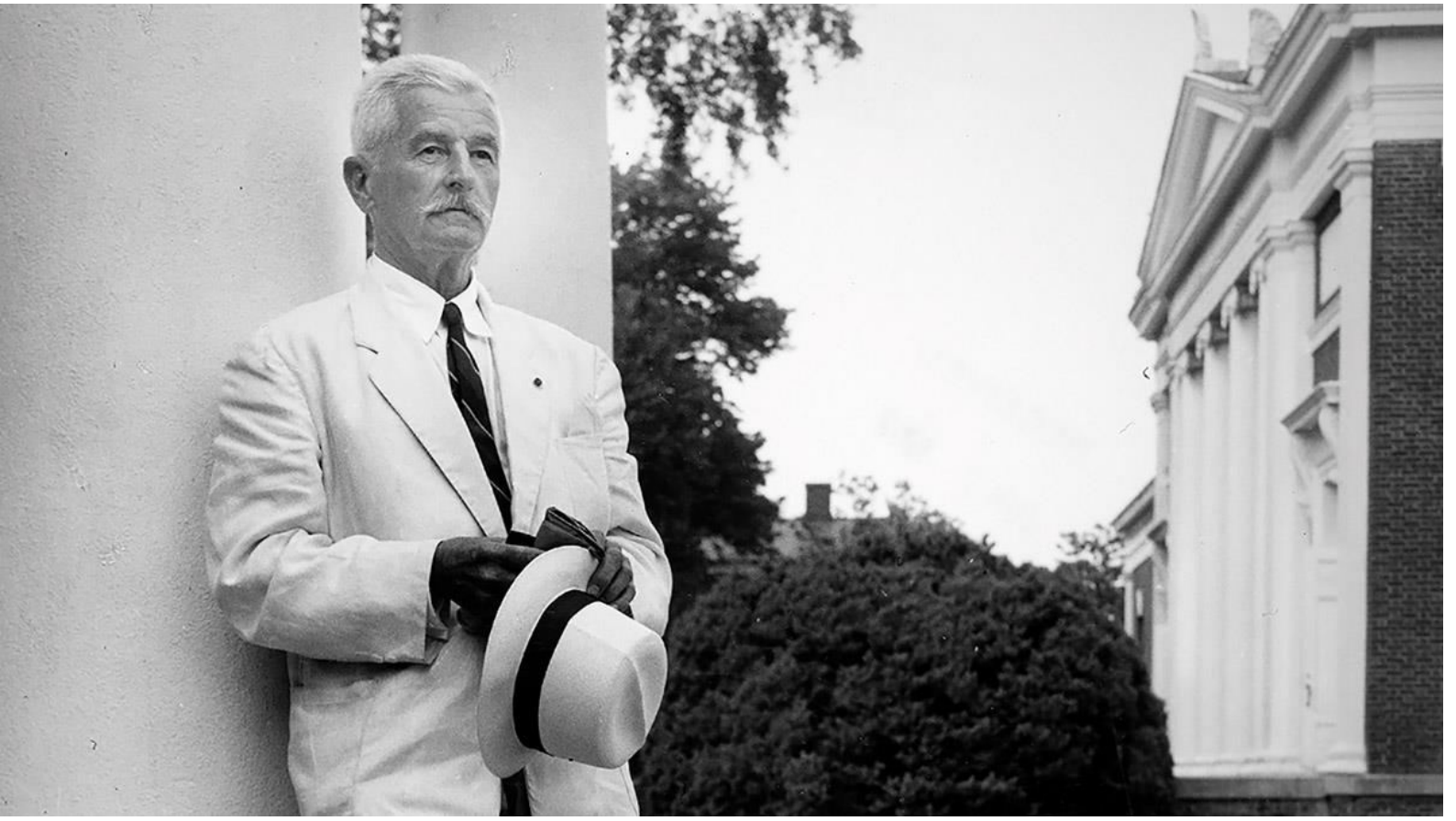

Hand Upon the Waters, William Faulkner

Hand Upon the Waters

I

THE TWO MEN followed the path where it ran between the river and the dense wall of cypress and cane and gum and brier. One of them carried a gunny sack which had been washed and looked as if it had been ironed too. The other was a youth, less than twenty, by his face. The river was low, at mid-July level.

‘He ought to been catching fish in this water,’ the youth said.

‘If he happened to feel like fishing,’ the one with the sack said. ‘Him and Joe run that line when Lonnie feels like it, not when the fish are biting.’

‘They’ll be on the line, anyway,’ the youth said. ‘I don’t reckon Lonnie cares who takes them off for him.’

Presently the ground rose to a cleared point almost like a headland. Upon it sat a conical hut with a pointed roof, built partly of mildewed canvas and odd-shaped boards and partly of oil tins hammered out flat. A rusted stovepipe projected crazily above it, there was a meager woodpile and an ax, and a bunch of cane poles leaned against it. Then they saw, on the earth before the open door, a dozen or so short lengths of cord just cut from a spool near by, and a rusted can half full of heavy fishhooks, some of which had already been bent onto the cords. But there was nobody there.

‘The boat’s gone,’ the man with the sack said. ‘So he ain’t gone to the store.’ Then he discovered that the youth had gone on, and he drew in

his breath and was just about to shout when suddenly a man rushed out of the undergrowth and stopped, facing him and making an urgent whimpering sound — a man not large, but with tremendous arms and shoulders; an adult, yet with something childlike about him, about the way he moved, barefoot, in battered overalls and with the urgent eyes of the deaf and dumb.

'Hi, Joe,' the man with the sack said, raising his voice as people will with those who they know cannot understand them. 'Where's Lonnie?' He held up the sack. 'Got some fish?'

But the other only stared at him, making that rapid whimpering. Then he turned and scuttled on up the path where the youth had disappeared, who, at that moment, shouted: 'Just look at this line!'

The older one followed. The youth was leaning eagerly out over the water beside a tree from which a light cotton rope slanted tautly downward into the water. The deaf-and-dumb man stood just behind him, still whimpering and lifting his feet rapidly in turn, though before the older man reached him he turned and scuttled back past him, toward the hut. At this stage of the river the line should have been clear of the water, stretching from bank to bank, between the two trees, with only the hooks on the dependent cords submerged. But now it slanted into the water from either end, with a heavy downstream sag, and even the older man could feel movement on it. 'It's big as a man!' the youth cried.

'Yonder's his boat,' the older man said. The youth saw it, too — across the stream and below them, floated into a willow clump inside a point. 'Cross and get it, and we'll see how big this fish is.'

The youth stepped out of his shoes and overalls and removed his shirt and waded out and began to swim, holding straight across to let the current carry him down to the skiff, and got the skiff and paddled back, standing erect in it and staring eagerly upstream toward the heavy sag of the line, near the center of which the water, from time to time, roiled heavily with submerged movement. He brought the skiff in below the older man, who, at that moment, discovered the deaf-and-dumb man just behind him again, still making the rapid and urgent sound and trying to enter the skiff.

'Get back!' the older man said, pushing the other back with his arm. 'Get back, Joe!'

'Hurry up!' the youth said, staring eagerly toward the submerged line, where, as he watched, something rolled sluggishly to the surface, then sank again. 'There's something on there, or there ain't a hog in Georgia. It's big as a man too!'

The older one stepped into the skiff. He still held the rope, and he drew the skiff, hand over hand, along the line itself.

Suddenly, from the bank of the river behind them, the deaf-and-dumb man began to make an actual sound. It was quite loud.

II

'Inquest?' Stevens said.

'Lonnie Grinnup.' The coroner was an old country doctor. 'Two fellows found him drowned on his own trotline this morning.'

‘No!’ Stevens said. ‘Poor damned feeb. I’ll come out.’ As county attorney he had no business there, even if it had not been an accident. He knew it. He was going to look at the dead man’s face for a sentimental reason.

What was now Yoknapatawpha County bad been founded not by one pioneer but by three simultaneous ones. They came together on horseback, through the Cumberland Gap from the Carolinas, when Jefferson was still a Chickasaw Agency post, and bought land in the Indian patent and established families and flourished and vanished, so that now, a hundred years afterward, there was in all the county they helped to found but one representative of the three names.

This was Stevens, because the last of the Holston family had died before the end of the last century, and the Louis Grenier, whose dead face Stevens was driving eight miles in the heat of a July afternoon to look at, had never even known he was Louis Grenier.

He could not even spell the Lonnie Grinnup he called himself — an orphan, too, like Stevens, a man a little under medium size and somewhere in his middle thirties, whom the whole county knew — the face which was almost delicate when you looked at it again, equable, constant, always cheerful, with an invariable fuzz of soft golden beard which had never known a razor, and light-colored peaceful eyes— ‘touched,’ they said, but whatever it was, bad touched him lightly, taking not very much away that need be missed — living, year in and year out, in the hovel he had built himself of an old tent and a few mismatched boards and flattened oil tins, with the deaf-and-dumb orphan he had taken into his hut ten years ago and clothed and fed and raised, and who had not even grown mentally as far as he himself had.

Actually his hut and trotline and fish trap were in almost the exact center of the thousand and more acres his ancestors had once owned. But he never knew it.

Stevens believed he would not have cared, would have declined to accept the idea that any one man could or should own that much of the earth which belongs to all, to every man for his use and pleasure — in his own case, that thirty or forty square feet where his hut sat and the span of river across which his trotline stretched, where anyone was welcome at any time, whether he was there or not, to use his gear and eat his food as long as there was food.

And at times he would wedge his door shut against prowling animals and with his deaf-and-dumb companion he would appear without warning or invitation at houses or cabins ten and fifteen miles away, where he would remain for weeks, pleasant, equable, demanding nothing and without servility, sleeping wherever it was convenient for his hosts to have him sleep — in the hay of lofts, or in beds in family or company rooms, while the deaf-and-dumb youth lay on the porch or the ground just outside, where he could hear him who was brother and father both, breathing. It was his one sound out of all the voiceless earth. He was infallibly aware of it.

It was early afternoon. The distances were blue with heat. Then, across the long flat where the highway began to parallel the river bottom, Stevens saw the store. By ordinary it would have been deserted, but now he could already see clotted about it the topless and battered cars, the saddled horses and mules and the wagons, the riders and drivers of which he knew by name. Better still, they knew him, voting for him year after year and calling him by his given name even though they did not quite understand him, just as they did not understand the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa key on his watch chain. He drew in beside the coroner’s car.

Apparently it was not to be in the store, but in the grist mill beside it, before the open door of which the clean Saturday overalls and shirts and the bared heads and the sunburned necks striped with the white razor lines of Saturday neck shaves were densest and quietest. They made way for him to enter. There was a table and three chairs where the coroner and two witnesses sat.

Stevens noticed a man of about forty holding a clean gunny sack, folded and refolded until it resembled a book, and a youth whose face wore an expression of weary yet indomitable amazement.

The body lay under a quilt on the low platform to which the silent mill was bolted. He crossed to it and raised the corner of the quilt and looked at the face and lowered the quilt and turned, already on his way back to town, and then he did not go back to town. He moved over among the men who stood along the wall, their hats in their hands, and listened to the two witnesses — it was the youth telling it in his amazed, spent, incredulous voice — finish describing the finding of the body. He watched the coroner sign the certificate and return the pen to his pocket, and he knew he was not going back to town.

‘I reckon that’s all,’ the coroner said. He glanced toward the door. ‘All right, Ike,’ he said. ‘You can take him now.’ Stevens moved aside with the others and watched the four men cross toward the quilt. ‘You going to take him, Ike?’ he said.

The eldest of the four glanced back at him for a moment. ‘Yes. He had his burying money with Mitchell at the store.’

‘You, and Pose, and Matthew, and Jim Blake,’ Stevens said.

This time the other glanced back at him almost with surprise, almost impatiently.

‘We can make up the difference,’ he said.

‘I’ll help,’ Stevens said.

‘I thank you,’ the other said. ‘We got enough.’

Then the coroner was among them, speaking testily: ‘All right, boys. Give them room.’

With the others, Stevens moved out into the air, the afternoon again. There was a wagon backed up to the door now which had not been there before. Its tail gate was open, the bed was filled with straw, and with the others Stevens stood bareheaded and watched the four men emerge from the shed, carrying the quilt-wrapped bundle, and approach the wagon. Three or four others moved forward to help, and Stevens moved, too, and touched the youth’s shoulder, seeing again that expression of spent and incredulous wild amazement.

‘You went and got the boat before you knew anything was wrong,’ he said.

‘That’s right,’ the youth said. He spoke quietly enough at first. ‘I swum over and got the boat and rowed back. I knowed something was on the line. I could see it swagged—’

‘You mean you swam the boat back,’ Stevens said.

‘ — down into the — Sir?’

‘You swam the boat back. You swam over and got it and swam it back.’

‘No, sir! I rowed the boat back. I rowed it straight back across! I never suspected nothing! I could see them fish—’

‘What with?’ Stevens said. The youth glared at him. ‘What did you row it back with?’

‘With the oar! I picked up the oar and rowed it right back, and all the time I could see them flopping around in the water. They didn’t want to let go! They held on to him even after we hauled him up, still eating him! Fish were! I knowed turtles would, but these were fish! Eating him! Of course it was fish we thought was there! It was! I won’t never eat another one! Never!’

It had not seemed long, yet the afternoon had gone somewhere, taking some of the heat with it. Again in his car, his hand on the switch, Stevens sat looking at the wagon, now about to depart. And it’s not right, he thought. It don’t add. Something more that I missed, didn’t see. Or something that hasn’t happened yet.

The wagon was now moving, crossing the dusty banquette toward the highroad, with two men on the seat and the other two on saddled mules beside it. Stevens’ hand turned the switch; the car was already in gear. It passed the wagon, already going fast.

A mile down the road he turned into a dirt lane, back toward the hills. It began to rise, the sun intermittent now, for in places among the ridges sunset had already come. Presently the road forked. In the V of the fork stood a church, white-painted and steepleless, beside an unfenced straggle of cheap marble headstones and other graves outlined only by rows of inverted glass jars and crockery and broken brick.

He did not hesitate. He drove up beside the church and turned and stopped the car facing the fork and the road over which he had just come where it curved away and vanished. Because of the curve, he could hear the wagon for some time before he saw it, then he heard the truck. It was coming down out of the hills behind him, fast, sweeping into sight, already slowing — a cab, a shallow bed with a tarpaulin spread over it.

It drew out of the road at the fork and stopped; then he could hear the wagon again, and then he saw it and the two riders come around the curve in the dusk, and there was a man standing in the road beside the truck now, and Stevens recognized him: Tyler Ballenbaugh — a farmer, married and with a family and a reputation for self-sufficiency and violence, who had been born in the county and went out West and returned, bringing with him, like an effluvium, rumors of sums he had won gambling, who had married and bought land and no longer gambled at cards, but on certain years would mortgage his own crop and buy or sell cotton futures with the money — standing in the road beside the wagon, tall in the dusk, talking to the men in the wagon without raising his voice or making any gesture. Then there was another man beside him, in a white shirt, whom Stevens did not recognize or look at again.

His hand dropped to the switch; again the car was in motion with the sound of the engine. He turned the headlights on and dropped rapidly down out of the churchyard and into the road and up behind the wagon as the man in the white shirt leaped onto the running board, shouting at him, and Stevens recognized him too: A younger brother of Ballenbaugh's, who had gone to Memphis years ago, where it was understood he had been a hired armed guard during a textile strike, but who, for the last two or three years, had been at his brother's, hiding, it

was said, not from the police hut from some of his Memphis friends or later business associates.

From time to time his name made one in reported brawls and fights at country dances and picnics. He was subdued and thrown into jail once by two officers in Jefferson, where, on Saturdays, drunk, he would brag about his past exploits or curse his present luck and the older brother who made him work about the farm.

‘Who in hell you spying on?’ he shouted.

‘Boyd,’ the other Ballenbaugh said. He did not even raise his voice. ‘Get back in the truck.’ He had not moved — a big somber-faced man who stared at Stevens out of pale, cold, absolutely expressionless eyes. ‘Howdy, Gavin,’ he said.

‘Howdy, Tyler,’ Stevens said. ‘You going to take Lonnie?’

‘Does anybody here object?’

‘I don’t,’ Stevens said, getting out of the car. ‘I’ll help you swap him.’

Then he got back into the car. The wagon moved on. The truck hacked and turned, already gaining speed; the two faces fled past — the one which Stevens saw now was not truculent, but frightened; the other, in which there was nothing at all save the still, cold, pale eyes. The cracked tail lamp vanished over the hill. That was an Okatoba County license number, he thought.

Lonnie Grinnup was buried the next afternoon, from Tyler Ballenbaugh’s house.

Stevens was not there. ‘Joe wasn’t there, either, I suppose,’ he said. ‘Lonnie’s dummy.’

‘No. He wasn’t there, either. The folks that went in to Lonnie’s camp on Sunday morning to look at that trotline said that he was still there, hunting for Lonnie. But he wasn’t at the burying. When he finds Lonnie this time, he can lie down by him, but he won’t hear him breathing.’

Ill ‘No,’ Stevens said.

He was in Mottstown, the seat of Okatoba County, on that afternoon. And although it was Sunday, and although he would not know until he found it just what he was looking for, he found it before dark — the agent for the company which, eleven years ago, had issued to Lonnie Grinnup a five-thousand-dollar policy, with double indemnity for accidental death, on his life, with Tyler Ballenbaugh as beneficiary.

It was quite correct. The examining doctor had never seen Lonnie Grinnup before, but he had known Tyler Ballenbaugh for years, and Lonnie had made his mark on the application and Ballenbaugh had paid the first premium and kept them up ever since.

There had been no particular secrecy about it other than transacting the business in another town, and Stevens realized that even that was not unduly strange.

Okatoba County was just across the river, three miles from where Ballenbaugh lived, and Stevens knew of more men than Ballenbaugh who owned land in one county and bought their cars and trucks and banked their money in another, obeying the country-bred man’s

inherent, possibly atavistic, faint distrust, perhaps, not of men in white collars but of paving and electricity.

‘Then I’m not to notify the company yeti’ the agent asked.

‘No. I want you to accept the claim when he comes in to file it, explain to him it will take a week or so to settle it, wait three days and send him word to come in to your office to see you at nine o’clock or ten o’clock the next morning; don’t tell him why, what for. Then telephone me at Jefferson when you know he has got the message.’

Early the next morning, about daybreak, the heat wave broke. He lay in bed watching and listening to the crash and glare of lightning and the rain’s loud fury, thinking of the drumming of it and the fierce channeling of clay-colored water across Lonnie Grinnup’s raw and kinless grave in the barren hill beside the steepleless church, and of the sound it would make, above the turmoil of the rising river, on the tin-and-canvas hut where the deaf-and-dumb youth probably still waited for him to come home, knowing that something had happened, but not how, not why.

Not how, Stevens thought. They fooled him someway. They didn’t even bother to tie him up. They just fooled him.

On Wednesday night he received a telephone message from the Mottstown agent that Tyler Ballenbaugh had filed his claim.

‘All right,’ Stevens said. ‘Send him the message Monday, to come in Tuesday. And let me know when you know he has gotten it.’ He put the phone down. I am playing stud poker with a man who has proved

himself a gambler, which I have not, he thought. But at least I have forced him to draw a card. And he knows who is in the pot with him.

So when the second message came, on the following Monday afternoon, he knew only what he himself was going to do. He had thought once of asking the sheriff for a deputy, or of taking some friend with him.

But even a friend would not believe that what I have is a hole card, he told himself, even though I do: That one man, even an amateur at murder, might be satisfied that he had cleaned up after himself. But when there are two of them, neither one is going to be satisfied that the other has left no ravelings.

So he went alone. He owned a pistol. He looked at it and put it back into its drawer. At least nobody is going to shoot me with that, he told himself. He left town just after dusk.

This time he passed the store, dark at the roadside.

When he reached the lane into which he had turned nine days ago, this time he turned to the right and drove on for a quarter of a mile and turned into a littered yard, his headlights full upon a dark cabin. He did not turn them off. He walked full in the yellow beam, toward the cabin, shouting: ‘Nate! Nate!’

After a moment a Negro voice answered, though no light showed.

‘I’m going in to Mr. Lonnie Grinnup’s camp. If I’m not back by daylight, you better go up to the store and tell them.’

There was no answer. Then a woman's voice said: Toil come on away from that door!' The man's voice murmured something.

'I can't help it!' the woman cried. 'You come away and let them white folks alone!'

So there are others besides me, Stevens thought, thinking how quite often, almost always, there is in Negroes an instinct not for evil but to recognize evil at once when it exists. He went back to the car and snapped off the lights and took his flashlight from the seat.

He found the truck. In the close-held beam of the light he read again the license number which he had watched nine days ago flee over the hill. He snapped off the light and put it into his pocket.

Twenty minutes later he realized he need not have worried about the light. He was in the path, between the black wall of jungle and the river, he saw the faint glow inside the canvas wall of the hut and he could already hear the two voices — the one cold, level and steady, the other harsh and high.

He stumbled over the woodpile and then over something else and found the door and flung it back and entered the devastation of the dead man's house — the shuck mattresses dragged out of the wooden hunks, the overturned stove and scattered cooking vessels — where Tyler Ballenbaugh stood facing him with a pistol and the younger one stood half-crouched above an overturned box.

'Stand back, Gavin,' Ballenbaugh said.

'Stand back yourself, Tyler,' Stevens said. 'You're too late.'

The younger one stood up. Stevens saw recognition come into his face. ‘Well, by—’ he said.

‘Is it all up, Gavin?’ Ballenbaugh said. ‘Don’t lie to me.’

‘I reckon it is,’ Stevens said. ‘Put your pistol down.’

‘Who else is with you?’

‘Enough,’ Stevens said. ‘Put your pistol down, Tyler.’

‘Hell,’ the younger one said. He began to move; Stevens saw his eyes go swiftly from him to the door behind him. ‘He’s lying. There ain’t anybody with him. He’s just spying around like he was the other day, putting his nose into business he’s going to wish he had kept it out of. Because this time it’s going to get bit off.’

He was moving toward Stevens, stooping a little, his arms held slightly away from his sides.

‘Boyd!’ Tyler said. The other continued to approach Stevens, not smiling, but with a queer light, a glitter, in his face. ‘Boyd!’ Tyler said. Then he moved, too, with astonishing speed, and overtook the younger and with one sweep of his arm hurled him back into the bunk. They faced each other — the one cold, still, expressionless, the pistol held before him aimed at nothing, the other half-crouched, snarling.

What the hell you going to do? Let him take us back to town like two damn sheep?’

That’s for me to decide,’ Tyler said. He looked at Stevens. ‘I never intended this, Gavin. I insured his life, kept the premiums paid — yes. But it was good business: If he had outlived me, I wouldn’t have had any use for the money, and if I had outlived him, I would have collected

on my judgment. There was no secret about it. It was done in open daylight. Anybody could have found out about it. Maybe he told about it. I never told him not to. And who's to say against it anyway? I always fed him when he came to my house, he always stayed as long as he wanted to, come when he wanted to. But I never intended this.'

Suddenly the younger one began to laugh, half-crouched against the bunk where the other had flung him. 'So that's the tune,' he said. That's the way it's going.' Then it was not laughter any more, though the transition was so slight or perhaps so swift as to be imperceptible. He was standing now, leaning forward a little, facing his brother. 'I never insured him for five thousand dollars! I wasn't going to get—'

'Hush,' Tyler said.

' — five thousand dollars when they found him dead on that—'

Tyler walked steadily to the other and slapped him in two motions, palm and back, of the same hand, the pistol still held before him in the other.

'I said, hush, Boyd,' he said. He looked at Stevens again. 'I never intended this. I don't want that money now, even if they were going to pay it, because this is not the way I aimed for it to be. Not the way I bet. What are you going to do?'

'Do you need to ask that? I want an indictment for murder.'

'And then prove it!' the younger one snarled. Try and prove it! I never insured his life for—'

‘Hush,’ Tyler said. He spoke almost gently, looking at Stevens with the pale eyes in which there was absolutely nothing. ‘You can’t do that. It’s a good name. Has been. Maybe nobody’s done much for it yet, but nobody’s hurt it bad yet, up to now. I have owed no man, I have taken nothing that was not mine. You mustn’t do that, Gavin.’

‘I mustn’t do anything else, Tyler.’

The other looked at him. Stevens heard him draw a long breath and expel it. But his face did not change at all. ‘You want your eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.’

‘Justice wants it. Maybe Lonnie Grinnup wants it. Wouldn’t you?’

For a moment longer the other looked at him. Then Ballenbaugh turned and made a quiet gesture at his brother and another toward Stevens, quiet and peremptory.

Then they were out of the hut, standing in the light from the door; a breeze came up from somewhere and rustled in the leaves overhead and died away, ceased.

At first Stevens did not know what Ballenbaugh was about. He watched in mounting surprise as Ballenbaugh turned to face his brother, his hand extended, speaking in a voice which was actually harsh now: ‘This is the end of the row. I was afraid from that night when you came home and told me. I should have raised you better, but I didn’t. Here. Stand up and finish it.’

‘Look out, Tyler!’ Stevens said. ‘Don’t do that!’

‘Keep out of this, Gavin. If it’s meat for meat you want, you will get it.’ He still faced his brother, he did not even glance at Stevens. ‘Here,’ he said. ‘Take it and stand up.’

Then it was too late. Stevens saw the younger one spring back. He saw Tyler take a step forward and he seemed to hear in the other's voice the surprise, the disbelief, then the realization of the mistake. 'Drop the pistol, Boyd,' he said. 'Drop it.'

'So you want it back, do you?' the younger said. 'I come to you that night and told you you were worth five thousand dollars as soon as somebody happened to look on that trotline, and asked you to give me ten dollars, and you turned me down. Ten dollars, and you wouldn't. Sure you can have it. Take it.' It flashed, low against his side; the orange fire lanced downward again as the other fell.

Now it's my turn, Stevens thought. They faced each other; he heard again that brief wind come from somewhere and shake the leaves overhead and fall still.

'Run while you can, Boyd,' he said. 'You've done enough. Run, now.'

'Sure I'll run. You do all your worrying about me now, because in a minute you won't have any worries. I'll run all right, after I've said a word to smart guys that come sticking their noses where they'll wish to hell they hadn't—'

Now he's going to shoot, Stevens thought, and he sprang. For an instant he had the illusion of watching himself springing, reflected somehow by the faint light from the river, that luminousness which water gives back to the dark, in the air above Boyd Ballenbaugh's head. Then he knew it was not himself he saw, it had not been wind he heard, as the creature, the shape which had no tongue and needed none, which had been waiting nine days now for Lonnie Grinnup to come home, dropped toward the murderer's back with its hands already extended and its body curved and rigid with silent and deadly purpose.

He was in the tree, Stevens thought. The pistol glared. He saw the flash, but he heard no sound.

IV

He was sitting on the veranda with his neat surgeon's bandage after supper when the sheriff of the county came up the walk — a big man, too, pleasant, affable, with eyes even paler and colder and more expressionless than Tyler Ballenbaugh's. 'It won't take but a minute,' he said, 'or I wouldn't have bothered you.'

'How bothered me?' Stevens said.

The sheriff lowered one thigh to the veranda rail. 'Head feel all right?'

'Feels all right,' Stevens said.

'That's good, I reckon you heard where we found Boyd.' Stevens looked back at him just as blankly. 'I may have,' he said pleasantly. 'Haven't remembered much today but a headache.'

'You told us where to look. You were conscious when I got there. You were trying to give Tyler water. You told us to look on that trotline.'

'Did I? Well, well, what won't a man say, drunk or out of his head? Sometimes he's right too.'

'You were. We looked on the line, and there was Boyd hung on one of the hooks, dead, just like Lonnie Grinnup was. And Tyler Ballenbaugh with a broken leg and another bullet in his shoulder, and you with a

crease in your skull you could hide a cigar in. How did he get on that trotline, Gavin?'

'I don't know,' Stevens said.

'All right. I'm not sheriff now. How did Boyd get on that trotline?'

'I don't know.'

The sheriff looked at him; they looked at each other. 'Is that what you answer any friend that asks?'

'Yes. Because I was shot, you see. I don't know.'

The sheriff took a cigar from his pocket and looked at it for a time. 'Joe — that deaf-and-dumb boy Lonnie raised — seems to have gone away at last. He was still around there last Sunday, but nobody has seen him since. He could have stayed. Nobody would have bothered him.'

'Maybe he missed Lonnie too much to stay,' Stevens said. 'Maybe he missed Lonnie.' The sheriff rose. He bit the end from the cigar and lit it. 'Did that bullet cause you to forget this too? Just what made you suspect something was wrong? What was it the rest of us seem to have missed?'

'It was that paddle,' Stevens said.

'Paddle?'

'Didn't you ever run a trotline, a trotline right at your camp? You don't paddle, you pull the boat hand over hand along the line itself from one hook to the next. Lonnie never did use his paddle; he even kept the

skiff tied to the same tree his trotline was fastened to, and the paddle stayed in his house.

If you had ever been there, you would have seen it. But the paddle was in the skiff when that boy found it.’

The End