

Sam Stone

Bottom
Boffow

Tales and Others

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STORIES AND NARRATIVES

Loretta Moore



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Sample

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BOTTOM TALES AND OTHERS

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Sample

To God, and to the people who've
played a positive role in my life.

Sample

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Sample

The Simple and Good

THERE WAS A CAREFREE SPIRIT INHABITING ME AS A young girl during the 1940s and '50s, which allowed me to be intrinsically connected with my surroundings. Measuring my sentiments and emotions in retrospect, I was a loose spirit, in a substrate of reality, claimed by nothing relating me to an identifiable permanent normal structure. I attached my yearning and attention to a life floating by, to the whimsical appearances and unfortified images of people, places, and things. Defying all of the understated components of my nondescript community, I was attracted to elements visual and silent, giving regard to the least impressive and unmarketable composition I located in my environment, from which I gained relief and a feeling of high reward.

Reverend Elijah Wilson shared this simple motivation and idea with me for living. The thirty-two-year-old preacher—father and husband—faced responsibility without accordance to pat solutions and guidelines. Enormously tall and broad, with a ruddy complexion, the implant from rural Alabama presided over a tiny neighborhood storefront sanctified church, whose membership was made up of his five children, wife, and a couple of deacons and their families. (Extreme efforts were used on the part of him and his members to grow the small church—even to serving cake and Kool-Aid following the Holy Roller service—with the result that nothing produced the reaction sought.) Nevertheless, when I was seven, eight, and nine years old, Reverend Elijah's church was linked to fantasia, leaping out of its

dark circumference into a spiritual, existential realm. As storefront churches are known to do, his church, too, cycled from being as dead as a burned out astral to becoming a blazing star with the activity of tambourines and shouting and lively preaching.

Reverend Elijah Wilson and I were keepers, preservers of everything within our poor, working-class community's parameters. Not in the way a writer is a keeper, a preserver of communities. No, outside of the suffering ministry Rev. Wilson conducted, the educationally deficient, country-talking preacher rescued and salvaged furniture, clothing, and anything tossed out onto the streets, and hauled it in his old dilapidated truck to junk dealers. I, too, turned in junk for payment, something children and adults commonly did in those times, and collected things people no longer wanted—newspapers and soda bottles, clothing—using my brother's wagon to transport the items to junk-dealing locations. Together, we formed a protectorate around the lowly streets snaking their way throughout the Bottom; we greeted each day in our section of the community as overseers of diluted visions, and the unforeseen goodness it promised, and reverie of hope its premises contained. In the midst of dull, unproductive surroundings, we were rewarded with an environment presenting many delightful, dazzling images and instances. Such as Mr. Jackson.

Thirty-five-year-old Mr. Jackson was a laughable sight lumbering down the street every Friday after a hard day at the local factory. As was his habit to begin every weekend, the tall, heavysset man, Charles Jackson, had stopped off at a nearby tavern, and tanked, he'd stagger home to his family. Neighbors were in turn rewarded by the hilarious actions and antics of the

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drunken man. While his wife, Ernestine, always looked on disgustedly, the children in the Jackson family didn't seem to take offense. In actuality, no one viewed the situation with condemnation, for he was playing the role as head of household, working to provide for his family. Although Mrs. Jackson was not a financial contributor, as mother and wife it was a never-ending job, too. Nonetheless, as a protection against depriving the family, around noon that day, Mrs. Ernestine Jackson had trekked to her husband's workplace and collected his wages. She left him with five dollars to spend. It might have been disastrous for her family had she not done this, for some families had gone to rack and ruin due to the father's recklessness. In this way Ernestine Jackson wouldn't be expected to demonstrate that kind of gumption. The fifth oldest of fifteen in a poor North Carolina sharecropping family, Ernestine Milton Jackson was certainly not a commanding type, just the opposite. She was someone without a strong will, and about many things was unreasonably fearful. Frightened out of her mind of a thunderstorm, she would go to lengths to hide under the bed and scream and cry for the Lord's mercy. Ernestine Jackson referred to her husband with reverence calling him *Mr. Jackson*. "If and when Mr. Jackson leaves this earth, I don't want him to come back after me," Ernestine Jackson had been known to say, immensely fearful of the dead.

So once more us preservers passed.

"It's gone be a hot one today. Gone feel like summer, 'n' it ain't even here, yet," Rev. Elijah Wilson smilingly reported, happy over the strange appearance of sunshine and good weather. Happiness and gratitude was surging through both of us due to a prized day after the harsh winter and a chilly early

spring. “You home again from school, I see,” my environmental companion laughingly intoned. And I responded that yes, I wasn’t feeling very well when I woke up that morning. I didn’t need to explain, for he knew, that I was prone to remain home and jumped on any opportunity not to have to attend my neighborhood elementary school. In my mind, McCalister Elementary was a horrible place. Everything about the school, from the antiquated stone building, which was reminiscent of a middle-ages prison, to the meanness expressed by some of the children and some teachers, provided good reason to make it a place to avoid.

Sure, there were times I played hooky, and used the idle time to do things I desired: Even bake. “*This cake tastes good. Go get me another piece!*” Rev. Elijah Wilson showed the biggest support, even when I produced a “ruined” cake because I veered from the proof-positive cooking techniques I learned from watching my mother making a cake from scratch.

The preacher and I related little to working or being productive in the usual ways of others. Nevertheless, as partakers and takers-in of discovery, through senses and imagination, commonly exploring the universe of our static, slumbering, inert surroundings, we uncovered subtle magical attractions and brought the unheralded richness of fascination that was the spirit of the Bottom.