

The path down to the river was as black as soot. Mud squeezed between her barefoot toes as she chose her steps carefully, trying to avoid sharp roots hidden in the muck.

*Feels like puddin' but it don't smell like it. she thought. More like hawg turds. I bes' be quiet passin' 'em stables colored folks stay in. No tellin' what 'em bucks mite be up tuh.*

The sweltering heat and humidity sweat-soaked her shirt. She could still see the setting sun on the horizon through the bramble and majestic outstretched arms of live oaks ornamented with long strands of Spanish moss. Bullfrog croaks and tree frog chirps floated from the swampy delta made by Mott's Creek.

Waves of cicada choruses echoed around her, almost covering the hum of annoying mosquitoes around her head. She heard a small human musical chorus escaping the log-cabin shacks in the distance that served as marginal shelter for the small assembly of slaves:

*Go down Moses,  
Way down in Egypt land.  
Tell ol' Pharaoh  
Tuh let mah peoples go!*

*Rev'rend Campbell was up at the Sanders house this Sunday mornin' givin' us a preachin'. Miz Ginny played the pianer an' we all sung some hymns. I like that part more than anythin' else. She plays real sweet.*

*Preacher Campbell spent the bes' part of the afternoon learnin' 'em darkies the Bible. He come an' puts on a service at the Sanders' house on Sunday onest a month, I reckon. Miz Ginny makes me stay an listen, but I ain't understandin' 'em stories he tells. They talked funny back in 'em Bible days. She sez I otta love Jesus so I kin go tuh Heaven an' live with 'im furever.*

*I ain't never met Jesus, but from what I heard, he died a long time back. An' I'm kind-ah skeered of livin' in Heaven furever with some dead man I ain't never met before. Well, maybe he ain't dead no more, I ain't knowin'. But what's a dead man come back alive look like ... an' smell like?*

*I reckon 'em coloreds won't never git tuh Heaven nowadays. They ain't people folk like us, so I reckon they got the same chance as Mister James' hawgs.*

“‘em nigras ... er whatever they's called ... live like animals.” she whispered to herself. “No wunder they git treated bad. Worse than me. They mus' deserve it.”

She carefully watched her steps to avoid roots and occasional patties and turds left by free-range cattle and hogs that roamed the woods. She missed a buried cypress knee near swampy water and stepped squarely on it.

“Ow!” she suppressed a scream under her breath. “Maybe I'll wahr some shoes next time!”

Then she noticed something bright white among the bushes beside the path. Coming closer, she could see a several cup-sized white flowers. Moving some bush branches, she could see an open area with a bush-sized tree covered with several of the flowers, brightly lit by rays of the setting sun.

“Well, I’ll swanny!” she exclaimed quietly. “What purdy flahers!” Drawing closer, she sniffed one of the flowers.

*What a nice smell! Looks like God jes’ put ‘em thur an’ shined his lite on ‘em jes’ fur me! God does make a purdy world. We jes’ ain’t seein’ it sometimes.*

She picked one of the smallest blooms and put it in her hair.