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The Shepherd of the Hills

By Grover Jones

Kinda free with your powder, ain't ya?
Not when I'm aimin' at a moonshiner
with four jugs slung over his shoulder.
Accordin' to the law, a man's
got a right to tote his liquor...
wherever it fits him best,
inside or out.
And he ain't a moonshiner
till he sells it and gets caught at it.
The way you talk up for these
superstitious mountain people,
you'd think that every third 'shiner
is your nephew.
Well, I've been up here long enough for
the government to know just where I stand.
And you better be careful potshottin'
at these nephews whose uncle I ain't.
Hey, Charlie, come here!
Take a look at this!
I told you I got him.
Cow. Cow?
Yeah. Lamentin' cow.
Full udder and nobody to milk her.
Lamentin', huh?
Snakes.
Get these hid away from here.
Let Wash do it.
Do what you're told. Jim Lane's
standin' watch for us at Holler Ridge.
Let him find his own cover.
Get these things hid away.
Douse that fire. Watch that smoke.
Are you deaf?
Revenuers! Dump that mash
and scatter till I call ya.
Who lives there?
Jim Lane and his daughter, Sammy.
Come in.
Andy!
Hello, Sammy.
You're lookin' fine.
How's everything with you, Jim?
Well, Andy, I can't complain.
You're here just in time. We got a powerful

lot of johnnycake and squirrel stew.
There's only one more plate, unless
they wanna eat stew out of their hands.
No, thanks, Sammy.
We got business to attend to.
Well, are you satisfied?
So long, Jim.
Bye, Sammy.
Good-bye.
They hit me without no warnin'.
Easy. Easy, young'un.
Don't hurt out loud, Pappy.
Here. Careful.
The murderin' hounds. I was right
down at the fork of the creek.
Young Matt givin' you sorghum beer
for spottin' revenuers...
while he's totin' his corn whiskey
down into town!
Someday I'll... Don't aggravate
yourself. It's me is shot.
'Tain't like it was Young Matt's fault.
Yeah!
It's you that's shot, just like you said.
Not him!
Come in.
What do you want?
My name's Daniel Howitt. I...
Don't you touch him!
This looks bad.
It's stopped bein' bad and turned worse.
I can take care of him.
That bullet's still with him.
I said I can take care of him.
I got salve. I got cobwebs...
This is no time to argue!
Boil some water
and get some clean rags.
When do you aim to take him?
Take him?
You're just wellin' him
to take him to jail, ain't you?
I've been tryin' to tell ya.
I'm Daniel Howitt.

I came here to get some information,
to get acquainted.

Why?

Well, I'd like to buy a piece
of land, settle down here. Why?

I... gonies! The man was
right clever with me,
and you act like he was a fine-hair.
Folks like him don't come to land
what's been corned out.

Land with seed ticks and chinch bugs
and whoopin' cough and...

Why'd you come?

I didn't ask you how he got shot.

No, you didn't, for a fact.

Evenin', brother.

Hello, Sammy.

Keep joggin', Young Matt.

Don't get off that horse!

Don't get your dander up.

I just come to see is your pa home.

He is, and we don't need
you and your kind askin' after him.

I guess then I'll have
to invite myself in.

Get on up the hill, Rowdy.

Tell Aunt Mollie

I want stack cakes...

and roast yearlin'coon

with plenty of gravy!

And tell her we ain't aimin' to stand
for no more sickness and misery!

My, ain't the birds a... hollerin'
pretty. You and your devilment!

Aunt Mollie and Old Matt and their poison
ways, makin' people scared of livin'!

There's bluebirds nestin'
all over the mountain.

Liquor totin' and gettin' drunk
and raisin' Jupiter to suit yourselves!

Your eyes are cussin' pretty tonight.

Makin' the hants do your biddin'!

Givin' the sick a soon start to die,
makin' the well dark-eyed and fearful.

Why can't your dead mother
keep her unhappiness in her grave?
Leave my mother be.
Oh, Matt, why do you keep doin' it?
All the way up the trail he bled.
What are you talkin' about?
They shot him, Matt.
Did they...
I'm all right.
What happened? I was drinkin'
when I should've been watchin'.
Andy Beeler?
Yeah.
And two new ones with him.
Looks like... he'll never learn.
Well, they're startin' somethin'
they better know how to finish.
Who's he?
My name's Daniel Howitt.
What's he here for?
He's my cousin.
Now, that isn't...
This here's young Matt Mathews.
Mr. Howitt says he's gonna live here.
That's right. I plan to stay here.
It ain't likely for strangers...
to find these parts to settle down in.
I brought along some
good fishing tackle.
We might give 'em a try
when the weather's right.
Let me know can I do
anything for ya, Jim.
Even Sammy's sayin' it now, Ma.
All the lies they teached her.
Blamin' us for all
their ails and sufferin'.
You for all the unseen things
God lets be.
Me for the fightin' and meanness.
Well, maybe they're right
about me, but you...
I'll stop 'em.
Some one of these days I'll find him,

him that... never came back to ya.
Do you suppose the Mathews
would sell me some of their land?
Might... if you was that crazy.
They got money cramps.
But don't let 'em sell ya
Moanin' Meadow.
Moanin' Meadow?
That's where the hant comes from.
Frogs as quiet as grave rocks,
and the light comin' from nowhere.
The trees don't rustle,
and the flowers grow big,
but they don't have pretty smells.
Bad land,
like everything has got
the name of Mathews is bad, exceptin'
'Ceptin' Young Matt!
He ain't naturally bad.
Them's the ones that makes him so.
Them?
Them as won't let the dead rest!
His uncle, Old Matt,
with his fire-spittin' tongue.
That old she-devil crow, Aunt Mollie.
And Pete, without
no brains and no hope.
All of 'em makin' Matt a sick soul,
raisin' him to murder,
to murder his pa
who run off and left him.
And all of 'em guilting her,
she who never done no hurt
to no one of God's critters.
She?
His mother.
Coot.
It's Coot Royal.
The baby.
Yeah.
She's needin' some elm bark tea.
Poor young'un can't hardly breathe.
She... She's near dyin'.
I... gonies!

No, you don't, Pappy.
You stay here. You're too gaunted.
I'll go with her.
It's just a trot and gallop
down the trail.
I knowed it.
I knowed it when I heared
the fox bark in the night...
and my voice growed damp
when I prayed.
Sammy.
Get a clean rag and a little stick.
Fix me a swab, Sammy.
She's done it!
She's sent the hex on us!
It's me done it, Granny Lady,
'cause I ain't never been no good.
The sorriest critter on the creek,
with things always
windin' out black for me...
and nothin' to give ya but poke
sallet and no-good hog mollies.
You've given me more than that!
You always call me "lady. "
And I can sit here and rest myself
in a milk-white castle.
It's her in Moanin' Meadow
that walks through the night,
touchin' nothing
but layin' her hand on all.
It's them darn Mathews on the knob.
It's him, the spittin' snake that never
come back to claim his own wood's colt!
It's him!
The stranger, Coot,
he brung her back to us
like a good shepherd.
Your little girl was choked up
and became unconscious.
Just keep her throat clear and keep her wrapped
up warm, and she'll be all right tonight.
By tomorrow, she'll be beggin' to wade the creek
and askin' what makes the sky blue, won't ya?
Your daddy will be gettin'

anxious, won't he, Sammy?
Stranger?
Did you ever get to feel
how good mud is?
No, but I wish I had.
I almost stepped on a cloud.
Morning, and howdy to ya, Sammy!
Same to you, Kip.
Wife mendin'?
Fine. She's talkin' like a windmill.
Goggle-eyes!
Yeah. Caught 'em
down by the ol' Beany.
Grasshopper bait?
No. Noodlin'!
Yeah?
Hello, Mrs. Schulz. How's the baby?
Just fine, Sammy. Wait,
Sammy. I wanna go in the store.
We might need more money
when we get up to Mathews'.
Corky? He won't lend you no money.
He won't even let you look at none.
I don't want to borrow any money.
I only want to cash a check.
A check? Yeah. A check is
a piece of paper, a note.
Like a mortgage?
Well, no, not... not exactly.
A check is a... A check is an exchange.
You mean, like a swap.
Well, uh, yes, in a way.
You see, a check is...
A check is a letter,
a letter to the bank
where I have my money,
tellin' them to... to pay cash
to whoever has that letter.
Is it honest?
Yes, if you have the money
in the bank.
All right,
I'd like to see you do it.
Hello, Hank!

Hello, Sammy.

Let's see, Mrs. Palestrom.

Hello, Mrs. Kundy.

I got Coleby's Cholera Tincture,
Miss Wassop's Soothing Syrup,
Kittredge's Salve and Wahoo Tonic.

Could be she might
be needin' worm cakes.

Nope, 'tain't that. I put a dried tater
chip and two crawdad legs in her bed,
but she's still got that seldom feelin',
complainin' from head to heel.

How much is them?

I'm gettin' tired of soakin'
sugar s-s-sops.

Better do somethin' about
that neck rash you got there.

'Tain't rash. It's the dye
from off my shirt.

I didn't souse it enough in lye water.

You oughta see our young'uns
just like a passel of pure redskins.

Them's 30 cents.

The mouthpiece is for nothin'.

Thirty cents!

Howdy, Sammy.

Been wantin' to meet your cousin.

Hello, Mr. Howitt.

How do you do, sir?

He wants to cash a check... one of them letters
to where he's got money in the bank.

How much do you reckon
to want, Mr. Howitt?

Well, if it's convenient,
I could use a hundred dollars.

You could use a hundred dollars?

Yes, if it's convenient.

Well, uh...

I have letters of
identification here.

Well, uh, Sammy's say - so
is all right with me.

I... I'll look around.

Smart.

Twenty-five, 30, 35, 40.

Forty-five.

It's Confederate.

Forty will do me fine.

I didn't dig into my real reserves.

They ain't here.

There you are, sir.

Thank you very much.

Look out, Al.

You know about them
city telephone machines for talkin'?

Yeah. What about 'em?

Seems foolish to me.

Ain't nobody in the Ozarks don't know
you got a hundred dollars right now.

Remember now, you keep shut.

I'll do the talkin'.

Anything you say, Sammy.

It ain't gonna be so pleasant,
on account of Aunt Mollie, it ain't.

She always looks at ya
like a sheep-killin' dog.

How 'bout Old Matt?

Oh, him?

When he finds out you got a hundred dollars, his
eyes will get bigger than buckets of hog lard.

Don't open it.

They'll shoot ya
clean back to the valley.

Hello!

Hello, there!

He ain't totin' no gun.

Come on.

I told you afore you ain't wanted here.

Where's your woman?

Down by the hog scald.

So you're the cousin, eh?

What do you want?

He wants to buy some dirt land.

Go on in.

I'll fetch my woman.

While I worry him,
you head for the house.

He's ornery, just like

them he watches for.
He ain't educated to city talk.
You gotta twist him around a pole
or somethin' to get what you want.
You see?
Yes, I do.
Friends, Pete.
Won't nobody hurt ya.
That's Pete.
He ain't right.
Pete? Mollie and Old Matt's boy.
Young Matt's cousin.
Well, pretty near it.
Aunt Mollie, this is Mr. Howitt.
Strangers ain't wanted.
What brung you here?
He wants to buy some Mathews land.
He's my cousin.
He's got a hundred dollars.
Shucks.
For a hundred dollars, we can let you have that
finger of land down by the twisted sassafras.
No?
No!
If it's a question of more money,
Mrs. Mathews,
I'd be glad to give you a hundred dollars
cash and something each month.
We got them uplands on the sun side.
Ain't been brushed off yet.
But if you're lookin' for...
He ain't!
I'd like to buy Moanin' Meadow.
Shut up!
Not for no hundred dollars.
No.
It'd take more money
than you'd ever have.
It'd take a thousand dollars.
All right, I'll pay a thousand dollars,
if you'll allow me
to give you the hundred dollars now...
and \$75 a month
until the thousand is paid.

You'll pay... a thousand dollars?
Yes.
Have you pen and paper?
You unbounded your word and spoke.
That's what ya done.
A hundred dollars and promised more.
You made a swap
with a bad tangle in it.
Smell.
Besides which, on account
of you disobeyin' me,
you bought an unhappy land.
Well, you see, Sammy...
Moanin' Meadow. Won't nobody come
to pay you company there...
nor warm by your fire with ya.
Well, it might be that unhappy land,
like unhappy people,
needs someone to care for it.
I beg the good omens I've had through the
week to counter the spell of the spirits...
who seek to dampen the wishes I've knotted in
yarn or darken the luck of pulley-bone's charm.
One and one is two, and three add to five.
Dead spirits stay dead and live ones alive.
Listen, Sammy...
See that buck brush, Mr. Howitt?
Well, up past it into them chinkapins,
then you travel up the steep hill,
down past the deer lick
into them low, big gaps.
That's Moanin' Meadow. Good-bye, Mr.
Howitt. Sammy, there's no sense to all this.
I'm tellin' you for
the last and final time,
them that goes in there has daylight
dreams and always disremembers.
And there's poison plants and poke berries
and nightshades dancin' with the bats.
Good-bye, Mr. Howitt.
That snag in your shoulder ailin'?
Not any.
It's just that from the time I was
shucked out of knee britches,

I ain't been so
crowded 'round with notions.
I brung ya a brand-new kiss for luck.
Restin' up from devilment?
Nope. Just committed some.
Brung you that lace neckpiece
for your throat.
These pants is got thorns in 'em.
Like you was sayin', Jim,
a blue-eyed filly is
the most worrisome kind to gentle.
- What?
- No mind what you do,
you never get a
friendly whicker out of 'em.
Well, the last I recollect, we was
speakin' of notions. That's what I mean.
You get to whisperin' to yourself...
when there ain't
a single word to say.
Bees bumblin' at ya,
you get all tongue-tied,
start smilin' sidewise.
And you see plumb fancy
with your eyes shut tight.
Feelin' that way, a man most
generally falls off to sleep.
I... It don't make a speck of sense.
Oh, it 'tain't the sleepin' or the
talkin' back and forth in your dreams.
It's... It's the wakin' up
and findin' out...
you been dreamin' to suit yourself.
Well, it's just like you been sayin'
and I been wonderin'.
The heavier the man,
the deeper his boot track.
It just don't make no sense,
love don't.
But there it is.
Well, I guess supper's coolin'
and waitin' at our house.
Bye, Jim.
Bye.

Bye, Sammy.

"I've been sayin',
and he's been wonderin'."

What in thunderation
was he talkin' about?

Somethin' inside you gets to hurtin',
you're breathin' so awful bad,
you wanna yell out loud.

And you know you're walkin'
up a road ain't got no end.

For the sake of my tired soul's
confusion, what are you aimin' at?

He's been talkin' pretty words
fenced around with no meanin'.

'Cause love don't make
no sense, it don't,

not when a man's got on his mind
what Young Matt's sworn to do.

Uh-huh!

Smelled that peppermint candy
all the way up here, didn't ya?

Here, Pete.

Something's wrong.

Something's wrong around here.

What is it?

Everything's as usual, and better.

Set and eat.

What's he tryin' to say?

What you been wantin' most to do,

Matt? What are you gettin' at?

Look.

A hundred dollars, and more to come.

Your waitin's over, Matt.

You sold Moanin' Meadow.

For your sake.

Look! Hatin', hatin'.

You sold it, and you got no right!

She's my sister

same as she's your mother.

Only she has got a right

to be in Moanin' Meadow.

Go on!

But before you do it,

you gotta know this.

It's me runnin' the Mathews, and not
you whose bornin' brung the misery on us.
I know what I am.
Then don't be forgettin'
why us are livin' on the hill,
hidin' from folks' laughin' and talkin'.
Don't no one ask us
to no get-togethers.
They don't want nothin' to do
with no kinfolk of your mother's.
No stranger's gonna trample
on her grave.
You can't rest her easy
by killin' strangers.
Kill him what put
the idiot curse on my son.
Him what killed her, not the one that's
gonna give you the money to do it.
Poison talk.
You witch-woman you.
You... with your sermon of hate.
Castin'a spell onto all of us!
A... drivin' Young Matt to murder.
You fool! You blind-drunk fool!
You're right. You're right.
I sat there sayin' to myself,
"Why don't ya stop him?
'Cause you can't.
"'Cause why? 'Cause you ain't got
the backbone of a fishworm. That's why.
And once more, you're tromped down!"
Ah, I "seed" it...
the night she lay dyin'
over in her cabin... and alone.
Yeah, I told you I was
down to the forks,
but I seed it with my own eyes.
You were full of the devil's sin,
and it was a-stormin'.
And little Pete went out to help,
and you followed him
and drove him out of the cabin.
A lightnin' tree felled him and took
away his senses. You lie! You lie!

And she looked at you afore she
died, didn't she? Didn't she?
No!
Yes!
And anyone that looks at a dyin'
body's face will be the next one to die!
So you put your Satan's sin
and filled Young Matt with it.
Heh! "Counter the curse...
by killing the one that wronged her. "
And all this I knowed
and seed with my own eyes...
and held it inside me.
I done that for you, Mollie,
'cause you're mine.
I gotta ask you to get off of
this place, Mr. Howitt.
But I bought this place.
It ain't for sale.
You'll get your money back.
Look, Matt, this place is mine.
I don't wanna hurt
no kinfolk of Sammy's.
You won't be. I'm not Sammy's cousin.
She just said that to protect me.
Well, then get off of here
and get off quick.
Look, Matt, I bought this place.
And among honest people,
a trade is a trade.
Let me borrow that gun, Matt.
Some folks ain't to be trusted
with a loaded gun.
Remember what I said.
I'll be lookin' to see you gone.
It'd be bad luck to start up
housekeepin' without some salt, bread...
and a sweepin' broom.
Thanks.
It's the right notion, Sammy.
With the way things are
in our mountains now,
it needs more than salt and bread
and a sweepin' broom.

Can't hardly believe it myself.
But it wasn't always that way.
No, they wasn't.
Folks was happy. They sung songs.
They worked.
Now all they do is set around
and try to outsmart the government.
Seems like people nowadays
are stagnatin'...
and filming over like a...
like a pond dryin' up.
Maybe there's a way of goin' ahead
by getting back to where you were.
Maybe if we four begin it... help to
lift the burden... others'll come to help.
You know how I feel about it.
You can count on me.
Well, seein' as how
we're all of one mind,
let me unpack you
from Moanin' Meadow.
That's home, Sammy.
But you folks come and see me.
You can have a fence full of open gates
'round Moanin' Meadow.
You'll never be crowded for company.
Come on, help me.
Andy.
Here, I'll take that.
Why, I almost forgot.
I bought you that.
Bye.
Bye.
Bye.
Must be the Lord marks folks...
to favor a purpose.
One and one is two, and three goes to five.
Dead spirits stay dead and live ones alive.
One and one is two and three goes to five.
Dead spirits stay dead and live ones alive.
Sammy, it's good to see you here.
Come in.
Sit down, Sammy.
I can't sit, and I can't stop shakin'.

I couldn't sleep a wink.
I can't stop the feelin' inside me.
Past and present go together.
I knowed it from the first.
You and Young Matt son and pappy.
Him and your eyes, and you and his.
And the way his mouth laughs
when he don't want it to.
I'm glad you know.
Sit down, Sammy.
Someday, he's gonna look good at you and see
himself lookin' back at him from outta your eyes.
Someday, he's certain bound to know.
Someday, he is certain bound to know.
I'm gonna tell him.
He swore a blood oath
to kill ya when he finds ya.
Listen, Sammy. He's my son.
If dyin' for him would help,
that would be easy.
But I know that if he kills me,
he loses himself... and you.
It would mean just one more
generation of misery.
I know what it means to go through
life empty and alone.
I won't let him do that.
I don't know how
and I don't know when, Sammy,
but I will find a way to tell him.
I must find a way to help him
unswear his blood oath.
Before, it was just some worthless man
that Matt always hated.
Now it's you.
Wash, take this.
I got somebody I wanna see.
That sums up to \$4.00, Corky.
Reckon I'll have to ask you
to pass me by this time.
Overstocked.
I'm waitin', Corky.
And waitin'aggravates me.
Can't blame me, Wash.

Ain't nothin' I can do about it
if folks have changed and...
and lost their appetite for thirstin'.
These hills don't change for nobody.
And there's some people around here
that are overdue to learn that.
It's hindsight
changin' old friends for new.
Corky, if you can't sell that to
nobody else, you sold it to yourself.
I reckon I just temporarily
lost my manners.
Yeah.
Been tryin' to figure out
what it was I liked about you.
Come to find out it's the easy style
you unload a full-up wagon.
Hello, Matt.
What are you doin' down here?
Get outta there! He's working for me,
Wash. He's helping me with the sheep.
Workin'?
For you?
You get on up the trail.
Get up the trail, I told ya!
Pick him up, Wash.
Me? That idiot?
Pick him up!
Pick him up yourself.
Shoo, boy!
Oh, I didn't mean to hurt you none.
Thanks.
Let's go home.
Come on, Pete.
It's a funny thing about him.
As far as I can remember back,
he's either fightin' agin ya
or he's fightin' for ya.
Ain't nobody got a right
to Moanin' Meadow.
My mother's buried there.
It's hers.
I told him it was an unhappy land.
All he said was, "Maybe it just needs

a- carin' for, like unhappy folks. "
He didn't ask me who shot Pappy.
He just went ahead a-helpin' him.
And Coot's baby.
Ever since he's been here,
he's been actin' just like
a good shepherd.
Even when he talks about
liquor drinkin',
he makes it sound more right
than why we shouldn't do it.
Well, it ain't him.
It's Moanin' Meadow I'm talkin' about.
If he cares for Moanin' Meadow like he says
and like he cares for folks,
then he'll be a-helpin'.
Like what he's done for Granny Becky.
Sent her off to a city doctor.
Her blind-born eyes are gonna
be fixed so she can see out of'em.
He did that?
He did! 'Cause there ain't no bad in him.
There ain't nothin' but good!
Ah, Matt, let him stay.
Well, maybe.
I've been expecting you, Matt.
I come to ask are you still
of a mind to go fishin'.
- If you say so.
- The weather's right... now.
You know,
there's a funny thing about fishin'.
You can let your thoughts
drift downstream...
till they carry your troubles
clean outta sight.
Yep.
If I had me fins where I got legs,
I'd paddle me away from troubles...
instead of wadin' knee-deep
to meet 'em.
There's things come natural
with mountain learnin',
things I might could show you.

But...
what I'm needin' now takes a...
man with city knowin' to tell me.
I'd like to help you, Matt. Can I?
Might be you could.
Say somebody was... lost from ya...
somebody you had to find,
somebody you was in debt to kill.
We got a curse on us, we Mathews folks.
A curse as old as... me.
There ain't no rest for us,
livin' or dead.
Not till I find him who
marked me for what I am and...
aged my mother too young
for her grave.
Matt,
what would it be like,
as long as you live,
having to remember
that you stopped a man's life?
Whole days when...
you couldn't forget.
Nights when you have to face yourself...
and him alone.
Nights when...
when you just pray
for the comin' of daylight.
You think I wanna do it,
that it pleases me to think about it?
I saw a fella kill a man once,
when I wasn't half grown.
But I stood up to it and looked,
'cause I knowed
that's what I was born to do.
But there's Sammy to think of.
Sammy loves you, Matt.
Sammy?
I got no right...
to love nor marry.
I gotta forget thinkin' about Sammy.
We'll find him, Matt. I promise you.
Dan Howitt he calls his name.
Settin' hisself up

as shepherd of the hills.
We don't need no shepherdin'.
We ain't allowin' no stranger
to come in and hide among us...
and turn our mountain folk
away from their learnin'!
Makin' and drinkin' honest
corn liquor is blessed of old.
It's our livin'!
Already we been left
shorthanded at the stills...
and are gettin' closer to where
nobody'll buy or drink our makin's!
A... spreadin' his reach
into the family.
If somebody's come to see us,
they're bad off to go a place.
I'm gettin' educated.
You was being spoke of, Mr. Howitt.
Come on in, if you're a mind to.
I knew you'd be expectin' me.
Payment on Moanin' Meadow.
Money's a thing hands can't dirty.
I brought you a message, too,
an invitation.
You can take it back
where you brung it from.
Granny Becky's back
from her operation.
They're removin'
the bandages tomorrow
havin' what Coot calls "an unveilin"
at Flying Clouds Bluff.
Becky was born blind.
She ain't never gonna see
'less she's born again.
She especially wanted her cousin
Mollie Mathews to be at her first seein'.
Shut up shoutin'.
There's to be an all-day singin'
and dinner on the grass.
Promise to take me with you, Pete?
Let 'em gather.
Let Becky see.

Let 'em sing.
You'll be missed if you're not there.
Oh, I almost forgot you, Pete.
You earned it... and more.
Why, that's twice as much
as any two of us earned last month.
Here she comes.
You gotta get ready now, Ma.
I'm ready.
Thank you, God.
The first tear I ever seen.
A mighty pretty thing
for human gladness.
I'm a-seein'!
I'm a witness to the color
of God's good dirt.
I was savin' you, child, till these old eyes
got used to seeing pretty things.
Howdy, Granny Becky.
You and your chairs.
A-rockin' me to seein'
all over the place.
You mind speakin' to me?
Hello, Granny Becky.
You're Corky!
Yeah.
And me a-thinkin' you was
a sawed-off little one.
You're Mollie Mathews, my blood cousin.
I asked a-purpose to have you here...
'cause I recollect you had a gift
for love and kindness...
when you was a girl.
Now there's a devil in ya.
Your soul's et up with hate.
You meddlin' old fool.
We hadn't oughta come, like I told ya.
I'm...
Sammy Lane!
Well, bless the sight
of you, child!
And...
Who is he? Him? You know him.
That's young Matt Mathews.

Then I'm as blind as ever I was.
He's no Mathews,
no more than he's
a poisoned Baldknobber.
No, Sammy. He's kin to his image.
Son of his father, if I can see at all.
That's Mr. Howitt.
Don't, Matt. She told you the truth.
He was gonna tell you hisself!
Get his rifle, Pete.
Stay where you are, Matt.
And leave your rifle restin'
where it's at.
Throw it away!
Stop, you poor fool!
Let go, Pete! Let go!
I wish I'd stayed stone-blind...
in the good, clean dark.
What's done is done.
We'll go home.
He done it! He done it!
If Pete dies, it's 'cause you all are
standin' around here mournin' womanlike...
instead of sheddin' the blood that laid the
curse on the Mathews from her day to this!
I guess...
I'm the only one to...
end the curse.
Don't. Please, don't, Matt.
I've been waitin'
and prayin' to stop ya.
You gotta turn back
turn back from killin'.
Get out of the way, Sammy. Go home.
If you go,
it's all ended between us,
all the feelin's and hopes.
There never was...
no hopes between us.
Don't.
Don't, Matt.
Matt.
Young Matt.
I got some words saved to tell ya.

Pete!

Pete. Son.

Ma.

I can remember...

when you had gentlelike ways...

till the lightning tree...

took away my speakin'.

It... It made you die...

inside.

It's you...

who's the curse.

Leave me alone with my baby.

Please.

Mollie!

Mollie!

I've tended him

to the best of my knowledge.

Hurt like Matt is, a man's

got to have the will to live,

something he'd he'd die for,

to bring him back to livin'!

The will to live.

Something to die for.

He can't be blamed for bein'learned

to see and fight for the wrong things.

I know, Sammy. Why can't he live

and see things good and clean...

and know that folks love him?

I watched him comin'down that meadow...

and I saw myself 25 years ago...

with nobody there to stop me

from makin'that mistake.

I killed a man.

I've been servin'a prison term.

That's why I never knew

Sarah was dying,

why I couldn't come back.

And I didn't want Matt to spend his life

in prison for the same thing.

I'd rather see him dead.

That's why I shot him... first.

Ever since I...

got able to remember,

I've been sproutin' and...

growin' too fast outta my britches.
I reckon I never grewed any inside...
till today.
It's kinda like...
being borned all over again...
right side up.
I ain't lost from nobody no more.
Matt.
Tell her I got a marrying notion...
if she'll ask me real nice.
I'd admire to.