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Zinatta

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- Vick

EE-3-DDDD,

- 1 - (over)

When Pastor Jim was very young and since beyond his years he developed a great vexation with his father who was a semi invalid, drooping emaciated of the local pool hall and the habitue thereof whom he regularly trounced in endless games of chance.

I, working early and late against the fearsome odds of the Great Depression to support the family and to get on with Jim's young Jim's college fund, gave little attention to the heat being generated over the issue until -

One evening hurrying down an alley to the grocery, I collided with a neighbor in the half dusk - hanging over the back fence by the pool hall, peering into the dusk - "my ward!" I groaned "what's up?" Receiving no reply I took my place beside him, hastily reorienting the area in the direction of his gaze... "never have I seen the likes before or ever expect to see the likes again" - said he, excitedly - "Three weeks ago, it was, - and I'd Jim sittin' cross legged - in that very spot - surrounded by rats big as cats - where rats had never been before - they seized my arms in iron grip and rasped - "listenin' they wuz - to every word he said - bid ye ever SEE a carnim' listen - Mrs. Jones? Well - it was a hummer or no - listenin' and little Jim was sayin' "Friends! The hour has struck - you must cheer the foundation from under that den of in - in - ee - quit us."

mine informant sprang uncomfortably close to my ear and hissed - "Oh you will not see them, Mrs. Jones - only the big holes and the mounds of sawdust beneath - and the timbers set under the sagging corners - and, perhaps, you have heard how ol' Jarvonn was bitten to the bone, a week ago, when he struck at a rat, and the floor giving way under Big Jim Jones' chair and 'tis a wonder his back was not broken... and the urine" - "He what?" I whispered, "surely he didn't -"

(over)

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"No! No!" shrieked my informant 'twas only the way
of rats trompin' vitals -- and Biddy. Had not his
soul never had a nose for smellin' -- Remem'ber?
he was slapped down twice by a couple of strangers
who found rat pellets in the ham sandwich he
sold 'em -- Ah! yes! It's the nature of -- livin' things
to eat -- eat and excrete -- as they should know --
it all started when little Jim -- set right there -- a
sayin' to them rodents -- "Friends! the hour has struck --"
There arose a stirring of many bodies -- a mere whisper
in the tall grass and a rasping of many teeth on wood --
a spooky sort of sympathy -- well suited to the night.
My informant stiffened and resumed his earlier
stance, gazing fixedly at the poor hole.

His fingers snuggled into mine. Lady Bug (his little dog)
reared her soft white body between us. Little Jim
said: "I have a feeling God is very fond of niggers
like this. No! It is not a feeling really, but a KNOWING, said,
he, persively -- "Yes! a KNOWING that has been going on --
a long -- long time -- when worlds were different -- than
this one -- and we were not much different than we are."

The Old House

There was an abandoned house on the lot where the starving chickens had been penned. It set close to the sidewalk on the long walk. The outbuilding where the chickens had roosted was not visible from the walk or from the inside of the old house because of the ~~intertwining~~ tall weeds and undergrowth that covered the lot.

The timber of the old house was not showing a lot of warp and twist or other sign of disrepair, except the bare boards bore no indication that paint had ever been applied on either interior or exterior. The roof had not leaked at the rate one would expect of such a neglected place, and no part of the floor was broken or gone.

There was an atmosphere of mystery about the place and a sort of mute appeal that was not easy to shake off. Villagers reported from time to time that the old house was haunted. Young fry avoided it for the most part except when young Jim led the foray. It must be admitted that he feared neither gods or devils, or the quick or the dead. ^{on the other hand} I had many fears, all of them ~~was~~ confined to anxiety about young Jim's safety and the safety of the animals of our family ^{and in the town} which like children, I ~~had~~ ^{had} much like children and ^{were} dependent upon ~~the~~ ^{young Jim and I} for guidance and assistance when in trouble just like children.

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What happened most in my mind was the suspicion
 that transients might be using the old house for a
 way station. They ^{were} numerous in the depth of depression.
^{Also} the railroad tracks were close by, and switching
 was underway both day and night. My imagination
 grew like the green bay tree, whispering: "you know how
 'tis with the lad. Whenever riddle or mystery is there, he
 will see also," or "Beware!" Among those knights of the
 road could be blood-letters, child molesters, kidnapers,
 all driven insane by the crucial economic stress of
 these times --. Inspired by these whisperings, I could
 always fling my exhausted flesh into passing ~~on~~ my
 investigation of any place or thing that might pose a
 threat to me and mine or any other person or ^{another any other living} thing.

I'd creep through the thicket, ^{often} and check the old
 empty house from stem to stern, for signs of occupancy
 and finding none -- I would sit on my bottom, ^{on the floor} lean
 against the wall -- and envision all the folk who
 may have lived there, wondering if old houses miss
 all the folk ~~as~~ it has sheltered, and all those
 familiar voices that have drifted into the limbo of
 its past.

I was equally intrigued by old prisons set in
 in the middle of pastures or hidden in dark ravines
 where houses had once stood.

The most fascinating of these ^{old prints} I had encountered on a trip from Indiana to Penfro Valley in Kentucky some years ^{ago} later. Penfro was the birthplace of the old barn dance, folk music and homespun humor - like ol' He Hee now, ^{showing} on J.V. I ^{on that trip} pulled at my lady friend who was my relief driver, to halt the car and I lit out across that pasture with my camera hammering me in the back every leap I took. Cows along the way surveyed me questioningly and returned to their grazing.

a beautiful rose bush laden with crimson bloom leaned against the old structure, with its feelers rocking in the ^{soft} breeze as it reached for the roof. A cluster of roses was draped over the sagging door which stood open just enough to admit a person and to afford a good look at the Sears & Roebuck Catalogue, neatly placed beside the hole in the seat platform. The seat and the floor was immaculately clean and in the center of the floor a fat rattler was coiled. Dressed in his new skin, ^{the snake} ^{so much as} bright it did not even shake its tail at one nor did it stir when I clicked the camera. That picture was a masterpiece. I cherished it for years, # as I ^{reluctantly} turned to resume my steps back to the car another rattler hurried toward me on the path. It surged aside to avoid my feet and disappeared through the sagging door of the old print. I rejoined my friend in the car. After a few miles of silence she said: All those years
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I have known you and I'll never really know you, I reckon. So, what's with the old prying? Something getting like never happens to other people ~~is~~, I suppose?

"Maybe not. Maybe no," I mumbled ~~and~~ and let the matter rest there.

To return to the empty house along the long walk, from time to time a very old lady and a very young boy had appeared there. Young Jim had called on her and offered to get her groceries etc. He had said she had acted very stand offish as she did to me when I followed up his offer with another of my own. Neighbors said the ^{and the woman} boy always arrived at night and departed the same way. None knew by what means they had come or gone since no strangers had visited them or been seen around the place. ^{in new paragraph} In due course the neighbors also reported that the boy and the woman had been seen some weeks before Jim had found the starving chicken but she had gone, they said in the same mysterious fashion as she had come. She never came again after that incidence and the speech I had prepared for her about such conduct with chickens was, therefore, never delivered.

It was little consolation to me that young Jim's father was always in town where Jim could easily find him, ^{if in trouble. Big Jim} because ~~he~~ he was usually at the pool room. Trouncing is associated in games of chance, and strangely

or poison you." Once as I came down the alley from
the grocery at dusk I heard the poolroom proprietor
speaking to his ~~customers~~ clientele. It was summer
and the ~~door~~ back doors of the old landmark was
wide open to admit the ~~the~~ westwinds which blew
intermittently affording small respites to the sweltering
townfolk. And the proprietor: "Boys if these
desam rats don't clear out ~~there~~ ^{by} winter
will be standing ^{to mark the spot where this pool hall}
stood, ~~corner~~ ^{corner} I heard a musical tee-hee coming from
a sagging fence corner behind the old edifice --
Squinting against the rapidly falling dusk -- I crept
closer and there sat young Jim -- half naked -- except for
his shorts -- sitting atop a corner fence post -- which was
wearing ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~ominously~~ ^{ominously} ~~and~~ ^{creaking} under his weight --
sagging ~~over~~ ^{over} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~heaving~~ ^{heaving} himself, he was, and
chanting ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ a language foreign to me -- but,
judging from the animated tossing of the grasses in
the lot below I realized that the small ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~work~~ ^{work} ~~was~~
below hadn't missed a syllable of his gargled
edged up a little closer keeping in the shadow of a
big tree -- trying to figure out how that fence post
maintained ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~a~~ ^a ~~45~~ ⁴⁵ ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~angle~~ ^{angle}, doing a wide smooth
circle as if moved by ~~a~~ ^a ~~machine~~ ^{machine} by some invisible
mechanical device -- whilst topped by the small naked
nymph -- gittering about and making joyful noises and
yet, rode the darn post as if it were a horse -- exactly --

EE-3-FFFF6

^{Crept up to}
Often, spite on young Jim when he was unaware
just to admire the bronze of his sturdy body and note
little rivulets of sweat coursing down, marking paths
pale paths through the dust he had gathered in his
wandering. And as always having finished his immediate
involvement with his horse, he spoke without
turning his head in my direction: "you needn't be a
Cat-footin', Mom. I always know who is around."

Blinching widely, I sauntered ^{on} down the alley toward
home and the preparation of the evening meal. The air
was sultry now. The soft breeze came more regularly.
I was tempted to dilly dally ⁱⁿ and hope that young Jim would
come along with me and relate the incidents of his day. He
didn't. A stockman was driving a couple of head of cattle
toward me there in the narrow alley. "Watch out for
that bull, Mrs. Jones", he squalled "he's a mean one."
"That's why", said I grumpily - "watch a mean?", said he,
suspiciously. "I mean, you should never have owned
an animal of any kind, ^{elder} ~~man~~. If he's mean, it's because
you never ^{could see} any good in him. All you could see
was money, ^{elder} ~~man~~." I grained as I rubbed noses
with the bull and scratched his ears, encrusted with
the blood from ^{many} fly bites. "Buy some spray for these
Cows! And spray 'em. Do you hear me? And to H - L
with the cost of it. You can afford it." I snuffed angrily.

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"Of course I hear ye. I aint deaf -- whatever else -- you think I am I'll spray 'em in the morning."

"Spray 'em tonight," I snarled. "They will be at 'em again at daybreak unless ye do and I just hope I NEVER have to get as mad as I'm going to be -- if that spray is not on these cows by daybreak."

"How can you see fly bites when it's almost dark," he growled.

"With these fingers I feel 'em, man," I roared and I can feel abuse of animals even if I was ten years dead. You know that? And don't you tell yourself these cows are not fly bitten! Doncha dare! Hear me?" said I.

"Of course I hear you, I've got no more ear trouble since you -- forced me to see a specialist -- cost me \$100, ten-damn thief, he was for God's sake -- I'll spray 'em tonight." He moaned.

"Your cows -- Elmer -- Remember your cows, not your ears." I grinned, and ^{started to} continued on my way.

He took off his battered hat, ^(scratched) his head vigorously and remarked: "You get me so rattled, Mr. Jones, I awww I don't know if I'm plowing or disking -- You are always -- after me about -- the way I do my beasties -- I don't know why I like you, I don't know why anybody likes you -- be damn if I do, but I sure don't know why me and all the rest does what you tell ^{us to do} -- every time."

"Wahl, Elmo," I drawled in my most elongated southern accent. "twixt me and thee - 'trint 'cause they like me - 'tis 'cause what I feel 'em is solid - sound sense - and having done what I ^{to do} say they feel so much better inside - more like they've befriended themselves ye' know. And by the way, rub some salve on those bites before ye spray 'em. Do it just before daylight in the morning. Heave?" "Course I bear" - like I told you before. Okay I'll do it," snapped he.

"The course - Eemer? Not your ears - mind you, now. I chanted briskly and hurried past him, mindful, once more, of the many tasks awaiting me at home. Young Jim skipped past me in a spate in the night. I was often caught up, rather sadly too, in the thought that he was not of this world and that neither words held mystery for him. Where learned churchmen expounded upon profundity his wisdom was so unusual, so apart from the reasoning of this world. At those times I would vow within myself to live forever to safeguard him from all obscenity and harm at the hands of the unlearned.