

at a few of them just to see them run. In my younger days, and done out of fun. But like Gilly says, those days are gone now. Especially those days of the vigilante."

Fix looked up at him, nodding his head, then he looked around at the other people in the room.

"And the rest of you?" he asked. "How do you feel? You feel that this, this butcher; this, this all-American got a point?"

"We're wasting time," Luke Will said.

No one else spoke out. They only mumbled among themselves. But most of them agreed with Luke Will.

"Well, Gi-bear?" Fix asked.

"They'll listen ~~to~~ to you, Daddy," Gil said. "Make them see that it'll hurt the family. It'll only hurt our name more."

"But especially yours, hanh, Mr. all-American?"

"It would hurt me, Daddy." *yes.*

Fix looked from Gilbert to the woman sitting on the bed with her head bowed. Then he looked down at the little boy in his lap and patted the boy on the leg.

"You know this little boy I'm holding here?" he asked, looking up at Gil. "Tee Beau. No more daddy." He looked at Gil a while to let it sink in, then he nodded toward the woman on the bed. "You know that lady there--Doucette? no more husband."



"I'm sorry, Daddy," Gil said. "I'll do all I can for Tee Beau and Doucette."

"Sure, you will," Fix said. "We all will. But now her husband, his daddy, lay dead on a cold slab in Bayonne, and we do nothing, but sit here and talk. Well, Gi-bear?"

Gilbert lowered his head, and didn't answer.

"I wait, I wait. I wait for all my sons--but especially for you. The one we sent to LSU. The only one in the family to ever go to LSU. The only one to ever get a high education. The educated one, Alfonze, A-goose. We wait for Mr. educated all-American. What does he say? He says don't move. He says sit, weep with the women. Because he wishes to be an all-American. The other one I can understand. He must <sup>sell</sup> ~~kill~~ his hog guts. But never was bright. An elementary education was his schooling. But this one--all the way to the university."

"We're doing nothing here but wasting time, Fix," Luke Will said again. "Mapes needs help."

"I won't go without my sons," Fix said. "All my sons. There will be no split in this family. This is family. Family. The majority--or none."

"And let those niggers stand there with guns, and we don't accomodate them? They want war, let's give them war."

"I'm not interested in your war, Luke Will," Fix told him. "I'm interested only in my family. If the majority



feels their brother is not worth it, then the family has spoken. I'm only interested in my family."

Gilbert raised his head to look at his father. He was crying again.

"I'm sorry, Daddy," he said.

"Go, Mr. All-American," Fix told him. "Go. Leave. That is your mama's bed you're sitting on. Where you were born, where Beau was born, where all you were born. Where she died. Go. Leave. You desecrate the bed. Go Block. Go run the ball. Let it take place of your family. Let it bring flowers to the cemetery at La Toussaint. I don't wish to see you in this house or at the cemetery. Go. Leave."

Gilbert stood up, but he did not walk away.

"Daddy, please." *he said*

"Fix?" One of the old men to his right leaned forward and touched him on the arm. "Fix?"

"I'm dead, Alfonze," he said. "I may as well go lay beside Maltilde."

"You're not dead, Fix."

"They say I am. They say my ideas are all past. They say to love family, to look out for family, to defend family honor is all past. What else is left, but to go lay beside Maltilde?"

"I'll go with you, Fix, if you still want to go," Alfonze said. "I'll get my gun. I'll go."



"Two old men, Alfonze? A-goose was right. That is a farce."

"Others will join us, I'm sure."

"This is family, Alfonze. It is not defending the honor of white women, or the white race. I'm much too old for such trash. This is family. <sup>and when a member has been insulted, all have been insulted</sup> A member of the family has been insulted, <sup>m</sup> And family must seek justice. But they say no. <sup>2</sup> They <sup>it</sup> it is past. What else is left but to go lay beside Maltilde." He looked up at Gilbert. "Get out. Take your brother Hog Gut with you. I don't wish to see either one of you ever again. Go change your names if you wish. Get out. Go tell Mapes I will come to Bayonne at his convenience. Now, I have no more to say."

He took the big red handkerchief from his back pocket and blew his nose. <sup>loud</sup> He put the handkerchief <sup>back</sup> and held the little boy close to his chest and looked down at the floor.

Russ put his arm around Gil's shoulders and led him out of the room, with me following. <sup>a step behind them</sup> We pushed our way through the crowd in the other room. The people had already heard what had gone on in the <sup>back</sup> ~~other~~ room, because they sure were not looking at Gil the way they did when he first came there. They gave him plenty room to pass, <sup>and</sup> I even <sup>seen</sup> ~~saw~~ a woman holding her child back from him. We pushed our way out onto the porch. The sun was going down behind the trees on the other side of the bayou. A thin purple cloud lay across the sun, <sup>giving the sky a nice serene look like you see in paintings</sup>



"He'll get over it," Russ told Gil. "They'll all get over it. ~~You're their hero.~~" *"You'll see."*

"He won't ever get over it," Gil said. "He's as dead right now as Beau is. And I killed him."

"You ~~couldn't do anything else~~ but what you did." *Russ said.*

"I could have run the other way." *Gil said*

"And that would have been better?" Russ asked him.

"It couldn't be any worse," Gil said.

While we stood out on the porch, Luke Will and that other rough looking guy came out there.

"If you think this is the end of it, you're crazy," Luke Will said to Gil.

"You don't speak for this family, Luke Will," Gil said.

"And who do you speak for, all-American?" *She told me*

"Your time has passed," Luke Will, " Gil said. "You and your gang tried to destroy them in the sixties and you failed. And you're still a loser."

"You're the loser, boy," Luke Will said, and grinned at him. "You can't even come back to your own home any more. No man can lose any more than that."

"Take off, Luke Will," Russ said. *"Just"* ~~Russ~~ "But don't go near Marshall, and don't go into Bayonne."

"I go where I want, Russell," Luke Will said.

"You do that," Russ said. "But if you go near Marshall causing trouble, or you go into Bayonne causing trouble, I'll hear about it. If Mapes don't get you, I sure will."



"I'll leave it to the man, Russell."

"You just go on and listen to the man,

"I always do," Luke Will said. "Let's go, Jack."

They went down the steps, letting the screen door slam behind them. They were both big men, big country rednecks, the kind you read and heard about and hoped you'd never meet. They moved among the cars and trucks until they reached a white pick-up ~~parked~~ on the other side of the road. There was a gun rack in the cab of the truck with two guns on the rack. The truck also had a CB radio, and Luke Will got on the radio and started talking. The other guy started up the truck and drove away.

"Well?" Russ asked Gil. "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," Gil said.

"You want to go stay at my place?"

"I don't know," Gil said. "I don't know. Yesterday this time I was Gil Boutan, next to the governor's, the most famous name in this state. Today I feel like a man without a country."

"The country will look up to you,

"I don't have a country if I don't have a home."

"You have a home. They'll get over it. They'll know you're the one. Sometimes you must hurt people to make them see their faults." Russ put his hand on Gil's shoulder.

"Listen," he said. "Stay at my place tonight, and tomorrow I'll take you into Bayonne."



Gil did not answer him. He was looking across the yard toward the trees along the bayou. The sun had sunk a little below the thin layer of purple cloud.

"Well, I have to go out and call Mapes, see what he's up to," Russ said. "I'll be in the car if you change your mind."

I watched him go out of the yard out to the car, which was parked directly before the door.

"He's a nice guy," I said to Gil. "I'm sure glad he was around. What do you want to do? You want me to leave you?"

"I don't know," Gil said. "I don't know nothing any more. I don't know a damned thing."