

White Sun, Red Son

By Mantrid Brizon

What happens when the line between retribution and hatred is blurred?

It's a hot July morning and Jedidiah awakens to the pleasant sound of a rooster's call. Southwestern Mississippi is often sweltering, even at dawn, and this year in eighteen fifty-five is no different. As Jedidiah rises from his bed, his wife Gretchen covers her head with a silken pillow stuffed with the finest feathers. The dark skinned human scratches his salt and pepper beard, which is trimmed quite short. His nappy hair has an elegant streak of silver running through the leftmost side. The man, who is in his mid-fifties, gazes at his prized wife as she sleeps in her white silk nightgown.

Gretchen is much younger than he, though that is not uncommon; she is thirty-two. The tanned human woman's long brown hair is quite curly, flowing elegantly over her shoulders and reaching to her mid-back, though she often wears it up. Her slender frame magnifies her ample bosom and plump yet firm buttocks. He sometimes wonders how he managed to ensnare such a magnificent creature and bear

three sons and two daughters with her but turning toward the window and gazing at his vast and prosperous plantation answers that question every time.

Shamus awakens atop his simple cot to the horrific sound of the rooster's call, dreading another day of harsh manual labor coupled with verbal and physical mistreatment. Shamus, all of sixteen years old, has been a slave since he can remember but that is merely his fate. Human's control his little world, and as a Voeldahn with fur, a tail and claws, he is but a plaything to them. Though his kind are more varied in size, shape and color than the humans who rule them, the Voeldahn have no inherent traits that make them either superior or inferior. Aside from their snouts, large animalesque ears and similar physical features, they are not dissimilar to the humans.

Shamus often wonders why they don't have better hearing, sight or smell when they look so much alike many of the animals that live alongside them. Why is a horse Voeldahn not as strong as a regular horse? Why can't he, a feline Voeldahn, not see perfectly in the dark? The answers are lost to the boy, though it doesn't prevent him from asking the questions. He sits at the edge of his cot in the steaming hot shack where he is forced to reside beside his fellow male slaves; the women live in another shack across the field. He runs his clawed fingers through his curly black hair, his body already beginning to sweat from the heat and matting his dark brown fur.

He looks toward the ground for a moment, staring at the sandals specially designed for his digitigrade feet. His milk chocolate brown eyes stare at the footwear until he is finally snapped out of it by a tap on the shoulder. Zachariah, a rabbit Voeldahn with two-tone tan and cream-colored fur and green eyes stands before him.

“We need to get to work before the overseers do, or they might beat us.” Zachariah warns.

Shamus nods, slipping his feet into the sandals and following the rabbit, who is the same age as he. As he walks toward the field he can see his mother standing on the porch and waiting on Gretchen. Sarah, a feline Voeldahn with long brown hair, soft brown and tan fur in a tuxedo pattern and a slender, attractive build, pours a glass of fresh squeezed lemonade for her mistress as Jedidiah eats an ample meal of bacon, eggs and strawberries on fine china trimmed with gold leaf. Though Jedidiah has gained considerable weight since Shamus was a boy, he still only feeds his slaves once a day; a meal of wheat mush and leftover pork bits mixed into a disgusting slop.

As he looks to his master, trying to keep his snout pointed forward so that Jedidiah doesn't see, he is appalled when the filthy old man grabs at his mother's cheap linen dress. Gretchen looks displeased but does not say

anything; she can't challenge her husband and get away with it. Sarah cannot tell him "no", as she is technically his property. Shamus' blood boils as Jedidiah takes Sarah by the wrist and leads her into the house. Her frightened and disgusted demeanor reveals that she has experienced this torment many times before, and rumor has it that Shamus is the direct result of such indulgence.

As a Voeldahn woman may only have a Voeldahn child, regardless of her partners race, it is entirely possible. Of course, this sword cuts both ways, and it is also rumored that Jedidiah's two youngest children, his daughters, are the result of Gretchen enjoying time with several younger Voeldahn slaves when Jedidiah was not home. Unlike Jedidiah, however, she could be hanged for such a horrendous offense if it were ever proven to be true. An overseer cracks a whip in the air, startling the slaves as he lines them before a field of cotton.

"Get to it, S'vir! I don't wanna see no slackin'!" He barks.

As they work, Zachariah's foot slips into a burrow, possibly left by a fox or a family of moles. Twisting his ankle, he falls to the ground and cries out in pain. The overseer, William, hops down from his steed. He uncoils his whip and looks at the rabbit Voeldahn with pure disdain.

“You gon’ get up, S’vir?!” William growls.

“Y-yes, sir!” Zachariah nods.

Though he tries, his fragile ankle punishes him for the attempt and he falls back down to the ground.

“I said you bes’ get up, S’vir!” William snarls.

As he raises a hand to crack the whip, Shamus stands before him, blocking his view of Zachariah.

“What the hell do ya’ think yer doin’, S’vir?!” William asks in shock.

“He’s hurt! You don’t gotta beat him, jus’ give ‘em a minute!” Shamus pleads.

“It’s the sun, boss!” Another Voeldahn exclaims.

Stepping up from the group, Isaac, a powerful canine Voeldahn with black and brown fur in a very familiar pattern approaches the group. Standing six feet tall and with large muscles from many years of hard labor, he could easily best any at the plantation, human or Voeldahn. As a slave, however, he could never use his size and strength to his advantage.

“I don’t care what it is! Get ‘em both back to work ‘for I whip the lot of ya’!” William growls.

“Yes boss!” Isaac nods.

Isaac helps Zachariah to his feet, allowing the rabbit boy to fake that he is alright by physically holding him up and working beside him. As Shamus turns to continue working, he winces and falls to his knees as a loud snap echoes. Struck by the whip, William hoots as he gleefully strikes the Voeldahn again and again. After lashing him six times, he coils the whip and climbs back onto his horse.

“That’ll teach ya’ to stand up to a human, S’vir!” William chuckles. “No get back to it!”

With blood running down his back, Shamus’ rage build within him. What he wouldn’t give to be rid of those damned humans. After a hard day’s work, Shamus returns to the shack for the only meal that he and the others receive. Sitting beside him is who he considers to be his father. Matthew, a feline Voeldahn, is common-law married to Sarah, who has similar colorations. He has never been close to Shamus, as he never believed that Shamus was his, but the product of Jedidiah’s molestations. Matthew glances at his son’s wounds but says nothing; he eats his slop quietly.

This routine continues unbroken, as it had for many years before that day. However, when the rooster calls the next morning, the slaves are surprised when Jedidiah allows all but his house slaves to rest. Sitting near the field and looking to the manor, Shamus understands why. Jedidiah doesn't often receive visitors, and this one is quite special. On the porch he sees a pale-skinned human with short blonde hair and blue eyes in an outfit that looks quite common. This human is named Elijah, and he is the only son of the owners of the nearest plantation. Seated beside him is a feline Voeldahn with milky white fur, flowing blonde hair and vibrant green eyes. She is his wife, Elizabeth.

Having died a year prior, Elijah took control of the plantation. It is well known by both free human and enslaved Voeldahn; Elijah is the polar opposite of Jedidiah and many other human slave owners. Raised with a strict Protestant background, he had grown up questioning the ethics of slavery. Though his parents didn't seem to have a problem with it, they soon realized that Elijah had taken the Good Book to heart. Having lived, played and even worked alongside his family's slaves, they were appalled when he announced his plan to marry Elizabeth, a Voeldahn slave girl owned by the family and whom Elijah had grown up beside.

Some say that it was this declaration that lead to his father's sudden heart attack. After his father's death, his mother soon caught pneumonia and succumbed only a month later, leaving the young man of twenty to run the

plantation as he saw fit. Shortly after their burial, more rumors began to circulate of the fair treatment that his slaves received; regular meals, no overseers to beat and torment them, husbands and wives allowed to live together, and even a proper wage. Furthermore, some say that he has begun teaching his slaves how to read, a crime punishable by hanging, especially if committed by a human.

Shamus is both amazed and touched as he watches Elijah and Elizabeth serving themselves, preventing Jedidiah's house slaves, including his mother Sarah, from waiting on them. His jaw nearly drops as he witnesses Elijah doting on his wife, filling Elizabeth's teacup for her and giving her a loving kiss. Jedidiah cannot resist, staring with open maw as if the human was engulfed in flame. Neither has ever seen such a sight, and it brings a tear to Shamus' eye. Perhaps there is hope for the world yet? Sitting quite a distance away, he wonders what the plantation owners are saying as they speak to one another.

"I hear ya'll been lettin' yer S'vir read! I hope that's just a rumor!" Jedidiah chuckles.

Elizabeth struggles to keep from giving him a death glare as the repugnant man speaks.

"Well, who's to say how these rumors get started." Elijah comments.

“So long as they’re rumors...” Jedidiah warns with a grin. “I haven’t seen ya’ in a dog’s age, Eli! Why, I remember when ya’ll came down here with yer parents and you was this big!” Jedidiah holds a hand flat, barely a meter above the porch.

“It has been a while.” Elijah nods.

“What brings ya’ll down here anyway?” Jedidiah asks.

“Well... I wanted to talk to you about your slaves...”
Elijah begins.

“Oh?” Jedidiah raises a brow.

“You may recall that last month one of them wandered onto my property?”

“I do. I also recall I had to get the sheriff, ‘cause you didn’t want to release ‘em to me.” Jedidiah remarks.

Elijah taps his fingertips on the glass top of the white painted wooden table, the centerpiece of Jedidiah’s patio set.

“I heard rumors as well, that your plantation was... Unduly harsh.” Elijah continues.

“I don’t see how.” Jedidiah sits back in his chair.

“I don’t want to tell you how to run your plantation.”

“Then don’t.” Jedidiah interjects.

**“But it would serve you well if you treated them better.”
Elijah suggests.**

“And what would you have me do?” Jedidiah asks.

“Feed them proper meals and more than once a day? Don’t beat them for suffering heatstroke? Don’t let them work hard enough to suffer heatstroke? Those are all fine places to start.”

**“Listen here, boy... It’s hard work controllin’ these S’vir! Your pa knew that all too well, and he ran a tight ship!”
Jedidiah growls, leaning forward and resting his elbows on his table.**

“My pa was a lost soul who didn’t realize the evil that he was perpetrating, and he’s dead anyway.” Elijah retorts.

“And I’m glad he is; he’s prolly turnin’ over in his grave! Hell, I’m amazed you can keep yours under control. They’re one step above animals and two steps below a human. How do you keep that little minx from indulging her carnal urges with her kind?”

“Watch how you talk about, Elizabeth!” Elijah yells, slamming his hands on the table and cracking the glass.

“Well now!” Jedidiah laughs. “You are your father’s son after all.”

“I... I apologize.” Elijah lowers his head. Digging into a pocket he pulls out several gold pieces. “This should be enough to replace the glass.” He murmurs.

Immediately taking his leave, Elijah takes Elizabeth by the hand and pulls back her chair like a gentleman as Jedidiah watches with a little smirk plastered across his face. As they walk down the steps, Jedidiah rises from his chair to enter his manor. Elijah suddenly stops and turns back toward the older slave owner.

“What is it, boy?” Jedidiah growls.

“I hope you think about what I said.” Elijah replies.

Jedidiah snickers as the couple approach their carriage. Elijah helps Elizabeth climb aboard before following suit and driving it himself. Shaking the reins, he brings the horse to a trot and pulls away from the manor, glancing back at Jedidiah as he stands at the top of his porch.

“I really hate that man.” Elizabeth says to her husband, resting her head on his shoulder.

“So do I, darling. It’s hard to believe that God can truly love everyone.” Elijah sighs. “I know I can’t.”

“You did your best and that’s all that matters, my love.” She assures him before kissing his cheek.

“You’re right.” He says, kissing her back. “We should hurry home. I don’t want them to miss their reading lessons!” He grins.

Shamus watches the carriage disappear down the trail, a sinking feeling overtaking him as he realizes that tomorrow will be a day like all of the others. As he sits in the field, he watches as Jedidiah leans over his railings, muttering to himself. Margaret, a fifteen-year-old mouse Voeldahn with solid black fur, long blonde hair and green eyes approaches him. She serves Jedidiah as many of the younger girls do, sorting the harvest and caring for the animals. Margaret specifically is tasked with feeding the chickens daily before gathering any unfertilized eggs that they have lain.

“Hi, Shamus!” She exclaims with a wide grin.

“Hi, Margaret.” Shamus nervously replies.

“It’s so nice to just sit and watch the sky isn’t it?” She asks.

“Y-yeah... It is.” He replies.

Shamus’ pulse rises at her presence. He has longed for her since they hit puberty but can never find the nerve to reveal his feelings. He is never certain if she feels the same, as Margaret always has a sunny disposition. As the two talk, Jedidiah glances over to the girl. His eyes scan her small frame and his deranged mind formulates equally deranged fantasies about the youth.

“Margaret!” Jedidiah loudly calls out and interrupting the pair.

“Yes sir?!” She answers, glancing over her shoulder.

Shamus’ heart sinks as the old human waves her towards him. Though he doesn’t speak, Jedidiah doesn’t have too. Shamus has seen that look in his eyes many times, before he would drag his mother into the house by her wrist. He can’t bear the thought of Margaret being sullied by such a putrid man; she’s still pure. The naïve girl approaches her master, who grabs hold of her wrist. Pulling hard, he drags her toward the house. It is only then when she realizes what is about to happen. She pulls back, but the overweight human is far too strong. She whimpers and cries out.

“P-please master, yer hurtin’ me! Jus’ tell me what you want!”

Sarah and Gretchen both witness him pulling her into the house and toward a back room. Sarah’s eyes well with tears and Gretchen feels herself becoming sick to her stomach, but there is nothing that they can do. Shamus sobs and buries his head in his palms. As the door slams shut, the sound of thumping and a glass breaking is heard.

“Why you little!” Jedidiah cries out.

A loud bang that's followed by a soft thud startles everyone. Shamus rises to his feet and stands in the field, wondering what just happened. The door slowly pulls open and a horrified Jedidiah looks to his wife and maid, who stand beside each other near the door. Small droplets of blood streak his face, and a cut on the side of his head streams crimson. On the floor in the room lies Margaret's corpse, shot through the forehead. In his hand is a loaded 1851 Colt Navy revolver, which he wears daily on his belt in a leather cavalry holster.

"What happened?!" Gretchen asks in shock.

"I-I didn't mean too! I just... I was..." He mumbles. He takes a moment to collect himself. "She hit me with a bottle and I got mad. She should have known better!"

His words cut into both Gretchen and Sarah. Though Gretchen herself is prejudiced against the Voeldahn, they are both still women and both know what would have happened to the poor girl had she allowed Jedidiah to have his way. Neither feels any sympathy for the old man and are both secretly grateful that Margaret escaped having to experience such a terrible fate; to them a swift death is preferable to what he would have done. Rushing past the women, Sarah can't help but cry. To her shock, Gretchen joins her and covers the girl's head with a cloth before leading her maid away from the scene.

Exiting the house, Jedidiah whistles loudly at the two nearest slaves, Shamus and another Voeldahn named George. George is twenty-five, and a strong canine with solid white fur and blue eyes. His matching white hair is always cut short, as he works in the mill and can't afford to let it snag. The two slaves rush toward their master who directs them inside. They are both horrified to see Margaret's body. Shamus can barely contain his rage.

"Take her beyond the field and bury her!" Jedidiah instructs.

"Shouldn't she get a proper Christian burial?" George asks.

"Do what I say, S'vir! God isn't gonna care!" Jedidiah barks.

The disgusted Voeldahn both manage to contain their emotions, gently picking up Margaret's body and taking her outside. Her corpse twitches as a sticky gray substance oozes from the gaping wound at the back of her head, falling into Shamus' hands. They carry her slowly through the field in broad daylight, a scene witnessed by many of the slaves at the plantation and all of Jedidiah's family. The men seethe with rage while the women cry openly for the innocent girl. Leaving them behind, they enter the forest just beyond the fields and dig a hole in the hard clay. With each pile of earth lifted by his spade, Shamus is only thankful that Margaret died without ever being violated.

**"I can't take much more of this." Shamus thinks aloud.
"I'll kill that son-of-a bitch myself."**

"Can I help you?" George asks.

The two men stop digging, staring at each other for the longest time as they consider the possibility. Glancing down at Margaret's body, Shamus decides that he would rather be dead than to spend another day as a slave. Sharing this feeling with George, the two agree to tell the others and then act when Jedidiah and his family are asleep that very night. He nor his family will live to inflict another atrocity upon them. After burying Margaret, the pair return to the plantation as evening sets in. Without delay, they inform the other men of their plan, only so that they may flee in the confusion.

To their silent elation, the entire group wishes to join in. Though they don't bother to inform the women, their reaction over Margaret's death assures them that there will be no objections. That twilight seems to last forever as they wait for the moment to strike. When the moon rises into the sky, they assume it must be near midnight. No longer willing to wait, Shamus leaves the shack and creeps toward the manor. Followed by the entire group of male slaves and bearing simple gardening tools and their own claws, they approach the house that's guarded by several human overseers, tasked specifically with watching for night raids.

When one overseer has his back turned, George makes the first move. He grabs the human's face, covering his mouth and drawing the edge of a sharpened trowel against his throat, slashing it open. Taking his musket, he motions for the others to follow. Another overseer is silently dispatched with a blow to the head using the butt of the loaded musket. His throat is also slashed. The third and final sentry stands before the front double doors and faces the opposite side of the house, using a strip attached to a pillar to light a match. Before he can ignite the tobacco inside his pipe, the cord is around his neck. After passing out, Shamus takes the liberty of cutting his throat with the trowel.

Now armed with three loaded muskets, a cheap looking revolver and several gardening tools, the slaves creep into the house and find Jedidiah's sons asleep in their beds upstairs. They slash the eldest's throat, but when he knocks over a lamp George panics and shoots the second son, awakening the entire home. Not wanting to miss the opportunity, they begin shooting every human indiscriminately, not even sparing Jedidiah's young daughters. A slave named Nathaniel bears the revolver, storming Jedidiah's room with Shamus, Isaac and Zachariah.

As a groggy Jedidiah reaches for his Colt Navy revolver, Shamus grabs the leather flap holster and pulls it away while Nathaniel holds their master at gunpoint.

Shamus takes the weapon from the holster, dropping the empty leather to the floor. As he examines the weapon he sees that one of the chambers in the cylinder is missing a lead ball, the round that killed Margaret. He aims the revolver at Jedidiah as Gretchen cries in the bed beside him. She has never been so terrified.

“Do you have this under control?” Nathaniel asks.

“Yeah.” Shamus grins sinisterly.

“Good. I’ve got four rounds left. I want to make sure his sons are dead. Be right back.” Nathaniel says to the group.

Gretchen cries loudly as she realizes that her family has effectively been obliterated.

“Are ya’ really gonna bite the hand that feeds ya’, boy?” Jedidiah asks.

“No. I’m bitin’ the hand that holds the whip...” Shamus growls.

He cocks the hammer of the loaded cap & ball revolver, his hatred swelling within him. Jedidiah takes a step towards him and the inexperienced youth jerks the trigger. The Colt Navy fires, a lead ball flying out of the barrel. It strikes Jedidiah in the right cheek, bashing through his face and exploding from the back. It’s nowhere near where he

was aiming. Gretchen screams loudly as her husband falls to the floor with a loud thud. Climbing from the bed she tries to flee but is quickly grabbed by Isaac. The strong canine Voeldahn shoves her down onto the bed with his powerful arms as Zachariah steps beside him.

“Where do ya’ think ya’ going, wench?!” Isaac yells.

“Please, I’m sorry for what he did. He abused me too! Do you think I wanted him to hurt you?!” Gretchen pleads.

Shamus watches as his fellow slaves untie the rope belts that hold up their simple linen trousers. He knows full-well what they intend to do to her but he simply doesn’t care. As far as he is concerned, all humans deserve such a fate for what’s been done to them. Jedidiah coughs as he struggles to breathe; he isn’t quite dead. The powerful Voeldahn leaps upon the bed and tears at Gretchen’s expensive silk nightgown, exposing the flesh of her exquisite body. Meanwhile, Shamus points the revolver at Jedidiah’s face, draws back the hammer and fires once again. This round pierces his forehead.

Turning, he leaves the room as the two enraged slaves have their way with the wife of their now deceased master.

“What’s wrong? Ya’ use to love it when Jedidiah was alive!” Isaac cruelly teases her.

“Maybe she like mine better?” Zachariah chirps.

For a split second, Shamus isn’t sure how to feel as he listens to Gretchen’s cries while they rape her barely a meter from her husband’s corpse. He shakes his head and forces it from his mind, telling himself that she deserves it for their years of plight. Nathaniel approaches, the revolver smoking as he walks down the hall. He hears Gretchen screaming and looks past Shamus and toward the open bedroom door.

“Are they dead?” Shamus asks.

“Yeah. Killed ‘em all!” Nathaniel gleefully exclaims.

Walking past Shamus, Nathaniel enters the bedroom.

“Hey! What ya’ll think ya’ doin’ without me?!” He laughs before slamming the bedroom door.

Shamus glances over his shoulder, sighing sorrowfully. Looking to the gun in his hand, he realizes that this is his opportunity to finally glean the retribution they deserve, and not just from Jedidiah. He walks away and down the steps, leaving Gretchen to her fate. Sitting on the porch, he watches as the other slaves break windows, burn furniture and otherwise destroy the plantation. Nearly a dozen men

enter and exit the master bedroom before Gretchen's body is finally thrown from the second-floor window to join her family below, piled outside like cordwood.

When dawn arrives, many are eager to flee. Unwilling to let it die, Shamus stands before the others and whips them into a frenzy. Still holding the half-loaded Colt Navy revolver, he preaches freedom to the others with an underlying hatred of humans sprinkled in. Following his lead, they race toward the nearest plantation to free their slaves as well. This plantation, however, is owned and run by Elijah and his Voeldahn wife, Elizabeth. As the horde of rebellious slaves trudge down the path and toward the house, Shamus prepares himself for anything. He feels a burning desire to murder another human, thirsting for their blood.

Reaching the manor, they find Elijah sitting on the porch beside his wife and reading to Voeldahn children. It is not at all what they expected. Realizing that something is wrong, Elijah calls them over and asks them what happened. The former slaves don't deny what they have done. Though Elizabeth and many of Elijah's workers look stunned, Elijah is otherwise unphased.

"I can't say I blame you." He says to Shamus and his gang. "He was a cruel man and he died a cruel death, one he justly deserved."

The horde is floored. Nathaniel and Isaac look to each other; this is not what Shamus said would happen. He told them that *all* humans were evil. Is this some sort of human trick to lower their guard? Looking to Elizabeth and the well cared for children, none of whom are human, they wonder how that could be the case.

“We’re here to free your slaves, human!” Shamus yells.

“What?” Elijah laughs. “I don’t have slaves!”

“Then who are they?!” Shamus points to a gathering crowd of Voeldahn.

Elijah turns around and glances at them.

“They’re my workers. I pay them an honest wage for honest work. I just tell other humans they’re slaves because they wouldn’t understand. I don’t think they’re ready to.” Elijah answers.

“A likely excuse, human!” Shamus growls.

“It’s true!” An older feline Voeldahn steps forward. “Eli’s a great man. He’s nothin’ like his pa. He’s polite, caring, and even works the fields with us!”

The horde begin to whisper among themselves, wondering if Elijah is not what Shamus made him out to be; just because he is human doesn't make him a bad person.

"Then what was you doin' jus' now?" Shamus asks.

"We're teaching the children how to read." Elizabeth answers, standing beside her human husband.

"Bullshit! Ya' let yer slaves go right now, human!" Shamus roars, pointing the revolver at Elijah and cocking the weapon.

"Alright. Whatever you say." Elijah says as he raises his hands in surrender. "Anyone who wants to leave is free to go with these fine people!" He says loudly to the crowd behind him.

No one steps forward; they don't want too. Elizabeth grabs her husband's arm and lowers it, taking his hand in hers. She considers it a show of solidarity with her human lover, something that even the hostile escaped slaves might accept.

"Look, I know what you did back there must be pretty bad, but I won't tell anyone. You and anyone else can walk north right now to freed territory and I won't ever say anything." Elijah promises them.

“Th-that’s just some trick!” Shamus yells to his group, his voice trembling. “If that’s true, why not let ‘em come with us?”

“I did!” Elijah exclaims. “They aren’t my slaves; it’s just an act. I freed them all a long time ago. We’re deep in Mississippi, and if they left, slavers might catch them long before they reach freed land. It’s safer to stay here where they know they’ll be paid and won’t be mistreated.”

The escapees behind Shamus quietly chatter amongst themselves, no longer believing Elijah to be anything other than a good man. Clearly not all humans are beasts like Jedidiah.

“Th-that... That’s jus’ a trick to keep ‘em here!”

“No it isn’t! I’ll even let you rest here, give you food and water!” Elijah assures them.

“Never trust a human!” Shamus shouts as he pulls the trigger.

“No!” Elizabeth screams.

Her eyes welling with tears, she kneels over the body of her slain husband. Elizabeth begins sobbing like a little child and cradles him in her arms. Kissing his forehead, she smears his blood on her own lips and the white fur of her snout. Elijah’s slaves, all of whom had stayed by choice, stare in horror as he lies dead. Even Jedidiah’s slaves are

appalled. Though they had only known of Elijah's kindness and purity from rumor, he had proved it to them in the brief moment before his death. The Voeldahn of both plantations encircle Shamus, who only now realizes the gravity of what he has done.

Not all humans are bad, and by acting in blind hatred, he has destroyed the lives of many. Elijah was the buffer that protected his workers from genuine slave owners who would use and abuse them, a fate they may yet suffer if they can't flee to the north. Elizabeth turns her head to him, glaring with rage. She loved him with all her heart, and now a confused and angry little boy has taken him from her.

"God damn you to Hell." She growls with bloodstained lips.

Taking this as a cue, the crowd lunges at Shamus, wrestling him down to the ground. They punch and kick him while one of Elijah's workers retrieves a long hemp rope from the nearby carriage. Shamus tries to beg and plead, but he can barely breathe during the assault. Tying a crude noose around his neck, they fling the long end of the rope over a thick branch of a maple tree that is approximately five meters high. Before he knows what is happening, the rope tightens as he is lifted from the ground. It pulls fur from his neck and burns the flesh beneath as it squeezes him with incredible force.

Within seconds, he passes out from a lack of oxygen. Tying the end of the rope to a lower branch, Elijah's workers retrieve the human's body. He had treated them with dignity and respect, had worked beside them in his fields, paid them an honest wage and even broke the law so that they could learn to read. As they give Elijah a proper funeral behind the manor, Shamus' carcass swings gently in the breeze in front of it. Landing on his shoulder, several crows appear to consume his flesh, just as his hate had consumed his mind.