

Kneel to the Rising Sun

A STORY

By Erskine Caldwell



ASHIVER went through Lonnie. He drew his hand away from his sharp chin, remembering what Clem had said. It made him feel now as if he were committing a crime by standing in Arch Gunnard's presence and allowing his hollow face to be seen.

He and Clem had been walking up the road together that afternoon on their way to the filling station when he told Clem how much he needed rations. Clem had stopped a moment to kick a rock out of the road, and said that if you work for Arch Gunnard long enough your face will be sharp enough to split the boards for your own coffin.

As Lonnie turned away to sit down on an empty box beside the gasoline pump, he could not help wishing that he could be as unafraid of Arch Gunnard as Clem was. Even if Clem was a Negro, he never hesitated to ask for rations when he needed something to eat; and when he and his family did not get enough, Clem came right out and told Arch so. Arch stood for that, but he swore that he was going to run Clem out of the county the first chance he got.

Lonnie knew without turning around that Clem was standing at the corner of the filling station with two or three other Negroes, and looking at him; but for some reason he was unable to meet Clem's eyes.

Arch Gunnard was sitting in the sun, honing his jackknife on his boot top. He glanced once or twice at Lonnie's hound, Nancy, who was lying in the middle of the road waiting for Lonnie to go home.

"That your dog, Lonnie?"

Jumping with fear, Lonnie's hand went to his chin to hide the lean face that would accuse Arch of short-rationing.

Arch snapped his fingers and the hound stood up, wagging her tail. She waited to be called.

"Mr. Arch, I——"

Arch called the dog. She began crawling toward them on her belly, wagging her tail a little faster each time Arch's fingers snapped. When she was several feet away, she turned over on her back and lay on the ground with her paws in the air.

Dudley Smith and Jim Weaver, who were leaning against the side of the filling station behind Arch, laughed. Arch spat some tobacco juice on his boot top and whetted the jackknife blade some more.

"What kind of a hound dog is that, anyway, Lonnie?" Arch said. "Looks like to me it might be a ketch hound."

Lonnie could feel Clem Henry's eyes boring into the back of his head. He wondered what Clem would do if it had been his dog Arch Gunnard was calling.

"His tail's too long for a coon hound or a bird dog, ain't it, Arch?" somebody said behind Lonnie, laughing out loud.

Everybody laughed then, including Arch. They looked at Lonnie, waiting to hear what he was going to say.

"Is he a ketch hound, Lonnie?" Arch said, snapping his fingers again.

"Mr. Arch, I——"

"Don't be ashamed of him, Lonnie, if he don't show signs of turning out to be a bird dog or a fox hound. Everybody needs a hound around that can go out and catch pigs and rabbits when you are in a hurry for them."

Arch Gunnard was getting ready to grab Nancy by the tail. Lonnie sat up, twisting his neck until he caught a glimpse of Clem at the other corner of the filling station. Clem was staring at him with unmistakable meaning, with the same look in his eyes he had had when he said that afternoon that nobody who worked for Arch Gunnard ought to stand for short-rationing. Lonnie lowered his eyes. He could not figure out how a Negro could be braver than he was.

"The trouble with this hound of yours, Lonnie, is that he's too heavy on his feet. Don't you reckon it would be a good idea to lighten the load some, being as how he's a ketch hound to begin with?"

Lonnie remembered what Clem had said he would do if Arch Gunnard ever tried to cut off his dog's tail. Lonnie knew, and Clem knew, and everybody else knew, that that would give Arch the chance he was waiting for. All Arch asked, he had said, was for Clem Henry to overstep his place just one little inch, or to talk back to him with just one little word, and he would do the rest. Everybody knew what Arch meant by that, especially if Clem did not turn and run. And Clem had not been known to run yet from anybody, after fifteen years in the county.

Arch reached down and grabbed Nancy's tail while Lonnie was wondering about Clem. Nancy acted as if she thought Arch were playing some kind of a game with her. She turned her head until she could reach Arch's hand to lick it. He cracked her on the bridge of the nose with the end of the jack-knife.

"He's a mighty playful dog, Lonnie," Arch said, catching up a shorter grip on the tail, "but his wag-pole is way too long for a dog his size."

Lonnie swallowed hard.

"Mr. Arch, she's a mighty fine rabbit tracker. I——"

"Shucks, Lonnie," he said, whetting the knife blade on the tail. "I ain't never seen a hound in all my life that needed a tail that long to hunt rabbits with. It's way too long for just an ordinary ketch hound."

Lonnie looked up hopefully at Dudley Smith and the others. None of them offered any help. It was useless for him to try to stop Arch, because Arch Gunnard would let nothing stand in his way when once he had set his head on what he wished to do. Lonnie knew that if he should let himself show any anger or resentment, Arch would drive him off the farm before sundown that night. Clem Henry was the only person there who would help him; but Clem——

The white men and Negroes at both corners of the filling station waited to see what Lonnie was going

to do about it. All of them hoped he would put up a fight for his hound. If any one ever had the nerve to stop Arch Gunnard from cutting off a dog's tail, it might put an end to it. It was plain, though, that Lonnie, who was one of Arch's share croppers, was afraid to speak up. Clem Henry might; Clem was the one to stop Arch, even if it meant trouble. And all of the men knew that Arch would insist on running Clem out of the county, or filling him full of lead.

"I reckon it's all right with you, ain't it, Lonnie?" Arch said. "I don't hear no objections."

Clem Henry stepped forward several paces, and stopped.

Arch laughed, watching Lonnie's face, and jerked Nancy to her feet. The hound cried out in pain and surprise, but Arch made her be quiet by kicking her in the belly.

Lonnie winced. A contraction in his throat almost choked him for several moments, and he had to open his mouth and fight for breath. The other white men around him were silent.

Lonnie could see the other end of the gas station from the corners of his eyes. He saw a couple of Negroes go up behind Clem and grasp his overalls. Clem spat on the ground between outspread feet, but he did not try to break away from them.

"Being as how I don't hear no objections, I reckon it's all right to go ahead and cut it off," Arch said, spitting.

Lonnie's head went forward and all he could see of Nancy were her hind feet. He had come to ask for a slab of sowbelly and some molasses, or something. Now he did not know if he could ever bring himself to ask for rations, no matter how much hungrier they became at home.

"I always make a habit of asking first," Arch said. "I wouldn't want to go and cut off a tail if a man had any objections. That wouldn't be right. No, sir, it wouldn't."

Arch caught a shorter grip on the hound's tail and placed the knife blade on it two or three inches from the rump. It looked to those who were watching him as if his mouth were watering, because tobacco juice trickled down the corners of his lips.

A noisy automobile came plowing down the road through the deep red dust. Every one looked up as it passed to see who was in it. Lonnie glanced at it, but he could not keep his eyes raised. His head fell downward once more until he could feel his sharp chin cutting into his chest. He wondered then if Arch had noticed how lean his face was.

"I keep two or three ketch hounds around the place," Arch said, honing the blade on the tail as if it were a razor strap until it brought smiles to the faces of the men grouped around him, "but I never could see no

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good reason for a ketch hound having a long tail. It only gets in their way when I send them out to catch a pig or rabbit for my supper."

Pulling with his left hand and pushing with his right, Arch Gunnard docked the hound's tail as quickly and as easily as if he were cutting a willow switch in the pasture to drive the cows home with. The dog sprang forward until she was far beyond Arch's reach, and began howling so loud she could be heard more than a mile away. She stopped once and looked back at Arch, and then she sprang to the middle of the road and began leaping and twisting in circles. All that time she was yelping and biting at the bleeding stub of her tail.

Arch leaned back and twirled the severed tail in one hand while he wiped the jack-knife blade on his boot sole. He watched Lonnie's dog chasing herself around in circles in the red dust.

Nobody had anything to say then. Lonnie tried not to watch his dog's agony, and he forced himself to keep from looking at Clem Henry. Then with his eyes squeezed shut, he wondered why he had remained on Arch Gunnard's plantation all those past years, sharecropping for a mere living on short rations, and becoming leaner and leaner all the time. He knew then how true it was what Clem had said about Arch's sharecroppers' faces becoming sharp enough to hew their own coffins. His hand went to his chin before he knew what he was doing. His hand dropped when he had felt the bones of his jaws.

As hungry as he was, he knew that even if Arch did give him some rations, there would not be nearly enough for them to eat until the following week. Hatty, his wife, was already broken down from hunger and working in the fields; and his father, Mark Newsome, stone blind for the past twenty years, was always asking him why there was never enough food in the house for them to have a solid meal. Lonnie's head fell forward a little more, and he could feel his eyes becoming damp. The pressure of his sharp chin against his chest made him so uncomfortable that he had to raise his head at last in order to ease the pain of it.

The first thing he saw was Arch Gunnard twirling Nancy's tail in his left hand. Arch Gunnard had a trunk full of dog tails at home. He had been cutting off tails ever since any one could remember; and during those years he had accumulated a collection of which he was so proud that he kept the trunk locked and the key tied around his neck on a string. On Sunday afternoons when a crowd was there, Arch showed them off.

Clem Henry had left the filling station and was walking alone down the road toward the plantation. Clem's house was in a cluster of Negro cabins below Arch's big house, and he had to pass Lonnie's house

to get there. Lonnie was on the verge of getting up and leaving when he saw Arch looking at him. He did not know whether Arch was looking at his lean face or whether he was watching to see if he was going to get up and go down the road with Clem.

The thought of leaving reminded him of his reason for being there. He had to have some rations before supper time that night, no matter how short they were.

"Mr. Arch, I—"

Arch stared at him for several seconds, appearing as if he had turned to listen to some strange sound unheard of before that moment. Lonnie bit his lips, wondering if Arch was going to say anything about how lean and hungry he looked. But Arch was thinking about something else. He slapped his hand on his leg and laughed out loud.

"I sometimes wish niggers had tails," Arch said, coiling the hound's tail into a ball and putting it into his hip pocket. "I'd a heap rather cut off nigger tails than dogs'."

Dudley Smith and somebody else behind them laughed for a brief moment. The laughter died out almost as suddenly as it had risen. The Negroes who had heard Arch shuffled their feet in the dust and moved backward. It was only a few minutes until not one was left at the gas station. They went up the road behind the red wooden building until they were out of sight.

Arch got up and stretched. The sun was getting low, and it was no longer comfortable in the October air.

"Well, I reckon I'll be getting on home to get me some supper," he said.

He walked slowly to the middle of the road and stopped to look at Nancy retreating along the ditch.

"Nobody going my way?" he asked. "What's wrong with you, Lonnie? Going home to supper, ain't you?"

Lonnie found himself jumping to his feet. His first thought was to ask for the sowbelly and molasses, and maybe some corn meal; but when he opened his mouth, the words refused to come out. He took several steps forward and shook his head. He did not know what Arch might say or do if he said "no."

"Hatty'll be looking for you," Arch said, turning his back and walking off.

He reached into his hip pocket and took out Nancy's tail. He began twirling it as he walked down the road toward the big house in the distance.

Dudley Smith went inside the filling station, and the others walked away.

After Arch had gone several hundred yards, Lonnie sat down on the box beside the gas pump from which he had got up when Arch spoke to him. He sat down heavily, his shoulders drooping, his arms falling between his outspread legs.

He did not know how long his eyes had been closed, but when he opened them, he saw Nancy lying between his feet, licking the docked tail. While he watched her he felt the sharp point of his chin cutting into his chest again. Presently the door behind him was slammed shut, and a little later he could hear Dudley Smith walking up the road toward home.

II

Lonnie had been sleeping fitfully for several hours when he suddenly found himself wide awake. Hatty shook him again. He raised himself on his elbow and tried to see into the darkness of the room. Without knowing what time it was, he was able to determine that it was still nearly two hours until sunrise.

"Lonnie," Hatty said again, trembling in the cold night air, "Lonnie, your pa ain't in the house."

Lonnie sat upright.

"How you know he ain't?" he said.

"I've been laying here wide awake ever since I got in bed, and I heard him when he went out."

"Maybe he's just stepped out for a while," Lonnie said, turning and trying to see through the bedroom window.

"I know what I'm saying, Lonnie. Your pa's been gone a heap too long."

Both of them sat without a sound for several minutes while they listened for Mark Newsome.

Lonnie got up and lit the lamp. He shivered while he was putting on his shirt, overalls, and shoes. Outside the window it was almost pitch dark, but Lonnie could feel the damp October air blowing against his face.

"I'll go help look," Hatty said.

Lonnie went to the bed and drew the covers back over her and shook his head.

"You try to get some sleep, Hatty," he said; "you can't stay wide awake the whole night through. I'll go bring Pa back."

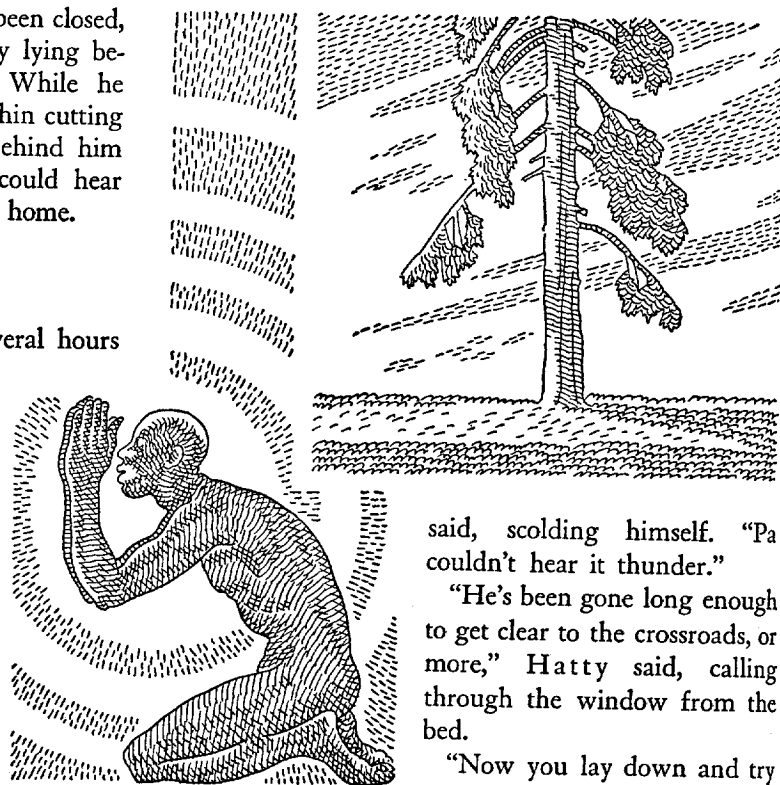
He left Hatty, blowing out the lamp, and stumbled through the dark hall, feeling his way to the front porch by touching the wall with his hands. When he got to the porch, he could still see hardly any distance, but his eyes were becoming more accustomed to the darkness. He waited a minute, listening.

Feeling his way down the steps, he walked around the corner of the house before calling Mark.

"Pa," he said loudly. "Oh, Pa!"

He stopped under the bedroom window when he realized what he had been doing.

"Now that's a fool thing for me to be doing," he



said, scolding himself. "Pa couldn't hear it thunder."

"He's been gone long enough to get clear to the crossroads, or more," Hatty said, calling through the window from the bed.

"Now you lay down and try to get some sleep," Lonnie told

her. "I'll bring him back in no time."

He could hear Nancy scratching fleas under the house, but he knew she was in no shape to help look for Mark. It would be several days before she recovered from the shock of losing her tail.

"He's been gone a long time," Hatty said, unable to be still.

Lonnie walked toward the barn, listening for some sound. Over at the big house he could hear the fattening hogs grunting and squealing, and he wished they would be quiet so he could hear other sounds. Arch Gunnard's dogs were howling occasionally, but they were not making any more noise than they usually did at night.

Lonnie went to the barn, looking inside and out. After walking around the barn, he walked into the field as far as the cotton shed. He knew it was useless, but he could not keep from calling Mark time after time.

"Now, what in the world could have become of Pa?" he said, stopping and wondering where to look next.

After he went back to the front yard, he began to feel uneasy for the first time. Mark had not acted any more strangely during the past few days than he ordinarily did, but Lonnie knew he was upset over the way Arch Gunnard was giving out short rations. Mark had even said that at the rate they were getting food, all of them would starve to death in another three months.

Lonnie left the yard and went down the road toward



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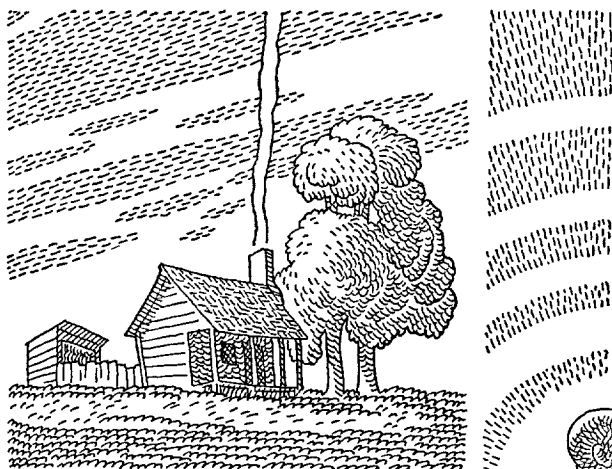
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the Negro cabins. When he got to Clem's house, he turned in and walked up the path to the door. He knocked several times and waited. There was no answer, and he rapped louder.

"Who's that?" he heard Clem say.

"It's me," Lonnie said. "I've got to see you a minute, Clem. I'm out here in the front yard."

He sat down and waited for Clem to dress and come outside. While he waited he strained his ears to catch any sound that might be in the air. Over the fields toward the big house, he could hear the fattening hogs grunt and squeal.

Clem came out and shut the door. He stood on the doorsill a moment speaking to his wife, telling her who had called him.

"What's the trouble?" Clem asked, coming down the path to Lonnie.

"Pa's not in his bed," Lonnie said, "and Hatty says he's been gone from the house over an hour now. I went out in the field, and all around the barn, but I couldn't find him anywhere."

Clem then finished buckling his overall straps, and began rolling a cigarette. He walked slowly down the path to the road. It was still dark, and it would be at least an hour before dawn made it any lighter.

"Maybe he was too hungry to lay in bed any more," Clem said. "When I saw him yesterday, he said he was so weak he didn't know if he could last much longer."

"I asked Arch last night after supper time for some rations—just a little piece of sowbelly and some molasses. He said he'd get around to letting me have some the first thing this morning."

"Why don't you tell him to give you full rations, or none?" Clem said. "If you knew you wasn't going to get none at all, you could move away and find a better man to sharecrop for, couldn't you?"

"I've been loyal to Arch Gunnard a long time now," Lonnie said. "I'd hate to haul off and leave him like that."

Clem looked at Lonnie, but he did not say anything just then. They turned up the road toward the driveway that led up to the big house. The fattening hogs were still grunting in the pen, and one of Arch's hounds came down a cotton row to smell their shoes.

"Them fattening hogs always get enough to eat," Clem said. "There's not a one of them that don't weigh seven hundred pounds, and they're getting bigger every day. Besides taking all that's thrown to them, they make a lot of meals off of the chickens that get in there to peck around."

Lonnie listened to the grunting as they turned up the driveway toward the big house.

Reckon we'd better get Arch up to help look for Pa," Lonnie said. "I hate to do it, because I know how he never likes to lose his sleep, but I'm scared Pa might stray off into the swamp and get lost for good. He couldn't hear it thunder even, and I never could find him back in there in all that tangle."

Clem said something under his breath and went on toward the barn and hog pen. He reached the pen before Lonnie.

"You'd better come here quick," Clem said, turning around to see where Lonnie was.

Lonnie ran to the hog pen. He stopped and climbed half-way up the wooden-and-wire sides of the fence. At first he could see nothing, but gradually he was able to see the moving mass of black fattening hogs on the other side of the pen. They were biting and snarling at each other like a pack of hungry hounds turned loose on a dead rabbit.

Lonnie scrambled to the top of the fence, but Clem caught him and pulled him back.

"Don't go in that hog pen that way," he said. "Them hogs are wild enough now to tear you to pieces. They're fighting over something."

Both of them ran around the corner of the pen and got to the side where the hogs were. Down under their feet on the ground Lonnie caught a glimpse of a dark mass splotched with white. He was able to see it for only a moment, because one of the hogs trampled over it.

Clem opened and closed his mouth several times before he was able to say anything. He clutched Lonnie's arm, shaking him.

"That looks like it might be your pa," he said. "I swear before goodness, it does look like it."

Lonnie still could not believe it. He climbed to the top of the fence and began kicking his feet at the hogs,

trying to drive them away. They paid no attention to Lonnie.

While he was perched there, Clem had gone to the wagon shed, and he ran back with two singletrees he had somehow managed to find in the dark. He handed one to Lonnie, poking it at him until Lonnie's attention was drawn from the hogs long enough to take it.

Clem leaped over the fence and began swinging the singletree at the hogs. Lonnie slid down beside him, yelling at them. One hog turned on Lonnie and snapped at him, and Clem struck it over the back of the neck with enough force to drive it off momentarily.

By then Lonnie was able to realize what had happened. He ran into the mass of hogs, kicking them with his heavy stiff shoes and striking them on their heads with the iron-tipped singletree. Once he felt a stinging sensation, and looked down to see one of the hogs crunching the calf of his leg; after hitting the hog until it was driven back, he paid no attention to it. He knew most of his overall leg had been torn away, because he could feel the night air on his bare wet calf.

Clem had gone ahead and had driven the hogs back. They were in a snarling circle around them, and both of them had to keep the singletrees swinging back and forth all the time to keep the hogs off. Finally Lonnie reached down and got a grip on Mark's leg. With Clem helping, Lonnie carried his father to the fence and lifted him over.

They were too much out of breath for a while to say or to do anything. The snarling fattening hogs were at the fence, biting the wood and wire, and making more noise than ever.

While Lonnie was searching in his pockets for a match, Clem struck one. He held the flame close to Mark Newsome's head.

They both stared unbelievably, and then Clem blew out the match. There was nothing said as they stared at each other in the darkness.

Clem walked several steps away, and turned and came back beside Lonnie.

"It's him, though," Clem said, sitting down on the ground. "It's him, all right."

"I reckon so," Lonnie said. He could think of nothing else to say then.

They sat on the ground, one on each side of Mark, looking into the night. There had been no sound or movement from the body at their feet since they had laid it down. The face, throat, and stomach had been completely devoured.

"You'd better go wake up Arch Gunnard," Clem said after a while.

"What for?" Lonnie asked. "He can't help none now."

"Makes no difference," Clem said persistently. "You'd

better go wake him up and let him see what there is to see. If you wait till morning, he might take it into his head to say the hogs didn't do it."

Clem turned around and looked at the big house. "A man who short-rations tenants ought to have to sit and look at that till it's buried."

"You ought not to talk like that about Arch," Lonnie said. "He's asleep in bed. He didn't have a thing to do with it."

Clem laughed a little, and threw the singletree on the ground between his feet. After letting it lay there a little while, he picked it up and began beating the earth with it.

Lonnie got to his feet slowly. He left without saying anything more and walked stiffly to the house in the darkness to wake up Arch Gunnard.

III

Arch was hard to wake up. And even after he was awake, he was in no hurry to get up. Lonnie was standing outside the bedroom window, and Arch was lying in bed six or eight feet away.

"Who told you to come and wake me up in the middle of the night?" Arch said.

"Well, Clem Henry's out here, and he said maybe you'd like to know about it."

"You tell Clem Henry I said that one of these days he's going to find himself inside out, like a coat-sleeve."

Lonnie waited doggedly. He knew Clem was right in insisting that Arch ought to wake up and come out there to see what had happened. Lonnie was afraid to go back to the barnyard and tell Clem that Arch was not coming.

"Are you still out there, Lonnie?" Arch shouted.

"I'm right here, Mr. Arch," Lonnie said.

He met Arch at the back step. On the way out to the hog pen Arch did not speak to him. Arch stalked heavily ahead, not even waiting to see if Lonnie was coming. The lantern that Arch was carrying cast long flat beams of yellow light over the ground; and when they got where Clem was waiting with Mark's body, the Negro's face shone in the night like a highly polished plowshare.

"What was Mark doing in my hog pen at night, anyway?" Arch said, shouting at them both.

Neither Clem nor Lonnie replied. Arch glared at them for not answering. But no matter how many times he looked at them, his eyes returned each time to stare at the torn body of Mark Newsome on the ground at his feet.

"There's nothing to be done now," Arch said finally. "We'll just have to wait till daylight and send for the undertaker."

He turned his back and looked sideways at Clem.

Clem stood up. "What do you think is to be coming at night?"

"I couldn't st hogs," Clem said.

"You mind yo when you talk sorry for it."

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Clem stood up and looked him straight in the eyes. "What do you want, Clem?" he said. "Who told you to be coming around my house in the middle of night?"

"I couldn't stand to see anybody eaten up by the hogs," Clem said.

"You mind your own business," Arch told him. "And when you talk to me, take off your hat, or you'll be sorry for it."

Lonnie backed away. That was how trouble between Clem and Arch always began. He had seen it start that way dozens of times before. As long as Clem turned and went away, nothing happened; but sometimes Clem had stayed right where he was and talked up to Arch just as if he had been a white man, too. Lonnie hoped it would not happen this time. Arch was already mad enough as it was, for being got out of bed in the middle of night, and Lonnie knew there was no limit to what Arch would do when he got good and mad at a Negro.

"I reckon you know how he came to get eaten up by the hogs like that," Clem said, looking straight at Arch. Arch whirled around.

"God damn you yellow-blooded—" Arch yelled.

He swung the lantern at Clem's head. Clem dodged, but the bottom of it hit his shoulder, and it was smashed to pieces. The oil splattered on the ground, igniting in the air from the flaming wick. Clem was lucky not to have it splash on his overalls.

"Now, look here—" Clem said.

"You yellow-blooded nigger," Arch said, rushing at him. "I'll teach you to talk back to me. You've got too big for your place for the last time."

"Mr. Arch, I—" Lonnie said, stepping forward partly between them. No one heard him.

Arch stood back and watched the kerosene flicker out on the ground.

"You know good and well why he got eaten up by the fattening hogs," Clem said, standing his ground. "He was so hungry that he had to get up out of bed in the middle of night and come up here in the dark trying to find something to eat. Maybe he was trying to find the smokehouse. It makes no difference. He's been on short rations like everybody else, and he was so old he didn't know where else to look for food except in your smokehouse. You know good and well that's how he got lost up here in the dark and fell in the hog pen."

The kerosene had died out completely. In the last faint flare, Arch had reached down and grabbed up the singletree that had been lying on the ground where Lonnie had dropped it. Arch raised the singletree over his head and struck with all his might at Clem. Clem dodged, but Arch drew back again quickly and landed a blow on his arm just above the elbow before he

could get out of the way. Clem's arm dropped lifelessly.

"You God damn yellow-blooded nigger!" Arch shouted. "Now's your time, you black bastard. I've just been waiting for the chance to teach you a lesson. And this's going to be one you won't never forget."

Clem felt the ground with his feet until he located the other singletree. He stooped down and got it. Raising it, he did not try to hit Arch, but held it in front of him so he could ward off Arch's blows at his head.

"Drop that singletree," Arch said.

"I won't stand here and let you beat me like that," Clem protested.

"By God, that's all I want to hear," Arch said, his mouth curling. "Nigger, your time has come, by God."

He swung once more at Clem, but Clem turned and ran toward the barn. Arch went after him a few steps and stopped. Then he threw aside the singletree and turned and ran back to the house.

Lonnie went to the fence and tried to think what was best for him to do. He knew he could not take sides with a Negro, even if Clem had helped him, and especially after Clem had talked to Arch in the way he wished he could himself; he was a white man, and to save his life he could not bear to think of turning against Arch, no matter what happened.

Presently a light burst through one of the windows of the house, and he heard Arch shouting at his wife to wake her up.

When he saw Arch's wife go to the telephone, Lonnie realized what was going to happen. She was calling up the neighbors and Arch's friends. They would not mind getting up when they found out what was about to take place.

Out behind the barn he heard Clem calling him. Leaving the yard, he felt his way out there in the dark.

"What's the trouble, Clem?" he said.

"I reckon my time has come," Clem said. "Arch Gunnard talks that way when he's good and mad. He talked just like he did that time he carried Jim Moffin off to the swamp—and Jim never came back."

"Arch wouldn't do anything like that to you, Clem," he said excitedly, but he knew better.

Clem said nothing.

"Maybe you'd better strike out for the swamp till he changes his mind and cools off some," Lonnie said. "You might be right, Clem."

Lonnie could feel Clem's eyes burning into him.

"Wouldn't be no sense in that, if you'd help me," Clem said. "Wouldn't you stand by me?"

Lonnie trembled as the meaning of Clem's suggestion became clear to him. His back was to the side of the barn, and he leaned against it while sheets of black and white passed before his eyes.

"Wouldn't you stand by me?" Clem asked again.

"I don't know what Arch would say to that."

Clem walked away several paces. He stood with his back to Lonnie while he looked across the field toward the quarter where his home was.

"I could go out here in that little patch of woods and stay till they got tired of looking for me," Clem said, turning around to see Lonnie.

"You'd better go somewhere," Lonnie said uneasily. "I know Arch Gunnard. He's hard to handle when he makes up his mind to do something. I couldn't stop him an inch. Maybe you'd better get clear out of the country."

"I couldn't do that, and leave my family down there across the field," Clem said.

"He'll get you if you don't."

"If you'd only sort of help me out a little, I would only have to go and hide out in that patch of woods a while. Looks like you could do that for me, being as how I helped you find your pa when he was in the hog pen."

Lonnie nodded, listening for sounds from the house. He continued to nod while Clem was waiting to be assured.

"If you're going to stand up for me," Clem said, "I can just go over there in the woods and wait till they get it off their minds. You won't be telling where I am, and you could say I struck out for the swamp. They wouldn't ever find me without bloodhounds."

"That's right," Lonnie said, listening for sounds of Arch coming out of the house. He did not wish to be found back there where Arch could accuse him of talking to Clem.

The moment Lonnie replied, Clem turned and ran off into the night. Lonnie went after him a few steps, as if he had suddenly changed his mind about helping him, but Clem was lost in the darkness by then.

Lonnie waited several minutes, listening to Clem crashing through the underbrush in the patch of woods a quarter of a mile across the field. When he could hear Clem no longer, he went around the barn to meet Arch.

Arch came out of the house carrying his double-barrelled shotgun. His pockets were bulging with shells.

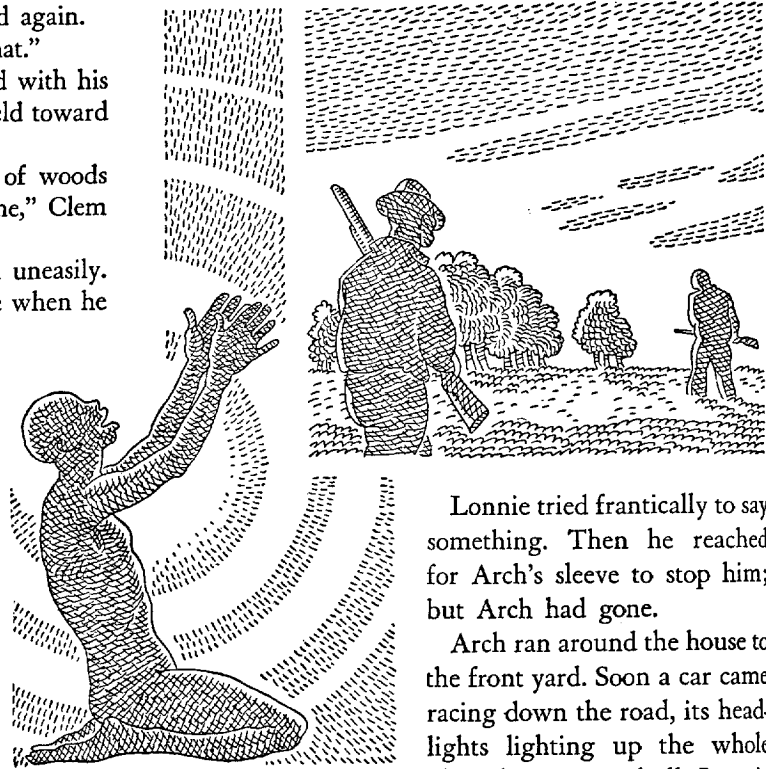
"Where is that damn nigger, Lonnie?" Arch said.

Lonnie opened his mouth, but no words came out.

"You know which way he went, don't you?"

Lonnie again tried to say something, but there were no sounds. He jumped when he found himself nodding his head to Arch.

"That's all right then," Arch said. "That's all I need to know. Dudley Smith, and Tom Hawkins, and Frank and Dave Howard, and the rest will be here in a minute, and you can stay right here so you can show us where he's hiding out."



Lonnie tried frantically to say something. Then he reached for Arch's sleeve to stop him; but Arch had gone.

Arch ran around the house to the front yard. Soon a car came racing down the road, its headlights lighting up the whole place, hog pen and all. Lonnie

knew it was probably Dudley Smith, because his was the first house in that direction, only a mile away. While he was turning into the driveway, several other automobiles came into sight, both up the road and down it.

Lonnie trembled. He was afraid Arch was going to tell him to point out where Clem had gone to hide. Then he knew Arch would. He had promised Clem he would not do that. Now, he did not know what to do. But try as he did, he could not make himself believe that Arch Gunnard would do anything more than whip Clem.

Clem had not done anything that called for lynching. He had not raped a white woman, he had not shot at a white man; he had only talked back to Arch, with his hat on. But Arch was mad enough now to do anything; he was mad enough at Clem not to stop at anything short of lynching.

The whole crowd of men was swarming around him before he realized it. And there was Arch clutching his arm and shouting into his face.

Lonnie recognized every man in the feeble dawn. They were excited, and they looked like men on the last lap of an all-night fox-hunting party. Their shotguns and pistols were held at their waists, ready for the kill.

"What's the matter with you, Lonnie?" Arch said, shouting into his ears. "Wake up and say where Clem Henry went to hide out."

Lonnie remembered looking up and seeing Frank

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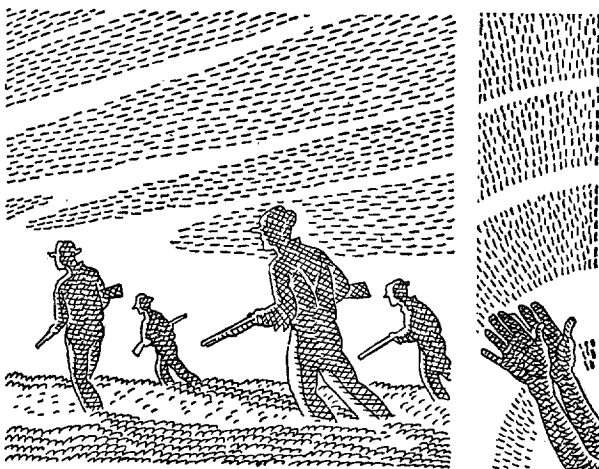
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Howard dropping yellow shells into the breach of his gun. Frank bent forward so he could hear Lonnie say where Clem was.

"You ain't going to kill Clem this time, are you, Mr. Arch?" Lonnie asked frightenedly.

"Kill him?" Dudley Smith repeated. "What do you reckon we've been waiting all this time for if it wasn't for a chance to get Clem? That nigger has had it coming to him ever since he came to this county. He's a bad nigger, and it's coming to him."

"That's right," Lonnie said. He heard himself speak, but he did not know what he was saying. "But Clem helped me find Pa when he was looking for something to eat."

Arch grabbed his shoulder and shook him until his teeth rattled. Then he realized what he had been saying.

"Now, look here, Lonnie," Arch shouted. "You must be out of your head, because you know good and well you wouldn't talk like a nigger-lover in your right mind."

"That's right," Lonnie said, trembling all over.

He could still feel the grip on his shoulder where Arch's strong fingers had hurt him.

"Did Clem go to the swamp, Lonnie?" Dudley Smith said.

Lonnie tried to shake his head; he tried to nod his head. Then Arch's fingers squeezed his thin neck. Lonnie looked at the men wild-eyed.

"Where is he hiding out, Lonnie?" Arch demanded.

Lonnie went three or four steps toward the barn. When he stopped, the men behind him pushed him forward again. He found himself being rushed behind the barn and beyond it.

"All right, Lonnie," Arch said. "Now which way?"

Lonnie pointed toward the woods where the creek was. The swamp was in the other direction.

"He said he was going to hide out in that little patch of woods along the creek over there, Mr. Arch," Lonnie said. "I reckon he's over there now."

Lonnie felt himself swept forward, and he stumbled over the rough ground trying to keep from being knocked down and trampled upon. Nobody was talking, and every one seemed to be walking on tiptoes. The gray light of early dawn was increasing enough to both hide them and to show the way ahead. Just before they reached the fringe of the woods, the men separated, and Lonnie found himself a part of the circle that was to close in on Clem.

Lonnie was alone, and there was no one to stop him, but he was unable to move forward or backward. Slowly he understood what he had done. Clem was probably up a tree somewhere in the woods ahead, but by that time he had been surrounded on all sides, and if he should attempt to run, he would be shot down like a rabbit. Lonnie sat down on a log and tried to think what to do. The sun would be up in a few more minutes, and as soon as it rose, the men would close in on the creek and Clem.

Once or twice he saw the quick flare of a match through the underbrush where some of the men were lying in wait. A whiff of cigarette smoke struck his nostrils, and he found himself wondering if Clem could smell it wherever he was in the woods. There was still no sound anywhere around him, and he knew that Arch and the rest were waiting for the sun, which was soon to come up behind him.

It was light enough by then to see plainly the rough ground and the tangled underbrush and the curling bark on the pine trees. The men had already begun to creep forward, guns raised as if stalking a deer. The woods were not large, and the crowd would be able to cover it in a few minutes at the rate the men were going forward. There was still a chance that Clem had slipped through the circle before dawn, but Lonnie felt that he was still there. He realized more sharply than ever that Clem had trusted him not to tell in which direction he had gone to hide.

Lonnie found himself moving forward, drawn into the narrowing circle. Presently he could see the men all around him in dim outline. Their eyes were searching the heavy green pine tops as they went forward from tree to tree.

The creeping forward began to work into the movement of Lonnie's body. He found himself springing forward on his toes, and his body was leaning in that direction. It was like creeping up on a rabbit. He forgot for a while what he was doing there. The springing motion in his legs seemed to be growing stronger with each step. He bent forward so far that he could

almost touch the ground with his fingers. He could not stop now.

The fifteen men were drawing closer and closer together. The dawn had broken enough to show the time on the face of a watch. The sun was beginning to color the sky above.

Lonnie was far in advance of any one else. He could not hold himself back. The strength in his legs was more than he could hold in check.

He had so long been unable to buy shells for his gun that he had forgotten how much he liked to hunt.

The sound of the men's steady creeping had become a rhythm in his ears.

"Here's the bastard!" somebody shouted, and there was a concerted crashing through the dry underbrush. Lonnie was among the first to reach the tree.

He could see everybody with guns raised and, far into the sky above, the sharply outlined face of Clem gleamed in the rising sun. His body was hugging the slender top of the pine.

Lonnie did not know who was the first to fire, but the rest of the men did not hesitate. There was a deafening roar as the shotguns and revolvers flared and smoked around the trunk of the tree. Lonnie closed his eyes; he was afraid to look at the face again. The firing continued without break. Clem hugged the tree with all his might, and then, with the far-away sound of splintering wood, the top of the tree and Clem came crashing through the limbs to the ground. The body, sprawling and torn, landed on the ground with a thud that stopped Lonnie's heart for a moment.

He turned, clutching for the support of a tree, as the firing began once more. The crumpled body was tossed time after time, like a sackful of kittens being killed with an automatic shotgun, as charges of lead were fired into it from all sides. A cloud of dust rose from the ground and drifted overhead with the choking odor of burned powder.

Lonnie did not remember how long the shooting lasted. He found himself running from tree to tree, clutching at the rough pine bark, stumbling wildly

toward the cleared ground. The sky had turned from gray to red when he emerged in the open, and as he ran, falling over the hard clods of the plowed field, he tried to keep his eyes on the house ahead.

Once he fell and found it almost impossible to rise again to his feet. He struggled to his knees, facing the round red sun. The warmth gave him the strength to rise to his feet, and he muttered unintelligibly to himself.

When he got home, Hatty was waiting for him in the yard. She had heard the shots in the woods, and she had seen him stumbling over the hard clods in the field, and she had seen him kneeling there; and she now ran trembling to him to find out what had happened.

Once in his own yard, Lonnie turned and looked for a second over his shoulder. He saw the men climbing over the fence at Arch's. Arch's wife was standing on the back porch, and she was speaking to them.

"Where's your pa, Lonnie?" Hatty said. "And what in the world was all that shooting in the woods for?"

Lonnie stumbled forward until he reached the front porch. He fell upon the steps.

"Lonnie, Lonnie!" Hatty was saying. "Wake up and tell me what in the world is the matter."

"Nothing," Lonnie said. "Nothing."

"Well, if there's nothing the matter, can't you go up to the big house and ask for a little piece of streak-of-lean? We ain't got a thing to cook for breakfast. Your pa's going to be hungrier than ever after being up walking around all night."

"What?" Lonnie shouted, jumping to his feet.

"Why, go get a little piece of streak-of-lean, Lonnie. That's all I said."

"Meat?" he said, shaking her roughly.

"Yes," she said, falling back in surprise. "Couldn't you ask Arch Gunnard for a little bit of streak-of-lean?"

Lonnie slumped down again on the steps, his hands and head falling.

"No," he said almost inaudibly. "No. I ain't hungry."

NO PROXY

By Robin Lampson

No sight or knowledge of another's disaster ever fully prepares us
 For our own: we accept the event, and we sympathize; but no other can act
 As our vicar in living, as our proxy in the learning of pain and misfortune;
 No other can substitute and receive for us experience's trauma and cicatrix.
 For pain and disaster, like death, are things we instinctively reject
 As personally irrelevant until they impale us and we purchase realization
 With our own suffering tissue and twisting nerves.

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