

The Stranger

Just after sunrise, I saw the stranger's car coming up the gravel drive. The high-booted man got out of his car. Virgil's mama wasn't with him.

His fist was wrapped around something dark, and he hid that hand in his jacket pocket. Was it a weapon? I couldn't see.

With clicking strides he hurried up to the steps and onto the porch. I heard the door open and shut.

How long did I wait? No way to tell. Waits always seem interminable—especially when I'm on high alert.

At last, I heard the door open and someone moving on the porch. It was Virgil! He jumped over the front steps and hit the pavement running. He wasn't wearing a jacket or his baseball cap.

I flew after him. His feet kicked up gravel as he tore down the driveway. He turned right and ran along the side of the highway. I thought he was headed for the grocery market to ask for help. But no.

Virgil barreled past the store's parking lot and continued down the berm, past a number of houses. If Virgil was in danger, why didn't he go to a house? Or flag down a car to get help? Virgil might be in a different kind of trouble. What if he had killed his daddy with that birthday knife?