

Jack looked at him, but with no more feeling than if he was looking at a tree or a fence post. He showed more thought looking at that door to the nigger room than he did looking at Luke Will.

"I hope you wouldn't mind," Luke Will said.

"Are you suggesting I go down there and help him?" Jack asked.

"Not exactly," Luke Will said.

"What are you suggesting?" Jack asked.

Luke Will and his boys, all five of them looked at Jack. We all knowed what Luke Will was suggesting, Jack did too. Luke Will didn't say any more. Nobody did. And I went on serving. I set a bottle of Old Crow, glasses, cokes, and a bowl of ice on the bar. Luke Will and his boys started digging their hands into the ice bowl, and pouring their own drinks. I ~~looked~~ took a quick peek into the ~~ice~~ bowl, and I could see dirt and grit settled at the bottom. Couple of these boys had not washed their hands in a good while.

"Law seems to work slow at times," the quiet customer said, quietly. "But it's still the best thing that we have." He took out a pipe. "Gentlemen don't mind, do you?"

Nobody answered him. He lit the pipe.

Luke Will turned up the glass, and half the drink was gone. When he turned it up again, everything was gone 'cept the ice, and he fixed himself another drink.

"The old man ain't showing up," he said.

"What?" I said.

"His all-American son talked him out of it," Luke Will said.

"That's a lie," I said, ~~kk~~ before I knowed I had said it.

Luke Will and all his boys looked at me all at the same time.

"What's that you said, Tee Jack?"

"I didn't mean it," I said. "God in Heaven knows I didn't mean that. Just slipped out, just slipped out-- hearing ~~Fkkkkkk~~ that Fix wasn't w riding tonight."

"Be careful, Tee Jack, my fuse is short," Luke Will said.

"I can see why," I said. "I I can see why. Listen, why don't you boys just have that bottle on me. Don't have to worry about paying me. Have it on me." All right?"

They all said all right, and I felt a little better. I had thought about the baseball bat under the bar. I knowed I couldn't do much with it ~~with~~ ^{aginst} all five of them, but I had given it some thought.

"I think it's the right thing to do," the man with the pipe said.

Now, why did he have to go and open his mouth, just when things was quieting down. ^{some} He didn't even know these boys. I knowed them, and he could see they was ready to jump ^{down} cross that bar on me, so what did he think ~~they would do to him?~~ ^{he would have} .?

"What's that you said, Mister?" Luke Will asked him.

"Let the law handle this," the pipe man said, not even looking at Luke Will.

"Say, where you from, Mister?" Leroy asked. "Not one of them New Yourk yNankee Jews."

The fellow took the pipe from his mouth and looked at Leroy. Leroy was no more than seventeen, eighteen at the most.

~~xxxxxxx~~ "Texas," ~~he~~ said. ~~"I'm teaching at USL."~~ I wasn't supposed to sell him the stuff, but I wasn't no fool, either, not with that crowd.

"Texxas," the quiet fellow said. "I'm teaching at USL."

They would have hit like they would a nigger, that's what.

"What you teaching there, nigger study?" *Leroy and L*

"I teach black writing among other things," the man from USL said, holding the stem of his pipe next to the corner of his mouth.

"Ain't you a little late for class?" Leroy asked.

"None on Friday nights," the pipe man said.

"You must have one. Think, now," Leroy said.

The pipe man thought for a second, then he shook his head. "Nope. None that I can recall," he said.

"Then whyy don't you just go on back to Lafayette and start up one," Leroy said, stepping a little closer to the pipe man.

"Now, now, Leroy," I said. "Calm down, ~~h~~ calm down."

"Sure," Leroy said, looking at the pipe man. "Sure."

He finished his drink, and went back and fixed up another one. I looked at the pipe man. I hate putting a white man out of my lace, but I sure wished ~~he~~ *that fellow* would go home.

"So Fix's leaving it up to Mapes, huh?" Robert asked Luke Will. He raised his bottle for me to biring him another M^lller.

"It's not him," Luke W ll said to Robert. "Itis that all --American fart and that hog gut salesman there in Bayonne. They the ones talked him out of it. He wanted to come, but he wouldn't come without them. I left him there crying."

"My God," I said. I served obert his beer, and collected my money. "What is this world coming to?" I said.

"What in the world is this world coming to?"

Jack finished his drink and set the glass on the bar.

"Gkood night," he said, moving away from the corner.

"Leaving us, Jack?"

"Yes."

Jack had to pass by Robert and the pipe man to get to the door, and the pipe man turned from the bar to look at him.

"Sir?" he said. "Don't you own that place?"

Jack stopped and looked at the pipe man. He didn't like for strangers to speak to him unless he spoke first.

"What place?" he asked the pipe man.

"Where this man was killed?"

"I own a third of it," Marshall said.

"Don't you think you ought to do something?"

"The law is down there," Marshall said. "That's what they pay him for."

"I mean something else," the pipe man said.

"What?" Jack said.

The pipe man looked at Jack. Jack looked right back at him, but not showing nothing in his face.

~~"You must have some conviction," the pipe man said.~~
 "Sir, you seem like an intelligent man?"

"Sure," Jack said. "So what?"

"You must care something for this place, for those people who live on the place."

~~"No," Jack said.~~

~~"No?"~~

~~"No?"~~

"They live pretty well," Jack said. "They don't pay rent or anything."

"And what's happening here now, doesn't matter?"

"I don't see anything happening," Jack said. "Do you?"

The pipe man just looked at Jack. He couldn't believe Jack. But he didn't know Jack either.

"In the end, it's people like us who, *you and I* ~~me and you~~, who pay for this."

"Sure," Jack said. "But I've been paying my share seventy years all ready." How long ^{long} you been paying yours?"

"The debt is never finish as long as we stand for this."

Jack grunted. No change though, no change in his face at all. "If you can't take it here, you better get on back to Texas," he said, and went out.

He backed the car from in front of the door, and drove back up the river. The trees along the ~~road~~ river bank had shadowns all over the place now. Soon it would be dark--and these boys here was putting that stuff away faster and faster.

"He sure cooked your goose," Leroy told the pipe man.

The pipe man didn't look at Leroy. He was looking in the glass behind the bar. Leroy ~~started grinning at him~~ was drunk now. His young ch ldish face had urned beet red. His blue eyes had gotten bluer. His small reddish lips shoullda been on a girl, not a man.

"Bring us another bottle lthere, Tee Jack," Luke Will said.

"Sure, boys, sure," I said. "Remember lnow, the first one was on me." The ay I said first, I wanted them to know that his one was not on me. I ~~don~~ didn't think I had insulted him two bottles worth when I called him a lie.

I set up the bar, and they dugged in. I glanced into the ice bowl again. Yep, dirt and grit covered the bottom. Some of these boys hadn't seen a wash basin in weeks.

"You down there," Luke Will said to the pipe man. "Don't you think you ought to get moving."

"I was just thinking about it," the pipe man said.

"Don't think," Luke Will said. "Move it."

The pipe man knocked some ashes out of his pipe into the palm of his hand, then he dumped the ashes into the little ashtray I had on the bar.

"You boys think you doing the right thing, taking the law in your own hands?"

"You leaving, or you need some escorting?" Luke Will asked him.

"I'm leaving," the pipe man said. "But I will leave with these words, 'Don't do it. For the sake of the South, don't do it. For 'Salt' and 'KPepper', don't do it."

"Henry, you and Jack, show that gentlemen to his car," Luke Will said.

"Luke, please," I said. "He's a white man. That can make trouble."

"If he's a white man, let him act like one," Luke Will said. "Jack, you and Henry "

~~Jack Tobias and~~ Jack Thompson and Henry Tobias started toward the pipe man. The pipe man raised one of his hands.

"I'm leaving," he said.

"You better go straight to Lafayette, too," Luke Will said. "I know how to find that school house, I cross that Atchafalaya Basin every day."

The pipe man looked at ~~all of us xxxxxx and went out~~ Robert, but Robert looked down at his bottle of beer. He looked at me, but he could see I wasn't on his side either. I wasn't against him, but he as a stranger here, and these was my regular customers--and I wasn't no fool either. I didn't want come in here one day and find a bunch of rattle snakes and water moccasins crawling all over the floor.

The pipe man nodded ~~his head~~ to himself, and went out. You never in all your born days seen a sadder looking figure. Fellow acted like he carried the whole world on his shoulders all by himself.

"You ought to mind who you let come in your place, Tee Jack," Luke Will said to me.

"How can you tell a book by the cover?" I said. "He looked all right when he first came in. A little on the weak, worrying side, but he looked all right."

"Be more careful in the future," Luke Will said.

"Sure," I said. "You know me. Anything to please my regular customers."

"One more, and I'm ready to kick me some ass," Leroy said, fixing another drink. "Shit, I can't wait. Let's go kick some ass."

"Take it easy, boy," Luke Will said. "You'll get your chance."

"I close at ten on Fridays, boys," I said.

"Tonight you'll stay open long as we want you to," Luke Will said.

"Sure, boys, sure," I said. I thought about all them rattle snakes crawling all over the place. "Anything to please my regular customers." I looked over the bar at Robert. He had just finished ~~the last swallow of beer, in the bottle.~~ ^{he} "Like lanother one?" ^{"I said"} On the house this time, ~~I said.~~ ^{on the house."}

"No, I'm going home," Robert said. "I haven't been here at all today. Good night."

"It's on the h use," I said. "Any kind you like. You can have a couple if you like."

He went out, ~~leaving me in there with them like you would leave an old dog in the rain.~~ I heard him get in his car and drive away. ~~I felt lonely as an old dog in the rain.~~ I didn't look around at Luke Will and his boys, because I knowed they were all watching me.

"Look at him," Leroy said. "Look at him. Shaking there like a' old nigger. Now you know how a old nigger feel. Look at him, look at him."

I wouldn't look around, so he moved down the bar to face me. He started pointing his finger and laughing at me. He was drunk now, drunk as he could be, and his

~~soft face, and girlish~~ soft girlish gam face and little red girlish lips looked like they belong to a

~~freak in a carnival.~~

*made hi look like a freak of kind
seen at
carnival
show.*

"Let's finish this bottle, ~~Lake Will~~ said.

*and get out of here," Lake Will
said.*

"You ought to mind who you let come in your place, Tee Jack," Luke Will said to me.

"How can you tell a book by the cover," I said. "He looked all right when he first came in. A little on the weak, worrying side, but he looked all right."

"Be more careful in the future," Luke Will said.

"S rem" I said. "You know me. Anything to please my regular customers."

"One more, and I'm ready to kick me some ass," Leroy said, fixing another drink. "Shit, let's go kick some ass, I'm ready now."

"Take it easy, boy," Luke Will said. "You'll get your chance."

"I close at ten on Friday," I said.

"You'll stay open long as we want you to," Luke Will said.

"Sure, boys, sure," I said. I thought about all them rattle snakes. ^{crucis all on the plane.} "Anything to please my regular customers,"

I said. ~~I looked at Pete. "You bet, you god step here with me."~~

~~I looked at Kelly. "Pete you want to stay here with me?"~~

"No, I'm in his hands," Pete said.

"I haven't been here at all today. Good night."

He went out, left me there with just the beer. And the beer was all I needed. Leroy started laughing and putting it by me.

"Look at it, he's doing, look at it,
he's doing. Now you know how
a nigger feel."

"Let's break the bottle," Lulu will
said.