***Sounder***

***Chapter 3***

***Summary:***

For breakfast the family eats no meat, just biscuits and milk gravy. The boy is ready to go check on Sounder, but his mother is preparing to leave. She wraps the walnut kernels in brown paper and puts the remaining pork sausage and 4 ham in a meal sack before dressing in her warmest clothes. She is going to the store to sell the walnuts; she does not say what she is going to do with the meal sack slung over her shoulder. Mother warns the boy not to wander too far looking for Sounder, as he is not likely to be found today. If a stranger comes to the cabin, he should say nothing. The boy nods but does not speak. Mother leaves, singing a mournful song. Her son wants to run after her but only watches until she is just a speck in the distance and eventually fades into the earth. It is a dreary day and the boy worries that people are going to be unkind to his mother; he imagines the many cruel things which might happen to her in town. He had hoped the sun would shine so the ground would be softer when he has to bury Sounder. The boy wants to cry, but he does not. He carries wood into the cabin, builds up the fire, and warns his siblings not to open the stove door. He takes Sounder’s ear from under his pillow and is thankful his mother washes his sheets and pillowcase every week, just as she does for the people who live in the big houses. She also washes their curtains twice a year, but the boy has never looked through a window with curtains on it. The fire in the stove has burned down a bit, so he leaves to do his sad task: drag Sounder out from under the porch and bury him. He is not eager to do this awful thing, but he finally goes outside before it gets any colder. Sounder did not die in his favorite spot, as the indentation just behind the front steps of the porch where his master placed some coffee sacks for some insulation from the cold is empty. Mother said Sounder would die in the farthest corner under the porch, so that is where the boy crawls. It is a dirty, dusty mess, but Sounder is nowhere under the cabin. The boy loses Sounder’s ear as he crawls on his belly looking for the dog. It is unlikely that a wild creature carried the carcass away, so the boy thinks that perhaps Sounder is not as hurt as the boy thought and somehow managed to follow his master. Now the boy cries, and he walks the road as far as he dares. There is no sign of Sounder.

***Analysis (Ch1-2):***

The next morning the rest of the family returns to eating their usual breakfast of biscuits and gravy. The boy looks for Sounder but does not see him anywhere. The boy's mother leaves to go sell the walnut kernels, and she tells him that he will not find Sounder that day. The boy watches her leave, feeling a familiar, penetrating loneliness. He tends to the other children, stokes the fire, then goes upstairs to retrieve Sounder's ear. He puts it in his pocket and goes out looking for the dog. He looks in all of Sounder's favorite spots and climbs on his hands and knees under the porch, but the dog is not to be found anywhere. The boy, surprised that he can find no trace of Sounder, begins to wonder if Sounder is alive, off healing himself somewhere. The boy begins to cry, "[n]ot that there was any new or sudden sorrow. There just seemed to be nothing else to fill up the vast lostness of the moment."