

The Great American Novel



Joe walked along the levy, keeping his back to the wind. The wind howled, chopping the lake into endless lines, moving lines of black shadow. The sun was setting into the wind, reddening the clouds that boiled away into the dusk, a reminder of the day's rain and a foreboding for tomorrow. Joe stopped, unhooked Red's leash and kneeled next to the hound, tears streaming into the wind.

"I am sorry I have to do this to you, Red," he choked out. "Times are hard."

The hound stared into Joe's eyes with his own droopy ones, he whimpered softly, as if to say he understood.

"You know I can barely keep gas in the truck, let alone keep you fed, and now they are going to take away my trailer. I have known for a long time this day would come, but..."

Red licked Joe's hand, as if to tell him to be strong.

After a pause, Joe pointed out over the water, and the hound followed his hand with his eyes.

"Out there," said Joe, "is where I found you. When you were a tiny puppy, Red, I found you in the mouth of a lunker catfish that I caught right here on this levy. It has been a good five years, Red. But now, now that things have gone bad, I have to throw you back."

Red stared out over the water and then let out a long mournful howl.

"I am so sorry Red!" Joe sobbed. "Don't you see this is how it has to be?"

Red lowered his head, his ears drooping nearly to the mud. Red knew what had to be done. Red was a good dog.

Joe stood, and gently gripped Red, with one hand at the scruff of his neck, and the other at the base of his tail. Red did not resist. Gentler still, Joe heaved one, two, three, and threw Red out, out far into the lake.

As Red sank, he looked back with his deep brown soulfull eyes.

Joe watched the bubbles rise until it was nearly too dark to see, and then he walked slowly back along the levy to his pickup-truck with his hands in his pockets, wondering if he had made the right decision.

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To contact the author, mail Bob@HamsterRepublic.com

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