

“As you are dying, your whole life rolls in front of your eyes, like a magic lantern show, ‘cept it goes backwards. Everthing you ever did, you watch again.” At least that’s what old man Charlie McIntyre had told him. But Adam didn’t want to believe it. If that were true, it would mean he would have to re-live that horrible scene when his whole life had been ruined, and he at fourteen was turned into a freak. It was the most terrible moment in his life, or – as he imagined – in anyone’s life. And that it happened merely because of the incredible cruelty of two brutish boys only made it worse.

It was that cruelty Adam dwelt on as he lay awake waiting for dawn, waiting for daylight to arrive so that he could run away. He spent a restless night, waking every half hour or so. At least it seemed that way. He couldn’t really tell, not having a watch or being near a clock, and the Jepsons were too poor to own a clock that chimed. But when Jehu Jepson called up to the boys to “git yore asses down here!,” Adam knew he had tossed and turned most of the night. Every time he woke up his first thought was about running away, how he would explain it to the County Court, and how he would try to get some kind of control over where they would send him next. Then, invariably, he would be overwhelmed with the fear that the justices would send him back to the Jepsons. No, he would say to himself — he even shouted “**NO**” out loud once sometime in the middle of the night. *No. I am not coming back here! After I’ve told them what the Jepson boys done to me, the justices won’t dare send me back here.* Then he would toss and turn some more, as much as anyone could toss and turn on a straw tick stuffed between the floor joists of the grim little attic where Adam and the Jepson boys, Luke and Paulie, slept.