

SPUNK. What you want with me, Lina? You called me.

LINA. What make you think I called you, Spunk?

SPUNK. Cause I heard you. And if your mouth was too stiff to say my name, your spirit called me. I heard it.

LINA. Maybe it was your wife and children down in Bartow calling you home.

SPUNK. Who told you that lie, Lina?

LINA. It wasn't told to me, but I heard it.

SPUNK. I swear to God that's a lie, Lina. A great big old Georgia lie. What you reckon I come back for if it wasn't 'cause I love you?

LINA. Oh, some comes for a reason and some comes for a season.

SPUNK (shortly) The capacity of your vocabulary ain't nothing but saw-dust, Lina. Stop talking foolishness. I swear I love you.

LINA. Don't swear to a lie, Spunk. That makes everything even worser than it is already.

SPUNK. I ain't never told you a lie, Lina. Why you doubt my word now?

LINA. First Old Man Bishop come told me that he met somebody from Bartow and they told him you had a family there you had done walked off and left. So I told him to get out of my face with his lies. Then somebody wrote me a letter with no name signed to it and told me the same thing. Then a man come hunting you. A strange man. Said he was right from there and come to take you home to your wife. He was asking everybody where you was

so somebody pointed me out and he come here asking. Said you had a habit of going off like that to spend a while but you always come home whenever your wife sent for you. Said he had your railroad fare in his pocket. So then I told him where you was so he thanked me and left to go out there where you was. Didn't he come?

SPUNK. Je-sus! What a lie! Ain't no man been to see me'cepting these boys from here. That's some of Old Hodge Bishop's doings. He still trying to hurt me. So that why you quit me, honey? Lawd, lawd, it's just like the old folks say, 'You can't make buckling tongues meet.'

LINA. Yes. Ye see I worried and fretted a heap. I said I would just wait and see. Then the waiting got to be too tiresome for me. Waiting for you to come when maybe you'd be in Bartow done forgot all about me. It got to the place where I had done tasted all the food in the world. So I wasn't hungry no more. I didn't need no more sleep or nothing. I told myself it would be easier to quit waiting than it would be to wait for nothing. So I told 'em all I had done give you up. So they prayed over me and I joined the church Sunday and wrote you about it.

SPUNK. So the fight between me and them Bishops ain't over yet! And they all fights alike - underhand. He knowed that parting us would hurt me worse'n anything he could do, so he went to work and done it. I wished he had of killed me. Done experiences everything I hate to make my love come out right and love done throwed me down.

LINA. Hurry up and tell me, Spunk, if you got that wife or not.

SPUNK. What you want to know that for? You don't want me no more.

LINA (bantering) Maybe I don't, but you see the waves a long time after the ship done passed. Maybe I want to know just for old time's sake.

SPUNK. What you trying to do - put thd hot-box to my head? You got me like a stepped-on worm. Half dead but still trying to crawl.

LINA. I done throwed up a highway in the wilderness for you to walk on. Answer me what I asked you.

SPUNK. I'll tell you with a parable, Lina. You know God got a long rail fence in heaven, made out of gold. And when he makes the people out of clay he stands 'em up against that fence to dry. And when they's good and dry, he blows the breath of life in 'em and turns 'em go. Lina, soon as God breathed on me I knowed I was lonesome and I knowed you was somewhere looking for me. So I come straight from God'd drying fence to you. I might have scumbled 'round examing a few girl babies to find out if it was you. But I am never even breathed marriage to no other woman in my life.

(LINA drops her head and sits silent)

I hope you did call me, Evalina. I needs calling. Ring the bells of mercy and call the sinner man home.

(EVALINA leans out of the window and breaks a bloom from the magnolia tree and sticks It in his hat-band. Then draws back shyly.)

Move that chair out the way, Lina.

(She moves the chair. He steps thru' the window and closes it behind him. These is the baying of bloodhounds in the distance.)