

# In the Blood

*by* Townsend Walker

"Bound to happen," Marny said. "The way he went on; no doubt he'd end up like this."

Few folks sitting around in a one room shack. Walls were weather stained slats; the door, the only opening. Their fans flapping the air in their faces.

A pine box, a body and ice inside, rested in the corner.

Everybody agreed Wash (for Washington Taylor) should of known better: steep stairs, the way he was wobbling, just walking out on the porch.

"You see the amount of liquor he put away that night?" Marny said to no one particular.

"But, end of the day it was the railing that give way," Charlie said. "Who knew it was needing fixing?"

Railing hadn't been fixed since, well nobody could remember when.

"Hot today, but don't expect we'll have an ice problem," Charlie said. "Won't be many people coming by."

They nodded. Wash hadn't been real popular, kept to himself. Even the time everybody pitched in when the creek ran over, eight days of rain, he'd stayed inside his shack up on the high ground.

The ice under Wash shifted and the body slid sideways in the coffin. They got up to look.

"You know, he don't look that different dead than alive," Marny said.

"That long pointy nose, used to jut out from under his sweaty cap. That bottom lip droopy like. Never happy with the world."

"Figure anybody anyway related to Wash are here," Charlie said.

They sat in silence a bit, run out of things to say.

Charlie's head jerked up. "But you know, makes me think. You remember Cissy, don't you? She was kin."

"Sure, who don't." Marny said. "That bright little Cole girl, long blonde hair, dimples, crescent scar on her cheek. Good in school; teacher wanted her to go on to college in Memphis."

"Never knew exactly what happened to her," Charlie said. "Senior year, just disappeared. Said she'd gone to take care of her old aunt over in Hattiesburg."

The door opened, a young boy walked in, a grown-up Cissy behind him.

"Why you're the spitting image of . . ." Marny put her hand to her mouth.

