

"Tom?" the old man said.

"Yes, Sir?" the boy said.

"Your grandmother can get those dishes by herself. I want you to go inside and get my rifle. You know where my horn and pouch are?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then do it now. Bring it all out on the porch and put it in that chair. I'm going down to check on the bull and I want all the equipment here when I get back."

"Yes, Sir."

"I won't be long."

"Yes, Sir."

After he had walked ~~out~~^{half} way to the barn, Aaron Thompson wished he had worn his hat. He didn't know if it was he who felt dizzy or if it was the shimmering heat waves rising from the ground and disturbing everything around him. The sun had moved ~~enough~~^{enough} to give the sick bull, Hercules, ~~enough~~ shade for his head and part of his massive shank. The animal either would not or could not stand nor did it appear to notice the old man when he climbed into the pen to doctor it. Still, the man was pleased with the apparent progress which his bull seemed to be making. The Bull's breathing which that just that morning had been heavy, labored, rasping had now ~~subided~~^{subided} to the ~~point~~^{point} ~~it seemed to~~ become almost normal. The eyes were clearer now, and some of the feed had been eaten out of the trough markedly. Yes, the Bull would make it; There was no doubt ~~at~~ in the man's mind now, if there had ever been any doubt. All that was needed was more feed, more rest, more time to get the strength back in that grizzled body. It was merely a matter of time. He felt that the bull sensed this. His large expressionless eyes showed. It was only a matter of time.

The Hawkins Rifle was laid across the seat of the Chair and the powder horn and pouch hung from the Chair back. He picked the rifle up. It was very rusty. The rust ^{powder} came off thick on his hands. He tried to cock it but the lock would not move at first. He saw the boy looking at him. He saw the two women moving silently back and forth from the kitchen to the ~~parlor~~ dinner table on the porch and looking at him. He felt ashamed that he had let his weapon rust up so badly. He was thinking that maybe it was the woman's fault, that the steam and heat from her cooking had damaged the rifle when it hung on the kitchen wall. He didn't think that it was he who hung it there, like his own father had hung his rifle in the kitchen which had also been the dining room and sometimes a bedroom too in old winters.

"It's rusty, ain't it, Brondpa?" the boy said. The old man yanked at the hammer ^{again} and this time it cocked. He had to squeeze the trigger hard to set it off and the sound of the hammer hitting the trigger was not the clean ~~metallic~~ sound of metal against metal. It was muffled as rust struck against rust.

"Will it work, Brondpa?" said the boy.

"Get me some grease out of that pouch."

The boy opened the pouch and searched through it and finally brought something out. "Is this what you want?"

The old man took it. The grease ~~had~~ inside the tin had congealed into wax. "Get me some grease. There's some in the kitchen. And bring me a bucket ~~and~~ of water."

"Yes, sir."

When the boy brought the grease and the water the old man had already gotten the lock to

to ^{Cock}~~trap~~ and ^{snap}~~hook~~ more easily. The sound
was almost metallic now. The boy had
thought of being with the water and the grease.
He ~~put~~ the bucket at the old man's feet
and stood back respectfully.

or should have been but wasn't. The judge
 was eating slowly like he was thinking
 of something to say back. Everyone kept from
 speaking ~~because~~ because they could see on
 the judge's face that he thinking. Aaron Thompson
 was waiting for Throckmorton to say something
 back because he was a lawyer, and a judge,
 and didn't like to be beat in an argument. Finally,
 the judge Throckmorton looked up. He was still holding
 a fork with food on it in his hand. "I like what you
 said, Aaron. They are good sentiments, noble sentiments.
 But these intentions I won't hide the fact that you
 are ^{men} older now, still strong perhaps, perhaps even
 strong enough to put ^a good fight here if you have
 a mind to. But what is ^a good fight? Is it
 working yourself to death never giving up in spite of the
 land. Or is a good fight, the fight that finally beats
 the land - if that is possible. If it is the former,
 then I am sure that you ~~can~~ would be
 up to it. But if it is the latter, and I feel
 that in, then all the endurance and effort of
 a man means nothing, if the land is that ^{hard} turned
 brought under the control of the man who attacks
 it. A man can push himself till his heart bursts
 from the strain. As I see it he may die feeling
 the pride he earned by never giving up that
 he ~~has~~ leaves this life with little else, and
 nothing but a wild land or fallow fields, empty
 of cattle, with nothing but ^{all that} ^{is left} ^{of his} ^{land} ^{as a} ^{legacy}
 for his loved ones. ^{His} ^{children} ^{and} ^{grandchildren}.

Don't you see, Aaron, the fighting is no good
 if you don't win. It means the same as if you
 had never come upon this land and left it
 to the Indians. And it don't even take a ~~lot~~
^{long} ^{time} ^{for} ^{any} ^{one} ^{to} ^{see} ^{that} ^{you} ^{hold} ^{on} ^{this} ^{place}
 is slipping a little more year by year, sliding
 against you so that when you give ten acres, it
 takes an acre. What you need is a hand to
 help you take some of this land back so that the
 farm doesn't become complete wilderness again.

" I never needed help before and I
ain't takin' it now."

" Maybe if you took a man on just
part time, say at plantin' time. He could get
a few acres back from the mesquite and cactus,
and give you a chance to get a ~~good~~ big crop in
again."

" Maybe you forgot, judge, some of the
big crops I've brought in from this place. Well
I haven't ~~forgot~~ and can't say what you may be
thinkin', I'm gonna bring some big crops in
again. It's just that you don't seem to understand,
that the times ain't fit for plantin' big crops now.
Ain't been fit for a couple of years. But that, all
gonna change. I can feel it. Just like I could
feel the bad years comin', now I can feel it inside
of me, in my bones. I can feel the good
years comin' again. Like in the ~~book~~ ^{book}, the seven
lean years are just about over and I'm gonna
plant again and plant big like the old days and
my ~~old~~ Bull Hercules will be over his spell and
then will work at Calpin time again. Oh, it
will be work. And, ~~but~~, I admit that it will
be harder on me than before. I know that. But
I'll show you just the same that I can work as
good as I always could when I got somethin'
to work with. We're in a spell right now. That's
all. Aint no use fightin' a spell. Best, just to
sit it out like you sit a fever out. Then there
will plenty of work again. That's where you been
mistaken all along judge. You've been thinkin'
all along that it's words that kills a man,
when you should of known that it is idleness
that really kills. ^{work} Work makes the blood flow and
set the annoids right again. ^{it's only thing that} ~~It~~ makes life worth
livin', you know that, ~~judge~~ " *"

" Maybe I do and maybe I don't. I really
don't say. But I can say this, that your stubbornness
may be placin' ^{your} those you love most, in ~~in~~ danger.
(You either can't or won't work your land any more.

you refuse for some strange reason, as yet unknown to me, to accept any help which might aid you in setting this farm back in shape again and when danger of violence threatens your family, you refuse to move them out of that zone of danger. Just look at yourself Aaron. You have a big farm, you've got good land and right here on your dinner table, your Sunday dinner table, you might add - you don't even have meat. There is no reason why a man with good land like you have, Sir, should not provide meat for his ~~self~~ Sunday dinner.

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"I know this, my friend, that you are a hard headed man. I know I'm right but nothing I can say will change your mind."

"No, Sir. There is no reason to change it."

"I see. I suppose you have been considering ~~in the last few minutes~~ carefully the possible danger of Indians in the area."

"I have, Sir."

"And I suppose you have ruled out the idea of taking them to Jockboro where they would be safe until troops restore order."

"No judge, I have not. If they wish to go I will take them and see that they are put up. But I must come back and see that the stock get water. And there is my Bull Hercules whose ailin."

"That old animal. That Bull's older than all of us put together. You can't sell me, you still getting service of them, not that bull."

"That animal's got good blood, real good blood. He's an aristocrat. He'll be servicing cows when bulls half his age are being turned out to pasture."

"Well, I'm not concerned about my bull. What matters is Minnie and the Children."

"I'm not no child," said the boy.

"If you really mean what you say, Aaron, about letting them come in to Jackboro, I'll take them in myself and see that they are taken care of good and proper. Jesus, here I can drive them in and I'll send word to you when we get the all clear sign."

"Judge Mockmorton," said Mignie, "I think I can speak for the children when I say that we would prefer to remain here on our own place. We don't want to be beholdin' to nobody" Jesus interrupted. "But these Indians are not even a day's ride away. They are Kiowa, Todeg, and they have killed."

"Sir," she said, "They have been Kiowa ^{in the country} before ~~and~~ they have killed before and we have not left our place. In past things were much worse then and no body ran to Jackboro like they do now. I just don't understand people actin' like that now days. I guess we done had too much peace in the last couple of years. ^{Just} People who have had peace for long get jumpy at the thought of trouble. I swear, I've never seen anything quite like it."

"Beside, Judge," said the old man, "It's probably no more than a revenge party. If the telegram is true and they have killed, then they should already be on their way back to the Reservation."

"I don't know," Jesus said. He took a drink of water and sat back finished with his meal. "There is something very strange about this. I have checked very thorough and there have been no reports of Indian trouble, none at all. Not even in the Panhandle where there would most likely be trouble between Indians and Buffalo ^{men}. This does not mean that there has been no trouble, especially if the Buffalo men have crossed on to reservation land where Indians had a right

to drive them off. But even if there was fighting there, it does not explain why the Kiowa have crossed south instead of west of the reservation. I do not understand it. If it ~~was~~ ^{is} revenge the ~~war~~ Kiowa ~~wanted~~ wish, they could have had it at the border instead of coming this far south."

"Could they be going to Mexico for captives and stock like in the old days?" said Aaron.

"I do not believe that Kiowa would do this. It is too late now for that. The Kiowa Chiefs and even the young men know it. They know that it would be a foolish thing to do. It is true that they are not fed well by the government, but if they wished cattle and horses they could easily get them without going to the old places in Mexico."

"Well," said Thompson, "you're supposed to think like the Kiowa, what do you think is making them raid this far south, if it ain't revenge or ~~so~~ fresh meat then looking for?"

"Magic," Jesus said.

"Magic?" Even the judge looked around.

"Yes, Kiowa magic. You see, the Kiowa are a beaten people and most of them know this. The great old war chiefs are mostly dead now and the Hotsenko, the warrior society, ~~has~~ ~~has~~ does not have its old strength with the people. And it is also true that the Tribal Chiefs, ~~also~~ especially the ones who have tried to bring their people to the white man's way - these men have lost free with the people when the white man does not keep the promises which he has told the Chiefs to make to their people. This leaves only the medicine men."

Then are several very powerful ^{medium} men among the Kiowa. Of all the Kiowa leaders, it is these men who still impress the people. They are always telling the Kiowa how they can be great again through their magic. And it is strong magic.

I once saw a man struck dead ~~with~~ by a powerful medicine man. This makes the people respect and fear their powers very much. They trust the medicine men and they are afraid not to believe them. That is why I feel the trouble lies with something these men have done or told the people because these men are the only ones who have not lost face."

"Well, what do you think the medicine men could have told the warriors?"

"I don't know, but it must be something very powerful. It would take very strong medicine to make the Kiowa act so strangely."

"That is why you ~~and your~~ and Minnie and your grand children may be in serious danger," said the judge.

"This is true," said Jesus.

"You are in danger because there is no reason for their acts, no predictability."

"Well, Minnie's right, Judge. They weren't that predictable before and in those days there were a hell of a lot more of them than there are now, and they were a lot meaner, less formed."

"Then you still won't change your mind and come in to Jacksboro."

"No, Judge. I think I can speak for my wife and my grand children when I say I will take our chance at our home like we've always done."

"Mister Thompson, have you ever seen a Kiowa?" asked Jesus.

"I seen 'em when they brought Satanta, and Lone Wolf and Big Tree into Jacksboro for trial."

"I'm not talking about that, Mr. Thompson. What I mean is, have you ever seen hostiles?"

"Yes, a couple of times. I seen 'em far off when they were moving through after they had done so much killing and stealing in Mexico that they had no stomach for it here. I

I seen 'em morien through fast not even
 payin heed to us, ~~who~~ even ignorin us
 when they could of seen us as well
 as we saw them. Just too full of killin,
 that's all."

"Have you ever seen anyone killed by these
 people," Mr. Thompson.

Mrs Thompson spoke up "I don't think
 this is a ^{propitious} ~~propitious~~ for the Sunday dinner table, especially
 when there are children present"

"Please forgive me, ma'am," said Jesus, "but
 I believe it is important that this be said. It
 might make Mr. Thompson think more deeply
 about the danger that faces all of you."

"I don't need no ... I don't need no
 body to tell me how to think" said Aaron Thompson.

"Have you ever seen anyone killed by
 Kiowa, Mister Thompson."

"No, I have not. But I've heard enough
 from people who have. I promise you it wasn't
 sugar coated."

"I might say, Mister Thompson, that he who
 has not seen what the Kiowa can do to a man,
~~does not~~ can not really know what it is like,
 not even if he is told in the most accurate
 way. I will not try to describe it before ladies,
 though I know that I should, because among
 the white man, the woman has great power
 to make ~~him~~ ~~her~~ ~~husband~~ ~~to~~ the man decide things
 in their favor.

I will say this to you, ~~now~~ Mrs. Thompson,
 and to you girl, that I have seen the bodies of
 many white men torn, and cut in way that
 show that ~~an~~ a Kiowa holds no part of their
 man or woman's body sacred. I have seen parts
 cut off and put in other places. I have seen
 bodies cleaned out inside, like fresh pillaged
 deer. I ~~for~~ have seen big rocks where ^{many} heads
 used to be. I have even seen in the ^{many} Mesquite
 country to the north, the body of a girl about your

age." He pointed to the girl sitting at the table across from him, looking sicker now. "I found her, when the Kiowa had left her a week before. What was left of her was hung in the fork of a mesquite tree. I am a strong man, Mr. Thompson, but that made me sick to the stomach. I have seen much, maybe too much, but I carry that sight with till I die. I shall never forget it."

Minnie Thompson was stunned. She could not have stopped this man if she had wanted to. ~~He had~~ She felt weak as if the heat had taken all of her strength. She was sweating. She was trembling. She looked at the girl but the girl did not take her eyes from her plate. She was paler, almost green in color. ^{Mrs. Thompson} She would have liked to reach out and hold her granddaughter's hand but the girl's hand were clasped ^{together} to gether under the table.

"Judge," she said, "What this man has said does make me think, not about me because my mind is made up, but about my children. I feel that if it would not inconvenience you much, that it would be a favor of you would take them into forksboro."

"It would be my pleasure, Minnie," said the Judge. "But I don't want to go," said the boy. "I want to see some Indians."

"You'll go, if I say you go."

The girl looked up at her grandmother. There was a pleading look on her face which Minnie Thompson misunderstood.

"That settles it, Judge," said Minnie Thompson, "These children will go with you till the trouble is over."

This upset the girl even more. "Grandma, can I please talk to you?"

"What do you want?"

"Not Grandma. May I talk to you in the kitchen?"

Both of them went into the kitchen.

"Judge," said Aaron, "I think that the children should make their own decisions. This is their land too. They ought to learn right now that to keep land you have got to earn it by staying on it in good times and in bad. That you even got to defend it if you have to. I think the boy at least should know this and learn it now."

"I don't make the rules here, Aaron, you do, you and Minnie."

The woman and the girl returned to the table without her grand daughter. She sat down and put her mopkin cloth in her lap. "The children will not be going today, thank you. But tomorrow or Tuesday I will bring them in to Jacksboro, myself if I have to. But they can't go today. I would be delighted if you could meet us in Jacksboro when we get there, Judge."

"I would be most happy to, Minnie. But I feel that I should emphasize that time is most important in these matters."

"Yes, Sir, time is most important. I will have the children in Jacksboro as soon as possible."

The meal was obviously completed though there had been very little eaten. The judge sensed the moment to depart and pushed himself back from the table. The others responded likewise. Instantly Minnie Thompson was up out of her chair before the judge could reach it. The judge turned to Aaron Thompson. "Aaron, I hope you have some weapon other than that old Hawkins you used to have."

The boy ^{him} ~~what~~ ^{is} a Hawk in the road at,

"Nope, I don't."

"Well, I'm going to give you my pistol then since I got a rifle in the buggy."

"Won't need one, judge."

The judge sighed and threw up his hands resigned. "I do wish I had your faith in Providence or what ever it is that makes you so hard headed. I would load up that old single shot then, if it hasn't rusted up on you. With Providence and at least one shot on your side, you can at least feel better off."

"I'll take that advice, judge."

"Well, God save us all. Don't feel me I finally sunk in that skull of yours."

"Nope I would a loaded it up anyway."

~~The judge asked~~

Minnie put her hand on the judge's sleeve. "You didn't eat much judge. I'll put some things in a basket for you to nibble on when you go back."

The judge followed Minnie into the cooking room. ~~He stops~~ The girl was seated sitting very still in the corner. She was drinking something. The judge stepped inside the door, stepped to the old woman as she began to prepare the small basket.

"Minnie, I don't think I have to tell you how important it is for Aaron to get some help to run this place."

"I know that, judge. A wife knows things like that, but what the use knowing about it when a body don't do nothing about it. It defeats me, judge."

"He's got to see the light and admit he can't handle this place by himself or you all will be off this farm in a couple of years at most."

"I know. I know that."

"When was the last time you had meat for

minnie?

"That ain't kind, ~~judge~~ thing to as a man's woman, judge."

"I know, Minnie, but I'm really worried about you and I'm gonna try to fix things - even if he doesn't want me to."

"Don't, judge. I'd rather you just leave us be. Maybe it will be a good year come fall, and maybe things will get better." She finished wrapping a nocker over the corn bread with jelly already on it, and ^{green} onions. She handed it to the judge. "Sorry there ain't more in it judge."

"That's all right, Minnie" He took her hand in his. It was a hard, leathery hand, but a weak hand just the same. "Keep trying," he said. "He finally come around to clear them kids one of these, and he'll hire a hand and make this place produce like it ought to."

"I'll keep trying, judge" she said. Her hand did not or could not return the embrace of his.

They walked out onto the porch together. Aaron Thompson was arguing and Jesus ~~wasn't~~ ^{wasn't} to ~~Speak but~~ ^{wasn't} not given the chance. was looking for the chance to speak.

"They never put their roots down nor ever showed any sense for working the land. You can't tell me these Kiowa feel the same about this land as I do, 'Cause I won't believe it."

"Then you refuse to look on this land as the Indian does you lie as ^{well} as the Indian who will try to understand the white man way. You can not know then how the Indian looks upon the white man's ~~habit~~ practice of putting boundaries and fences on everything. He put the pins boundaries upon the territory of his tribe and nation but within those boundaries the land is every ^{one's} ^{own}. He can not see why each man must fence from his neighbor and then not use it himself while still denying its use to his neighbor. This makes no sense to an Indian because

He knows that the buffalo, in a time when there were buffalo, when the great South herd was black across the plains. He knows that the buffalo can not have fences and his people like the buffalo must also roam free if they are to live. To confine them is to kill them. The white man is really no different than the Indian though any Kiowa would not say this or would call me crazy for saying this. The Kiowa does value land. He values it as dearly as the white man. But the Indian values not ~~the~~ each piece of land for himself as the white man does the land within his fence. Instead the Indian values the territory, the whole land that his people ~~for~~ have fought hard to take and hold. He values the land not for himself and his family like the white man, but for his people, his tribe, his ancestors, his future sons. The Indian can not see fighting another man for taking an acre or ten acres or a thousand acres unless the taking does dishonor against him and his people. ~~to~~ This made the Indian weak. It is hard for Indian to see or feel God when white man takes a little bit at a time. Then suddenly there are two money white men. They fight the Indian and tell him that the territory of his people, ~~the~~ the freedom of his ancestors is no more. Just like that the white man takes the Indian's past, present and his future away and says it is no more. The Indian must leave. He must stand back and watch the new people tear his land to bits and tie it up with wire and posts. He must stand and watch ~~as~~ as the new people fight ~~and~~ among themselves and kill each other over little pieces of land that ~~are without meaning~~ is without meaning or sense to it now that it has been tied up with wire. It is hard to understand why the white man, as clever as he is, would fight so hard to take away his own freedom. ~~It is even harder for him to understand why the white man will not even~~

Let the Indian cross the land given of the Indian
promises ~~to~~ not to take stock or harm the rows
of green plants the white man so values."

"Green plants, he says. Compared to what
it takes to put those green plants there - the
sweat, the blood, the pain of really hard
work - Compared to that, an Indian
never worked a day in his life. He may
have tried to ~~earn~~ give the land, but
he never broke his back and buried his
kin to win the very soil. That's what
makes the land belong to a man. It's
not a noble thought, it's the effort, the
very ^{living} juices of ~~the~~ that the land ~~draws~~ from
a farmer. These juices keep flowing till
the man gives up or dies. It's these
juices - the tears, the blood, the sweat and
even this excitement - it's all these
things. It makes the soil not just
belong to him. It makes it part of
him. It earned that way and only that
way. It's not earned by running
back forth over it as called as you please.
If it don't become part of a man, then it's
not his. If he don't hold on to it like it was
his own two legs then he don't deserve it. The
Sioux are still alive aren't they? They're still
lucky and happy aren't they? If they'd hung
on to the land and fought to the death, even
last piece of them, then I'd respect em,
and the land would be theirs and not just
as their graves and it would take many
a generation to pass and die on the land before
it could declare it as its own. But the Sioux
~~they~~ keep living off the land they gave up
and when they left the land they lost all
right to it. They might have even been factors
to the land. And now they want us to think well
of them, us who have stayed and are going to stay.

I tell you this - that any Saxon who comes
on my land will be regarded by me as
a trespasser because he is a trespasser. And
I got a gun to deal with trespassers."

~~the~~ Jesus said nothing. While Thompson
had been talking he was looking the old man
straight in the eyes. He had seen that fire before.
He had seen it in the eyes of old chiefs, in the
eyes of the Roitzsaks, in the medicine man's
eyes. It was a fire that not even defeat
could extinguish because the fire ^{burned} the
eyes so they could not see. Defeat. Only death
put that fire out. That initially was a shame. He
got into the buggy without saying good bye. He
did not even feel the buggy firm as the
judge climbed aboard. He had not even
aware that the reins were given to him and
that his hand automatically snapped the
reins and guided the horse out of the farm
yard and down the road.