

The African knows long before any the rest of us do. He was once a great hunter, this African here. Before the high water of 27 destroyed the bears, he had stalk ed them cross Louisiana and Mississippi. lHe has tracked cats in Texas. Gigg ed alli ators and snakes in the ba ous and rivers in Southern and South Western Louisiana. But now his old legs are too weak and his arms too arthritic to hold up the gig or gun even if there were games left to be killed. Still he has that sense of feel that all good hubters mus have and never ever lose. So he knows long before any the erest of us do that the major is on his way. I accidently glance in his direction, and I see his yellowish e eyes watching me over the rim of the cup. Not a look of apprehension or fear, a warning. But warning me about what I don't know, until I see the car lights flash across the yard.

Others in the room ~~kkk~~ see the lights too. They want to leave, but now its too late ~~gxxxx~~ to go. They look at Candi, they look at me, they look at the prince. We brought them up here, and now we must protect them.

But neither the prince or the Africlan seems at all perturbed. ~~The African raises his cup to his lmouth, and he does not even at me or toward the door.~~ The prince ~~kk~~ has just put down his plate, and he's lstanding at the foot of the staris as though he's about to say something, ~~to~~ ^{the people} his subjects. His biege su t and b ue shirt or as neat and dry as they were when he first came in. It is comfortably cool in the room, but most of the people have perspired a little, including myself. But not the prince or the African. Maybe because they have less fat than the rest of us. Or maybe it's below their haracter to sweat.

I glance toward the door as the major comes upon the porch. I can tell ^{how} the sound of footsteps that there are other people out there with him.

"Y'all coming in or staying out ~~there?~~the major asks them.

"Out here," someone says.

"This is my house," the major says.

"Out here," someone answers. And I recognize the voice of Beau Bkoutan.

I glance at Candi who is looking toward the door like everyone else. She continues to stare at the door a moment, then her eyes shifts to me. Well, I say with my own eyes, You have your friends, he has his. She looks at me deadly for another couple of seconds, then she pushes herself up from the stairs and goes out onto the porch.

"What's ^{all} this, Uncle Jack?" she says.

"What you mean what's ^{all} this?" he says back. "What's it look like?"

"kI want no humbug round here, uncle Jack."

"What kind of humbug?" the major asks.

"I'm warning you, Uncle Jack."

"You warning me?" he asks her.

"That's right, I'm warning you, ncle Jack."

"Why, hello there, Candi," Beau says. "Sorry 'bout the dust this evening."

Candi doesn't answer him.

"I think Beau just spoke to you," the major says.

"Did he?" Candi says. "I didn't lhear it."

"Speak again, Beau," the major says. "She doesn't hear too well."

"Why, hellow there , Candi," Beau says again. "kSorry 'bout the dust this ~~afternoon~~ evening."

Candi doesn't answer him this time eigher. She says to the major. "I'll hold ~~re~~ you responsible, Uncle Jack."

"Responsible for what?" the major says. "For brining white people to my own house? Is there a low aganst white people coming t a white man's house.?"

"Just remember what I said, Uncle Jack."

"Not me," the major skays. "You're the one had better watch it. Bringing nigger trouble makers round here, stirring up old people in the quarters. Forcing them to come up here when all the want is to be left along. You and that sissy you call a boyfriend had better watch it."

"You getting a sissy in the family there, Major?" someone says and laughs.

" Yall better head on back to that River Club *7 y' all* where y'a ll come from," Candi sais. *here Uley's goal for you!*

"No ma'am," the major says. "Not one step. I broubht my friends to my own house for a drink, and they stay here till I tell them to go."

"I know all of ou," Candi says. "Everyone last one of you. Beau Boutan, I know you. I know you too, Luke Will. Tee Jean .Louis Bob. Just be careful now. Just be careful."

She pushes open the door to come back inside.

"S4nd Janey out there," the major tells her. "But lhe kdoesn't wait. "Janey," he calls. "Br ng me my bottle of whiskey--lif them niggers ain't drunk it all up

in there. Bring me firve glasses , and make sure you scoil 'em. Don't ant poison my friends."

Someone laughs. I think it's Luke Will. He tells the major, "Major, you're too much." And the other men agree that the major is too much.

Candi come back into the room and sits down on the stairs, her hands clasped, jaws set tight, she stares down at the floor. Everyone is quiet, watching her. I don't know whether to go to her or go outside and tlry reasoning with th maj r. Then the prince puts his hand on her shoulder, and she rubs her cheek against the back of his hand. Cousinly.

"You want us to leave?" he ask her.

"No," she says.

k Janey comes into the living room carrying a tray of glasses, a bottle of Jack Daniels unopened, a pitcher of water, and a bowl of ice. Janey and everything on the tray is shaking as if she has the st. Vitus ldance. I'm nearest the door, so I open it for her. You hear things rattling even more when she goes out onto the porch where those white men are waiting. ^{for tap whisky} And before yo ^{Smith} can say Janey she's back inside again. It would be funny any other time, but it's not funny tonight.

"Y u were going to say something ," Candi says to the prince.

"I wanted to tell my kpeople how beautiful they are for coming up here tonight," the prince says.

"Our peopke, Bearnard," Candi says, looking up at him. "Our people."

The prince looks at her the way a good prince would look at one of his subjects who is not very bright--with