

"Little Bit."
Livingston, Alabama

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Livingston, Alabama

Revised by
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SEEKING SALVATION

"I can't talk 'bout nothin' today, my mind is so tore up. You see, Missie Tankersley is gwine be buried dis mornin', if'n her folks gits word in time." Little Bit, as the small Negro woman was called, stood by the side of the road. I turned off my car motor.

"You see, Missie's Maw had ten gals," she went on. "Missie was de fust one ter break de light--hit's sho' sad. I been grievin' an' moanin' all day. Hit ain't ~~dat~~ we's kin, but we's been door neighbors a long time. See, they is de Tankersleys an' I is a Sledge; us both belonged to old families or least-ways our folks did. Dat makes us nigh 'bout kin.

"Yassum, I's a Amason now, Hattie Amason, but de biggest of 'em calls me 'Little Bit.' No'm, I dunno how old I is. My maw died when I was a little gal an' didn't nobody take no keer of my age. Some says I's over fifty. But I feels a hundred today. I's so bothered in my mind 'bout Missie.

"I'se been kinder worried 'bout Rich, too. No'm, you right; he ain't exactly my husban'; dat is, we ain't married, jes' sorter lives wid one another near as we kin widout de law. I can't be too resistin', jes' sorter shy. I

has chillun by my first husban' but I ain't mothered none since I been single with Rich.

"I was born right over yonder on Mr. John Lewis Brown's place where he ceasted a few years ago. Rich, he come up dere one day when I was sick an' seems lak I was so puny, so he said: 'Little Bit, if'n you come on go back wid me to de Camp you might git well 'fore you know hit," an' I did. I got well as I ever been, but one time I put on shoes an' tried to wear 'em en got my feet wet. Anyways, Miss Callie Cobb took me ter de doctor an' I got well er that spell.

"Yessum, Rich, he done well by me fer a while, but you knows how hit is when a man wants ter follow a stream. You haster let him run hit out wid hisself. I don' fuss or nothin'; don' follow him up. I jes' sets an' waits.

"My fust husban' didn' give me no trouble 'bout foll'n nobody off; they wan't never no sling on him like dat, onliest thing he ever done was foller another man to Liverston (Livingston) from de Brown place ter help him sell a cow dat ~~he~~ man didn' have no ~~business~~ ^{in de fust place} wid, caze hit wan't his cow nohow. But Warren didn' know dat. De ole Jedge said: 'De Cloaker ain't no better than the rogue.' But you see, Warren wa'n't no cloaker caze he wa'nt wid de man when he stole de cow. But he didn' have no ^{witness} ~~business~~ an' de other man what stole de cow wouldn' straighten hit out wid de white folks. So Warren got sorn't up to de

coal mines in Birmingham. Dere is where he ceasted. Now I don' know when hit was. Warren said he didn' want ter take no whuppin' from de tasker, so dey double-teamed on him, loadin' dem cars wid all dat coal.

"I was young an' didn' keep up wid nothin' lak dat in dem days; an' ^{anyways} I'd done come ter de Camp wid Rich 'bout den. But when ole man Ned Williams got out de mines an' come back home an' tole me 'bout Warren ceastin', I went right up to de mines seekin' him. I was tryin' to see if'n he lef' his Bible ^e dare: I sho' wanted hit caze hit had my little gal's age in hit. I axed de policeman Red Senemer Number One Shaft (dat's what he go by), an' he said he looked but couldn' find hit nowhere--Said he reckon Warren sarnt hit ter some er his folks.

"No'm I didn' ax where he buried at, twon't no use den. See, he'd done ceasted 'bout a year 'fore I knowed hit. I was young an' didn' set down an' study 'bout hit, an' when I knowed enough to go seek an' 'quire after him he been gone too long. Dey tole me de law oughter help me raise my chillun, but de wash-pot done dat. Dat's how I gits along. I don' try no farmin'.

"I ain't got but dat one gal now, an' she's down in de country. She's goin' on twenty. I reckon I can't hold my 'membrance good since I been sickly. I's better now though. Miss Evie Cobb is mighty good an' I helps out at de Camp now, cleans up an' ev'ything lak put Miss Evie ter bed, an' rub her arms.

Seems lak she got de palsy. She got a 'flicted hand. Could be conjure. I don't know, but hit shakes mightily. Her ma's used ter shake too; both of 'em might er been conjured--I ain't heard 'em say.

"I stays on right dere in de yard lookin' out for Rich; he didn' say when he gwiner be back; didn' say he was gwine nowhere; jes' took his ole waggin down de road to haul Miss Evie a little stovewood. But he took a notion ter park it down in de woods an' he ain't never come back yet.

"Dat was de next week after Easter Sunday in April, an' I ain't seed him since; but Charlie Godfrey met him on a truck goin' down de highway an' said he thought he was headin' fer de Mississippi bottoms.

"Ain't no tellin' where Rich at; he mostly follow dat practice. All I knows when he gets tired followin' dat stream, he gwiner come home. I don' say nothin'; I's jes' waitin'. Didn' no woman go from here as I knows of; if he got one he gotter down dere, an' if he done dat I jes' has to enjoy hit lak hit is, caze she's dere an' I's here, an' I couldn' do her no good or no harm.

"Yessum, I tries to be a Christian. De Lord freed my soul, I knows. All I does is ax fer signs in de elements. I jes' says, 'Lord God, hear this here critter what's callin', fer I's a servin' soul; show me de signs.' An' after

I prays lak dat I looks in de elements an' sees somethin' pretty as you ever seed. Then I commence to git weak in my knees. Couldn' tote my own shoes an' me jes' wearin' sixes. Den I take a notion an' de spirit say, 'Travel, keep travelin'! an' I heard my maw say, 'Come ye dat love de Lord,' an' I said, 'Dat's my maw's voice said dat,' an' then I tries to follow her; travelin'.

"'Nother 'sperience 'fore I found salvation. My sister taken me ter a big hill an' tole me to climb hit. I didn' have no faith an' I couldn' climb so I had to turn 'roun' en come back, but when de spirit of de Lord took me I seed a little light an' a voice said, 'Follow me', an' I went jes' as straight up dat hill as I could walk; jes' travelin', travelin', all de time when you seekin' salvation.

"One time I seed a big snow field wid a big white blanket stretched out an' another woman was wid me an' a little spirit. I'd been prayin' nine years an' I had ter finish up wid God, so He led me through dat snow field to dry land, an' jes' 'fore I got dere I was mos' bogged down. I stop an' I pray: 'Oh, Jesus, if you ever freed a soul from destruction, move dis weight, an' He lifted hit right den an' said, 'Well done, Servant.'"

"I didn' know sin could be so heavy; I could feel hit fall off me jes' lak a sack er corn. Felt mos' lak I could fly, I was so light. I looked up

in de elements an' I said: "Lord Jesus, lighten up de world," an' I ain't
never seed nothin' pretty as dem stars.

"Couldn' nobody ketch me den, enemy ner nobody, caze I had de Holy Spirit
'bout me, I'd done finish up wid God."

8/17/39
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