

By Lisa Langford

MALIK SIDE

Edited to be read as a monologue from page 54

MALIK

My granddaddy's daddy had fourteen sons. It was some ol' hard, rocky land bout like this, overgrown, untended to, not too far from a crick. Wasn't nobody using the land and far as the ol' man was concerned it didn't belong to nobody but the Indians and they wadn't there, so he wasn't asking nobody for shit.

He took them fourteen sons and set 'em to work on an acre each. Sure enough, they coax some life out the land. Ol' man give 'em another acre each. And another and another and another. 'Fore long, they had a farm. A family farm. Time prospered them. Seem like everything they touch sprout and bud and bloom and grow. The Ol' Man didn't trust people he didn't know. That's why he had them fourteen boys; he was planting seeds. Putting down roots deep enough to build on. But folks started edging up to his acres: Black folk ain't had nothing. Dirt poor whites humbled out of hate. One lone Choctaw used to find him a clearing, light a fire, and dance until he cried. After while, it was a village. A village of people.

So when the Klan showed up, Ol' Man thought he was showing them what could be.

Hard to see the future through a hood. They tied him to a pole and lashed him, one for every acre they was finta take.

My granddaddy's brothers left one by one. Buffalo. Detroit. Cleveland.

My granddaddy stayed. Dug himself so deep into the land look like couldn't nothing move him.

He got papers on his acres and signed them over to my daddy when he died.

Needra, I ain't chasing no dream;

I'm just coming back for what's mine.