
B O O K S B Y

Flannery O'Connor

N O V E L S

Wise Blood

The Violent Bear It Away

S T O R I E S

A Good Man Is Hard to Find

Everything That Rises Must Converge
with an introduction by Robert Fitzgerald

N O N - F I C T I O N

Mystery and Manners
edited and with an introduction
by Robert and Sally Fitzgerald

The Habit of Being
edited and with an introduction
by Sally Fitzgerald

Flannery

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Farrar

Farrar, Straus and Giroux
19 Union Square West, New York 10003

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Distributed in Canada by Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.

Printed in the United States of America

Published in 1971 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux

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Library of Congress catalog card number: 72-171492

Paperback ISBN-13: 978-0-374-51536-2

Paperback ISBN-10: 0-374-51536-0

Designed by Herb Johnson

www.fsgbooks.com

58 60 62 64 65 63 61 59

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Wildcat

The Crop

The Turkey

The Train

The Peeler

The Heart of the Park

A Stroke of Good Fortune

Enoch and the Gorilla

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A Late Encounter with the

The Life You Save May Be

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Int

Flannery O'Connor's first published. It was entitled *Stories* and consists of the first page of the original manuscript. Iowa, bears the legend, "A t the requirements for the Department of English, in iversity of Iowa." It is dated a dedication to her teacher,

At their first meeting in h was unable to understand tongue: "Embarrassed, I ask said on a pad. She wrote: ' not a journalist. Can I come her to bring examples of h late as it was. Like Keats, w sounds in English, Flannery hension but on the page h just like Flannery herself. F yet trusting relationship. S nunciations. The stories w about human weakness, ha about having them read, an presented in the Workshop Robert Penn Warren was t at the University of Iowa; white man, and Warren cri

* Letter to Robert Giroux dat

always had a flexible and objective view of her own writing, constantly revising, and in every case improving. The will to be a writer was adamant; nothing could resist it, not even her own sensibility about her own work. Cut, alter, try it again . . . Sitting at the back of the room, silent, Flannery was more of a presence than the exuberant talkers who serenade every writing-class with their loudness. The only communicating gesture she would make was an occasional amused and shy smile at something absurd. The dreary chair she sat in glowed."

The publishing career of this unknown writer of twenty-one had already started. Flannery mailed "The Geranium" to the editors of *Accent* as early as February 1946.* They accepted it at once and printed it in their summer issue. On the basis of the stories she later incorporated into her novel-in-progress, *Wise Blood*, Mr. Engle recommended her for a prize offered by a publisher for a first novel. In the spring of 1947 she was awarded this prize—the sum of \$750, which was to serve as part of the advance against royalties if the publisher ultimately accepted the novel.

Flannery received her master's degree that summer; *Sewanee Review* published "The Train" the next spring; in June 1948 she took the important and crucial step of finding a literary agent and a lifelong friend, Elizabeth McKee. Miss McKee placed her story "The Capture" (entitled "The Turkey" in the thesis) with *Mademoiselle* in November. It was shortly after this—I was not the publisher involved with the prize—that I met Flannery O'Connor.

Robert Lowell brought her into my office late in February 1949. They had come to New York from Yaddo, the writer's colony at Saratoga Springs, where Flannery worked on *Wise Blood* and Lowell on his poems. Behind her soft-spoken speech, clear-eyed gaze and shy manner, I sensed a tremendous strength. This was the rarest kind of young writer, one who was prepared to work her utmost and knew exactly what she must do with her talent. I rather regretted, as a publisher, meeting such an interesting writer at the start of a career in which I could play no part. She told me she was committed elsewhere, and if I knew anything it was that she would

* We are indebted to Daniel Curley, former editor of *Accent*, for verifying this date.

honor her commitment. She published—Thomas Merton *Mountain* to take with her Georgia. Later I heard that she lived in Connecticut with my friend. I hoped I'd have the opportunity.

It was not until after her death how her publishing fate took shape. Her publishing relationship also developed. The details are fully and clearly in correspondence with Elizabeth McKee. Letters before she added the name of her mother, Regina O'Connor. Flannery's letters are quoted in the introduction of her executor, Robert Fitzgerald.

In her first letter (June 1946) she revealed she had been working on the novel. It will probably be two more years before she has writing habits in a letter dated June 1948. I don't have my novel outlined yet. I am doing. Like the old lady, I don't know until I see what I say; then I know. I am on the twelfth chapter now. I suppose I am past the 50,000 word mark. Only a few won't have to be cut. It would discourage me. Anyway I yearn to go about it.

At the end of the year, my agent advised her to submit a letter of definite commitment and payment. On December 15, 1948: "Perhaps in January and perhaps before the end of the year. I have decided, however, not to do anything off in a hurry." On January 15, 1949: "Here are the first nine chapters. They are not finished but they are finished."

there was no response by February 5: "I'll be anxious to hear the outcome . . ."

She heard it on February 16 and it was not to her liking. One can sympathize with the publisher's problem at this early stage of composition. *Wise Blood* was a strange book, as Flannery would have been the first to acknowledge. What she could not accept was the tone of the publisher's letter. He said he thought she was a pretty straight shooter, that she had an astonishing gift, but that some aspects of the book were obscured by her habit of rewriting over and over again. To be honest, he added, he sensed a kind of aloneness in the book, as if she were writing out of her own experience, and consciously limiting this experience. He wished she would sit down and tell him what was what. He hoped she didn't mind his forthright letter.

Flannery wrote at once to Miss McKee: "Please tell me what is behind this Sears-Roebuck Straight Shooter approach. I presume . . . either that [the publisher] will not take the novel as it will be if left to my fiendish care (it will be essentially as it is), or that [the publisher] would like to rescue it at this point and train it into a conventional novel . . . The letter is addressed to a slightly dim-witted Campfire Girl, and I cannot look forward with composure to a lifetime of others like them."

At the same time, in an effort to honor her commitment, she answered the publisher's letter next day: "I can only hope that in the finished novel the direction will be clearer . . . I feel that whatever virtues the novel may have are very much connected with the limitations you mention. I am not writing a conventional novel, and I think that the quality of the novel I write will derive precisely from the peculiarity or aloneness, if you will, of the experience I write from . . . In short, I am amenable to criticism but only within the sphere of what I am trying to do; I will not pretend to do otherwise. The finished book, though I hope less angular, will be just as odd if not odder than the nine chapters you now have."

Matters had not improved much by the following April, when she wrote Paul Engle to tell him that "other publishers who have read the two printed chapters"—she was referring to "The Train" and to the publication that winter of "The Heart of the Park" in

Partisan Review—"are interested in meeting with the dissatisfaction to the conclusion that I will show him with the phrase." She said, "My need to work this novel is great, although you may feel that I am wasting time, but I cannot work faster than I rewrite as much as I do." She said she had been turned down for the novel. Engle had recommended her to Paul Lowell, Philip Rahv and Robert Lowell.

I met her again in March 1951. Juliana Fitzgerald in Ridgeville, Virginia, Flannery was in, and she had godparents, renouncing the Catholicism it is to be regretted that she could not meet Sister Mary Julian in 1970.) She had written on the novel and was still looking for a literary agent soon informed that the first chapters had not allayed his interest. She had obtained a release from the publisher for *Wise Blood*.

The strength I sensed in her was an incredible strain put on her during her journey home for Christmas 1950. She was in and out of Emory Hospital, unable to climb stairs, and she was taken to "Andalusia," their country home, to be their home and Flannery's home. In September Flannery was seen by Bob Giroux, he said we had taken the manuscript up to the first floor, but nothing magic in that date. She was making progress at this time, but I did not see her last until the first of the year 1951, later (September 1, 1951) she

"Bob Giroux and Caroline Gordon made some suggestions for improving my book and I have been working on these and have by now about come up with another draft of it."

By the end of the year the novel was ready, and we began to prepare for publication. Flannery had less vanity than anyone I have ever known. When I asked her for a photograph to use on the book jacket, I expected a picture taken before her illness. The new one she sent was not unattractive, and she looked out at the reader with that clear-eyed gaze of hers, but her hair had not fully grown back nor had the puffiness induced by cortisone wholly subsided. The photograph was widely reproduced when *Wise Blood* was published in May 1952. I was disappointed by the reviews more than she was; they all recognized her power but missed her point.

In the five years between 1947, when a draft of the first chapter of *Wise Blood* was written, and 1952, Flannery's development was amazing. In the three years following, she wrote better and better. Starting late in 1952 with "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," a masterpiece of a story, she turned out one beauty after another, including "The River," "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," "The Displaced Person," "The Artificial Nigger" and "Good Country People." Catherine Carver, whom we were fortunate enough to have as an editor, and who worked with Flannery at this period, brought each new story into my office with more or less the same remark, "Wait till you read this one!" Early in 1955 Flannery completed work on her second book, a collection of these stories which she entitled *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. In January we sent it to press, having set publication for June. I remember our amusement at Evelyn Waugh's reaction to the advance proofs we sent him: "If these stories are in fact the work of a young lady, they are indeed remarkable." At the beginning of April, before the book appeared, I resigned from the firm and joined the house with which I have since been associated. When Flannery sent me an inscribed copy, soon after my departure, I felt a twinge of sadness that my editorial association with her books had ended.

Once again fate rearranged what seemed to be an unalterable course. After the very successful publication of *A Good Man Is*

Hard to Find, Flannery w she asked my advice, saying Carver remained as her ed ask that such a stipulation b not readily granted, but Fla end she got what she want Carver and Denver Lindley free to join the house she r tracted for her third book, and published *The Violent L* *Wise Blood* was out of print She wrote a short and eloqu cribing the book as "a comic stating that it had been writ of theory, but one with certa is to some a matter of life an readers who would prefer sequence." She ended by de as "a mystery, and one whic be asked to deepen." We rei anniversary of the original p and paperback editions. Did book that does not stay out o

One of Flannery's admir more of a fan with each new see how much the two had of comedy, deep faith, great rounding each of them wa in which they refined and in a short span of time. T powers.

Finally, they were both as tion of Merton's *The Sign* General in France, I was abl of Jacques Maritain, who wr General did not read English

Sign of Jonas), explaining what the “American Trappist” was up to. As for Flannery, whose work can only be understood in an American setting, when a German publisher wanted to drop some of her stories as too shocking for Germanic sensibilities, she wrote Miss McKee, “I didn’t think I was *that* vicious.”

On a trip south in 1959 I stopped at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky to see Merton, before going to see Flannery in Georgia. He gave me a presentation copy of the beautifully designed private edition of *Prometheus: A Meditation* to take to her. He was much interested in Flannery’s peacocks. From previous visits to “Andalusia” I was able to tell him about their habits—how they roost at dusk by gradual hops from ground to fence post to tree limb; how their trains get caught under car wheels because they refuse to hurry; how vain they are (they seemed to jockey for good angles when they saw my camera); how funny it is to see peachicks rehearsing with their immature featherduster tails; and how rare it is to see the ultimate display, when the peacock shimmers and shakes his feathers in a kind of ecstasy at the height of preening. I could not tell Merton enough about them or about Flannery and her surroundings. What was Milledgeville like? Well, one of its sights was the beautiful ante-bellum Cline house, where Flannery’s aunt served a formal midday dinner. He was surprised to learn that far from being “backwoods” Milledgeville had once been the capital of Georgia. I also showed him a letter in which Flannery wrote: “Somebody sent me a gossip column that said Gene Kelly would make his TV debut in Flannery O’Connor’s ‘backwoods love story’ [*The Life You Save May Be Your Own*]. I certainly can’t afford to miss this metamorphosis.”

When I got to the O’Connors’, Flannery was curious to hear about Gethsemani. Was Merton allowed to talk to me? Yes, without restriction. I described our walks in the woods and the monastic routine of the day: first office (Matins) at two a.m. and last office (Compline) at sunset, followed by bed. I mentioned that in Louisville I’d bought Edith Sitwell’s recording of *Façade*, which Merton played over and over, laughing so hard that tears ran down his cheeks, and Flannery asked me to recite some of the poems. Even my pallid approximation of Dame Edith’s renderings of “Daisy and

Lily, lazy and silly,” “Long “Black Mrs. Behemoth” and smiles.

When Flannery died, Merton was proud of her worth when he said he had read the works of writers as Hemingway, Portmanteau, and Sophocles . . . I write her letters with all the craft with which she

Up to the very end, she wrote me about *thing That Rises Must Converge*. I was thinking about this collection of stories to get it out with me sick,” “I am definitely out of control with this lupus. I have a long time there is a lot of rewriting of the present state of health [the stories they are.” This is a typical O’Connor last stories, like “Revelation” as perfect as stories can be. In the introduction for the book, one of which, she drew. All eight had appeared in the book. I wrote, “I forgot to tell Bob that *Rises Must Converge* is all it ought to be.” It seemed to me (as he said so) may have dated from the French anthology of the section of which was entitled “The Unpub” unaware of the two unpub

The first of these new stories, Gordon later wrote of it: “The operations of supernatural women. Such operations as they have eluded some of the best Miss O’Connor seems to have failed: in the dramatization of Our Lord corporeal substance which is unfamiliar. No

baffled the reviewers, so much so they have reached for any *cliché* they could lay hold of in order to have some way of apprehending this original and disturbing work."

The final story, "Judgement Day," was mailed to me in early July. It is a revised and expanded version of "The Geranium," which appears to have been a favorite of hers, for letters to Miss McKee reveal that in 1955 she had also worked on an intermediate version under the title "An Exile in the East." As "Judgement Day" it became the ninth story in the collection published posthumously in 1965.

What turned out to be my last letter to Flannery was dated July 7, 1964. I knew of the recurrence of her illness, of course, but I did not know that the lupus was now uncontrolled. I enclosed with my letter an advance proof of our catalogue description of *Everything That Rises Must Converge* as it was then conceived. She never replied and in late July she was taken to the Baldwin County hospital at Milledgeville, where she died in a coma on August 3.

There are thirty-one stories in this volume. Nineteen are taken from Flannery's two collections and twelve* appear for the first time in book form. For this edition we have followed the author's original manuscripts for "The Partridge Festival," "Why Do the Heathen Rage?" and the first six stories. For the latter group we have also retained the order she followed in her thesis. The order of the other stories is chronological according to date of composition and does not duplicate the arrangement the author worked out for the two collections, which are of course available as she wanted them. Nor is it implied that all the stories here are of equal merit. It simply seems desirable to preserve as complete a collection of Flannery O'Connor's short fiction as possible.

Elizabeth Bishop, who with her poet's eye sees more than most of us, wrote at the time of Flannery's death: "I am sure her few books will live on and on in American literature. They are narrow, possibly, but they are clear, hard, vivid, and full of bits of description, phrases, and an odd insight that contains more real poetry than a dozen books of poems." She added a bit of testimony that Flannery herself would

* See *Notes*, p. 551.

have relished: "Critics who
wrong, I think. I lived in FL
ing 'Church of God' (both
every Wednesday night Si
tongues.' After those Wedne
ever wrote could seem at all

THE CO
Flan

The

OLD DUDLEY folded in to his own shape and away into another window waiting for the geranium. They took it in at five-geranium in her window. They better-looking geraniums. One thought, not any er this pale. The geranium they would p Grisby boy at home who had morning and left in the sun geranium and stuck it in t looking at in a few weeks. business with one. They set day and they put it so near t it over. They had no busi shouldn't have been there. C Lutish could root anything. He laid his head back and much he could think of to th way.

His daughter came in. "D asked. She looked provoked.

He didn't answer her.

"Well?"

"No." He wondered how l made his eyes feel like his th She had seen before and ha

sorry for herself too; but she could er saved herself, Old Dudley thought, if she'd just have let him alone—let him stay where he was back home and not be so taken up with her damn duty. She moved out of the room, leaving an audible sigh, to crawl over him and remind him again of that one minute—that wasn't her fault at all—when suddenly he had wanted to go to New York to live with her.

He could have got out of going. He could have been stubborn and told her he'd spend his life where he'd always spent it, send him or not send him the money every month, he'd get along with his pension and odd jobs. Keep her damn money—she needed it worse than he did. She would have been glad to have had her duty disposed of like that. Then she could have said if he died without his children near him, it was his own fault; if he got sick and there wasn't anybody to take care of him, well, he'd asked for it, she could have said. But there was that thing inside him that had wanted to see New York. He had been to Atlanta once when he was a boy and he had seen New York in a picture show. *Big Town Rhythm* it was. Big towns were important places. The thing inside him had sneaked up on him for just one instant. The place like he'd seen in the picture show had room for him! It was an important place and it had room for him! He'd said yes, he'd go.

He must have been sick when he said it. He couldn't have been well and said it. He had been sick and she had been so taken up with her damn duty, she had wangled it out of him. Why did she have to come down there in the first place to pester him? He had been doing all right. There was his pension that could feed him and odd jobs that kept him his room in the boarding house.

The window in that room showed him the river—thick and red as it struggled over rocks and around curves. He tried to think how it was besides red and slow. He added green blotches for trees on either side of it and a brown spot for trash somewhere upstream. He and Rabie had fished it in a flat-bottom boat every Wednesday. Rabie knew the river up and down for twenty miles. There wasn't another nigger in Coa County that knew it like he did. He loved the river, but it hadn't meant anything to Old Dudley. The fish were what he was after. He liked to come in at night with a long

string of them and slap them he'd say. It took a man to get ing house always said. He and day morning and fish all day. Old Dudley always caught catching them—he just loved down dere, boss," he'd say. "hidin' none nowhere 'round and shift the boat downstream cleaner than a weasel but he always gave him the little on

Old Dudley had lived upsta house ever since his wife die He was the man in the hous house was supposed to do. In the old girls crabbed and cr the house had to listen and j and twittered intermittently. Rabie and Lutisha lived down Rabie took care of the clean was sharp at sneaking off v help Old Dudley with some or painting a door. He lik Atlanta when Old Dudley were put together on the insi knew.

Sometimes at night they v got a 'possum but Old Duc once in a while and huntin' 'possum hunting. They neve one; and besides, he was m go huntin' no 'possum toni wants tuh tend tuh," he'd talking about hounds and g tonight?" Dudley would g tonight," Rabie'd sigh.

Old Dudley would get ou

cleaned the pieces, would explain the mechanism to him. Then he'd put it together again. Rabie always marveled at the way he could put it together again. Old Dudley would have liked to have explained New York to Rabie. If he could have showed it to Rabie, it wouldn't have been so big—he wouldn't have felt pressed down every time he went out in it. "It ain't so big," he would have said. "Don't let it get you down, Rabie. It's just like any other city and cities ain't all that complicated."

But they were. New York was swishing and jamming one minute and dirty and dead the next. His daughter didn't even live in a house. She lived in a building—the middle in a row of buildings all alike, all blackened-red and gray with rasp-mouthed people hanging out their windows looking at other windows and other people just like them looking back. Inside you could go up and you could go down and there were just halls that reminded you of tape measures strung out with a door every inch. He remembered he'd been dazed by the building the first week. He'd wake up expecting the halls to have changed in the night and he'd look out the door and there they stretched like dog runs. The streets were the same way. He wondered where he'd be if he walked to the end of one of them. One night he dreamed he did and ended at the end of the building—nowhere.

The next week he had become more conscious of the daughter and son-in-law and their boy—no place to be out of their way. The son-in-law was a queer one. He drove a truck and came in only on the weekends. He said "nah" for "no" and he'd never heard of a 'possum. Old Dudley slept in the room with the boy, who was sixteen and couldn't be talked to. But sometimes when the daughter and Old Dudley were alone in the apartment, she would sit down and talk to him. First she had to think of something to say. Usually it gave out before what she considered was the proper time to get up and do something else, so he would have to say something. He always tried to think of something he hadn't said before. She never listened the second time. She was seeing that her father spent his last years with his own family and not in a decayed boarding house full of old women whose heads jiggled. She was doing her duty. She had brothers and sisters who were not.

Once she took him shopping went in a "subway"—a railroad cave. People boiled out of the streets. They rolled off the sidewalks black and white and yellow. Everything was boiling. The canals, and all of a sudden swooped through the people coming swooped off again. Old Dudley different ones before they got why people ever went out or had slipped down in his store and pulled him through the

They went on an overhead had to go up on a high platform over the rail and could see the rushing under him. He felt sank down on the wooden screamed and pulled him over off and kill yourself?" she said

Through a crack in the building in the street. "I don't care," or not."

"Come on," she said, "you"

"Home?" he repeated. The

"Come on," she said, "here it." They'd just had time to

They made that one. The apartment. The apartment was be where there wasn't some bathroom and the bathroom were always where you started and the basement and the river . . . damn his throat.

The geranium was late today it out by ten-fifteen.

Somewhere down the hall a

ble out to the street; a radio was bleating the worn music to a soap serial; and a garbage can crashed down a fire escape. The door to the next apartment slammed and a sharp footstep clipped down the hall. "That would be the nigger," Old Dudley muttered. "The nigger with the shiny shoes." He had been there a week when the nigger moved in. That Thursday he was looking out the door at the dog-run halls when this nigger went into the next apartment. He had on a gray, pin-stripe suit and a tan tie. His collar was stiff and white and made a clear-cut line next to his neck. His shoes were shiny tan—they matched his tie and his skin. Old Dudley scratched his head. He hadn't known the kind of people that would live thick in a building could afford servants. He chuckled. Lot of good a nigger in a Sunday suit would do them. Maybe this nigger would know the country around here—or maybe how to get to it. They might could hunt. They might could find them a stream somewhere. He shut the door and went to the daughter's room. "Hey!" he shouted, "the folks next door got 'em a nigger. Must be gonna clean for them. You reckon they gonna keep him every day?"

She looked up from making the bed. "What are you talking about?"

"I say they got 'em a servant next door—a nigger—all dressed up in a Sunday suit."

She walked to the other side of the bed. "You must be crazy," she said. "The next apartment is vacant and besides, nobody around here can afford any servant."

"I tell you I saw him," Old Dudley snickered. "Going right in there with a tie and a white collar on—and sharp-toed shoes."

"If he went in there, he's looking at it for himself," she muttered. She went to the dresser and started fidgeting with things.

Old Dudley laughed. She could be right funny when she wanted to. "Well," he said, "I think I'll go over and see what day he gets off. Maybe I can convince him he likes to fish," and he'd slapped his pocket to make the two quarters jingle. Before he got out in the hall good, she came tearing behind him and pulled him in. "Can't you hear?" she'd yelled. "I meant what I said. He's renting that himself if he went in there. Don't you go asking him any questions or saying anything to him. I don't want any trouble with niggers."

"You mean," Old Dudley n
to you?"

She shrugged. "I suppose
business," she added. "Don't h

That's just the way she'd s
at all. But he'd told her off th
what he meant. "You ain't be
dery-like. "You ain't been ra
think they're just as good as
around with one er that kind
with them, you're crazy." He
his throat was tightening. Sh
where they could afford to li
to him! Then she'd walked st
her. Trying to be holy with
neck in the air. Like he was
in their front doors and let
know his own daughter tha
door to them—and then thir
to want to mix with them.

He got up and took a pap
appear to be reading when sh
her standing up there starin
up something for him to c
window across the alley. T
never been this late before. T
sitting there looking out the
had looked at his watch to
fast. When he looked up, it
like flowers, but the geraniu
like the sick Grisby boy at h
the old ladies had in the par
the one behind Lutish's uni
a fondness for sashes. Most

The daughter came throu
at the paper when she came
she asked as if she had just

He hoped she didn't want

lost the time before. All the blooming buildings looked alike. He nodded.

"Go down to the third floor and ask Mrs. Schmitt to lend me the shirt pattern she uses for Jake."

Why couldn't she just let him sit? She didn't need the shirt pattern. "All right," he said. "What number is it?"

"Number 10—just like this. Right below us three floors down."

Old Dudley was always afraid that when he went out in the dog runs, a door would suddenly open and one of the snipe-nosed men that hung off the window ledges in his undershirt would growl, "What are you doing here?" The door to the nigger's apartment was open and he could see a woman sitting in a chair by the window. "Yankee niggers," he muttered. She had on rimless glasses and there was a book in her lap. Niggers don't think they're dressed up till they got on glasses, Old Dudley thought. He remembered Lutish's glasses. She had saved up thirteen dollars to buy them. Then she went to the doctor and asked him to look at her eyes and tell her how thick to get the glasses. He made her look at animals' pictures through a mirror and he stuck a light through her eyes and looked in her head. Then he said she didn't need any glasses. She was so mad she burned the corn bread three days in a row, but she bought her some glasses anyway at the ten-cent store. They didn't cost her but \$1.98 and she wore them every Saddey. "That was niggers," Old Dudley chuckled. He realized he had made a noise, and covered his mouth with his hand. Somebody might hear him in one of the apartments.

He turned down the first flight of stairs. Down the second he heard footsteps coming up. He looked over the banisters and saw it was a woman—a fat woman with an apron on. From the top, she looked kind er like Mrs. Benson at home. He wondered if she would speak to him. When they were four steps from each other, he darted a glance at her but she wasn't looking at him. When there were no steps between them, his eyes fluttered up for an instant and she was looking at him cold in the face. Then she was past him. She hadn't said a word. He felt heavy in his stomach.

He went down four flights instead of three. Then he went back up one and found number 10. Mrs. Schmitt said O.K., wait a

minute and she'd get the pa
to the door with it. The ch

Old Dudley started back slowly. It tired him going Not like having Rabie to o light-footed nigger. He coul hens knowing it and get hi squawk. Fast too. Dudley ha that way with fat people. He was hunting quail over near that could find a covey qu wasn't no good at bringing t time and then set like a dea This one time the hound st 'un," Rabie whispered, "I fee as they walked along. He l They covered the ground weight from side to side, lif needles with unconscious car forward swiftly. Old Dudley ground. It would slope and ously, or in pulling himself down.

"Ain't I better get dem b
"You ain't never easy on yo dem slopes, you gonna scatter

Old Dudley wanted to get out of it easy. "I'll get 'em," he and leaned forward. Someth backward on his heels. The g the air.

"Dem was some mighty f
Rabie sighed.

"We'll find another covey, of this damn hole."

He could er got five er tho er shot 'em off like cans on a

ear and extended the other forward. He could er knocked 'em out like clay pigeons. Bang! A squeak on the staircase made him wheel around—his arms still holding the invisible gun. The nigger was clipping up the steps toward him, an amused smile stretching his trimmed mustache. Old Dudley's mouth dropped open. The nigger's lips were pulled down like he was trying to keep from laughing. Old Dudley couldn't move. He stared at the clear-cut line the nigger's collar made against his skin.

"What are you hunting, old-timer?" the Negro asked in a voice that sounded like a nigger's laugh and a white man's sneer.

Old Dudley felt like a child with a pop-pistol. His mouth was open and his tongue was rigid in the middle of it. Right below his knees felt hollow. His feet slipped and he slid three steps and landed sitting down.

"You better be careful," the Negro said. "You could easily hurt yourself on these steps." And he held out his hand for Old Dudley to pull up on. It was a long narrow hand and the tips of the fingernails were clean and cut squarely. They looked like they might have been filed. Old Dudley's hands hung between his knees. The nigger took him by the arm and pulled up. "Whew!" he gasped, "you're heavy. Give a little help here." Old Dudley's knees unbended and he staggered up. The nigger had him by the arm. "I'm going up anyway," he said. "I'll help you." Old Dudley looked frantically around. The steps behind him seemed to close up. He was walking with the nigger up the stairs. The nigger was waiting for him on each step. "So you hunt?" the nigger was saying. "Well, let's see. I went deer hunting once. I believe we used a Dodson .38 to get those deer. What do you use?"

Old Dudley was staring through the shiny tan shoes. "I use a gun," he mumbled.

"I like to fool with guns better than hunting," the nigger was saying. "Never was much at killing anything. Seems kind of a shame to deplete the game reserve. I'd collect guns if I had the time and the money, though." He was waiting on every step till Old Dudley got on it. He was explaining guns and makes. He had on gray socks with a black fleck in them. They finished the stairs. The nigger walked down the hall with him, holding him by the

arm. It probably looked like

They went right up to C
asked, "You from around h

Old Dudley shook his he
looked at the nigger yet. A
looked at the nigger. "Well,
once you get used to it." He
went into his own apartment
in his throat was all over his

He shuffled to the chair b
His throat was going to po
account of a nigger—a dam
and called him "old-timer."
be. Him that had come from
where such as that couldn't b
They were swelling in them
room left for them there. I
niggers could call you "old-
wouldn't be. He rolled his he
his neck that was too full.

A man was looking at him
alley looking straight at him
That was where the geranium
in his undershirt, watching
pop. Old Dudley looked back
geranium. The geranium be
the geranium?" he called ou

"What you cryin' for?" t
man cry like that."

"Where is the geranium?"
there. Not you."

"This is my window," the
I want to."

"Where is it?" Old Dudle
left in his throat.

"It fell off if it's any of yo
Old Dudley got up and pe

the alley, way six floors down, he could see a cracked flower pot scattered over a spray of dirt and something pink sticking out of a green paper bow. It was down six floors. Smashed down six floors.

Old Dudley looked at the man who was chewing gum and waiting to see the throat pop. "You shouldn't have put it so near the ledge," he murmured. "Why don't you pick it up?"

"Why don't you, pop?"

Old Dudley stared at the man who was where the geranium should have been.

He would. He'd go down and pick it up. He'd put it in his own window and look at it all day if he wanted to. He turned from the window and left the room. He walked slowly down the dog run and got to the steps. The steps dropped down like a deep wound in the floor. They opened up through a gap like a cavern and went down and down. And he had gone up them a little behind the nigger. And the nigger had pulled him up on his feet and kept his arm in his and gone up the steps with him and said he hunted deer, "old-timer," and seen him holding a gun that wasn't there and sitting on the steps like a child. He had shiny tan shoes and he was trying not to laugh and the whole business was laughing. There'd probably be niggers with black flecks in their socks on every step, pulling down their mouths so as not to laugh. The steps dropped down and down. He wouldn't go down and have niggers pattin' him on the back. He went back to the room and the window and looked down at the geranium.

The man was sitting over where it should have been. "I ain't seen you pickin' it up," he said.

Old Dudley stared at the man.

"I seen you before," the man said. "I seen you settin' in that old chair every day, starin' out the window, looking in my apartment. What I do in my apartment is my business, see? I don't like people looking at what I do."

It was at the bottom of the alley with its roots in the air.

"I only tell people once," the man said and left the window.

Th

IT is trying on liberals in D
After the Democratic
barber. Three weeks before i
asked, "Who you gonna vot
"Darmon," Rayber said.

"You a nigger-lover?"

Rayber started in the chair
so brutally. "No," he said. If
would have said, "I am neith
said that before to Jacobs, th
how trying it is for liberals i
tion—had muttered, "That's

"Why?" Rayber had aske
Jacobs down.

Jacobs had said, "Skip it."
occurred, Rayber noticed, wh
argument.

"I am neither a Negro- no
said to the barber.

The barber drew a clean
pointed the razor at Rayber.
but two sides now, white and
campaign. You know what F
years ago, they was runnin'
throwin' jewel rocks at birds
nigger come in a white barber
haircut.' They threwed him o
listen, three black hyenas over
man and took half of what w

they are now? Settin' in their county jail eatin' like the President of the United States—they might get dirty in the chain gang; or some damn nigger-lover might come by and be heart-broke to see 'em pickin' rock. Why, lemme tell you this—ain't nothin' gonna be good again until we get rid of them Mother Hubbards and get us a man can put these niggers in their places. Shuh."

"You hear that, George?" he shouted to the colored boy wiping up the floor around the basins.

"Sho do," George said.

It was time for Rayber to say something but nothing appropriate would come. He wanted to say something that George would understand. He was startled that George had been brought into the conversation. He remembered Jacobs telling about lecturing at a Negro college for a week. They couldn't say Negro—nigger—colored—black. Jacobs said he had come home every night and shouted, "NIGGER NIGGER NIGGER" out the back window. Rayber wondered what George's leanings were. He was a trim-looking boy.

"If a nigger come in my shop with any of that haircut sass, he'd get it cut all right." The barber made a noise between his teeth. "You a Mother Hubbard?" he asked.

"I'm voting for Darmon, if that's what you mean," Rayber said.

"You ever heard Hawkson talk?"

"I've had that pleasure," Rayber said.

"You heard his last one?"

"No, I understand his remarks don't alter from speech to speech," Rayber said curtly.

"Yeah?" the barber said. "Well, this last speech was a killerool Ol' Hawk let them Mother Hubbards have it."

"A good many people," Rayber said, "consider Hawkson a demagogue." He wondered if George knew what demagogue meant. Should have said, "lying politician."

"Demagogue!" The barber slapped his knee and whooped. "That's what Hawk said!" he howled. "Ain't that a shot! 'Folks,' he says, 'them Mother Hubbards says I'm a demagogue.' Then he rears back and says sort of soft-like, 'Am I a demagogue, you people?' And they yells, 'Naw, Hawk, you ain't no demagogue!' And he

comes forward shouting, 'Ol' gogue in this state!' And Whew!"

"Quite a show," Rayber said.

"Mother Hubbard," the barber said, "he let 'em all right. Lemme tell you about Hawkson's Fourth of July speech. It was full with poetry. Who was Darmon? Who was Darmon? the crowd said. Why, he was Little Boy Blue. He was in the meadow and niggers in the meadow heard that one. No Mother Hubbard."

Rayber thought that if the barber had heard that one.

Listen, he didn't have to read it. That was the trouble with the barber. They didn't use their horse sense. Where was his horse sense?

Why am I straining myself?

"Nossir!" the barber said.

They don't take the place of a horse.

"Thinking!" Rayber shouted.

"Listen," the barber said, "you ever hear people at Tilford?" At Tilford, they had niggers fine in their place and they had a place to put 'em. How do you like that?"

Rayber wanted to know what the barber thought it was.

The barber thought it was a waste of time to do with thinking. He thought it was a waste which he told Rayber. He said that he had heard Hawkson speeches at Mullin's Oak.

Rayber settled down in his chair. He thought that he had come in for a haircut.

The barber started back. He said that he had heard the one at Sparrow. The barber left standin', and all the barber said, "that's what Hawk said," he said, "that's what Hawk said, sit on the lid with. . . ."

"I have an appointment," Rayber said. "I'm in a hurry." Why should he stay and listen to that tripe?

As much rot as it was, the whole asinine conversation stuck with him the rest of the day and went through his mind in persistent detail after he was in bed that night. To his disgust, he found that he was going through it, putting in what he would have said if he'd had an opportunity to prepare himself. He wondered how Jacobs would have handled it. Jacobs had a way about him that made people think he knew more than Rayber thought he knew. It was not a bad trick in his profession. Rayber often amused himself analyzing it. Jacobs would have handled the barber calmly enough. Rayber started through the conversation again, thinking how Jacobs would have done it. He ended doing it himself.

The next time he went to the barber's, he had forgotten about the argument. The barber seemed to have forgotten it too. He disposed of the weather and stopped talking. Rayber was wondering what was going to be for supper. Oh. It was Tuesday. On Tuesday his wife had canned meat. Took canned meat and baked it with cheese—slice of meat and a slice of cheese—turned out striped—why do we have to have this stuff every Tuesday?—if you don't like it you don't have to—

"You still a Mother Hubbard?"

Rayber's head jerked. "What?"

"You still for Darmon?"

"Yes," Rayber said and his brain darted to its store of preparations.

"Well, look-a-here, you teachers, you know, looks like, well. . . ." He was confused. Rayber could see that he was not so sure of himself as he'd been the last time. He probably thought he had a new point to stress. "Looks like you fellows would vote for Hawk on account of you know what he said about teachers' salaries. Seems like you would now. Why not? Don't you want more money?"

"More money!" Rayber laughed. "Don't you know that with a rotten governor I'd lose more money than he'd give me?" He realized that he was finally on the barber's level. "Why, he dislikes too many different kinds of people," he said. "He'd cost me twice as much as Darmon."

"So what if he would?" money when it does some

"That's not what I mean

"That raise Hawk's pro anyway," somebody said from an air of executive assurance teacher, ain't he?"

"Yeah," the barber said, raise; but say, he wouldn't

"Ahh, he'd get something They stand to get their cut thing. That's the rules of th

"Better schools," Rayber s

"Seems like I been hearin

"You see," the man expl the schools. That's the way

The barber laughed.

"If you ever thought . . ."

"Maybe there'd be a new the man chortled. "How ab

Rayber wanted to lift his heard about reasoning?" he r

"Listen," the man said, " don't realize is, we've got a of black faces looking at yo

Rayber had a blind mom wasn't there was bashing hi began washing basins. "Will —black or white," Rayber sa up.

"All right," the barber agr How'd you like to go to a v

"Wouldn't like that," Geo These here the las' in this bo

"Go get some then," the b

"The time has come," the said, when we got to sit on t went on to review Hawkson

Rayber would like to have pushed him into the basin. The day was hot and full enough of flies without having to spend it listening to a fat fool. He could see the courthouse square, blue-green cool, through the tinted glass window. He wished to hell the barber would hurry. He fixed his attention on the square outside, feeling himself there where, he could tell from the trees, the air was moving slightly. A group of men sauntered up the courthouse walk. Rayber looked more closely and thought he recognized Jacobs. But Jacobs had a late afternoon class. It was Jacobs, though. Or was it. If it were, who was he talking to? Blakeley? Or was that Blakeley. He squinted. Three colored boys in zoot suits strolled by on the sidewalk. One dropped down on the pavement so that only his head was visible to Rayber, and the other two lounged over him, leaning against the barbershop window and making a hole in the view. Why the hell can't they park somewhere else? Rayber thought fiercely. "Hurry up," he said to the barber, "I have an appointment."

"What's your hurry?" the fat man said. "You better stay and stick up for Boy Blue."

"You know you never told us why you're gonna vote for him," the barber chuckled, taking the cloth from around Rayber's neck.

"Yeah," the fat man said, "see can you tell us without sayin', goodgovermint."

"I have an appointment," Rayber said. "I can't stay."

"You just know Darmon is so sorry you won't be able to say a good word for him," the fat man howled.

"Listen," Rayber said, "I'll be back in here next week and I'll give you as many reasons for voting for Darmon as you want—better reasons than you've given me for voting for Hawkson."

"I'd like to see you do that," the barber said. "Because I'm telling you, it can't be done."

"All right, we'll see," Rayber said.

"Remember," the fat man carped, "you ain't gonna say, goodgovermint."

"I won't say anything you can't understand," Rayber muttered and then felt foolish for showing his irritation. The fat man and the barber were grinning. "I'll see you Tuesday," Rayber said and left. He was disgusted with himself for saying he would give them

reasons. Reasons would have couldn't open his head in a hell he could. He wished to accurate. He wished to hell would have to be worked matter with him? Why not v thing in that shop squirm if

By the time he got home, for an argument. It would be words—no easy job, he could

He got right to work on it. had four sentences—all crossed of the meal to go to his de crossed the correction out.

"What is the matter with

"Not a thing," Rayber said

"I'm not stopping you," sh

When she went out, he ki the desk. By eleven o'clock it came easier, and he finishe enough. It began, "For two r and it ended, "Men who u walking on wind." He thoug He thought the whole thing

In the afternoon he took i there but he left. Rayber rea

"Well," Jacobs said, "so wh He had been jotting figures Rayber was reading.

Rayber wondered if he v barbers," he said. "You ever t

"I never argue," Jacobs sa

"That's because you don't explained. "You've never exp

Jacobs snorted. "Oh yes I l

"What happened?"

"I never argue."

"But you know you're right," Rayber persisted.

"I never argue."

"Well, I'm going to argue," Rayber said. "I'm going to say the right thing as fast as they can say the wrong. It'll be a question of speed. Understand," he went on, "this is no mission of conversion; I'm defending myself."

"I understand that," Jacobs said. "I hope you're able to do it."

"I've already done it! You read the paper. There it is." Rayber wondered if Jacobs were dense or preoccupied.

"Okay, then leave it there. Don't spoil your complexion arguing with barbers."

"It's got to be done," Rayber said.

Jacobs shrugged.

Rayber had counted on discussing it with him at length. "Well, I'll see you," he said.

"Okay," Jacobs said.

Rayber wondered why he had ever read the paper to him in the first place.

Before he left for the barber's Tuesday afternoon, Rayber was nervous and he thought that by way of practice he'd try the paper out on his wife. He didn't know but what she was for Hawkson herself. Whenever he mentioned the election, she made it a point to say, "Just because you teach doesn't mean you know everything." Did he ever say he knew anything at all? Maybe he wouldn't call her. But he wanted to hear how the thing was actually going to sound said casually. It wasn't long; wouldn't take up much of her time. She would probably dislike being called. Still, she might possibly be affected by what he said. Possibly. He called her.

She said all right, but he'd just have to wait until she got through what she was doing; it looked like every time she got her hands in something, she had to leave and go do something else.

He said he didn't have all day to wait—it was only forty-five minutes until the shop closed—and would she please hurry up?

She came in wiping her hands and said all right; all right, she was there, wasn't she? Go ahead.

He began saying it very easily and casually, looking over her head. The sound of his voice playing over the words was not bad. He wondered if it were the words themselves or his tones that made

them sound the way they
tence and glanced at his w
clue. Her head was turned
where an open magazine
"That was very nice," she sa
left for the barber's.

He walked slowly, think
shop and now and then stop
Block's Feed Company had
"So Timid Persons Can Ki
read. Rayber wondered if
neared the barber's, he cou
man with the executive assu
a newspaper. Rayber went

"Howdy," the barber sai
year, though!"

"It's hot enough," Rayber

"Hunting season soon be

All right, Rayber wanted
thought he would work into
fat man hadn't noticed him.

"You should have seen th
other day," the barber went
birds spread once and we g
got two. That ain't bad."

"Never hunted quail," Ray

"There ain't nothing like t
gun and going after quail," t
life if you ain't had that."

Rayber cleared his throat a
fat man in the corner turned
here for? Rayber thought. Th
hearing the noises flies make
the back. The fat man turn
George's broom slowly strok
then stop, then scrape, then.
Rayber asked the barber.

"Yeah!" the barber laughe

You was gonna tell us why you are voting for Darmon. Hey, Roy!" he yelled to the fat man, "come over here. We gonna hear why we should vote for Boy Blue."

Roy grunted and turned another page. "Be there when I finish this piece," he mumbled.

"What you got there, Joe?" one of the men in the back called, "one of them goodgovermint boys?"

"Yeah," the barber said. "He's gonna make a speech."

"I've heard too many of that kind already," the man said.

"You ain't heard one by Rayber," the barber said. "Rayber's all right. He don't know how to vote, but he's all right."

Rayber reddened. Two of the men strolled up. "This is no speech," Rayber said. "I only want to discuss it with you—sanely."

"Come on over here, Roy," the barber yelled.

"What are you trying to make of this?" Rayber muttered; then he said suddenly, "If you're calling everybody else, why don't you call your boy, George. You afraid to have him listen?"

The barber looked at Rayber for a second without saying anything.

Rayber felt as if he had made himself too much at home.

"He can hear," the barber said. "He can hear back where he is."

"I just thought he might be interested," Rayber said.

"He can hear," the barber repeated. "He can hear what he hears and he can hear two times that much. He can hear what you don't say as well as what you do."

Roy came over folding his newspaper. "Howdy, boy," he said, putting his hand on Rayber's head, "let's get on with this speech."

Rayber felt as if he were fighting his way out of a net. They were over him with their red faces grinning. He heard the words drag out—"Well, the way I see it, men elect. . . ." He felt them pull out of his mouth like freight cars, jangling, backing up on each other, grating to a halt, sliding, clinching back, jarring, and then suddenly stopping as roughly as they had begun. It was over. Rayber was jarred that it was over so soon. For a second—as if they were expecting him to go on—no one said anything.

Then, "How many yawl gonna vote for Boy Blue!" the barber yelled.

Some of the men turned around and snickered. One doubled over.

"Me," Roy said. "I'm gonna first to vote for Boy Blue to"

"Listen!" Rayber shouted,

"George," the barber yelled

"Yessir," George said.

"Who you gonna vote for"

"I'm not trying to. . . ." Ra

"I don't know is they gon

gonna vote for Mr. Hawkso

"Listen!" Rayber yelled, "d

fat minds? What do you

around by the shoulder. "Do

fool ignorance?"

The barber shook Rayber's

cited," he said, "we all thoug

been saying all along—you

lurched backward when Ray

footrest of the next chair. "T

ing steadily at Rayber's whi

him. "It's what I been saying

The blood began pounding

He turned and pushed quick

door. Outside, the sun was

heat, and before he had tur

lather began to drip inside

dangling to his knees.

Wildcat

OLD GABRIEL shuffled across the room waving his stick slowly sideways in front of him.

"Who that?" he whispered, appearing in the doorway. "I smells fo' niggers."

Their soft, minor-toned laughter rose above the frog's hum and blended into voices.

"Cain't you do no bettern that, Gabe?"

"Is you goin' with us, Granpaw?"

"You oughter be able to smell good enough to git our names."

Old Gabriel moved out on the porch a little way. "That Matthew an' George an' Willie Myrick. An' who that other?"

"This Boon Williams, Granpaw."

Gabriel felt for the edge of the porch with his stick. "What yawl doin'? Set down a spell."

"We waitin' on Mose an' Luke."

"We goin' huntin' that cat."

"What yawl huntin' him with?" old Gabriel muttered. "Yawl ain't got nothin' fit to kill a wildcat with." He sat down on the edge of the porch and hung his feet over the side. "I done tol' Mose an' Luke that."

"How many wildcats you killed, Gabrul?" Their voices, rising to him through the darkness, were full of gentle mockery.

"When I was a boy, there was a cat once," Gabriel started. "It come 'round here huntin' blood. Come in through the winder of a cabin one night an' sprung in bed with a nigger an' tore that nigger's throat open befo' he could holler good."

"This cat in the woods, Granpaw. It jus' come out to git cows. Jupe Williams seen it when he gone through to the sawmill."

"What he done about it?"
"Started runnin'." Their
again. "He thought it was
"It was," old Gabriel mu
"It after cows."

Gabriel sniffed. "It comin'
gonna git itssef some folks'
huntin' it ain't gonna do n
smellin' it."

"How you know that it y

"Ain't no mistakin' a wile
was a boy. Why don't yawl

"You ain't afraid to stay h

Old Gabriel stiffened. He
"Ef you waitin' on Mose an
They started over to yawl's

"Come in here, I say! Co

The blind boy sat alone on
gone?" he called.

"All gone but ol' Hezuh.

He hated to go in—among

"I smells it," he said.

"You come in here, Gabr

He went in and walked to
were muttering at him.

"You stay in here, boy."

"You be 'tractin' that cat ri

No air was coming through
shutter latch to open it.

"Don't open that winder, l
in here."

"I could er gone wit 'em,"
out. I ain't afraid." Shut up v

"Reba say she kin smell it herself."

He heard the old woman groan in the corner. "They ain't gonna do no good out huntin' it," she whined. "It here. It right around here. Ef it jump in this room it gonna git me fust, then it gonna git that boy, then it gonna git. . . ."

"Hush yo' mouth, Reba," he heard his mother say. "I look after my boy."

He could look after hisself. He warn't afraid. He could smell it—him an' Reba could. It'd jump on them fust; fust Reba an' then him. It was the shape of a reg'lar cat only bigger, his mother said. An' where you felt the sharp points on a house cat's foot, you felt big knife claws in a wildcat's, an' knife teeth, too; an' it breathed heat an' spit wet lime. Gabriel could feel its claws in his shoulders and its teeth in his throat. But he wouldn't let 'em stay there. He'd lock his arms 'round its body an' feel up for its neck an' jerk its head back an' go down wit it on the floor until its claws dropped away from his shoulders. Beat, beat, beat its head, beat, beat beat. . . .

"Who wit ol' Hezuh?" one of the women asked.

"Jus' Nancy."

"Oughter be somebody else down there," his mother said softly.

Reba moaned. "Anybody go out gonna git sprung on befo' they gits there. It around here, I say. It gittin' closer an' closer. It gonna git me sho."

He could smell it strong.

"How it gonna git in here? Yawl jus' frettin' for nothin'."

That was Thin Minnie. Nothin' could git her. She'd had a spell on her since when she was small—put there by a conjer woman.

"It come in easy ef it wanter," Reba snorted. "It tear up that cat hole an' come through."

"We could be down to Nancy's by then," Minnie sniffed.

"Yawl could," the old woman muttered.

Him an' her couldn't, he knew. But he'd stay an' fight it. You see that blin' boy there? He the one kill the wildcat!

Reba started groaning.

"Hush that!" his mother ordered.

The groaning turned into singing—low in her throat.

"Lord, Lord
Gonna see
Lord, Lord
Gonna see

"Hush!" his mother hissed.

Gabriel leaned forward in

It was a thump, thump an' then a shriek, far away, then over the edge of the hill into the cabin was shaking with the There was the feel of a rush let in. Nancy!

"It got him!" she screamed winder, got him in the thro

Later in the night the me squirrels.

Old Gabriel crept back thru sit in the chair a while or the bed and pushed his nos They won't no use to do t same. He had been smellin' i talkin' about it. There it w smells around, different from Wildcat. Tull Williams seen

Gabriel sat up suddenly. pushed to the door. He had A breeze was coming in an air full in his face. This o pushed the bolt in. What w on comin' in, it could git th down. It come in east ef it v him. By the door there was cat could gnaw it through

sat by the back do', he could git away quicker. He got up and dragged his chair after him across the room. The smell was near. Maybe he'd count. He could count to a thousand. Won't no nigger for five miles could count that fur. He started counting.

Mose an' Luke wouldn't be back for six hours yet. Tomorrow night they wouldn't go; but the cat was gonna git him tonight. Lemme go wit you boys an' smell him out for you. I the onliest one kin smell 'round here.

They'd lose him in the woods, they'd said. Huntin' wildcats won't no business for him.

I ain't afraid er no wildcat er no woods neither. Lemme go wit you boys, lemme go.

Ain't no reason to be 'fraid to stay here by yosef, they'd laughed. Ain't nothin' gonna git you. We take you up the road to Mattie's ef you scaird.

Mattie's! Take him to Mattie's! Settin' wit the women. What yawl think I is? I ain't afraid er no wildcat. But it comin', boys; an' it ain't gonna be in no woods—it gonna be here. Yawl wastin' yo' time in the woods. Stay here an' you ketch it.

He suppose to be countin'. Where he lef' off at? Five hunnert an' five, five hunnert an' six . . . Mattie's! What they think he is? Five hunnert an' two, five hunnert an' . . .

He sat stiff in the chair with his hands gripped tight to the stick across his knees. It won't gonna git him like he was a woman. His shirt was stuck wet to him, making him smell higher. The men had come back later in the night with a rabbit and two squirrels. He began to remember the other wildcat and he remembered as if he had been in Hezuh's cabin instead of with the women. He wondered was he Hezuh. He was Gabrul. It won't gonna git him like Hezuh. He was gonna hit it. He was gonna pull it off. He was gonna . . . how he gonna do all that? He hadn't been able to wring a chicken's neck for fo' years. It was gonna git him. Won't nothin' to do but wait. The smell was near. Won't nothin' for old people to do but wait. It was gonna git him tonight. The teeth would be hot an' the claws cold. The claws would sink in soft, an' the teeth would cut sharp an' scrape his bones inside.

Gabriel felt the sweat on himself. It kin smell me good's I kin smell it, he thought. I settin' here smellin' an' it comin' here smellin'.

Two hunnert an' fo'; where

There was a sudden scra- tense, tight-throated. "Come He couldn't move. He coul- other scratching. It was the the waiting either. "I here- noise and then a flutter. Ba- should have known that wo- yet. What ail his nose? Wha- miles could smell like he cou- ing differently, coming from- hole was. Pick . . . pick . . . was a bat. Pick . . . pick. "I He braced his feet to get- whispered. "He don't want- you go on, Wildcat, why yo- "Lord don't want me with- toward the cat hole. Across- on him with a troupe of an- put on and when he came, he- with the Lord and the ang- fifty miles fitter to judge th- it right outside, nosing the l- What he going toward it fo- There was a shelf nailed ov- and fell against a chair and- hold of the shelf and pulled- and backwards and felt the- instant and then felt it sag a- somewhere from the wall. H- hard and the shelf board fe- chair hit against his head a- heard a low, gasping animal- him; then snarls, tearing sl- Gabriel sat stiff on the floor.

"Cow," he breathed finally

Gradually he felt his mus- would go on off now, but it v-

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