

Oh Jude, My Jude

The shuffling sound of sandals on the old wooden floors stopped outside the door. After a brief but definite pause there was a timid knock — faint, slow, the hand then drawn back quickly.

" Yeah? " said Naomi.

" It's Dixie, Miss Naomi. "

" Well, get on in here. "

The door swung open slowly, and the negro girl took one step through the doorway, stopping just inside the room.

" What's wrong with you girl? Come over to me where I can hear you; I ain't goin' to bite your head off. "

The negro girl shuffled across the room to where Naomi was seated behind her desk, warming herself next to the small gas heater. The clock over the fireplace ~~was~~ ^{had} just ~~beginning~~ firing!

The shuffling sound of saddles on old wooden floors stopped outside the door, and after a brief but definite pause there was a timid knock, faint, slow, the hand drawn back quickly.

"Yeh," said Naomi.

"It's Dixie, Miss Naomi."

"Well get on in here."

The door swung open slowly. The negro woman took one step through the doorway and stopped just inside the room.

"What's wrong with you girl? I ain't going to bite your head off. Come over to the desk where I can hear you."

The negro woman shuffled across the room to where Naomi was seated behind her desk warming herself next to the small gas heater. The clock over the fireplace had just finished chiming the hour of five, and now the orange sunlight, the remains of what had been an unusually bright, cold day, angled down through the shutters, streaking across Dixie's face, giving it an unusual savage quality which her ancestors had once achieved with war paint.

"Well?"

"She back, Miss Naomi."

"Who brought her back?"

"She come by herself jus' a few minutes ago."

"Then tell her to get down here quick. Tell her she better have a good story because I'm expecting one, do you hear?"

Pleasing to him as he had thought. He is not disappointed that she no longer wants to make love. But she literally seems to drift away from him and his parting comments "You can keep the money" are not even heard or at least acknowledged by her as she is thinking intensely to herself on the bed.

The next morning the madame gives her consent to let the prostitute leave the city to "recuperate". She leaves before it is light yet and the sun comes up in a beautiful sky as the bus nears the town of St. Francisville. She talks to this man on the bus about things like blue sky and trees and asks questions about the animals and how it is like to farm and to live on a farm. She stops in St. Francisville because it is sunny there and also there are big trees and she can walk down to the river every morning if she wants to and just look at it. She never could see the river in New Orleans because the wharfs always shielded it from view and at night it was only Black and slimy and oily looking and there were rats and roaches that ran around the wharfs and sly, evil looking alley cats that when they weren't fighting were slinking around waiting to trap a mouse or rat.

She decides that this is the place where she wants to stop and rest. She goes into the station and asks the clerk where she can get a room. The clerk tells her that there is a place just three miles outside of town, a plantation owned and run by three old maids who live together in the old house that their granddaddy built in eighteen fifty six. The father of the women had since passed on and the three had never had any desire to leave the house. The leader of the three Miss Forsythia, maintained that there would be a day when that plantation would make them millionaires and they were going to wait until that day came. After the clerk gives her the directions to the plantation she decides to walk even when the clerk insists that he drive her out. She knows what he is up to and says she is going to walk anyway. When he asks for a date she tells him to get lost. and as she leaves picks up the telephone. She walks about a mile out of town before she sees the truck raising the dust ahead of her. (meanwhile a description of the country is given.) It is the ranch hand of the place where she is going to stay. She never doubts it for a minute and gets in the truck willingly. The farm hand is a nice sort of guy, somewhat crude in his language but generally a friendly person without those obvious designs of other men. She gets to like the man and the two at first become good friends. The two old maids and the younger woman slightly younger than the prostitute are very naive about the appearance of this whore. They take her in, and though

She says "St. Francis-I like the sound of that. I guess this is a good place to stop if she wants to and just look at it. She never could see the river in New Orleans because the wharfs always shielded it from view and at night it was only Black and slimy and oily looking and there were rats and roaches that ran around the wharfs and sly, evil looking alley cats that when they weren't fighting were slinking around waiting to trap a mouse or rat. She decides that this is the place where she wants to stop and rest. She goes into the station and asks the clerk where she can get a room. The clerk tells her that there is a place just three miles outside of town, a plantation owned and run by three old maids who live together in the old house that their granddaddy built in eighteen fifty six. The father of the women had since passed on and the three had never had any desire to leave the house. The leader of the three Miss Forsythia, maintained that there would be a day when that plantation would make them millionaires and they were going to wait until that day came. After the clerk gives her the directions to the plantation she decides to walk even when the clerk insists that he drive her out. She knows what he is up to and says she is going to walk anyway. When he asks for a date she tells him to get lost. and as she leaves picks up the telephone. She walks about a mile out of town before she sees the truck raising the dust ahead of her. (meanwhile a description of the country is given.) It is the ranch hand of the place where she is going to stay. She never doubts it for a minute and gets in the truck willingly. The farm hand is a nice sort of guy, somewhat crude in his language but generally a friendly person without those obvious designs of other men. She gets to like the man and the two at first become good friends. The two old maids and the younger woman slightly younger than the prostitute are very naive about the appearance of this whore. They take her in, and though

they are naturally disturbed by this "lower element" in the house they think that she is some, or one of the many homeless waifs that travel the roads in these hard times and so they befriend her. The younger maid becomes especially fond of her and asks all sorts of questions about the "outside". She had only been to New Orleans just once, when she was a child and that was so long ago that she could not remember. The prostitute tells her a biased account of the town and its more sinful pleasures. The maid becomes more and more interested, for now she strongly suspects what the occupation of the border was. And so does the farm hand. He takes her out to try to seduce her and he succeeds eventually, but this is after several weeks of her stay there and after several other mild attempts to seduce the prostitute. When they are in bed together she asks him why he doesn't seduce the younger maid. It would be good for her she says. He says that he would think of doing such a thing. Those three are ladies born and bred ladies and to violate them would be like violating the Virgin Mary.

The younger maid comes all the time to the prostitute's room and talks about the outside and her thoughts become more sordid and she seems to derive some sort of sexual joy out of her speculations. Finally a crisis will precipitate the prostitute's having to leave the plantation, and the younger girl wants to go with the prostitute, come down to New Orleans with her, to become a prostitute herself. In spite of the fight both leave together and a few days later the dazed young maid, now really quite mad comes back to the plantation.

Plot Alteration:

Of the three old maids, the oldest one is dying of cancer. All three of the women are Catholics and the prostitute is of no religion. There comes an acute religious climax at the death of the older sister and the prostitute who, perhaps unconsciously has made this trip from New Orleans to St. Francis, to find herself religiously, denies the religion and again seeks her own profession.

In his dialogue - Make Crapoun herself to one of the rats which she saw down at the wharf. She used to feel sorry for them and she used to watch them try to get up the ropes to the ship but were always blocked. They too wanted to escape but couldn't. * On Bach

And the yell sunlight, the remains of what had been
a very bright cold day stretched across their faces.

* The preacher starts her on the road to serious
introspection, the self-searching which climaxes with
her decision to leave her environment to try to seek
an answer. The preacher's insistence that she give herself
to God - give her body and soul is re-emphasized at
the house of the Bold maids. The scene which occurs
at the death of the elder sister. The Catholic Priest and
she have an argument or discussion that she realizes
that all anyone wants of her is her body. They demand
it. When she decides not to become a prostitute again
or marry or anything because that would be to
condemn her body to final submission. She is confident
that God will ultimately rule her destiny after death
but she can maintain some freedom while alive. That
freedom is manifested in her denial of God but not
her denial of faith.