

"All right," I said to the class. "It's a quarter to twelve now. I'm letting you out early because ^{you} ~~we~~ will have to chop wood this afternoon. I want you all back here by twelve-thirty."

That afternoon I stood by the fence while the fifth and sixth grade boys sawed and chopped wood. The smaller boys and all of the girls were still inside. They wanted to know why they had to study while the older boys were outside having fun. I told them that they could have fun the next day picking up chips and stacking wood while the older boys were inside studying. They did not see this as quite the same, but when I didn't give them any other choice they grudgingly relented. I gave them assignments and left Irene Cole in charge.

Standing by the fence I watched the five older boys sawing and chopping the wood. Two would saw while the other sat on the pole of wood to keep it steady. The other two boys split logs and chopped up small branches with the axes. They laughed and kidded each other while they worked. They were having much more fun out here than they would have had inside studying their books.

And I thought to myself, What am I doing? Am I doing anything at all? Am I reaching them at all? They are acting exactly as the old men did earlier. They are fifty years younger, but still doing the same thing that those old men did who never went to school a day in their ^{lives} ~~life~~. Is it all just one vicious circle? Am I doing anything?

And I thought about the other one, the one who had to sit in a chair, strapped down, while esectricity shot through his body until he was dead. He had chopped wood in this same yard, probably with that same axe, five, six, seven years ago. A big, slowit, wooly headed, thick lip, misshapened teeth boy; never askeng for the axe, but once he had taken it his big hands he would not release it until the last piece of wood h ad been cut.

"Jefferson?" I used to say to him. "Jefferson? Let somebody else work."

"I ain't tired, Mr. Wiggins. ^{im} Far from getting tired."

I used to stand back and look at him and wonder how I could get him to study his books with half the determination with which he swung that axe. But nothing, nothing I did. He was too big for me to whip or make him stand in the corner. So there was nothing else I could do but to talk to him, which could never penetrate that thick skull. But now, now, within the next few weeks, possibly a few months, they wanted me to... ^{PREPARE} ~~him~~ ^{him}

I looked at the boys chopping the wood. The two who had been sawing were now splitting the logs, and the two had been using the axes were now sawing. The same one as before still ^{straddled} ~~sat~~ the log to keep it steady. They were still having fun. As I had had fun doing the same when I was that age.

^{And} There were others. They had chopped wood here, too, then they were gone. Gone to the fields, to the small towns, to the cities, where they died. There was always news about

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one who had been stabbed to death, shot to death, who was still in his teens, or in his twenties.

But the big mulatto ^{from Paulaya} had predicted it, hadn't he? It was he as teacher then who stood by the fence while we chopped the wood. He had told us then that most of us would die violently, and those who did not would be brought down to the level of the beast. That there was no other choice but to run and run. That he was living testimony of someone who should have run. That in him--no, he did not say all of this, but we felt it--there was nothing but hatred for himself as well as contempt for us. That he hated himself for the mixture of his blood and the cowardice of his being, and that he hated us for reminding him what he was. No, he did not tell us this, but daily he showed ~~it~~. ^{was this.} As clearly as anything he showed his hatred for himself, ^{and that this was} and for us. That he could teach any of us only one thing--flight. Because there was no freedom here. He said it, and he didn't say it. But we felt it. When we told our people what he said, they told us to go back and learn all we could. There were those who did go back to learn. Others who only went back. And having no place to run, they went into the fields; others went into the small towns and cities seeking work, and did even worse. But she told me that, no, I would not be one of the others, that I would learn as much as he could teach me, then I would go away to learn from someone else. But

what he had to offer.

that I would learn. And when he saw that I would learn he hated me even more than he did the others, ^{because} I challenged him, the others did not. The others believed what he said. They went out into the fields, others went into the small towns and into the cities and died. So you think you can? he said. So, you think you can? No, he did not say it with words, only with his eyes. You will be the loser, my friend. Maybe he did not say friend; he probably didn't say friend; ^{jeer} fool, probably. Anyway, you will be the loser. Yes, I will teach you. You want to learn, I will help you learn. Maybe in that way I will be free, knowing that someone else has taken the burden. Good, good, you want to learn? Good, good, here is the burden.

Even after I had gone away for further education and on returning to the plantation to visit my aunt, seeing him still at the school, I could still see the hatred in him. And after he had retired from teaching because of ill health and I would visit him ^{as he has in Paulaya,} I would still feel his hatred for himself, for me, ~~for the~~, for the world. Once sitting at the fireplace with him he said to me, "Nothing pleases me more than when I hear of something wrong." Hitler had his reason, and even the Ku Klux Klans of the South for doing what they ^{do.} ~~did.~~ "You don't believe me, do you?" he asked me. "No sir, I don't," I said. "You will one day," he said. "I told you what you should have done, but, no, you want to stay. Well, you will one day. When you see that those five