

Faith, Love and Moonshine
An Appalachian Tale

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Frank Jamison grabs a few more pieces of the seasoned hickory and carefully places them in the bottom barrel of the copper still. The homemade apparatus sets in a remote hollow in which no other human has likely stepped foot. There is no beaten path or blazed trail leading to such a place. This virgin land makes for the ideal location.

While he stands at a distance smoking his pipe, the fire begins to take hold. Frank is physically a solid man. Dressed in his only pair of denim overalls, he watches and assesses. His once coal black hair, now greying, rests on his shoulders, and his long, grizzly beard hangs to his broad chest. The dark bags under his eyes have long set in due to worry and despair. He has entered his fortieth year this year, nineteen-hundred and twenty-three. Frank Jamison has invested thirty of those years into the mysterious trade that has now become the basic means to his family's survival. As a boy, he watched and learned from his father. Now, his son stands by his side and observes the family secrets of moonshining.

"See there, Raymond," Frank says to his son. "You have to get your water boilin' nice and hot so the steam'll rise up through your lines."

Raymond is a miniature version of his father. He stands in bare feet, wearing tattered overalls, consumed by intrigue. The eight-year-old watches as his daddy fires the still.

"How much you reckon this'll make, daddy," asks Raymond.

"I'd say 'bout twenty jars, son," says Frank, as he stirs the mash with a wooden oar.

"We gonna make another batch tomorrow?"

"Doubt it. Not for a few days any way."

"You gonna let me help?"

"You're my helper, ain't ya?" Frank gives a pat and a rub to his son's curly head.

"Yes, sir!" Raymond cheerfully answers.

As the corn mash boils and condenses into the copper coils, the liquid begins to trickle slowly into a quart jar. When the jar reaches its capacity, Raymond skillfully exchanges the container for an empty one. From the stack on the ground, he grabs a lid and places it onto the filled jar, turning it to a snug fit. The jar's clear contents depict innocence equal to that of the young eight-year-old boy.

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