

From Hatred
by Abigail Bodell

The soil of the Robinson farm was wrong. Although the gravelly, cracked mess filling the earth there lacked the ability to hold any moral values or perform true wrongdoing, it seemed to be in itself a manifestation of anxiety and apprehension. Crumbling softly under the beaten tires of the lone police car invading the property, it kicked up into great clouds of grey dust, hanging heavily in the air as some sort of warning.

Glancing idly out his windows, Deputy Bledsoe tsked with annoyance as his windshield wipers failed to clear away any of the building debris obscuring his view of the road. “Damn stuff doesn’t know where it belong.” He huffed, accelerating rapidly.

Much to his chagrin, he, as the freshest member of the force, was assigned to the one call that no one desired to respond to. The Robinsons were considered a strange folk to those engaged in the town’s gossip. Or rather, they were odd in that they had long overstayed their welcome in a location that clearly no longer approved of their presence. Despite the constant verbal assaults and threats they received whenever one of their kind had the nerve to set foot on the neatly maintained sidewalks downtown or even attempted to enter a respectable place of business, they persisted in their unwanted residence of the ramshackle farm home on the dusty outskirts of the community. Utterly frustrated, some residents were rumored to have taken their anger directly to the family’s front door, though Bledsoe knew not of the validity of such talk.

As his cruiser rolled to a stop in front of the Robinson family home, Bledsoe tipped his hat back in order to get a better look at the building and, as though in a trance, was immediately unable to tear his eyes away. The structure, although typical in its peeling, formerly white coat of paint and moisture-rotted wood, was sinister in the way in which it seemed to stare right back at him. A wave of nausea roiled his stomach as the cracked, dust-covered windows bore holes into his sight and sanity, glinting in a way that almost appeared maniacal in the dim, overcast light of the afternoon sun. Steeling himself and ripping his gaze from the leering house with a weak swallow, Bledsoe opened the car door with a clammy grip and stepped out into the heavy air.

Shuffling hesitantly up to the sagging steps of the porch, he noticed immediately that something was amiss. The wooden door of the home, once painted a cheery yellow, seemed to have been kicked in. Hanging halfway off its thoroughly rusted hinges, it swayed back and forth slightly in the dust-filled breeze that flirted with the tips of the freshly washed and neatly combed hair poking out from under his uniform's hat. Someone, or perhaps a group, it would appear from the number of fading footprints impressed into the layer of grey dirt coating the porch, had wanted access to the building or its residents, and hadn't taken no for an answer. Inhaling deeply to calm his nerves, Bledsoe straightened himself out and began to make his way into the claustrophobic hallway beyond the beaten entryway. "Sheriff's office. Anybody home?" he called out into the heavy silence.

Although no verbal response met his ears, a sudden creak from somewhere deeper in the residence caught his attention. Stepping carefully over splintered bits of door littering the worn planks of the flooring, he forced himself to move towards the ominous sound before his nerves could advise him to do otherwise and potentially lead him to retreat altogether. Entering the cramped, cluttered kitchen, he noticed a worn leaf of paper sitting solemnly upon the table, as

though awaiting his presence. Turning it over in his calloused, trembling hands, he squinted in the dim light of the room and began to read.

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It'll all come to an end soon. Even though they're hiding in their white hoods with their scary looking torches that make them look like ghosts in the night, papa says he knows it's them. They hate us here, they do. It seems they always will. Seems not everyone can come to terms with ol' Lincoln's decision coming up on a century ago, they make it clear that they think we ought to be working these fields rather than owning them. They want us gone, and it looks as though they'll be fed up enough to get the job done no matter the cost within the next week or so. But they can't wipe their hands of us that easily. This will always be the Robinson farm, and if they want it so damn bad, they can stay here with us. With hatred they come, and in these rotted walls they will stay.

The Klan. Bledsoe hadn't fully believed it, but it appeared the whispered rumors that some residing in the town, even a handful of those he worked alongside, had joined the chapter in the neighboring city when angered by the refusal of the Robinson's to vacate their property. Chills racing up and down his now sweat-covered back, he turned rapidly on his heel and made to escape when a sharp, brutal pain bloomed suddenly in his chest.

Shaking, he slowly lowered his gaze to find something utterly beyond reason. A hand, horribly twisted out of the same aged wood of the wall, had burst through the deputy's broad chest, digging its pointed fingertips into the freshly exposed flesh there. With no time to cry out, Sheriff Bledsoe could do nothing but observe as additional similarly shaped appendages greedily

grasped at him and pulled his weakening form back from whence they came. Eyes rolling desperately back, a final vision of his blood-spattered gold badge hitting the ground filled his mind, tormenting him as he saw that damned dust that covered everything on the property swallow it whole as the walls did to him.