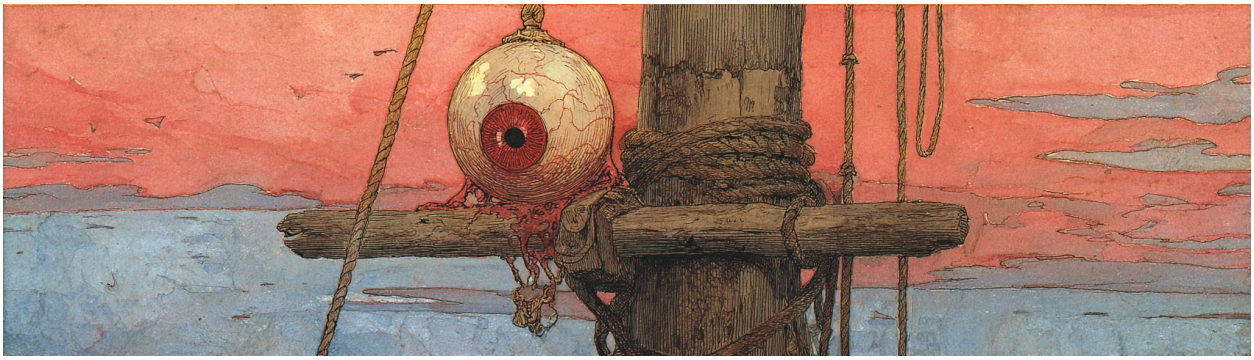


“Saturday You Die”

Overview

A young boy named Henry moves from the North to a small Southern town where he struggles to find his place among the local children. Older boys Howard Glass, Stanely Savage, and Clifford Welch intimidate Henry with threats of ritualistic murder and fantastical tales of a secret pirate cave beneath Doolen's Mountain. Rather than fearing the "death" the boys schedule for Saturday, Henry becomes enthralled by the prospect of his eyes being traded to pirates to serve as an all-seeing lookout for the world. He spends his week imagining what he will see. On Friday evening a truck comes to the old Shane house. On Saturday morning he meets Baxter there and realizes he is no longer the newest boy in town. By Clifford’s rule, Baxter will take his place. Henry runs up Doolen’s Mountain and weeps for the voyage he now believes he has lost.

Summary

The narrator explains that being a new boy in a small Southern town is the worst ordeal besides being born. Boys in the South are tougher than those in the North; they go barefoot in April, play with green snakes, keep scorpions in fruit jars, clang cow bells, and pop whips. These boys, including Howard Glass, Stanely Savage, and Clifford Welch, are all larger than Henry. Howard and Stanely are set to start school next year, while Clifford and another unnamed boy are entering the second grade. Howard Glass threatens to throw Henry into the ditch at Carter Road—the deepest in town—if he reveals their secrets, claiming no one will find him until a weed-cutter discovers his bones. Henry steadfastly promises never to tell anything. Howard also mentions burying people in a cave under the floor of a first cave.

In the South, Howard is the only child who wears glasses, which makes his eyes look as large as a cow's and gives him the appearance of an owl. The South is described as larger than the North because fewer trees exist to block the view, the grass is heavy green, there is no snow, and water comes from crank-handle cisterns. The squirrels are grey instead of red, and there are new birds called scissortails. Henry asks how long people stay in the cave, and Howard explains they stay forever because they are dead, though the boys take the bodies out the following Saturday to cut the flesh into jars for crawfish bait. Henry decides that being buried for only a week before being removed is not so bad.

Doolen's Mountain is a hill at the edge of town near Henry's house. While the other boys claim the cave there as their own, Henry climbs the mountain, which is three times as tall as a house and has five fluted sides. From the top, he sees the town, a long ditch, blue-green winter wheat, and a bright green prairie-hay meadow. After being chased off by bees or yellowjackets, Henry returns with a stick and throws rocks down the slope until he worries he will flatten the mountain; he then carries the rocks back up to repair the damage. Clifford Welch joins Henry on the summit and offers to protect him from the others, but admits they will "kill" Henry next Saturday because they always kill the last boy to move to town. Henry asks if he can help kill the next boy who arrives. Henry tells Clifford he has been in five states, including Iowa, South Dakota, and Kansas, but Clifford does not know what states are.

On Monday, while the older boys are in school and Howard Glass is confined to his home for abominable conduct, Stanely Savage tells Henry more about the cave. Stanely claims a lower cave connects to a river or ocean where they trade with pirates like Black Wolf, Dread Wolf, Captain Kidd, and John Silver. He describes a pirate king with one red eye and one black eye. Stanely claims the pirates bring monkeys, parrots, gold, pearls, and slaves. He says he keeps a slave in his attic who grinds gold money out of old bolts, nuts, horseshoes, and milk-can covers. Stanely explains they trade hickory nuts, pecans, bird's eggs, and human eyes to the pirates. The eyes are nailed to masts or yards as lookouts, Stanely says; he thinks they are given a little bell to ring as a signal. Stanely also claims they sell boy parts to Mr. Hockmeyer for sausage and that Clifford Welch's shooter has a fork made from a boy's wishbone.

On Wednesday, Henry explores the cave and finds pieces of an old structo set, a hammer head, hickory-nut shells, ashes, and a jar of water Henry believes contains scorpion poison. Henry spends the rest of the week in "great expectation," dreaming of becoming an invisible pair of eyes that can see whales, islands, and the "first wave" that starts all other waves. On Friday dusk, Henry sees a large truck moving crates into the old Shane house. Mrs. Glass gives Henry cake despite Howard twisting his arm. Henry goes home and tells his mother she can give his clothes away because he will not need them after tomorrow. On Saturday morning, Henry goes to the Shane house and meets a new boy named Baxter from Kansas. When Henry realizes Baxter is the newer boy, his world crashes. Because Baxter is now the most recent arrival, Henry expects him to be killed instead. Henry howls in horror and runs to the top of Doolen's Mountain, weeping bitterly over his lost hope of becoming a pirate lookout.

(Baxter), (Black Wolf), (Captain Kidd), (Carter Road), (Clifford Welch), (Doolen's Mountain), (Dread Wolf), (Henry), (Howard Glass), (Iowa), (John Silver), (Kansas), (Kansas City), (Mr. Hockmeyer), (Mrs. Glass), (North), (Quenton Quint), (Shane), (South), (South Dakota), (Stanely Savage)

Henry moves from the North to a Southern town where he is smaller and less tough than the local boys. He listens to Howard Glass threaten to throw him in a ditch or bury him in a cave and responds, "I never tell anything." Henry concludes that the South is larger than the North because of the landscape, different trees, and animals like scissortails. He asks Howard how long someone stays in the cave after being buried and learns that the "next Saturday we take you out again and cut you up." Henry climbs Doolen's Mountain,

throws rocks down the side, and then carries them back to the top to repair the damage. He sits with Clifford Welch and asks, "What if they kill me?" and "If a new boy comes to town, can I help you kill him?" Henry tells Clifford he has been in five states. On Monday, he listens to Stanely Savage describe a secret cave connected to a river or ocean where they trade boys' eyes to pirates for gold. Henry asks about the utility of eyes and is told they are lookouts on pirate ships. He enters the cave on Wednesday and finds items like an old hammer head and a jar of "poison water." He spends the rest of the week in "great expectation," dreaming of being a pair of eyes on a pirate ship mast to "see further than anybody else in the world." On Friday evening, he tells his mother, "You can give all my clothes away." On Saturday morning, Henry meets a newer boy named Baxter and tells him, "I get to go away where nobody else ever went before." Upon realizing Baxter is a newer boy and will be killed instead of him, Henry howls and runs to the top of Doolen's Mountain where he "wept bitterly over his lost hopes."

Baxter moves to the town from Kansas and encounters Henry on a Saturday morning. He tells Henry his name and stands near the front porch of the Shane house where crates and chairs are piled. When Henry begins to cry and runs away, Baxter's mother comes out to investigate. Baxter tells her, "I didn't do anything to him. I don't know why he started to cry."

Baxter's Mother appears on the porch of the Shane house on a Saturday morning. She asks her son, "What did you do to that little boy to make him cry?" When Baxter denies doing anything, she insists that he "must have done something" and tells him to "be good and try to get along with the other boys" because they are in a new town.

Clifford Welch is an older, bigger boy who already attends school. He climbs to the top of Doolen's Mountain and tells Henry, "If any of the other boys hurt you, you tell me." He claims to be the biggest boy and says everyone is afraid of him. Clifford promises that if anyone kills Henry, he will "kill them." He explains that he and Stanely are the only ones who "ever kill boys and bury them in the cave." Clifford confirms the killing happens on Saturdays and tells Henry he will be killed "Unless there's another new boy moves to town before then." He asks, "What are states?" in response to Henry's travel history.

Howard Glass is a boy who wears glasses and has eyes "as big as a cow's." He tells Henry that if he tells secrets, they will "throw you in the ditch at Carter Road" or "bury you in the cave." He explains that they cut the flesh off dead boys and "put it in jars to sell for crawfish bait." Howard is described as having "abominable conduct" which requires him to stay inside his house on a Monday.

Mrs. Glass appears on a Friday evening. She invites Henry into her house to "have some cake."

Stanely Savage is a boy who describes a secret cave under Doolen's Mountain where they trade with pirates. He says he keeps a "slave-in-chains" in his attic who makes gold money from old horseshoes and bolts. Stanely explains that they kill boys for their eyes because pirates nail them to masts or yards to "keep a sharp watch." He thinks lookouts are given "a little bell to ring." Stanely claims that Mr. Hockmeyer puts boys in his sausage and that Clifford Welch's shooter has a "fork made from a boy's wishbone."

I. The Ordeal of the Southern Arrival

1. The Premise of Relocation:

A. Hardship Ranking: Apart from being born, being a new boy in a small Southern town is the worst ordeal. Birth is "no less an ordeal because you forget it."

2. Environmental and Cultural Shifts:

A. Southern Boys: Southern boys are deemed inherently tougher; they "go barefoot in April," play with green snakes, keep scorpions in fruit jars, clang cow bells, and "pop whips."

B. The Bigger Boys: Unlike the North where peers had "all been your size," every local boy is larger than the protagonist, Henry.

C. Local Fauna and Architecture: The town features "crank-handle cisterns instead of pump-handle pumps," grey squirrels instead of red, cows kept by townspeople, and unprecedented birds like "scissortails."

D. Spatial Expansion: The South features longer days, less cloud cover, and no snow on the north side of houses. Earth and sky seem "everywhere of more extent," leading to Henry’s essential discovery: "it is larger in the South."

3. The Neighborhood Hierarchy:

A. The Roster: The local boys include Howard Glass, Stanely Savage, Clifford Welch, and an unnamed boy (later identified as Quenton Quint).

B. Educational Superiority: Howard and Stanely enter school next year; Clifford and Quenton are already heading to the second grade.

C. Howard’s Glasses: Howard Glass is the only non-adult to wear glasses, which make his green-flecked eyes look "as big as a cow's" and resemble an owl though Henry notes Southern owls are "a different kind."

II. Threats and Local Topography

1. Howard Glass's Ultimatum:

A. The Ditch Threat: Promises to throw Henry in the Carter Road ditch if he reveals their secrets. He warns that nobody will find him "until the weed cutter comes along, and then all they'll find is your bones."

B. Henry's Defense: Maintains steadfastly, "In all my life I never tell anything."

C. The Ditch's Formidability: Carter Road ditch is the deepest in town, with "nothing remotely like that ditch" existing in the North.

D. The Cave Alternative: Howard offers an alternative burial in a secondary cave located "under the floor of the first."

2. The Post-Mortem Schedule:

A. Initial Entombment: Howard clarifies the first burial lasts only "a week."

B. The Harvesting Process: After a week, the boys will "cut the flesh off you and put it in jars to sell for crawfish bait," then rebury the bones in a box.

C. Henry's Receptiveness: Concludes reasonably, "That isn't so bad to be buried for a week if you know that you're going to get out again."

3. Doolen's Mountain:

A. Description: A hill at the town's edge, "three times as tall as a house," sloping down in five fluted sides.

B. Vistas: Two sides face town, one overlooks the long ragged ditch, one shows blue-green winter wheat, and one shows bright green prairie-hay.

C. Henry's Excursion: Initially chased off by "some kind of bees or yellowjackets," Henry returns with a stick and throws rocks down the sides. He thoughtfully carries them back up to "repair the damage" so the mountain won't become "flat as the rest of the places."

4. Clifford Welch's Offer of Protection:

A. Asserting Dominance: Approaches Henry on the mountain, claiming, "I'm the biggest and I'll make them stop" because everyone is "afraid of me."

B. Clifford’s Promise: Offers to make bullies quit, but only "After school." If they actually kill Henry, Clifford assures, "Then I'll kill them."

C. The Execution Loophole: Confirms Howard's threat that Henry will be killed next Saturday, as they "always do it on a Saturday" to "the last one to come"—unless another new boy moves to town first.

5. Henry’s Five States:

A. Travel Experience: Henry boasts of having been in five states (his current one, his previous one, two in transit, and a childhood trip to South Dakota).

B. Clifford's Ignorance: Clifford asks, "What are states?", a disappointment that cuts Henry "like a butcher knife."

III. Pirates and Trade

1. Stanely Savage's Revelations (Monday):

A. The Subterranean Port: Claims the lower cave "goes for miles" and connects to a river or ocean where pirate boats tie up for trade.

B. The cave’s size: Henry asks how it can lead to an ocean when the only water nearby is a ditch. Then he remembers that the worlds inside stories can be larger than they seem from the outside. Stanely goes on with his tale.

2. The Pirate Clientele and Cargo:

A. Notable Figures: Black Wolf, Dread Wolf, Captain Kidd, John Silver, and a pirate king who has "one red eye and one black eye" and is supposedly "hanged and drowned and not running loose."

B. Imported Goods: Pirates deliver live monkeys, parrots, gunny sacks of gold, pigeon-egg pearls, slaves in chains, curved and long swords, guns with funnel-barrels, red pants, and green coats.

3. Stanely’s Attic Slave:

A. The Attic Slave: Claims to keep a "slave-in-chains" hidden in a secret attic room.

B. Alchemy: The slave comes down at night and grinds "old bolts and nuts and horseshoes and old milk-can covers" in a little grinder to produce "gold money."

C. Henry's Request Refused: Denied a slave of his own because he is "too little" and, furthermore, "you'll be dead."

4. The Export Market and Value of Boys:

A. Trade Goods: The boys trade hickory nuts, pecans, and bird's eggs to the pirates.

B. Premium Commodity: The primary reason for killing boys is to harvest their eyes, which are nailed "up on the highest part of the ship for a lookout."

C. Communication: Stanely thinks the disembodied eyes are given "a little bell to ring" upon spotting land, ships, or whales.

5. What They Do with the Body:

A. Sausage: In the boys’ account, Mr. Hockmeyer grinds boys into his sausage, though sparingly ("only one boy to half a dozen hogs"). Customers like the taste but "wouldn't buy it if they knew what was in it."

B. Clifford’s Shooter: Clifford Welch's shooter features a fork "made from a boy's wishbone."

IV. Anticipation and Preparation for Death

1. Reconnaissance of the Cave (Wednesday):

A. Inventory: Henry finds pieces of an old structo set, a handleless hammer head, hickory-nut shells, ashes, and a jar of water Henry believes contains the scorpion poison used to kill boys.

B. Accessing the Lower Cave: Henry attempts to pry up edges and say "different words" to open the secret door, but fails, resolving that someone will have to show him on execution day.

2. Henry's Euphoric Daydreams:

A. The Appeal of Disembodiment: Fantasizes about the "completely untrammeled existence" of being "no more than a pair of eyes."

B. Visual Wonders: Anticipates seeing undiscovered islands, ships, the inside of “cloud rooms," giant "green whales" snoozing in weeds, and the elusive "first wave" that pushes all the others.

C. What the Eyes Could Do: Thrills at the prospect of turning one eye to look at the other, being in two different places simultaneously, rolling "like marbles," and achieving invisibility.

3. Friday Night Developments:

A. Passage of Time: The week drags through "howling locust time, cricket time, June bug time (in the South they have June bugs in April), street-light time, star-light time."

B. The Old Shane House: A massive truck arrives; straining men move crates half as big as a room and trunks into the previously "dark and locked and drawn blinded and weed-choked" house, now fully illuminated.

C. Domestic Indifference: Mrs. Glass offers Henry cake; Henry considers Howard's abominable arm-twisting "worth it for the cake."

D. Final Affairs: Henry tells his mother she can "give all my clothes away" since he won't need them "After tomorrow." The story gives no reply from his mother.

V. The Tragic Arrival of the Newer Boy

1. Early Saturday Encounters:

A. Impatient Rising: Henry wakes very early, banging on doors, but only manages to find a new boy on the piled-up porch of the Shane house.

B. The Interrogation: Learns the boy is named Baxter, arriving from Kansas (a distance Henry dismisses with, "That isn't very far").

2. Henry's Misguided Bragging:

A. Superiority Display: Boasts about his superior name, the exclusive cave, the mountain, and his impending destiny to "go away where nobody else ever went before."

B. Exclusivity: Assures Baxter that such grand adventures "can't happen to you" because he is "only a new boy."

3. The Catastrophic Realization:

A. The Newest Boy: Baxter's status as a "new boy" makes him the newer boy in town.

B. The Displacement: Henry realizes the "world crashed to pieces" because Baxter "would get to be killed instead of Henry," completely ruining his chances of pirate-ship glory.

4. The Bitter Aftermath:

A. Henry's Outburst: Henry howls and runs away, prompting Baxter's mother to erroneously assume Baxter was the aggressor ("What did you do to that little boy to make him cry?").

B. Lost Futures: Henry runs in "black horror" past the cave, devastated that Baxter's eyes will get to see the Islands and Whales instead of him.

C. Final Despair: Flings himself down on Doolen's Mountain and "wept bitterly over his lost hopes."

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