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again, and over rocks, and into the bracken again, and the beating of his pulses made a song with the rushing in his ears as he ran, and the thudding of his stumbling feet.

The boar was in the young bracken, rooting up the ferns with its long snout, the sharp tusks tearing out the rhizomes. It turned calmly as the dog came yelping towards it. The boar shook its massive head as if in annoyance. Louie experienced a shock to see the beast at such close quarters and stood quite still, but the dog danced in crazy anxiety about the clearing. The boar made a sudden rush and the dog, snarling, leaped to one side. Then the boar was still, ignoring Louie and concentrating its red, hating eyes upon the little dog, squat legs rammed firmly against the ground, bracing itself for another rush. It charged all at once, catching the terrier unawares, and gashing it down one side. The dog squealed and scrambled out of the way. Louie made a rush at the boar, he did not know why, flapping his arms and hissing, and the dog joined in, gratified at the encouragement. The boar was taken completely by surprise, and turning hastily, it fled, but not before the dog nipped it neatly in its off leg with its sharp teeth. The pig swerved away to the side, searching frenziedly for something solid to back up against, and finding it in a large tree with high, spreading roots, like ridges. The boar turned quickly, just as the dog leaped at it. It lowered its head, wicked eyes blazing, and brought it up again, tossing the dog over with its sharp tusks. Infuriated, Louie flung himself into the battle at a lucky moment, while the boar still had its head raised. He slid the knife into the spot he knew so well from countless hunts he had witnessed, but had never participated in; he felt the keen blade slide in almost to the hilt, and with a swift, sure movement carried the slit over to the side of the throat. He felt nothing then, only a weak numbness, as if he had awoken from a terrible nightmare; but the hot blood flowed down the knife and over his fingers, and divided into many little streams down his arm, and he became aware of his surroundings.

THE dog lay upon the ground where the boar had tossed it, broken and bleeding and whimpering. Louie went to it and stroked it, making his soothing clucking noises. The dog licked his hand, and Louie took off his blood-stained shirt and wrapped it about the little dog. He looked angrily at the still-quivering body of the pig, and going back to it, he slashed off its gory head. He smashed off one of the tusks about half-way up, then picking up the dog once more, made his way back to the garage.

When he got down to the flat again Louie began to have vague fears about what Mac would say when he saw the

dog. Mac was in the little office, although it was nearly five o'clock and there would hardly be any customers now. Louie clenched the knife tightly as he drew near, the old kind of fear making him feel sick in the stomach. Mac heard him coming, and stood in the doorway, his eyes hard.

"Where you been?"

Louie stopped, afraid of what might happen.

"Come here!"

Louie went, and passed him the whimpering bundle. Mac took it, stared at it, and put it down. He stared at the boy, not understanding.

"My dog! What you done to her, eh? Where's all that blood come from?"

Louie tried desperately to tell him with his hands how the dog had fought with the savage boar, and how he, Louie, had slit the beast's throat; but Mac was not watching the eloquent gestures, he was staring at the crimson blade of the knife. He came forward menacingly, his jaw thrust out, and when he spoke it was as if it cost him a great effort.

"Stab my dog, would you? What you do it for, you loony cow? Try and kill my little Trixie, would you?" He swung a hefty fist at Louie's ear, where experience told him it hurt most. "What you do that to my dog for, you rotten little swine?" He punched Louie in the face, knocking him backwards. Louie rolled over on the dusty concrete, holding the knife away from his body, and finishing up in a sitting position at the red and yellow petrol bowser. He remembered something then, an important piece of evidence; quickly he pulled it out—the yellow tusk. He pointed violently at himself, at the knife, at the tusk, and at the dog.

In the moment of utter stillness that followed, Louie dimly heard the hum of an approaching truck, but he could only see Mac's eyes, puzzled at first and then dangerously cold.

"You're lying," he said, and slapped the boy on each side of the face, the slaps sounding sharp and cruel. Louie scrambled backwards, and Mac came after him, his eyes gleaming with hate; eyes of the pig. . .

Louie watched his boss topple over, slowly at first, and then with a rush, like a falling tree; and Louie would always remember how the knife gently oscillated and then was steady, as if it moved in conjunction with the pulse in Mac's bristly throat.

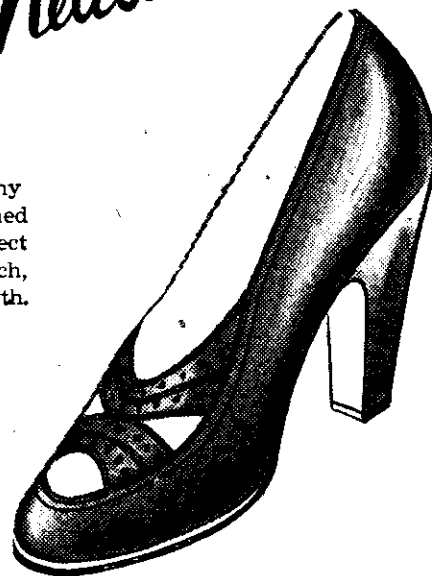
A rough hand seized Louie from behind, and swung him around.

"I seen you," the truck-driver said fiercely. "I saw you stick the knife in him."

Louie's eyes were expressionless, but inside he felt vaguely triumphant. He clucked his tongue and shrugged, and went over to the dog where it lay inside the doorway on his shirt.



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