



A Mercy Revised Pages

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REVISED

Vaark's death saddened them enough to disobey their owner's command to avoid the poxed place and dig the grave the new widow needed. In pouring rain Scully and Willard moved five or six feet of mud and hurried to get the coffin down before it filled with water. Thirteen days later, after the blacksmith healed Mistress Vaark and the girl, Florens, was back where she belonged, Jacob Vaark returned to visit his house at night.

"As well he should," said Willard.

"I sure would," answered Scully

It was still the most beautiful, grand house around and why not spend eternity there? The glow began near midnight, floated for a while, stopped, then moved ever so slowly from window to window space. With the master content to roam his house at night, it was safe to agree to his widow's instructions and begin to repair the farm, prepare it also, for nothing much had been kept up after she fell ill. Hardy as the women had always been, they had changed. Lina went about her work dutifully but seemed to fester somehow. Scully had wasted hours over the years secretly enjoying her river baths. Now, no more. Wherever, if ever, she bathed it did not allow him unfettered glimpses of her buttocks, that waist, those honey-colored breasts. Mistress too was different. Her hair was no longer brassy locks bursting from her cap, but pale strings drifting down her temples adding melancholy to her newly stern features.

She had taken control but avoided as too tiring tasks that she had once undertaken with gusto. Sorrow alone appeared stronger, less addle-headed, capable of handling chores. But her baby came first, and she would postpone egg-gathering, delay milking, interrupt any field chore if she heard a whimper from the infant's basket always nearby. Strangest was Florens. The docile soft creature they knew had turned to rock. When they saw her walking down the road three days after the smithy had visited Mistress Vaark and gone, they were too weary to recognize her. First because she was so bedraggled and second because she took no notice of either man. Stiff and in pain, both were hobbling as best they could down the road back to the livestock under their care. Much of the night before they had spent hiding from an insulted bear, a harrowing incident they agreed was primarily Willard's fault. The netted partridge hanging from the older man's waist was enough supplement for two meals each so there was no need to linger just so he could rest and puff on his pipe under a beech tree. Both knew what a whiff of smoke could do in woods where odor was decisive: to flee, attack, hide or, as in the case of a sow bear protecting her single cub, investigate. When the laurel hell that had yielded the birds suddenly crackled, Willard stood up, holding his hand out to Scully for silence. Scully unsheathed his knife and stood also. After a moment of uncanny silence the smell washed over them at the same moment the sow crashed through the branches clicking her teeth. Not knowing which of them had been chosen, they separated, each running man hoping he had made the correct choice, since playing dead was not an option. Scully, certain he felt hot breath on his nape, leaped for a beech branch and swung

up into it. It was unwise. herself a tree climber, the bear had merely to rise up to clamp his foot between her jaws. Not willing to be maimed without at least one gesture of defense, if not courage, Scully turned and without even aiming rammed his knife at the agile black hulk below him. For once, his lack of skill was a gift. The blade hit, slid like a needle into the bear's eye. The roar was terrible as she slid, clawing bark, and fell to the ground on her haunches. A ring of baying dogs could not have enraged her more. It was hours before she finally lumbered away, off balance by the blinding that diminished her naturally poor sight, to locate her young. They ran. It was when they burst from the wood onto the road that they saw a female-looking shape coming toward them.

tk

Sold for seven years to a Virginia planter, Willard expected to be free at age 21. But tk years were added onto his contract for infractions—theft and assault—and he was released to a wheat farmer up north. The wheat succumbed quickly to blast and the more or less absent owner turned his property over to livestock. Eventually, as overgrazing demanded more and more pasture, the owner made a land-for-labor trade with his neighbor, Jacob Vaark. Still, one man could not handle the stock. The addition of a boy helped.

Before Scully's arrival, Will had spent hard and lonely days watching cows munch and mate, his only solace in remembering with pleasure the even harder ones

in Virginia. Brutal as the work was, at least he was not lonely. There he was one of twenty-three men slaving in tobacco fields. Six English, one native and twelve from Africa by way of Barbados. The comradeship among them was sealed by their universal hatred of the overseer and the master's odious sons. It was upon one of the latter that the assault was made. Theft of a shawl was invented and thrown in just to increase Willard's indebtedness. With Scully's companionship and the welcome variety of work on the Vaark place there were only a few times that he over drank and misbehaved—each occasion an automatic extension of his term.

The last best period started when Vaark decided to build a great house. Again, he was among a crew of laborers and when the blacksmith came, things got even more interesting. Not only was the house grand but its enclosure was to be spectacular. tk Initially he admired the smithy and his craft, until he saw money pass from Vaark's hand to the iron-monger's. Learning he was being paid for his work, like the men who delivered building materials, something roiled in Willard and he, along with Scully, refused any request the black man made. Refused to haul chestnut wood for his fires; 'forgot' to tk. Vaark chastised them both into sullen accommodation, but it was the smith who calmed them down. Willard had two shirts, one with a collar, the other more of a rag. On the morning he slipped in fresh dung, he changed into the good, collared one. Arriving at the site, he caught the blacksmith's eye, then his nod, then his thumb pointing straight up as if to signal approval. If Willard had any doubt whether he was being made fun of or complimented, the smith

11

newly stern features. She had taken control, in a manner of speaking, but avoided as too tiring tasks that she had once undertaken with gusto. She laundered nothing, planted nothing, weeded never. She cooked and mended. Otherwise her time was spent reading a bible or trotting off to the village. Sorrow alone appeared stronger, less addle-headed, capable of handling chores. But her baby came first and she would postpone egg-gathering, delay milking, interrupt any field chore if she heard a whimper from the infant's basket always nearby.

Strangest was Florens. The docile, soft creature they knew had turned to rock. When they saw her stomping down the road three days of the smithy had visited Mistress' sick bed and gone, they were slow to recognize her as a living person. First because she was so bedraggled and second, because, like a visitation from another world, she took no notice of either man. Unseeing, she passed right by them although their sudden burst out of trees onto the road in front of her would have startled a human. Breathless and still alarmed from a narrow escape, anything could be anything. Both were running as fast as they could back to the livestock under their care before the pigs ate their litter. Much of the morning they had spent hiding from an insulted bear, a harrowing incident they agreed was primarily Willard's fault. The netted partridge hanging from the older man's waist was supplement enough for two meals each so there was no need to linger just so he could rest and puff his pipe beneath a beech. Both knew what a whiff of smoke could do in woods where odor was decisive: to flee, attack, hide or, as in the case of a sow bear protecting her single

cub, investigate. When the laurel hell that had yielded the partridges suddenly crackled, Willard stood up, holding his hand out to Scully for silence. Scully unsheathed his knife and stood also. After a moment of uncanny quiet—no birdcalls or squirrel chatter—the smell washed over them the same moment the sow crashed through the laurel clicking her teeth. Not knowing which of them she would select, they separated, each running man hoping he had made the correct choice, since play dead was not an option. Willard ducked behind a slate outcropping hoping it would disable the wind's direction. Scully, certain he felt hot breath on his nape, leaped for a beech branch and swung up into it. Unwise. Herself a tree climber, the bear had merely to stand up to clamp his foot between her jaws. Not willing to be maimed without at least one gesture of defense, if not courage, Scully turned and without even aiming, rammed his knife at the head of the agile black hulk a few inches below. For once, his lack of skill was a gift. The blade hit, slid like a needle into the bear's eye. The roar was terrible as, clawing bark, she fell to the ground on her haunches. A ring of baying dogs could not have enraged her more. Off balance by the blinding that diminished her naturally poor sight, it was some time before she lumbered away to locate her young. Willard and Scully waited, one treed like a caught bear himself, the other hugging rock, both afraid she would return. Convinced finally that she would not, cautiously sniffing for the fur smell, listening for a grunt, the movements of the other or a return of birdcall, they emerged racing. It was when they burst from the wood onto the road that they saw the female-looking shape marching like a redcoat toward them, barefoot but proud.

2

She had taken control but avoided as too tiring tasks that she had once undertaken with gusto. ^(over) Sorrow alone appeared stronger, less addle-headed, capable of handling chores.

But her baby came first, and she would postpone egg-gathering, delay milking, interrupt any field chore ^{if} she heard a whimper from the infant's basket always nearby.

Strangest was Florens. The docile soft creature they knew had turned to rock. When they saw her ^{stomping} walking down the road three days after the smithy had visited Mistress Vaark and gone, they were ^{slow} too weary to recognize her.

First because she was so bedraggled and second because she took no notice of either man. ^{like a spirit with} First because she was so bedraggled and second because she took no notice of either man. ^(over)

^{running} Stiff and in pain, both were hobbling as best they could ^{down the road} back to the livestock under their care. ^{before the pigs began to eat their litter} Much of the night ^{morning} before they had spent hiding from an

insulted bear, a harrowing incident they agreed was primarily Willard's fault. The netted partridge hanging from the older man's waist was enough supplement for two

meals each so there was no need to linger just so he could rest and puff on his pipe ^{beneath} under a beech tree. Both knew what a whiff of smoke could do in woods where odor

was decisive: to flee, attack, hide or, as in the case of a sow bear protecting her single cub, investigate. When the laurel hell that had yielded the birds suddenly crackled,

Willard stood up, holding his hand out to Scully for silence. Scully unsheathed his knife and stood also. After a moment of uncanny silence the smell washed over them at the same moment the sow crashed through the ^{laurel} branches clicking her teeth.

Not knowing which of them ^{she would choose} had been chosen, they separated, each running man hoping he had made the correct choice, since playing dead was not an option. *

Scully, certain he felt hot breath on his nape, leaped for a beech branch and swung

* Willard ducked behind ^{a slate} an outcropping hoping the wind's directions would protect him.

She laundered nothing, ~~weeded~~ ^{never} ~~weeded~~
~~cultivated~~ ^{planted} nothing. She cooked and
mended. ^{Otherwise} ~~And~~ ^{her} spent much time reading
a Bible or trotting off to the village.

She passed right by
~~although~~ ^{but} their sudden burst of the trees onto
the road would have startled a human.
Breathless and still alarmed from ^{a narrow} their
escape, anything could be anything.

~~new~~ widow would need. In pouring rain they removed five feet of mud and hurried to get the body down before the hole filled with water. Now, thirteen days later, the dead man had left it. ^(over) ^{His} The glow of ~~him~~ began near midnight, floated for a while, disappeared then moved ever so slowly from window to window. With Master Vaark content to roam his house and not appear anywhere else, scaring or rattling anybody, Willard felt it was safe ^{and appropriate} for him and Scully to help ^{the} Mistress ~~Vaark~~ repair the farm, prepare it also, for nothing much had been kept up after she fell ill. tk Hardy as the women had always been, they seemed distracted, slower now. Even after the blacksmith healed Mistress and the girl, Florens, was back where she belonged, a pall remained. True, Lina went about her work dutifully, but Scully thought something was festering in her. He had wasted hours over the years secretly watching her river baths. Now, no more. Wherever, if ever, she bathed, unfettered glimpses of her buttocks, that waist, those syrup-colored breasts were unavailable. ^(over) Mistress too was different. Her hair, no longer brassy locks bursting from her cap, became pale strings drifting at her temples adding melancholy to her newly stern features.

Just

Almost like the way he used to
re-appear following weeks of traveling.
They did not see him - his actual shape -
but they saw his ghostly blaze.

Most of all he missed what he ^{seldom} ~~never~~ saw
elsewhere: uncovered female hair, aggressive
seductive, black as sin.

quelled it. "Mr. Bond," he said. "Good morning." That was the first time in his life he had been called 'mister.' Virginia bailiffs, constables, small children, preachers—none had even considered it—nor did he himself. He knew his rank, but did not know the lift that small courtesy allowed him. That first time was not the last, because the smithy never failed to address him so. Chuckling to himself, Willard understood why the girl, Florens, was struck silly by the man; he probably called her 'miss' or 'lady' when they met in the wood for dinner-time foolery.

tk

When Mistress offered them the first money either had ever been paid—a shilling a week—they gladly took up the slack and did their best to keep the place up. Perhaps it was not as much as the blacksmith was paid, but enough to organize their dreams.

REVISED 2

→ Jacob Vaark rose from the grave nightly to visit his beautiful house.

"As well he should," said Willard.

"I sure would," answered Scully.

It was still the grandest house around and why not spend eternity there? (over)
H.S. Vaark's death had saddened them enough to disobey their owner's command to avoid the poxed place. They volunteered to dig the last—but not the final—grave ^{his} the

For X years

The Vaark place ~~was~~ the closest
either ^{man} would know ^(parents) of family. A
good hearted couple, ^{and} three servants ^{but not}
(Sisters, say). Each one dependant on
them, none cruel, all generous. Master
Vaark, unlike their ^{more or less absent} owner, never
cursed ^{or threatened} them. He even gave them
gifts ^(from during) at Christmas tide.

1
REVISED

6 shillings

6-10

2 Vaark's death ^{had} saddened them enough to disobey their owner's command to avoid ^{completely} the poxed place ^{they volunteered to} and dig the grave the new widow needed. In pouring rain Scully and Willard moved five or six feet of mud ^{from the ground} and hurried to get the ^{body} coffin down before ^{the hole} it filled with water. Thirteen days later, after the blacksmith ^{visited} ~~healed~~ Mistress Vaark and the girl, Florens, was back where she belonged, Jacob Vaark ^{rose from the grave} returned to ^{occupy} visit his house ~~at night~~.

"As well he should," said Willard.

"I sure would," answered Scully

It was still the most beautiful, grand house ^{est} around and why not spend eternity there? ^{Rain? Vaark's death} The glow began near midnight, floated for a while, ^{disappeared} stopped, then moved ever so slowly from window to window space. ^{Now} With the master content to roam his house and ^{scaring or rotting anyone,} not appear anywhere else, ~~at night~~, it was safe to agree to his widow's instructions and begin to repair the farm,

prepare it also, for nothing much had been kept up after she fell ill. Hardy as the women had always been, ^{were} they ^{Now} had changed. Lina went about her work dutifully but seemed to fester somehow. Scully had wasted hours over the years secretly enjoying her river baths. Now, no more. Wherever, if ever, she bathed ~~it did not allow him~~ unfettered glimpses of her buttocks, that waist, those honey-colored breasts ^{were unavailable}. Mistress too was different. Her hair ^{became} was no longer brassy locks bursting from her cap, but pale strings drifting down her temples adding melancholy to her newly stern features.

hours

that diminished
her ~~already~~ ^{naturally} poor sight

(3K) It was before she finally lumbered away, off balance by the blinding, yet determined to locate her young. They ran, the partridge^s still swinging from Willard's belt. It was when they burst from the wood onto the road that they saw a female-looking shape coming toward them.

TK

(7) When Mistress Vaark offered them the first money they had ever been paid, they gladly took up the slack and did their best to keep the place up. \$? Not as much as the smithy was paid, but enough to organize their dreams.

③ The string of partridge carried at Willard's waist was enough for two meal^s each so there was no need to linger just so he could rest and puff on his pipe under a tk. Both of them, the older man and the younger, knew^w what a whiff of smoke could do in the woods where odor was decisive information: to flee, attack, hide or, as in the case of a sow bear protecting her single cub, investigate. When the laurel hell that had yielded the birds crackled, Will stood up holding his hand out to Scully for silence. Scully unsheathed his knife and stood also. After a moment of profound silence the smell washed over them at the same instant the sow crashed through the branches. Not knowing which of them had been chosen, they separated, each man hoping he had made the correct choice. Scully, certain he felt hot breath on his nape, leaped for a ^{beech} tk branch and swing^v up into it. It was another poor choice. The bear followed. ~~Soon, she would~~ clamp his foot between her jaws. Not willing to be maimed without without at least one gesture of defense, if not courage, ^{Scully} he turned and without even aiming ^{rammed} ~~threw~~ his knife at the agile black hulk a ^{below} ~~few feet behind~~ him. For once, his lack of skill, was a gift. The blade hit, slid like a needle into the bear's eye. The roar was terrible as she half slid, clawing ~~the tree~~ bark, and fell on her haunches to the ground. A ring of baying dogs could not have enraged her more.

Herself a
tree
climber
She had
merely
to
rise
up
to

tk to "It was hours" ③A

④ Sold for seven years to a Virginia planter, Will expected to be free at age 21. But tk years were added on to his contract for infractions (theft and assault) and he was re-
leased to a wheat and cattle farmer up north. The wheat ^{succumbed} ~~failed~~ quickly ^{to blast} ~~in the damp~~

* With Vaark content to roam his house at night

(2)

It was still the most beautiful, grand house around and why not spend eternity there? The glow began near midnight, floated for a while, stopped, then moved

ever so slowly from window to window space to window space. It was safe ~~then~~ to

agree to Mistress' instructions and begin to repair the farm, prepare it also for nothing

much had been done after Vaark's death. Hardy as the women had always

been, ^{they} things had changed. Lina slumped, yet seemed to fester somehow. Scully, in

particular, had wasted hours over the years secretly enjoying her river baths. Now,

no more. ^{wherever she bathed, it did not allow him unfettered delight at the vision of} Mistress ^{she fell ill} to ^{and obeyed} had changed. Her hair was no longer brassy locks bursting

from her cap, but pale strings drifting down her temples adding melancholy to her

newly stern features. She had taken control but avoided certain tasks that she had

once undertaken with gusto. Sorrow, alone, appeared stronger, intent, capable of

completing a chore. But her baby came first, and she would postpone egg gathering,

delay milking, interrupt ^{any garden care} raking if she heard a mere whimper from the infant's basket

always nearby. Strangest was Florens, The docile soft creature they knew had

turned to rock. When they saw her walking down the road tk days after the smithy

had visited Mistress Vaark and ^{gone} left, they were too weary to recognize her. First be-

cause she was so bedraggled and second because she took no notice of either man.

Stiff and in pain, both were hurrying as best they could down the road back to the

herd. The night before they had spent ~~in trees~~ hiding from a ^Nfiercely insulted black

bear.

tk

those
buttocks,
that waisted
the wet
pears
or ?

Jim
Alis
wom
new
spending
Erq
Sean

quelled it. "Mr. Bond," he said. "Good morning." That was the first time in his life he had been called 'mister.' Virginia bailiffs, constables, small children, preachers—none had even considered it—nor did he himself. He knew his rank, but did not know the lift that small courtesy allowed him. That first time was not the last, because the smithy never failed to address him so. Chuckling to himself, Willard understood why the girl, Florens, was struck silly by the man; he probably called her 'miss' or 'lady' when they met in the wood for dinner-time foolery.

tk

When Mistress offered them the first money either had ever been paid—a shilling a week—they gladly took up the slack and did their best to keep the place up. Perhaps it was not as much as the blacksmith was paid, but enough to organize their dreams.

REVISED 2

Jacob Vaark rose from the grave nightly to visit his beautiful house.

"As well he should," said Willard.

"I sure would," answered Scully.

It was still the grandest house around and why not spend eternity there? For ^{population} years the farm made up the closest either man would know of family. A good-hearted couple (parents), and three female servants (sisters, say). Each ^{person on the farm was} one depend-

And then the helpful sons.

ent on them, none cruel, all kind. Master Vaark, unlike their more-or-less absent owner, never cursed or threatened. He even gave them gifts of rum during Christmas-
 (and once shared a tipple)
 tide. His death had saddened them enough to disobey their owner's command to avoid the poxed place; They volunteered to dig the last-^{if} ~~but~~ not the final-grave his widow would need. In pouring rain they removed five feet of mud and hurried to get the body down before the hole filled with water. Now, thirteen days later, the dead man had left it. Very like the way he used to re-appear following weeks of traveling. They did not see him-his actual shape-but they did see his ghostly blaze. His glow began near midnight, floated for a while on the second story, disappeared, then moved ever so slowly from window to window. With Master Vaark content to roam his house and not appear anywhere else, scaring or rattling anybody, Willard felt it safe and appropriate for him and Scully to ^{remain} ~~be~~ loyal and help ~~the~~ Mistress repair the farm, prepare it also, for nothing much had been kept up after she fell ill. ^{*} tk Hardy as the women had always been, they seemed distracted, slower now. ^{Before and} Even after the blacksmith healed Mistress and the girl, Florens, was back where she belonged, ^{the} a pall ^[what had been followed in May-June] ^{was almost visible.} remained. True, Lina went about her work dutifully, but Scully thought something was ^{Simmering} ~~festering~~ in her. He had wasted hours over the years secretly watching her river baths. Now, no more. Wherever, if ever, she bathed unfettered glimpses of her buttocks, that waist, those syrup-colored breasts were ^{no longer} unavailable. ^{Mainly} Most of all he missed what he seldom saw elsewhere: uncovered female hair, aggressive, seductive, black as witchcraft. ^{Seeing it cling and sway in water was a joy} Mistress too was different. Her hair, ^{the} no longer brassy locks ^{that once ignored} ~~bursting~~ from her cap, became pale strings drifting at her temples, adding melancholy to her

* The shillings she offered (one a week) was the first money they had ever been paid - lifting their work ^{from} ~~from~~ pity to profit, from dedication to -

newly stern features. She had taken control, in a manner of speaking, but avoided as too tiring tasks that she had once undertaken with gusto. She laundered nothing, planted nothing, weeded never. She cooked and mended. Otherwise her time was spent reading a bible or trotting off to the village. ^{* ~~Sorrow~~ ^{'s change} alone ^{was an improvement; she was} appeared stronger,} less addle-headed, capable of handling chores. But her baby came first and she would postpone egg-gathering, delay milking, interrupt any field chore if she heard a whimper from the infant's basket always nearby.

Strangest was Florens. The docile, ^{needing} ~~soft~~ creature they knew had turned to rock. When they saw her stomping down the road three days ^{after} ~~of~~ the smithy had visited Mistress' sick bed and gone, they were slow to recognize her as a living person. First because she was so bedraggled and second, because, like a visitation from another world, she took no notice of either man. Unseeing, she passed right by them although their sudden burst out of trees onto the road in front of her would have startled a human. Breathless and still alarmed from a narrow escape, ^{in their minds} anything could be anything. Both were running as fast as they could back to the livestock under their care before the pigs ate their litter. Much of the morning they had spent hiding from an insulted bear, a harrowing incident they agreed was primarily Willard's fault. The netted partridge hanging from the older man's waist was supplement enough for two meals each, ^{it was reckless to press their good luck and} ~~so there was no need to~~ linger just so he could ^{rest} ~~rest~~ and puff his pipe beneath a beech. Both knew what a whiff of smoke could do in woods where odor was decisive: to flee, attack, hide or, as in the case of a sow bear protecting her single

* ^{I reckon} "She will marry again. Soon," said Willard.
 "Why soon?"
 "How else keep the farm?"

"Who? Who is there?"
 Willard shook his head,
 "The village will provide."

cub, investigate. When the laurel hell that had yielded the partridges suddenly crackled, Willard stood up, holding his hand out to Scully for silence. Scully unsheathed his knife and stood also. After a moment of uncanny quiet—no birdcalls or squirrel chatter—the smell washed over them the same moment the sow crashed through the laurel clicking her teeth. Not knowing which of them she would select, they separated, each running man hoping he had made the correct choice, since ^{playing possum.} ~~play-dead~~ ^(over) was not an option. Willard ducked behind a slate outcropping ^{hoping it} ~~hoping it~~ would disable the wind's direction. Scully, certain he felt hot breath on his nape, leaped for a beech branch and swung up into it. Unwise. Herself a tree climber, the bear had merely to stand up to clamp his foot between her jaws. Not willing to be maimed without at least one gesture of defense, if not courage, Scully turned and without even aiming, rammed his knife at the head of the agile black hulk a few inches below. For once, his lack of skill was a gift. The blade hit, slid like a needle into the bear's eye. The roar was terrible as, clawing bark, she fell to the ground on her haunches. A ring of baying dogs could not have enraged her more. Off balance by the blinding that diminished her naturally poor sight, it was some time before she lumbered away to locate her young. Willard and Scully waited, one treed like a caught bear himself, the other hugging rock, both afraid she would return. Convinced finally that she would not, cautiously sniffing for the fur smell, listening for a grunt, the movements of the other or a return of birdcall, they emerged racing. It was when they ^{shot} ~~burst~~ from the wood onto the road that they saw the female-looking shape marching

Thumb
Tamping his pipe, he ^{prayed} ~~looked~~ the ledge of slate

toward them. Upon closer inspection, Scully decided she looked less like a visitation than a wounded redcoat, barefoot but proud.

horse

up into it. It was unwise. ^{stand} herself a tree climber, the bear had merely to ~~rise~~ up to clamp his foot between her jaws. Not willing to be maimed without at least one gesture of defense, if not courage, Scully turned and without even aiming rammed his knife at the agile black hulk below ^{a few inches} him. For once, his lack of skill was a gift. The blade hit, slid like a needle into the bear's eye. The roar was terrible as ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~slid~~, clawing bark, ~~and~~ ^{she} fell to the ground on her haunches. A ring of baying dogs could not have enraged her more. It was ^{some time} ~~hours~~ before she finally lumbered away, off balance by the blinding that diminished her naturally poor sight, ^{to locate her young.}

^{The men} waited, ^{freed like a bear himself} ~~freed~~ like a bear himself. ^{afraid she would return.} They ran. It was when they burst from the wood onto the road that they saw ^{the} a female-looking shape ^{coming toward them.} ^{Marching} ^{barefoot} ~~as a bear~~ ^{the other} ^{hugging rock} ^{put} ^{proud.}

^{tk} Sold for seven years to a Virginia planter, Willard expected to be free at age 21. But ^{tk} years were added onto his contract for infractions—theft and assault—and he was ^{re-} leased to a wheat farmer up north. ^{After two harvests} The wheat succumbed ^{quickly} to blast and the ^{more or less absent} owner turned his property over to livestock. Eventually, as overgrazing demanded more and more pasture, the owner made a land-for-^{labor} trade with his neighbor, Jacob Vaark. Still, one man could not handle the stock. The addition of a boy helped.

Before Scully's arrival, Will had spent hard and lonely days watching ^{cattle} cows munch and mate, his only solace in remembering with pleasure the even harder ones

^{like a redcoat?}
^{Convinced finally that she would not cautiously snuffing for the fir smell, listening for a grunt, or the return of birdcall, they emerged running. The partridge}

4

though that

in Virginia. Brutal as the work was, at least he was not lonely. There he was one of twenty-three men slaving in tobacco fields. Six English, one native and twelve from Africa by way of Barbados. The comradery among them was sealed by their universal hatred of the overseer and the ^Smater's odious sons. It was upon one of the latter that the assault was made. Theft of a shoat was invented and thrown in just to in-

crease Willard's indebtedness. ^(over) With Scully's companionship and the welcome variety ~~of work on the Vaark place~~ there were only a few times that he over drank and

misbehaved. ~~each occasion~~ an automatic extension of his term. ^{Before Scully came, he tried to run away twice}

An even greater improvement in his social life began

The last best period started when Vaark decided to build a great house.

Again, he was among a crew of laborers ^{skilled and not} and when the blacksmith came, things got

even more interesting. Not only was the house grand but its enclosure was to be spectacular. tk Initially he admired the smithy and his craft, until he saw money pass

from Vaark's hand to the iron-monger's. Learning he was being paid for his work,

like the men who delivered building materials, something roiled in Willard and he,

along with Scully, refused any request the black man made. Refused to haul charcoal

wood for his fires; 'forgot' to tk. Vaark chastised them both into sullen accommoda- ^{shield it from rain}

tion, but it was the smith who calmed them down. Willard had two shirts, one with a

collar, the other more of a rag. On the morning he slipped in fresh dung, he

changed into the good, collared one. Arriving at the site, he caught the blacksmith's

eye, then his nod, then his thumb pointing straight up as if to signal approval. If Wil-

lard ^{never knew} ~~had any doubt~~ whether he was being made fun of or complimented, the smith

only to be caught and given

and split the shirt all the way down its back

But when

It was hard to get ^{used to} ~~the~~ ^{new} rough region he was moved into.

At night ⁱⁿ this hammock, trapped in

~~the~~ ^{a wide} ~~darkness~~, he braced himself against ^{the living} ~~mammoth~~ ^{creatures} and ^{the} ~~dead ones~~.

~~Only the comfort of~~ Swine, and cattle ~~the only creatures he could control~~ were his only companions - at least until the owner came and carted ~~some~~ away for slaughter. When Scully's arrival, ~~Willard was overjoyed~~

^{was} he met with both welcome and relief.

And when their ^{duties} ~~work~~ expanded to occasional work on the Vaork place, ~~Willard~~ and an easy relationship with its servants,

Every Willis@gmail.com

5

said

it tickled him since it

~~quelled it~~ "Mr. Bond," ~~he said~~. "Good morning." ~~That~~ was the first time in his life he had been called 'mister.' Virginia bailiffs, constables, small children, preachers—none had ^{ever} ~~even~~ considered it—nor did he himself. He knew his rank, but did not know the lift that small courtesy allowed him. ^{Joke or not} ~~That~~ first time was not the last, because the smithy never failed to address him so. Chuckling to himself, Willard understood why the girl, Florens, was struck silly by the man; he probably called her 'miss' or 'lady' when they met in the wood for ^{supper} ~~dinner~~-time foolery.

tk

When Mistress offered them the first money ~~either had ever been paid—a shil-~~
~~ling a week—they gladly took up the slack and did their best to keep the place up.~~
 Perhaps ^{their pay} ~~it~~ was not as much as the blacksmith was paid, but enough to organize their dreams.

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REVISED 2

*insert
p 194*

Jacob Vaark rose from the grave nightly to visit his beautiful house.

"As well he should," said Willard.

"I sure would," answered Scully.

It was still the grandest house around and why not spend eternity there? ^(over) For x years the farm population made up the closest either man would know of family. A good-hearted couple (parents), and three female servants (sisters, say) and them the

At first
When they first noticed ^{the} ~~his~~ ^{the}
~~figure~~, Sully, ~~was~~ not sure it
was him, & thought they should
creep closer. Willard, on the
other hand, ^{warned} ~~cautioned~~ of the
consequences of disturbing the
risen dead. Night after
night they watched, until
they were finally convinced
themselves ^{one} that no body other than V.
would ~~haunt~~ the ^{spend}
haunting ^{occupy} time there; it had no previous
tenants and Mistress would
forbade anyone to enter. Both
men respected - if not understood - her
~~insistence~~ reason.

helpful sons. Each person dependent on them, none cruel, all kind. ^{Especially} Master Vaark, ^{who,} unlike their more-or-less absent owner, never cursed or threatened. He even gave them gifts of rum during Christmastide and once shared a tippie.. His death had saddened them enough to disobey their owner's command to avoid the poxed place; they volunteered to dig the last-if not the final-grave his widow would need. In pouring rain they removed five feet of mud and hurried to get the body down before the hole filled with water. Now, thirteen days later, the dead man had left it. Very like the way he used to re-appear following weeks of traveling. They did not see him—his ^{face or definite} actual shape—but they did see his ghostly blaze. His glow began near midnight, floated for a while on the second story, disappeared, then moved ever so slowly from window to window. With Master Vaark content to roam his house and not appear anywhere else, scaring or rattling anybody, Willard felt it safe and appropriate for him and Scully to stay loyal and help the Mistress repair the farm, prepare it also, for nothing much had been kept up after she fell ill. tk The shillings she offered (one a week) was the first money they had ever been paid, raising their work ethic from duty to dedication, from pity to profit. Hardy as the women had always been, they seemed distracted, slower now. Before and after the blacksmith healed Mistress and the girl, Florens, was back where she belonged, the pall remained. True, Lina went about her work carefully, but Scully thought something simmered in her. He had wasted hours over the years secretly watching her river baths. Unfettered glimpses of her buttocks, that waist, those syrup-colored breasts were no longer unavailable. Mainly he missed what he seldom saw elsewhere: uncovered female hair, aggressive, seductive, black

as witchcraft. Seeing ^{its} cling and sway in water was a ^{devilish} ~~special~~ joy. Now, no more. Wherever, if ever, she bathed he was convinced she was about to explode. Mistress too was different. Her hair, the brassy locks that ^{refused} ~~ignored~~ her cap, became pale strings drifting at her temples, adding melancholy to her newly stern features. She had taken control, in a manner of speaking, but avoided as too tiring tasks that she had once undertaken with gusto. She laundered nothing, planted nothing, weeded never. She cooked and mended. Otherwise her time was spent reading a bible or trotting off to the village.

"She'll marry again, I reckon," said Willard. "Soon."

"Why soon?"

"How else keep the farm?"

"Who, you reckon?"

^{closed one eye}
Willard ~~shook his~~ head. "The village will provide."

They laughed recalling the friendliness of the deacon.

Sorrow's change alone seemed to them an improvement; she was less addle-headed, more capable of handling chores. But her baby came first and she would postpone egg-gathering, delay milking, interrupt any field chore if she heard a whimper from the infant's basket always nearby.

Strangest was Florens. The docile, ^{ful}needy creature they knew had turned to rock. When they saw her stomping down the road three days after the smithy had visited Mistress' sick bed and gone, they were slow to recognize her as a living person. First because she was so bedraggled and second, because, like a visitation from another world, she took no notice of either man. Unseeing, she passed right by them although ^{the}~~their~~ sudden burst ^{of men} out of trees onto the road in front of her would have startled a human. Breathless and still alarmed from a narrow escape, in their minds anything could be anything. Both were running as fast as they could back to the livestock under their care before the pigs ate their litter. Much of the morning they had spent hiding from an insulted bear, a harrowing incident they agreed was primarily Willard's fault. The netted partridge hanging from the older man's waist was supplement enough for two meals each so it was reckless to press their good luck and linger just so he could rest beneath a beech and puff his pipe. Both knew what a whiff of smoke could do in woods where odor was decisive: to flee, attack, hide or, as in the case of a sow bear protecting her single cub, investigate. When the laurel hell that had yielded the partridges suddenly crackled, Willard stood up, holding his hand out to Scully for silence. Scully unsheathed his knife and stood also. After a moment of uncanny quiet—no birdcalls or squirrel chatter—the smell washed over them the same moment the sow crashed through the laurel clicking her teeth. Not knowing which of them she would select, they separated, each running man hoping he had made the correct choice, since ^{to}~~play~~ possum was not an option. Willard ducked behind an outcropping, thumb tamped his pipe and prayed the ledge of slate would

disable the wind's direction. Scully, certain he felt hot breath on his nape, leaped for a beech branch and swung up into it. Unwise. Herself a tree climber, the bear had merely to stand up to clamp his foot between her jaws. Not willing to be maimed without at least one gesture of defense, if not courage, Scully turned and without even aiming, rammed his knife at the head of the agile black hulk a few inches below. For once, his lack of skill was a gift. The blade hit, slid like a needle into the bear's eye. The roar was terrible as, clawing bark, she fell to the ground on her haunches. A ring of baying dogs could not have enraged her more. Off balance by the blinding that diminished her naturally poor sight, it was some time before she lumbered away to locate her young. Willard and Scully waited, one treed like a caught bear himself, the other hugging rock, both afraid she would return. Convinced finally that she would not, cautiously sniffing for the fur smell, listening for a grunt, the movements of the other or a return of birdcall, they emerged ^{Slowly before} racing. It was when they shot from the wood onto the road that they saw the female-looking shape marching toward them. Upon closer inspection, Scully decided she looked less like a visitation than a wounded redcoat, barefoot but proud.

tk

Sold for seven years to a Virginia planter, young Willard Bond expected to be freed at age 21. But x years were added onto his term of contract for infractions— theft and assault—and he was re-sold to a wheat farmer up north. Following two harvests the wheat succumbed to blast and the owner turned his property over to mixed

livestock. Eventually, as over-grazing demanded more and more pasture, the owner made a land-for-toil trade with his neighbor, Jacob Vaark. Still, one man could not handle the stock. The addition of a boy helped.

Before Scully's arrival, Willard had spent hard and lonely days watching cattle munch and mate, his only solace in remembering with satisfaction the even harder ones in Virginia. Brutal though that work was, at least he was not lonely. There he was one of twenty-three men slaving in tobacco fields. Six English, one native, and twelve from Africa by way of Barbados. The comradery among them was sealed by their shared hatred of the overseer and the master's odious sons. It was upon the latter that the assault was made. Theft of a shoat was invented and thrown in just to increase Willard's indebtedness. He had trouble getting used to the rougher, wilder region he was moved into. At night in his hammock, trapped in wide, animated darkness, he braced himself against the living and the dead. The glittering eyes of a stag could easily be a demon, just as the howls of tortured souls might be the call of happy wolves. ^(over) Swine and cattle were his only companions—until the owner returned and carted away the best for slaughter. Scully's arrival was met with both welcome and relief. And when their duties expanded to occasional work on the Vaark place, and they developed an easy relationship with its servants, there were just a few times he over drank and misbehaved. Before Scully came, Willard had run away twice, only to be caught in a tavern yard and given a further extension of his term.

The dread of those solitary
nights ^{gripped} ~~unsettled~~ his days,

An even greater improvement in his social life began when Vaark decided to build a great house. Again, he was among a crew of laborers, skilled and not, and when the blacksmith came, things got even more interesting. Not only was the house grand, but its enclosure was to be spectacular. tk

Initially he admired the smithy and his craft. ^{Until the day} ~~Then~~ he saw money pass from Vaark's hand to the iron-monger's. ^{the blacksmith} Learning ^{he} was being paid for his work, like the men who delivered building materials, unlike the men he worked with in Virginia, something roiled in Willard and he, along with Scully, refused any request the black man made. Refused to chop chestnut or haul charcoal for his fires; 'forgot' to shield ^{lumber} ~~it~~ from rain. Vaark chastised them both into sullen accommodation, but it was the smithy who calmed them down. Willard had two shirts, one with a collar, the other more of a rag. On the morning he slipped in fresh dung and split the shirt all the way down its back, he changed into the good collared one. Arriving at the site, he caught the blacksmith's eye, then his nod, then his thumb pointing straight up as if to signal approval. Willard never knew whether he was being made fun of or complimented. But when the smithy said "Mr. Bond. Good morning," it tickled him. Virginia bailiffs, constables, small children, preachers—none had ever considered calling him 'mister'—nor did he expect them to. He knew his rank, but did not know the lift that small courtesy allowed him. Joke or not, that first time was not the last, because the smithy never failed to address him so. Chuckling to himself, Willard understood

* The clink of silver was as unmistakable as its gleam.

why the girl, Florens, was struck silly by the man; he probably called her 'miss' or 'lady' when they met in the wood for supper-time foolery.

tk [Scully; horses]

Perhaps their pay was not as much as the blacksmith's, but for Scully and Mr. Bond, it was enough to organize their dreams.