

A Most Remarkable Evening No

It was a still night in early fall. The moon hung low in the clear sky, looking like an outsized pumpkin, and you could hear a dog's bugle for half a mile.

My friend, Jim, and I were in the middle of twenty square miles of swamp land on the Eno River, which is known as Austen Bend. Austen Bend is about ten miles from Bahama, as the crow flies. It is a little known place, for the swamp makes it useless for farming, and it is frequented only by occasional trappers and coon hunters like ourselves. We had done some hunting here before, but lack of time had usually prevented us from penetrating deeply into the main swamp itself. Therefore, we were that night in a region little known to us, hoping to hear some good runs with the fat swamp coons.

We had three dogs. They all belonged to me, and I had trained them to trail and fight together. I had won several field trials with these dogs, and they were recognized at that time as the best coon dogs in the state. They were Red and Queen, both Redbones, and Rock, a big black and tan. All of these dogs had pedigrees as long as a lover's goodnight.

We hit the swamp about eight o'clock, turned the dogs loose, and in about fifteen minutes we were listening to the sweetest music this side of heaven. There is nothing in this world that can compare with the music a bell-mouthed hound makes when he is running on a straight and hot trail. You can tell exactly what a dog is running, how old the trail is, and how smart the animal is by listening to the dogs.

We listened to some good runs that night, treed four coons, and kept one in order to make my little brother a hat from the skin. Then, about eleven o'clock, old Rock jumped a deer, and I called the dogs in before they got more than a mile away from us. We built a fire and brewed some coffee to keep us going the rest of the night. I gave Rock a good cussing for running a

deer when we were after coon. I was proud of Rock. That dog had a mouth like a bell and a heart of steel. He could outrun anything on four legs or two.

About eleven-thirty we turned the dogs loose and started off again. The dogs cast around for almost half an hour without finding anything. And, as it had turned cloudy, we were thinking about starting back to Durham when Rock struck a hot trail. We could tell by the way the dogs were making tongue that it wasn't a coon that they were trailing. Rock sounded like he didn't know what it was; and that puzzled me, for Rock had run just about every kind of game there is in the eastern states. Rock and Queen, both wise dogs, were going slow because they were trailing a strange scent. But the red puppy was telling the world in no uncertain terms that, even though he didn't know what it was, he had a hot trail and he was all for it. The time was close to midnight.

The dogs ran the trail out for a few minutes. Then they really opened up. They were running wild and free, and it was beautiful to hear. In a few minutes we heard the short, choppy barking that meant they had treed.

We marked the place by ear and struck out through the woods to see what the dogs had treed. Whatever it was started fighting. It was then that we heard the sound. It was the sound of some animal that was mighty angry, but I cannot describe it, except that I had never heard anything like it before, nor since. That sound stopped us in our tracks. Then whatever it was killed



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one of the dogs. We heard a scream in mortal pain. Several of our screams will break your heart. We were making all possible arrangements for the place where the fight was to take place, when suddenly there was a complete silence except for the noise of the dogs. They stopped suddenly, as if they had been cut off with a knife.

When we reached the place we found three dogs that had been beaten out of them. One of the bone puppy was dead, and one had lost an ear, and Queen had a gash in her side. Their asses were completely disappeared. We all patched up Rock and Queen the best we could and tried to get back on the trail. They refused to take the trail. I had never seen Rock to refuse to follow a trail, and I knew that anything would scare Rock that badly. I would hate to take the trail. All we had in the way of ammunition was a single shot .22 caliber. We decided to take the trail which is,

I won't admit that I was worried, but I was somewhat worried, especially when we saw the animal had left clearly in the mud. The mud was soft to tell much about the trail. They were plenty big. We followed the trail about sixty yards in the middle of a clear place about twenty yards around. There the animal appeared completely. I quit and go home right away. My curiosity wouldn't let me stay.

We used the old trick of circling to pick up the trail. In a few minutes Jim called. He had found more tracks in the middle of another clearing. This space was as big as a clearing if not bigger. It started right in the middle of a clear space. The ground was harder there and the track

(Continued on Page 2)