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Author(s): Flannery O'Connor

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THE DISPLACED PERSON

BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR

MRS. SHORTLEY stood on a small prominence to the left of the pump house. Her folded arms were supported by a foundation of stomach from which the rest of her rose with the grand self-confidence of a mountain, up narrowing bulges of granite to two icy blue points of light, that surveyed the surrounding territory. It was the kind of stomach that the faces of Washington, Jefferson, and Lee might have been carved on, or a sign splashed that said, DAMNATION TO THE EVIL-DOER. YOU WILL BE UNCOVERED.

She had on a pair of red rubber boots splattered with clay, and a blue and yellow flowered dress that had once been four chicken feed sacks. From her elevation she could see the road that ran from the highway to the big house and down to the barn and over to her own house and then disappeared in a fold between two pastures. Turning in from the highway was a black car.

Across the road from her, over by the tool shed, the two negroes, Astor and Sulk, had stopped work to watch. They were hidden by a fig tree but she knew they were there. Mrs. McIntyre came down the front steps of the big house just as the black car stopped at the walk. She had on a giant-size smile as if, since these people couldn't talk, you had to enlarge the look on your face to make them understand how you felt. "That there's her welcome look," Mrs. Shortley muttered, and very slowly she turned up her own mouth to imitate it and stood there smiling icily for almost a minute. Then the smile vanished and her usual look of omniscience returned.

The first one to get out of the car was the priest, a long-legged black figure with a white hat on. He opened the back door and out came two children, a boy and a girl, and then a

woman. Out of the front door came the man. Mrs. McIntyre was bounding forward with her stretched mouth. She had on her sitting-down clothes and a string of beads around her neck as if to make an impression. Mrs. Shortley wore the same clothes before any man, king or beggar.

The people were dressed like other people; this was the first thing that struck Mrs. Shortley as very peculiar. Every time she had seen them in her imagination, the picture she had got was of the three bears, walking single-file, with wooden shoes on like Dutchmen, and sailor hats and bright coats with a lot of buttons. But here she saw them with clothes on that could have belonged to anybody from around. Each of them shook Mrs. McIntyre's hand and bowed over it in a foreign way. The boy was supposed to speak the most English because he had learned it in school—the priest had told them this—and so he was to listen to his father's Polish and say it over in English and then listen to Mrs. McIntyre's English and say it over in Polish. That's what he's doing now, she decided, for the boy was in the center of the group. His name was Rudolph and the girl's name was Sledgwig and all of them's last name was something that nobody but they themselves and the priest could pronounce. The most she could make out of it was Gobblehook. She and Mrs. McIntyre had been calling them the Gobblehooks all week while they got ready for them.

There had been a great deal to do to get ready for them. The house they were to live in was a nigger house, four rooms but with a good roof and a good floor and not many cracks in the wall. Mrs. McIntyre couldn't afford to paint it inside but they had washed it down and aired it out and it was clean. They had got two iron beds and a stick of odd furniture here and a stick there and they had taken some flowered chicken feed sacks and made curtains for the windows. They had not had enough of the red sacks to go around and in the second room, two of the curtains were red and the other was green. "Now that's too bad," Mrs.

McIntyre said as they stood looking at the room, "but it's the best I can do. I certainly can't afford to buy curtains."

"They can't talk," Mrs. Shortley said. "You reckon they'll know what colors even is?"

Mrs. McIntyre had said that after what those people had gone through, they should be glad to get anything.

Mrs. Shortley recalled a newsreel she had seen once of a small room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking out, a hand raised clutching nothing. Before you could realize that it was real and take it into your head, the picture changed and a hollow-sounding voice was saying, "Time marches on!" This was the kind of thing that was happening every day in Europe where they had not advanced as in this country. The Gobblehooks had escaped this, but watching them from her vantage point, Mrs. Shortley had a sudden peculiar feeling that there was something very unknown hanging in the air.

If they had come from where this kind of thing was done to them, who was to say they were not the kind that would also do it to others?

The width and breadth of this question nearly shook her. Her stomach trembled as if there had been a slight quake in the heart of the mountain and automatically she moved down from her elevation and went forward to be introduced to them as if she must find out at once what they were capable of.

She approached, stomach foremost, head back, arms folded, boots flopping gently against her large legs; about fifteen feet from the gesticulating group, she stopped and made her presence felt by training her gaze on the back of Mrs. McIntyre's neck. Mrs. McIntyre was a small woman of fifty with red bangs and a little doll-baby mouth. She had buried one husband and divorced two and Mrs. Shortley respected her as a person that nobody had put anything over on yet—except, ha, ha, perhaps

the Shortleys. She held out her arm in Mrs. Shortley's direction and said to the Rudolph boy, "And this is Mrs. Shortley. Mr. Shortley is the dairyman. Where's Mr. Shortley?" she asked as his wife began to approach again, her arms still folded. "I want him to meet the Guizacs."

Now it was Guizac. She wasn't calling them Gobblehook to their face. "Chancey's at the barn," Mrs. Shortley said. "He don't have time to rest himself in the bushes like them niggers over there."

Her look first grazed the tops of their heads and then revolved downwards slowly, around and around, the way a buzzard glides and drops in the air until it alights on the carcass. She extended her hand and each one of them smiled and shook it and bowed in their foreign way. She observed that they all had very yellow hair and that the man's glasses were perfectly round and too small. He had bright little green eyes that seemed to be jumping about all the time, trying to look out from the edges of the too-small glasses. The woman was short and broad. She only smiled and said, "Ja ja," or something like it. The boy spoke English, pausing at odd places in the sentence and frowning furiously. The little girl stood by the mother, swinging her shoulders from side to side. She had long braided hair in two looped pigtaileds and there was no denying she was a pretty child. She was better looking than either Annie Maude or Sarah Mae, Mrs. Shortley's two girls going on fifteen and seventeen, but Annie Maude had never got her growth and Sarah Mae had a cast in her eye. She compared the Rudolph boy to her son, H. C., and decided that H. C. came out way ahead of Rudolph. H. C. was twenty years old, with her build and eye-glasses. He said since he looked like a preacher anyway, he must be meant to be one and he planned to take a Bible course and then start him a church.

Mrs. Shortley looked at the priest and was reminded that these people did not have an advanced religion. There was no telling

what all they believed since none of the foolishness had been reformed out of it. Again she saw the room piled high with bodies.

They were getting in the priest's car again to drive down to the cabin they were going to live in. There was no room for her and Mrs. McIntyre said, "Well, I'll see you later," as she got in the back of the car with the woman and the children.

Mrs. Shortley nodded and when the car had gone, she made her way circuitously to the fig tree and stood about ten feet behind the two negroes, one an old man holding a bucket half full of calf feed, and the other a younger man with a short yellow fox-like face and red eyes. "Well," she said slowly, "yaw! have looked long enough. What you think about them?"

The old man, Astor, raised himself. "We been watching," he said as if this would be news to her. "Who they now?"

"They come from over the water," Mrs. Shortley said with a wave of her arm. "They are what is called Displaced Persons."

"Displaced Persons," he said. "Well now. I declar. What do that mean? I ain't heard of them?"

"It means they ain't where they were born at and there's nowhere for them to go—like if you was run out of here and wouldn't nobody have you."

"It seem like they here though," the old man said in a reflective voice. "If they here, they somewhere."

"Sho is," the other agreed. "They here."

"They ain't where they belong to be at," she said. "They belong to be back over yonder where everything is still like they been used to. Over here, it's more advanced than where they come from. But yaw! better look out now," she said and nodded her head. "There's about ten million more just like them and I know what Mrs. McIntyre said."

"What she say?" the young one asked.

"Places are not so easy to get nowadays for white or black but

I reckon I heard what she stated to me," she said in a singsong voice.

"You liable to hear most anything," the old man remarked, leaning forward as if he were about to walk off but holding himself suspended.

"I heard her say, 'This is going to put the fear of the Lord into those shiftless niggers!'"

The old man started off. "She say something like that every now and then," he said. "Ha. Ha. Yes indeed."

"You better get in the barn and help Mr. Shortley," she said to the other one. "What you reckon she pays you for?"

"He the one sont me out," the negro muttered. "He the one gimme something else to do."

"Well you better get to doing it then," she said and stood there until he moved off. Then she turned herself in the direction of the barn, approaching it from an oblique angle that allowed her a look in the door before she could be seen herself. Mr. Shortley was adjusting the last milking machine on a large black and white cow near the barn entrance, squatting at her heels. There was about a half inch of cigaret adhering to the center of his lower lip. Mrs. Shortley observed it minutely for half a second. "If she seen or heard of you smoking in this barn, she would blow a fuse," she said.

Mr. Shortley raised a sharply ruttled face containing a wash-out under each cheek and two long crevices eaten down both sides of his blistered mouth. "You gonter be the one to tell her?" he asked.

"She's got a nose of her own," Mrs. Shortley said.

Mr. Shortley, without appearing to give the feat any consideration, lifted the cigaret stub with the sharp end of his tongue, drew it into his mouth, closed his lips tightly, rose, stepped out, gave his wife a good round appreciative stare, and spit the smoldering butt into the grass.

"Aw Chancey," she said, "haw haw," and she dug a little hole

for the butt with her toe and covered it up. This trick of Mr. Shortley's was actually his way of making love to her. When he had done his courting, he had not brought a guitar to strum or anything pretty for her to keep, but had sat on her porch steps, not saying a word, imitating a paralyzed man propped up to enjoy a cigaret. When the cigaret got the proper size, he would turn his eyes to her and open his mouth and draw in the butt and then sit there as if he had swallowed it, looking at her with the most loving look anybody could imagine. It nearly drove her wild and every time he did it, she wanted to pull his hat down over his eyes and hug him to death.

"Well," she said, going into the barn after him, "the Gobble-hooks have come and she wants you to meet them, says, 'Where's Mr. Shortley?' and I says, 'He don't have time to . . .'"

"Tote up them weights," Mr. Shortley said, squatting to the cow again.

"You reckon he can drive a tractor when he don't know English?" she asked. "I don't think she's going to get her money's worth out of them. That boy can talk but he looks delicate. The one can work can't talk and the one can talk can't work. She ain't any better off than if she had more niggers."

"I rather have a nigger if it was me," Mr. Shortley said.

"She says it's ten million more like them, Displaced Persons, she says that there priest can get her all she wants."

"She better quit messin with that there priest," Mr. Shortley said.

"He don't look harmful," Mrs. Shortley said. "Only kind of foolish."

"I ain't going to have the Pope of Rome tell me how to run no dairy," Mr. Shortley snarled.

"They ain't Eye-talians, they're Poles," she said. "From Poland where all them bodies were stacked up at. You remember all them bodies?"

"I give them three weeks here," Mr. Shortley said.

Three weeks later Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley drove to the cane bottom to see Mr. Guizac start to operate the silage cutter, a new machine that had just been bought because, for the first time, Mrs. McIntyre said, she had somebody who could operate it. Mr. Guizac could drive a tractor, operate the rotary hay baler, the silage cutter, the combine, the letz mill or any other machine they had on the place. He was an expert mechanic, a carpenter, and a mason. He was thrifty and energetic. Mrs. McIntyre said she figured he would save her twenty dollars a month on repair bills alone. She said getting him was the best day's work she had ever done in her life. He could work milking machines and he was scrupulously clean. He did not smoke.

She parked her car on the edge of the cane field and they got out. Sulk, the young negro, was attaching the wagon to the silage cutter and Mr. Guizac was attaching the silage cutter to the tractor. He finished first and pushed the colored boy out of the way and attached the wagon to the cutter himself, gesticulating with a bright impatient face when he wanted the hammer or the screw driver. Nothing was done quick enough to suit him. The negroes made him nervous.

The week before, he had come upon Sulk at the dinner hour, sneaking with a croker sack into the pen where the young turkeys were. He had watched him take a frying size turkey from the lot and thrust it in the sack and put the sack under his coat. Then he had followed him around the barn, jumped on him, dragged him to Mrs. McIntyre's back door, and had acted out the entire scene for her, while the negro muttered and grumbled and said God might strike him dead if he had been stealing any turkey, he had only been taking it to put some black shoe polish on its head because it had the sorehead. He had only been taking it to doctor it and God might strike him dead then and there if that was not the truth before Jesus. Mrs. McIntyre told him to go put the turkey back and then she was a long time explaining to Mr. Guizac that all negroes would steal. She finally had to call

Rudolph and tell him in English and have him tell his father in Polish and Mr. Guizac had gone off finally with a startled disappointed face.

Mrs. Shortley stood by hoping there would be trouble with the silage cutter but there was none. Mr. Guizac jumped on the tractor and maneuvered the big orange machine into the cane; in a second the silage was spurting in a green jet out of the pipe into the wagon. He went jolting down the row until he disappeared from sight and the noise became remote.

Mrs. McIntyre sighed with pleasure. "At last," she said, "I've got somebody I can depend on."

Mrs. Shortley looked straight ahead as if her vision penetrated the cane and the hill and pierced through to the other side. "I would suspicion help got from the devil," she said in a slow detached way.

"Now what do you mean by that?" Mrs. McIntyre asked, looking up sharply.

Mrs. Shortley wagged her head but would not say anything else. The fact was she had nothing else to say for this intuition had only at that instant come to her. She had never given much thought to the devil and she felt that religion was essentially for those people who didn't have the brains to avoid evil without it. For people like herself—for people of gumption—it was a social occasion providing the opportunity to sing. She had a strong voice and she liked to raise it above other voices at revivals and meetings. But if she had ever given religion much thought, she would have considered the devil the head of it and God the hanger-on. With the coming of these Displaced Persons, she was being forced to give thought to a lot of things she had not given it to before.

"I know what Sledgwig told Annie Maude," she said, and when Mrs. McIntyre carefully did not ask her what but reached down and broke off a sprig of sassafras to chew, she continued in

a way to indicate she was not telling all, "that they wouldn't be able to live long, the four of them, on seventy dollars a month."

"He's worth raising," Mrs. McIntyre said. "He saves me money."

This was as much as to say that Chancey had never saved her money. Chancey got up at four in the morning to milk her cows, in winter wind and summer heat, and he had been doing it for the last three years. They had been with her the longest she had ever had anybody. The gratitude they got was these hints that she hadn't been saved any money.

"Is Mr. Shortley feeling better today?" Mrs. McIntyre asked.

Mrs. Shortley thought it was about time she was asking that question. Mr. Shortley had been in bed two days with an attack. Mr. Guizac had taken his place in the dairy in addition to doing his own work. "No he ain't," she said. "That doctor said he was suffering from over-exhaustion."

"If Mr. Shortley is over-exhausted," Mrs. McIntyre said, "then he must have a second job on the side," and she looked at Mrs. Shortley with slightly narrowed eyes over her sprig of sassafras.

Mrs. Shortley did not say a word but her dark suspicion grew like a black thundercloud. The fact was that Mr. Shortley did have a second job on the side and that, in a free country, this was none of Mrs. McIntyre's business. Mr. Shortley made whiskey. He had a small still back in the farthest reaches of the place, on Mrs. McIntyre's land to be sure, but on land that she only owned and did not cultivate, on idle land that was not doing anybody any good. Mr. Shortley was not afraid of work. He got up at four in the morning and milked her cows and in the middle of the day when he was supposed to be resting, he was off attending to his still. Not every man would work like that. The negroes knew about his still but he knew about theirs so there had never been any disagreeableness between them. But with foreigners on the place, with people who were all eyes and no

understanding, who had come from a place continually fighting, where the religion had not been reformed one particle, with this kind of people, you had to be on the lookout every minute. She thought there ought to be a law against them. There was no reason they couldn't stay over there and take the places of some of the people who had been killed in their wars and butcherings.

"What's futhermore," she said suddenly, "Sledgwig said as soon as her papa saved up the money, he was going to buy him a used car. And once they get them a car, they'll leave you."

"I can't pay him enough for him to save to get a used car," Mrs. McIntyre said, "I'm not worried about that. Of course," she said then, "if Mr. Shortley stays over-exhausted, I'll have to use Mr. Guizac in the dairy and pay him more. He doesn't smoke, you know," she said and it was the fifth time that she had pointed this out.

"It is no man," Mrs. Shortley said emphatically, "that works as hard as Chancey. The doctor said some rest for a change and he would be all right. It's a good thing he didn't take them pills that doctor give him though."

"Why?" asked Mrs. McIntyre.

"You can't put a thing over on Chancey," Mrs. Shortley said. "He's very sharp. All his life he's suspicioned doctors because one killed his daddy with some pills he give him to take. This here doctor yesterday give Chancey some pills and Chancey says, 'How come they're free?' and the doctor says because they was some samples he had so Chancey says he could lay them on the table. The doctor says one every four hours. When he was gone, Chancey says, 'Give some to that there turkey hen with the sorehead. If they kill her, it ain't much loss.' And they killed her. In two hours, she was laying upside down by the water faucet as stiff as a brick and Chancey says, 'That would have been me if I hadn't had the sense I got.' He says that doctor ought to pay us for that hen."

The noise of the tractor and cutter increased as Mr. Guizac

appeared coming around the other side of the cane row. Mrs. Shortley looked at him darkly, wondering whether if he found Chancey's still, he would know what it was. The trouble with these people was, you couldn't tell what they knew. Mr. Guizac had a wide smile, toothless on one side. Every time he smiled, Europe stretched out in Mrs. Shortley's imagination, mysterious and evil, the devil's experiment station.

The tractor, the cutter, the wagon passed rattling and rumbling and grinding before them and they followed it with their eyes down the row. "Think how long that would have taken with men and mules to do it," Mrs. McIntyre shouted. "We'll have this whole bottom cut within a week at this rate."

"Maybe," Mrs. Shortley muttered, "if don't no terrible accident occur." She thought how the tractor had made mules worthless. Nowadays you couldn't give away a mule. The next thing to go, she said to herself, will be niggers.

In the afternoon she explained what was going to happen to them to Astor and Sulk who were in the cow lot, filling the manure spreader. She sat down next to the block of salt under a small shed, her stomach in her lap, her arms on top of it. "All you colored people better look out," she said. "You know how much you can get for a mule."

"Nothing, no indeed," the old man said. "Not one thing."

"Before it was a tractor," she said, "it could be a mule. And before it was a Displaced Person, it could be a nigger. The time is going to come," she prophesied, "when it won't be no more occasion to speak of a nigger."

The old man laughed politely. "Yes indeed," he said. "Ha ha."

The young ones didn't say anything. He only looked sullen but when she had gone in the house, he said, "Big Belly act like she know everything."

"Never mind," the old man said, "your place too low for anybody to dispute with you for it."

Mrs. Shortley didn't confide her fears about the still to Mr. Shortley until he was back on the job in the dairy. Then one night after they were in bed, she said, "That man prowls."

Mr. Shortley folded his hands on his bony chest and pretended he was a corpse.

"Prowls," she continued, and gave him a sharp kick in the side with her knee. "Who's to say what they know and don't know? Who's to say if he found it he wouldn't go right to her and tell? How you know they don't make liquor in Europe? They drive tractors. Answer me."

"Don't worry me now," Mr. Shortley said. "I'm a dead man."

"It's them little eyes of his that's foreign," she muttered. "Them foreign little eyes. I can almost see Satan looking out of his skin."

"If everybody was dead like me, nobody would have no trouble," Mr. Shortley observed.

"In Europe," she said, "they probably got some different way to make liquor but I reckon they know all the ways. They never have advanced nor reformed. They got the same religion as a thousand years ago. It could only be the devil responsible for that. Always fighting amongst each other. Disputing. And then get us into it. Ain't they got us into it twict already and we ain't got any more sense than to go over there and settle it for them and then they come on back over here and snoop around and find your still and go straight to her, dancing around in the eyes thataway . Do you hear me?"

"No," Mr. Shortley said.

"And I'll tell you another thing," she said. "I wouldn't be surprised if he don't know everything you say, whether it be in English or not. He couldn't know all he knows and not know what you're talking about. You better mind your tongue when you're around him."

"It's you that does the talking," Mr. Shortley murmured.

"I suspect," she said, "that before long there won't be a nigger

on this place. And I tell you what. I'd rather have niggers than them Poles. And what's furthermore I aim to take up for the niggers when the time comes. When Gobblehook first come here, you recollect how he shook their hands, like he didn't know the difference, like he might have been as black as them, but when it come to finding out Sulk was taking turkeys, he gone on and told her. I know he was taking turkeys. I could have told her myself."

Mr. Shortley was breathing softly as if he were asleep.

"A nigger don't know when he has a friend," she said. "And I'll tell you another thing. I get a heap out of Sledgwig. Sledgwig told Annie Maude that in Poland they lived in a brick house and one night a man come and told them to get out of it and not come back. Do you believe they ever lived in a brick house?"

"Airs," she said. "That's just airs. A wooden house is good enough for me. Chancey," she said, "turn thisaway. I hate to see niggers mistreated and run out. I have a heap of pity for niggers and poor folks. Ain't I always had?" she asked. "I say ain't I always been a friend to niggers and poor folks?"

"When the time comes," she said, "I'll stand up for the niggers and that's that."

Mrs. McIntyre bought a new drag harrow because, she said, for the first time she had somebody who could handle machinery. She and Mrs. Shortley were inspecting a field that Mr. Guizac had harrowed the day before. "That's been done beautifully!" Mrs. McIntyre said, looking out over the red undulating ground.

"Every Sunday he comes to our house and borrows the paper for Rudolph to see what used cars cost," Mrs. Shortley said. "But last Sunday Rudolph says, 'Papa wants the piece where the jabs are to get,'" and she imitated Rudolph's frown and the way he twisted his hands. "Heard it with my own ears," she said.

"Well," Mrs. McIntyre muttered, "I may have to get rid of some of this other help so I can pay him more."

Mrs. Shortley nodded to indicate she had known this for some time. "I'm not saying those niggers ain't had it coming," she said, "but they do the best they know how. You can always tell a nigger what to do and then stand by until he does it."

Mrs. McIntyre looked as if she were thinking. You could never tell if she was thinking or not, nor what, with her little doll-baby mouth and her red bangs and her cloudy blue, no, cloudy purple, eyes. "Yes, that's true," was all she said.

Very frequently the priest came to see the Guizacs and he would stop in at Mrs. McIntyre's house and ask her how they were getting along and she would walk him around the place, pointing out her improvements and what not. Mrs. Shortley could not imagine what she could have to say to him nor he to her unless he was trying to turn her to his church and Mrs. Shortley knew that she was too smart to be hoodwinked into that. Then she reflected that he might be going to get her another family of Displaced Persons. With two of them on the place, there would be almost nothing spoken but Polish! The negroes would be gone and there would be two families against Mr. Shortley and herself. She began to imagine a war of words, to see the Polish words and the English words coming at each other, stalking forward, not sentences, just words, gabble babble gabble, flung out high and shrill and stalking forward and then grappling with each other. She saw the Polish words, dirty and all-knowing and unreformed, flinging mud on the clean English words until they were all equally dirty. She saw them all piled up in a room, all the dead dirty words, theirs and hers too, piled up like the naked bodies in the newsreel. God save me, she cried silently, from the stinking power of Satan! And she started from that day to read her Bible. She began to quote from the prophets. She saw that there was more to religion than had ever met her eye, and she was not surprised to suspect that she had a special part in God's plan.

The visits of the priest irked her. She disliked to see the long

black figure, the bald head, the white turned-around collar, and the face that had the look of some secret, opened out and still hidden, as if he were saying: I can tell you something that you won't believe. That she wouldn't. Here he was—leading foreigners over here in hoards to places that were not theirs, to cause disputes, to uproot niggers, to plant the Whore of Babylon in the midst of the righteous! Whenever he came on the place, she hid herself behind something and watched until he left.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in early August that she had her vision. She had gone to drive in the cows for Mr. Shortley because he had a pain in his knee and she was walking slowly through the pasture, her arms folded, her eyes on the distant low-lying clouds that looked like rows and rows of white fish washed up on a great blue beach. She paused after an incline to heave a sigh of exhaustion for she had an immense weight to carry around and she was not as young as she used to be. At times she could feel her heart, like a child's fist, clenching and unclenching inside her chest, and when the feeling came, it stopped her thought altogether and she would go about like a large hull of herself, moving for no reason; but she gained this incline without a tremor and stood at the top of it, pleased with herself. Suddenly while she watched, the sky folded back in two pieces like the curtain to a stage and a gigantic figure stood facing her. It was the color of the sun in the early afternoon, white-gold. It was of no definite shape but there were fiery wheels all around it, spinning rapidly. She was not able to tell if the figure was going forward or backward because its magnificence was so great. She shut her eyes in order to look at it and it turned blood red and the wheels turned white. A voice, very resonant, said the one word, "Prophecy!"

She stood there, tottering slightly, but still upright, her eyes shut tight and her fists clenched. "The children of wicked nations will be butchered," she said in a loud voice. "Legs where arms

should be, foot to face, ear in the palm of hand. Who will remain whole? Who will remain whole? Who?"

Presently she opened her eyes. The sky was full of white fish carried lazily on their sides by some invisible current and pieces of the sun, submerged some distance beyond them, appeared from time to time as if they were being washed in the opposite direction. Woodenly, she planted one foot in front of the other until she had crossed the pasture and reached the lot. She walked through the barn like one in a daze and did not speak to Mr. Shortley who was cursing the cows in his quiet way. She could not remember exactly what had happened to her but she continued up the road until she saw the priest's car parked in front of Mrs. McIntyre's house. "Here again," she muttered. "Come on his devilment."

Mrs. McIntyre and the priest were walking in the yard. In order not to meet them face to face, she turned to the left and went in the feed house, a single-room shack piled on one side with flowered sacks of scratch feed. There were spilled oyster shells in one corner and a few old dirty calendars on the wall, advertising calf feed and various patent medicine remedies. One showed a bearded gentleman in a frock coat, holding up a bottle and beneath his feet was the inscription, "I have been made regular by this marvelous discovery!" Mrs. Shortley had always felt close to this man as if he were some distinguished person she was acquainted with but now her mind was on nothing but the dangerous presence of the priest. She stationed herself at a crack between two boards where she could look out and see him and Mrs. McIntyre strolling toward the turkey brooder, which was placed just outside the feed house. The priest spoke in a foreign way himself, English but very peculiar, as if he had a rag in his mouth.

"Arrr," he said as they approached the brooder, "arrrrn't they lovely? Arrrrn't they lovely now?" and he stopped and squinted through the wire.

Yes they arrr, arrrrr't they neowww? Mrs. Shortley said to herself and called down destruction on him.

"Do you think the Guizacs will leave me, Fr. Flynn?" Mrs. McIntyre asked. "Do you think they'll go to Chicago or some place like that?"

"And why should they now?" asked the priest. "Why should they want to leave a beautiful place like this now? All these birds and fowlsss and things! Arrr, chicky, chicky chicky." He was wiggling his finger inside the brooder, his big nose close to the wire.

"Money," Mrs. McIntyre said.

"Arrr, give them some more then," he said indifferently. "They have to live. They have to get along."

"So do I," Mrs. McIntyre said. "Giving them more money means I'll have to get rid of some of this other help but I've made up my mind to it."

"And are the Shortleys satisfactory?" he inquired, paying more attention to the turkeys than to her.

"They were when I couldn't do any better," she said. "But five times in the last month I've found Mr. Shortley smoking in the barn."

"And arrre the negroes any better?"

"They lie and steal and have to be watched all the time," she said.

He had opened the brooder and got out a chick and was holding it in his hand. "Tsk tsk," he said to the turkey. "Which will you discharge?" he asked.

"I've decided to give Mr. Shortley his month's notice tomorrow," Mrs. McIntyre said.

The priest scarcely seemed to hear her, he was so busy chucking the turkey under the beak and saying chicky chicky to it. Mrs. Shortley sat down on an open sack of laying mash, with a dead thump that sent feed dust clouding up around her. She found herself looking straight ahead at the opposite board wall where

the gentleman on the calendar was holding up his marvelous discovery but she didn't see him. She stared ahead as if she saw nothing whatsoever. Then she rose with this same look and ran to her house. Her face was an almost volcanic red.

She opened all the drawers and dragged out boxes and old battered suitcases from under the bed. She began to unload the drawers into the boxes, all the time without pause, without taking off the sunhat she had on her head. She set the two girls to doing the same. When Mr. Shortley came in, she did not even look at him but merely pointed one arm at him while she packed with the other. "Bring the car around to the back door," she said. "You ain't waiting to be fired!"

Mr. Shortley had never in his life doubted her omniscience though he continually opposed it. He looked on her as Fate, containing all foreknowledge, to whom he was as unflinchingly wedded as to hard circumstance itself. He perceived the entire situation in a half second and with only a sour scowl, retreated out the door and went to drive the automobile around to the back.

They tied the two iron beds to the top of the car and the two rocking chairs inside the beds and rolled the two mattresses up between the rocking chairs. On top of this they tied a crate of chickens. They loaded the inside of the car with the old suitcases and boxes, leaving a small space for Annie Maude and Sarah Mae. It took them the rest of the afternoon and half the night to do this but Mrs. Shortley was determined that they would leave before five o'clock in the morning, that Mr. Shortley should not adjust another milking machine on this place. All the time she had been working, her face was changing rapidly from red to white and back again as if her great body were making some furious silent protest all on its own.

Just before dawn, as it began to drizzle rain, they were ready to leave. They got in the car and sat there cramped up between boxes and bundles and rolls of bedding. The rectangular black automobile moved off with more than its customary grinding

noises as if it were protesting the load. In the back, the two long bony yellow-haired girls were sitting on a pile of boxes and there was a beagle hound puppy and a cat with two kittens under the blankets. The car moved slowly, like some over-freighted leaking ark, away from their shack and past the white house where Mrs. McIntyre was sleeping soundly and past the Guizac shack on top of the hill and on down the road to the gate where the two negroes were walking, one behind the other, on their way to help with the milking. They looked straight at the car and its occupants but even as the dim yellow headlights lit up their faces, they politely did not seem to see anything, or anyhow, to attach significance to what was there. The loaded car might have been passing mist in the early morning half-light. They continued up the road at the same even pace without looking back.

A dark yellow sun was beginning to rise in a sky that was the same slick dark grey as the highway. The fields stretched away, stiff and weedy, on either side. "Where we goin?" Mr. Shortley asked for the first time.

Mrs. Shortley sat with one foot on a packing box so that her knee was pushed into her stomach. Mr. Shortley's elbow was almost under her nose and Sarah Mae's bare left foot was sticking over the front seat, touching her ear.

"Where we goin?" Mr. Shortley repeated and when she didn't answer again, he turned and looked at her.

Fierce heat seemed to be swelling slowly and fully into her face as if it were welling up now for a final assault. She was sitting in an erect way in spite of the fact that one leg was twisted under her and one knee was almost into her neck, but there was a peculiar lack of light in her icy blue eyes. All the vision in them might have been turned around, looking inside her. She suddenly grabbed Mr. Shortley's elbow and Sarah Mae's foot at the same time and began to tug and pull on them as if she were trying to fit the two extra limbs onto herself.

Mr. Shortley began to curse and quickly stopped the car and

Sarah Mae yelled to quit but Mrs. Shortley was apparently trying to rearrange the whole car at once. She thrashed forward and backward, clutching at everything she could get her hands on and hugging it to herself, Mr. Shortley's head, Sarah Mae's leg, the cat, a wad of white bedding, her own big moon-like knee; then all at once her fierce expression faded into a look of astonishment and her grip on what she had loosened. One of her eyes drew near to the other and seemed to collapse quietly and she was still.

The two girls, who didn't know what had happened to her, began to say, "Where we goin, Ma? Where we goin?" They thought she was playing a joke and that their father, staring straight ahead at her, was imitating a dead man. They didn't know that she had had a great experience or ever been displaced in the world from all that belonged to her. Frightened by the grey slick road before them, they kept repeating in higher and higher voices, "Where we goin, Ma? Where we goin?" while their mother, her huge body rolled back still against the seat, seemed to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country.