Maggie Lawns

Irvin Caplin

More than ten years ago, when I first became conscious of things about me and remembered happenings from one day to the next, tales about Maggie Lawns were fixed in my memory.

Maggie Lawns lived in a one room shack which stood in the center of the lot later named after her. No one remembered when she first came to live there. No one knew where she came from. She never worked, and yet she always had enough money to pay the corner grocer. This was all that was known about her.

Weird stories concerning Maggie Lawns circulated in our neighborhood. Some said that she was more than two hundred years old. Others said that she was a witch and associated with the devil. Since she always paid her bills, many thought her an immortal who had come to this world disguised as the ugly old woman that she was. She was blamed for every misfortune that took place. There were many who suggested that she be driven from the neighborhood, but there were none who were willing to do the driving. She was a topic of discussion at every community gathering, from the meeting of our Rinky-Dinks to the meeting of the Women’s Sewing Society.

I was returning from a meeting of the Rinky-Dinks one summer night after an entire evening spent gossiping about Maggie Lawns. She had been pictured as the most wicked and the ugliest woman alive, and now I must pass her lot in order to reach my home.

As I neared the lot, I could see the one-room shack which was made visible by a full moon overhead. The shack was dimly lighted, and I could hear what seemed to be the meowing of a thousand cats. I lowered my