



Hardcastle: A Novel

John Yount

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“From now on, there are bound to be two classics of the Great Depression—*The Grapes of Wrath* and *Hardcastle*.” —*Los Angeles Times*

In 1931 William Music is making his way back home to Virginia when he hops off a freight train in Switch County, Kentucky, to find something to eat. For eleven cents—all the money in his pocket—he buys a soda bottle’s worth of moonshine. Farther down the road, he takes two turnips and a handful of string beans from a kitchen garden and beds down for the night in a haystack. It is still dark out when he wakes up to a dog licking his forehead and a man pointing a pistol in his face.

Despite the awkward introduction, Music and Regus Bone are soon friends. Bone is a guard at Hardcastle Coal Co., whose owner will do anything to keep his employees from unionizing. For the irresistible wage of three dollars a day, Music—outfitted with an ancient, misfiring revolver and a holster made from a feed sack—hires on as a watchman despite his queasy feelings about the job. His attraction to the young widow of a miner killed by a former guard only deepens his discomfort, and when he and Bone catch a pair of union organizers, they make a decision that will change their lives and Switch County forever.

Inspired by real events, *Hardcastle* is a stirring tribute to the power of friendship and family in a time and place in which the price of integrity is more than a man on his own can bear.

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