with tedious rows of broken gaudy bits of crockery and of colored glass. "I reckon he'll have to have a headstone too," Miss Jenny said aloud, and turning, saw Isom hauling his overalled legs into a tree about which two catbirds whirled and darted in scolding circles. "You, Isom."

"Yessum." Isom dropped obediently to the ground and the birds threatened him with a final burst of hysterical profanity. They entered the white folks' section and passed now between marble shapes bearing names that she knew well, and dates in stark and peaceful simplicity in the impervious stone. Now and then they were surmounted by symbolical urns and doves and surrounded by clipped, tended sward green against the blanched marble and the blue dappled sky and the black cedars from amid which doves crooned, endlessly reiterant. Here and there bright unfaded flowers lay in random bursts against the pattern of white and green, and presently John Sartoris lifted his stone back and his fulsome gesture amid a clump of cedars beyond which the bluff sheared sharply away into the valley.

Bayard's grave too was a shapeless mass of withered flowers, and Miss Jenny had Isom clear them off and carry them away. The masons were preparing to lay the curbing around

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it, and the headstone itself sat near by beneath a canvas covering. She lifted the canvas and read the clean, new lettering: Bayard Sartoris. March 16, 1893—June 11, 1920. That was better. Simple: no Sartoris man to invent bombast to put on it. Can't even lie dead in the ground without strutting and swaggering. Beside the grave was a second headstone, like the other save for the inscription. But the Sartoris touch was here, despite the fact that there was no grave to accompany it; and the whole thing was like a boastful voice in an empty church. Yet withal there was something else, as though the merry wild spirit of him who had laughed away so much of his heritage of humorless and fustian vainglory managed somehow even yet, though his bones lay in an anonymous grave beyond seas, to soften the arrogant gesture with which they had bade him farewell:

LIEUT. JOHN SARTORIS, R.A.F.

Killed in action, July 5, 1918

'I bare him on eagles' wings and brought him unto Me'

A faint breeze soughed in the cedars like a long sigh, and the branches moved gravely in it. Across the spaced tranquillity of the marble shapes the doves crooned their endless rising inflections. Isom returned for another armful of withered flowers and bore it away.

Old Bayard's headstone was simple too, having been born, as he had, too late for one war and too soon for the next, and she thought what a joke They had played on him—forbidding him opportunities for swashbuckling and then denying him the privilege of being buried by men, who would have invented vainglory for him. The cedars had almost overgrown his son John's and John's wife's graves. Sunlight reached them only in splashes, dappling the weathered stone with fitful stipplings; only with difficulty could the inscription have been deciphered. But she knew what it would be, what with the virus, the inspiration and example of that one which dominated them all, which gave the whole place, in which weary people were supposed to be resting, an orotund solemnity having no more to do with mortality than the bindings

of books have to do with their characters, and beneath which the headstones of the wives whom they had dragged into their arrogant orbits were, despite their pompous genealogical references, modest and effacing as the song of thrushes beneath the eyrie of an eagle.

He stood on a stone pedestal, in his frock coat and bareheaded, one leg slightly advanced and one hand resting lightly on the stone pylon beside him. His head was lifted a little in that gesture of haughty pride which repeated itself generation after generation with a fateful fidelity, his back to the world and his carven eyes gazing out across the valley where his railroad ran, and the blue changeless hills beyond, and beyond that, the ramparts of infinity itself. The pedestal and effigy were mottled with seasons of rain and sun and with drippings from the cedar branches, and the bold carving of the letters was bleared with mold, yet still decipherable:

> COLONEL JOHN SARTORIS, C.S.A. 1823 1876 Soldier, Statesman, Citizen of the World

> > For man's enlightenment he lived By man's ingratitude he died

Pause here, son of sorrow; remember death

This inscription had caused some furore on the part of the slayer's family, and a formal protest had followed. But in complying with popular opinion, old Bayard had had his revenge: he caused the line "By man's ingratitude he died" to be chiseled crudely out, and added beneath it: "Fell at the hand of — Redlaw, Sept. 4, 1876."

Miss Jenny stood for a time, musing, a slender, erect figure in black silk and a small, uncompromising black bonnet. The wind drew among the cedars in long sighs, and steadily as pulses the sad hopeless reiteration of the doves came along the sunny air. Isom returned for the last armful of dead flowers, and looking out across the marble vistas where the shadows of noon moved, she watched a group of children playing quietly and a little stiffly in their bright Sunday finery, among the tranquil dead. Well, it was the last one, at last, gathered in solemn conclave about the dying rever-

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"Yessum, I'm afraid so. My vacation hasn't come due, yet."

"Well, at this rate you'll spend it in an old men's home somewhere. Why don't you all come out and have dinner, so he can see the boy?"

"I'd like to," young Loosh answered, "but I don't have time to do all the things I want to, so I just make up my mind not to do any of 'em. Besides, I'll have to spend this afternoon fishing," he added.

"Yes," his father put in, "and choppin' up good fish with a pocket knife just to see what makes 'em go. Lemme tell you what he did this mawnin': he grabbed up that dawg that Abe shot last winter and laid its leg open and untangled them ligaments so quick that Abe not only didn't know what he was up to, but even the dawg didn't know it 'til it was too late to holler. Only you forgot to dig a little further for his soul," he added to his son.

"You don't know if he hasn't got one," young Loosh said, unruffled. "Dr. Straud has been experimenting with electricity; he says he believes the soul-----"

"Fiddlesticks," Miss Jenny interrupted. "You'd better get him a jar of Will Falls' salve to carry back to his doctor, Loosh. Well"—she glanced at the sun—"I'd better be going. If you won't come out to dinner—..."

"Thank you, ma'am," young Loosh answered.

His father said: "I brought him in to show him that collection of yours. We didn't know we looked that underfed."

"Help yourself," Miss Jenny answered. She went on, and they stood and watched her trim back until she passed out of sight beyond the cedars.

"And now there's another one," young Loosh said musingly. "Another one to grow up and keep his folks in a stew until he finally succeeds in doing what they all expect him to do. Well, maybe that Benbow blood will sort of hold him down. They're quiet folks, that girl; and Horace sort of ... and just women to raise him ..."

His father grunted. "He's got Sartoris blood in him, too."

Miss Jenny arrived home, looking a little spent, and Narcissa scolded her and at last prevailed on her to lie down after dinner. And here she had dozed while the drowsy afternoon wore away, and waked to lengthening shadows and a

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sound of piano keys touched softly below stairs. "I've slept all afternoon," she told herself, in a sort of consternation; yet she lay for a time yet while the curtains stirred faintly at the windows and the sound of the piano came up mingled with the jasmine from the garden and with the garrulous evensong of sparrows from the mulberry trees in the back vard. She rose and crossed the hall and entered Narcissa's room, where the child slept in its crib. Beside him the nurse dozed placidly. Miss Jenny tiptoed out and descended the stairs and entered the parlor and drew her chair out from behind the piano. Narcissa stopped playing.

"Do you feel rested?" she asked. "You shouldn't have done that this morning."

"Fiddlesticks," Miss Jenny rejoined. "It always does me good to see all those fool pompous men lying there with their marble mottoes and things. Thank the Lord, none of 'em will have a chance at me. I reckon the Lord knows His business, but I declare, sometimes . . . Play something."

Narcissa obeyed, touching the keys softly, and Miss Jenny sat listening for a while. The evening drew subtly onward; the shadows in the room grew more and more palpable. Outside the sparrows gossiped in shrill clouds. From the garden jasmine came in to them steady as breathing, and presently Miss Jenny roused and began to talk of the child. Narcissa played quietly on, her white dress with its black ribbon at the waist vaguely luminous in the dusk, with a hushed sheen like wax. Jasmine drifted and drifted; the sparrows were still now, and Miss Jenny talked on in the twilight about little Johnny while Narcissa played with rapt inattention, as though she were not listening. Then, without ceasing and without turning her head, she said:

"He isn't John. He's Benbow Sartoris." "What?"

"His name is Benbow Sartoris," she repeated,

Miss Jenny sat quite still for a moment. In the next room Elnora moved about, laying the table for supper. "And do you think that'll do any good?" Miss Jenny demanded. "Do you think you can change one of 'em with a name?"

The music went on in the dusk softly; the dusk was peopled with ghosts of glamorous and old disastrous things. And if they were just glamorous enough, there was sure to be a Sartoris in them, and then they were sure to be disastrous.

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ed if a Pawns. But the Player, and the game He plays . . . He must have a name for His pawns, though. But perhaps Sartoris is the game itself—a game outmoded and played with pawns shaped too late and to an old dead pattern, and of which the Player Himself is a little wearied. For there is death in the sound of it, and a glamorous fatality, like silver pennons downrushing at sunset, or a dying fall of horns along the road to Roncevaux.

"Do you think," Miss Jenny repeated, "that because his name is Benbow, he'll be any less a Sartoris and a scoundrel and a fool?"

Narcissa played on as though she were not listening. Then she turned her head and without stopping her hands she smiled at Miss Jenny quietly, a little dreamily, with serene, fond detachment. Beyond Miss Jenny's trim, fading head the maroon curtains hung motionless; beyond the window evening was a windless lilac dream, foster dam of quietude and peace.

Most of us are familiar with the circumstances under which Faulkner wrote Sartoris-and Robert Cantwell's essay. written for an earlier Signet edition, has long served as a valuable landmark in Faulkner scholarship. We are familiar with the significance of the dedication to Sherwood Anderson, who had previously said to young Faulkner, down in New Orleans, "You're a country boy, and all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from; but that's all right too." We are also familiar with the extent to which Faulkner thus came to rediscover the inexhaustible storehouse of raw materials for fiction in the factual-legendary-mythical history and genealogy of his own land and family. All these raw materials had been made available to him throughout his youth. Daily talk and conversation intermingled history, folklore, gossip, and tall tales-and even salted them with wry wit.

But by the time Sherwood Anderson sent him home, after the manner of the prodigal son, Faulkner had acquired a new perspective on his heritage. He had suffered through at least the peripheral experiences of the First World War while completing his training as an aviator. After the war. he had also suffered through the familiar disillusionments of the returning soldier and had found that he was unable to settle down in his hometown of Oxford, Mississippi. Almost desperately, he had tried to establish himself where he did not belong, among the Bohemian writers and painters in New Orleans. Still desperately, he had given up that life to work and loaf for a time in New York City. Then he had gotten the wanderlust out of his system by working his passage to Europe aboard a freighter, had tasted life in Rome, and had even looked in on Left-Bank writers in Paris. These experiences not only provided him with an increasingly detached and critical perspective on his native South but also heightened his passionate love for his Southern heritage. Only when he began writing Sartoris, however, did he come to grips with and explore the problem of how he might, could, would, should, give artistic treatment to narrative materials so intimately associated with his past and present.

It is not unfair to view *Sartoris* as Faulkner's third apprentice-novel, similar in its uncertainties and weaknesses to *Soldiers' Pay* and *Mosquitoes*, save that this time his

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viewpoint more clearly recognizes the inseparability of human weaknesses and strengths, of positives and negatives. of good and evil. In his first two novels his primary goal was to vent spleen through harsh uses of satire and sarcasm for purposes of negation. But when he turned to a fictional handling of his own family history, his own regional history, perhaps he felt the need for interweaving implied affirmations with negations. If by this time he had acquired enough perspective to realize that good and evil are always inextricably bound up with what he later called "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself," so much the better for his art. But any reader who is troubled by the many artistic flaws and weaknesses in Sartoris may well imagine that some of Faulkner's difficulties were caused by his trying to crowd in too many disparate elements; too many pieces of characterization, scene, event, incident, episode. Some of the pieces, thrown together in helter-skelter fashion like remainders of an uncompleted jigsaw puzzle, simply do not fit. Perhaps Sartoris became the matrix narrative for the chronicles of Yoknapatawpha County partly because it contained, even after Faulkner's patient revisions, so many leftovers; so many pieces of unfinished business.

Consider, for example, a few parts of Sartoris that are insufficiently assimilated. Remember the entire sequence of events involving the wen on old Bayard Sartoris' face, and the consternation of at least three professional doctors over the success with which the wen was removed by the magical salve of old man Falls. It is an amusing anecdote, but that is all that may be said for it. By contrast the sustained episode involving young Bayard Sartoris' visit of several days with the McCallum family is partially interlocked with the central action. But even here the pastoral occupations of the McCallums divert Faulkner so strongly that he neither justifies the disproportionate length of the digression nor manages to articulate it sufficiently. Different in kind, and yet once again inadequately fitted as parts within the whole, are the scattered episodes involving the one-sided love affair of Byron Snopes. Faulkner later seemed to grant the inadequacy of that handling when he returned to Byron and Narcissa for purposes of making out of the same materials an important short story entitled "There Was a Queen." Similarly, Horace Benbow's involvement with Belle Mitchell

ought to help any reader recognize other and later ironies that are closely related but only implied. For example, Miss Jenny has this much in common with old man Falls: each one tells and retells different stories about "harebrained" pranks or even crimes committed by the Sartoris brothers during and after the War Between the States, tells and retells until even the darkest facts become glamorous legends and myths. To them it does not matter whether the facts involve breaking through enemy lines in quest of coffee and anchovies or bursting into a boardinghouse to shoot and kill two carpetbaggers who are trying to control the Negro vote.

Once again the immediate point for readers of Sartoris to remember is that the "romance" thus attached to the history of the gallant Sartorises—and by extension to the entire history of the South—is represented by Faulkner as an element mistakenly added through the rhetoric of retellings. Faulkner, sadly understanding these romantic transformations of facts into myths—and even admiring courage as courage no matter how grossly misused—permits the play of his ironies to assign values that are predominantly corrective; values that handle, antiromantically, those details that the Sartorises have romanticized.

Just as soon as the reader begins to understand and pay careful attention to these controlling Faulknerian ironies, it is possible to appreciate that many other analogous elements of "romance" are also brought under antiromantic consideration in such ways that they extend Faulkner's thematic concerns. Although Miss Jenny is endowed by her creator with her own fondness for ironies so that she may at times serve Faulkner as mouthpiece, or persona, she is not permitted to recognize her own capacities for romanticizing. Honoring her as the strongest character in this narrative, Faulkner still finds room for being amused by the variations in her peculiar searches for romance. Remember, for instance, this passage:

She enjoyed humanity in its more colorful mutations, preferring lively romance to the most impeccable of dun fact, so she took in the more lurid afternoon paper . . . and read with cold avidity accounts of arson and murder and violent dissolution and adultery . . . [and, a few years later] diversion in the form of bootleggers' wars . . .

when Belle and Horace are entangled in each other's arms lip-lapping love words:

She said, "Come here," and he went to her, and in the dusk she was again tragic and young and familiar with a haunting sense of loss, and he knew the sad fecundity of the world and time's hopeful unillusion that fools itself. "I want to have your child, Horace," she said, and then her own child came up the hall

Narcissa's romantic love for the dead brother of young Bayard is not easily transferred to Bayard, who repels Narcissa more than he attracts. But given the choice between loving Byron Snopes or Dr. Alford, after she has lost Horace to Belle, Narcissa likes the romantic sense of inevitability, which seems to elevate her to the tragical position of a self-sacrificial martyr and mother of more Sartorises.

Another element of romance is interwoven more subtly here because it involves a delicate target for satire: the convenient manner in which the Sartorises assume that whatever happens to them is somehow a part of their fate, somehow an expression of God's will. Faulkner's quietly ironic handling of human self-excusings that dodge responsibilities through invoking such words as "fate" and "doom" and "God" has caused many readers and critics to assume, mistakenly, that Faulkner himself must have been a fatalist. It would be nearer the truth to say that Faulkner consistently represents human beings as meeting crises at the confluence of two opposed forces; that there are times when individuals, thus tested, can and do control their immediate situations through conscious choices; that there are other times when the same individuals are victimized by forces beyond their control. Through his imaginative manipulations of character and circumstance, in his fictions, Faulkner intermingles comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy; but in Sartoris (as in all the sequels to Sartoris) he is primarily concerned with choices that are made (or not made) from a full consciousness of moral responsibility. The tragic flaw in the Sartorises is pure Greek: self-pitying hubris, or arrogance resulting from excessive pride. But none of these characters ever becomes sufficiently tragic, in the literary sense of the term, to arrive at a self-recognition scene; not even Miss Jenny. Her at-

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titude in these matters runs the gamut from preaching moral responsibility to falling back on fate. Thus the Faulknerian ironies are brought to bear on her whenever she makes the quick jump. For example, just after she has been scolding both of the living Bayards for sharing reckless and irresponsible drives through the countryside, Miss Jenny turns to Narcissa and says of old Bayard's suicidal tendencies, "He goes along for the same reason that boy himself does. Sartoris. It's in the blood." Fate! Her further remarks suggest that there must also be a tendency in the Sartoris blood to be religiously fatalistic when entering into any of these suicidal and "hare-brained" antics.

Various romantic confusions concerning religion and fate are handled ironically by Faulkner as soon as they begin to appear in the first chapter of Part One-and they are still appearing in the last chapter of Part Five. At the outset we are told that the first Bayard once hunted a pack of fox hounds through a Methodist revival meeting and then returned to ride his horse into the ensuing indignation meeting: "In a spirit of fun, purely: he believed too firmly in Providence, as all his actions clearly showed, to have any religious convictions whatever." If the ironic tone and meaning in that observation is not clearly understood, the reader has to wait only a few pages before it is given clarification. Implying similarities in these matters between that first Bayard and his brother John, Faulkner describes the latter as sleeping in the Jefferson graveyard "among martial cherubim and the useless vainglory of whatever God he did not scorn to recognize."

An echo may be heard there of a phrase of Swinburne's: "... We thank with brief thanksgiving/Whatever gods may be ..." Faulkner, not too long before he wrote Sartoris, had been an ardent admirer and reader of pagan Swinburne, and throughout his life he remained quite scornful of certain Christian postures and doctrines. But as soon as he began to combine with his paganism a homemade theism, he did it in such a peculiar way that any good Christian should easily recognize the heterodox nature of his belief. Here in Sartoris his ironic treatments of confusions between religion and fate are supplemented by his permitting Miss Jenny to keep questioning the Deity, romantically, for his shortcomings as Supervisor of the Sartorises: "Providence

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doesn't seem to have any judgment at all." Again, "I reckon the Lord knows his business, but I declare, sometimes . . ."

In his ironic handling of certain religious conventions in Sartoris, Faulkner saves his best for the description of Miss Jenny's final visit to the graveyard. She examines the graveless stone erected in memory of young Bayard's aviator twin brother—who had profanely cursed his way through life to his vainglorious death—and observes that the epitaph drawn from Exodus 19:4 and chiseled on his stone adds another typically romantic and impertinent Sartoris touch:

I bare him on eagles' wings and brought him unto Me.

Faulkner, who did not believe in the Christian concept of an afterlife in heaven or hell, continues the narration by describing this tombstone inscription as being "like a boastful voice in an empty church." Later, he lets Miss Jenny wrap up the religious romanticism of the Sartorises in the following passage:

... the dusk was peopled with ghosts of glamorous and old disastrous things. And if they were just glamorous enough, there was sure to be a Sartoris in them, and then they were sure to be disastrous. Pawns. But the Player, and the game He plays ... He must have a name for His pawns, though. But perhaps Sartoris is the game itself—a game outmoded and played with pawns shaped too late and to an old dead pattern, and of which the Player Himself is a little wearied.

The thoughts in this passage would seem to be those of Miss Jenny, who can even handle irony romantically. But there is double irony here because Faulkner's larger context implicitly undercuts whatever is romantically and fatalistically religious. The larger context also controls meanings in the sentence that rounds out this passage; a sentence wherein many readers have failed to hear the ambivalent Faulknerian tone, predominantly antiromantic: "For there is death in the sound of it [Sartoris], and a glamorous fatality, like silver pennons downrushing at sunset, or a dying fall of horns along the road to Roncevaux."

Remember that Roland's trouble, in the valley of Roncevaux, was also partly caused by excessive pride. All that is needed here to bring this sentence into proper focus is to place it alongside other passages we have considered in which

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WILLIAM FAULKNER SARTORIS

The specter of an heroic past is ever present in Sartoris, casting its ironic light upon the novel's protagonists. Heirs to the aristocratic traditions of the Old South, they have been left with only romantic rhetoric, pride, and self-pity to face a world that no longer mirrors their self-image. Bayard Sartoris seeks refuge in compulsive acts of physical courage: Horace Benbow, in a bloodless aestheticism; and Narcissa Benbow, in a desperate clinging to appearances. But for them there is to be no escape-only ultimate futility. whether in the form of violent self-destruction, or a living death in a fragile world of dreams. A brilliant dissection of a decaying social class, and a vivid evocation of both the physical landscape and psychological climate of the South, Sartoris introduces many of the key themes, places, and characters of the Faulkner canon. By itself, it stands as his first memorable projection of a vision that, as Lawrance Thompson writes, "recognizes the inseparability of human weaknesses and strengths, of positives and negatives, of good and evil . . . what [Faulkner] later called 'the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

Foreword by Robert Cantwell Afterword by Lawrance Thompson

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