

Rooster

After Miss Merle left with the two baskets, Candy's boyfriend went out in the road and started talking with Mapes. They was leaning back against Mapes car talking and looking in the ~~yard~~ at us. Me, I was leaning back 'gainst the end of the tarry where ou went around the house back to the toilet. Chimley had just come from the toilet, and 'fore he got back to the front I seen him stooping over and getting a shell out of the shoe box under the house. He ~~g~~ got two. Put one in the gun, the other one in his pocket. You see, that's what we had been doing all the time. Sure, we was going to the toilet, but we was doing more then just going to the toilet. Clatoo had already told us where he had hid that box of shells, and every time one of us went to the toilet, and didn't cath one of them whitefooks watching us, we ducked down by the side of the house and got a couple shells out of that box. And nobody knowed the difference. Not my wife, not none of the other women, and surely not that preacher, Jameson. Just the men with guns--black men, I mean--just us.

Clatoo didn't want me, B lly Washington, Jean Pierre, and Clabber to have live bullets. He said Billy and Jean Pierre was both a little minus in sight; he said Clabber blinked too much; and said I had ~~never had~~ ^{held} a gun in my hand before. That was the true, all ~~of it~~ ^{that} was the true. But we was there like everybody else was there--and we said we was go'n have live bullets ^{just} like everybody else. Clatoo told us all right, but if a fight broke out he wanted us out ^{to stay} ~~the~~ the way. We said we would stay out his way, but was go'n do us share of fighting. And all this was going on while Mapes and candy 's boyfriendm was standing out there watching us ~~there in the yard~~. Just to ~~show~~ ^{show} ~~prove~~, whitefolks don't know half ow what's going on right in front their eyes.

We had all got bullets and we was all in the front yard again, when that noise started on the radio. I saw Mapes lean over to get the speaker. I could hear the static, then the other voice; then the static again, then Mapes. It went on like this two or three minutes: static, other voice; static, then Mapes. Then he hung up the speaker, and him and Candy's boyfriend came in the yard. Mapes was grinning. Not out, in. You could tell by his face he was grinning inside, even if his mouth wouldn't ~~show~~. *show it.*

"All right," he said, "Gather round here. I got some ~~good news and some bad news.~~"

~~We moved in closer to see what it was this time. The people was moving slow. They had been there a long, long time. Everybody was tired, but nobody was thinking about going home, not till this was over with. The shadows had~~ *was all the way to the road, coming to the door and the trees* ~~already covered the yard, way out in the road now. It had~~ *been* ~~got a little cool--not cold--but cooler than it was earlier in the day.~~

"All right," Mapes said. "Good news first. Fix ain't showing up. That's for me. Now the bad news for you. You got brave too late."

"That's a lie," Johnny Paul said. "Fix got to show up."

~~"Don't y'all believe none of that,"~~ Johnny Paul said.

Johnny Paul was standing ~~right in front of Mapes~~, not a arm's reach away from Mapes. But Mapes's fist didn't ~~jump~~ *spring* up and hit Johnny Paul. Mapes just grinned at Johnny Paul. Not a mean grin like he can give you; a relief grin. Mapes looked like somebody that just been told he didn't have to ~~die in~~ *go to* the 'lec ric chair. I never ~~seen~~ *seen* in all my born days seen a ~~man~~ *white man* so happy. ~~On us face~~, it was just the ~~opposite~~ *opposite*. We wanted to fight. Every black man, 'cept for Jameson, wanted to fight. Mapes looked at us grinning inside. He looked at all of us like that.

"That don't sound like Fix to me either," Clatoo said. Clatoo was the only one hadn't moved when Mapes told us to go her round him.

~~"It don't sound like Fix to me either,"~~ "Nko, it don't sound like Fix," Mapes said.. "But me and you and all the rest of us was thinking about what Fixx was thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, Fix woulda been here. But today, he ain't showing up. That football player convinced him not to *show up*. The power of football."

The people started looking around. Mapes was grinning. Not out, in. Just standing there feeling good and running in. He knew how *good* we felt.

"What about them others?" Clatoo said.

"What others?" Mapes said. His face changed quick.

Clatoo just looked at him. Mapes knewed who Clatoo was talking about.

"Russell said I might have some trouble with them," *to Mathu*. Mapes said, but that pumpgun can handle all that. Mathu, you ready?" Mapes asked.

"I'm feady," Mathu said.

~~"Mathu ain't going anywhere," Candy said,~~ *giving up*

~~"Yes, he is," Mapes said. He took Mathu by the arm.~~

~~"You need to do anything here?" Mapes said. "Lock up or anything?"~~

~~"No," Mathu said. "The people can have everything."~~

Candy had been sitting on the steps all the time, just sitting there quiet, thinking to her self. But soon as she heard Mapes tell Mathu to go with him, she got up from the steps and moved on the walk. Mapes had to go by her with Mathu to reach that car.

"What you think you doing?" Mapes asked her. "Can't you talk to her?" Mapes said to Candy's boyfriend.

"Candy, don't make a spectacal of lyourself," Lou said to her.

"If he goes, I go," Candy saic.

"And if ~~we~~ go, we all go," ~~Bewlah said~~ my wife said. *Bewlah*

"And where that woman go, I go," I said. *To follow*

The people all started lining up along the walk ~~now~~ *with*

"Wait," Clatoo said, *He had stood up* from the galler. "Wait. I *as the* been thinking. I been thinking." He started looking at *you.* all of us down on the g ound. "I been thinking about something. Can me and the rest of these men gather inside and talk?" he asked Mapes.

"Talk about what?" Mapes said. "That's all I've heard since I been here--talking. What more to talk about? More thirty year old stories? I told you he wasn't coming."

"Can we talk?" Clatoo asked again. "That can save a lot of trouble."

"Nobody talking without me," Candy said. "Not on my kplace."

"This time we have to, Candy," Clatoo said.

"Like hell you have to," Candy said. "You don't even live on my plac "

"I know that, Candy," Clatoo told her. "But I still say just us. Not the women, not the preacher, just us with guns--us black men with guns."

"Get the hell off my place," Candy said, looking up at Clatoo standing on the gallery.

"No, I'm not going anywhere now, Candy," he said.

"Wjat did yolu say, nigger?"

Everybody looked at Candy. When she was a little girl, she proba ly said that word, but nobody ever heard her say anything like that after she grewed up.

"Well, well, well," Mapes said. "Just listen to the saaviour."

"I said I wasn't going anywhere, Candy," Clatoo said.

Candy looked at him hard, to make him look away. But he didn't turn his head.

"Anybody do any talking around here without me will not be on my place tomorrow," Candy said to the rest of us.

~~"That goes for everybody. This is still my place, and I say there won't be any talking without me."~~

~~xxxxxxxxx "Sheriff?" Clatoo asked Mapes.~~ "You can listen to Clatoo if you want to. Clatoo has a place to go to, you don't."

"Well, well, well," Mapes said. "Y'all listen to your little savior now?/.."

"You're trying to ^{give} ~~separate~~ and conquer us," Candy said to Mapes.

"And you trying to keep them your slaves," Mapes said. *fail to her*

"Nobody is a slave here," Candy said. "I'm protecting them."

~~All they asked~~ "They asked to talk, and you said no, and that's slavery, Candy," Mapes said. "Even your daddy, ^{you} granddaddy, ^{you} great granddaddy let them do that. That's why that church was built up the quarters, so they could have a palcac to worship and talk."

Candy didn't know how to answer Mapes, and she looked at Mathu.

"Mathu, you want to go in there and talk?" she asked.

"You want to go in there and talk and don't want me in there? ^{just you} You want that, Mathu?"

Mathu looked at her. He was tired, he was tired like the rest of us now. He shook his head.

"I just want what they want, and get it over with."

"Well, I don't want it," Candy said. "And I won't have it."

She shot by us and jumped up on the gallery, and

spread out her arms to block the door.

"Come down from there," Mapes said to her. "Griffin, go up there and pull her ^{away} from that door."

"I'll bust his jaw," Candy said. ^{"He can't come up here."} "Let him come up here."
~~"Nobody talking in my house without me."~~

"You heard me, Griffin?" Mapes said again.

"Griffin looked up at Candy. He made two steps toward the gallery and stopped.

The people laughed at him.

^{we} "Remind me to take that badge and gun ^{from} you when ~~we~~ get back to Bayonne," Mapes said to him. "Get her down from hterehe," he said to Lou.

"Come on down, Candy," Lou said. "Don't make a spectacle of your self."

"She's done that all ready," Mapes said. "Tell her not to make a bigger ass of herself."

We all looked at Candy blocking the door. Beulah laughed. "That's tje a girl, stand your ground, Candy."

Mathu moved away from Mapes and started up the steps. He was tired, and he could hardly manage it, but he got up on the gallery. Candy watched him coming toward her. Mathu came up to the door and put his hand on her shoulder. She ~~lay~~ laid her face against his hand, and we could see she was crying.

"It's over with, Candy, I got to go."

"No," she said. Her face was still on his hand.

"No."

"You can always come to see me."

"No," she said. "No."

"That's what I want."

"No," she said. looking at him. "No."

"It got to be that way," ^{she said} "He can't come up here."
 This is do it - He has the new door, I did it, easy."

Lou had come up on the gallery behind Mathu, and he went over to the door.

"Come on," Candy," he said, reaching out lyhis hand and taking her arm. "Come on now."

"Nothing is going to change," Candy said. to Mathu. "I don't care what you all talk about in there, it's going to be the same. He take you to jail or not, you'll be out tom rrow. I don't care what y'all talk about. You belong here. This yours till God calls you, and nobody else."

"Come on, Candy," Lou told her, and pulled her this time.

She grabbed Mathu's ~~hark~~ arm. Lou pulled ~~he~~ on her, she held mathu. T ll Lou jecked on her, she still helt Mathu, till Mathu had to pull her hands away from his arm.

Lou had her round the waist and clean off the flooor. He went down the steps with her to the car. Candy was hollering all the time. "Nothing go'n change, nothing go'n change, nothing go'n change."