

Daddy's Flashlight

My father owned a particular item that had sentimental value to me: his flashlight. This magnificent source of light would be summoned when danger was lurking in the dark. If we heard an unfamiliar noise in the chicken coop at night, Montee would get up, reach for that old silver handled flashlight, and head out to the place where danger seemed to be. As he walked to the coop he immediately turned on the flashlight just in case there was a fox trying to steal a chicken. Foxes were a real threat to chickens, especially since our house was at the eye of the woods. It was not uncommon for a fox to go right up to the chicken coop and snatch a young chicken. After he investigated the area and found that everything was in its place, that same old flashlight would safely guide him back into the house.

On the last week of October, a camp meeting would be held in my hometown of Basin, Miss. The camp meeting would go on for the whole day. Since we had school during the day, my dad would take us to the meeting at night. Our only means of transportation was walking. Before we left Montee would make sure the batteries had enough power for us to get there and back home. We had to walk about two miles down a dark and hollow dirt road before we reached the church. If the road was wide enough, we could walk side-by-side. If the road was narrow, we would have to walk in a single file line. Montee would walk in front with the flashlight and give us instructions on where to walk, just in case

there was something in the road. Many times that would happen and we would have to depend on daddy's flashlight to get us there.

Even at night, in the cold winter month of December, Montee would use the flashlight to go rabbit hunting. As the fire blazed in the living room, we all would be sitting around the fire enjoying the warm blaze, and as soon as it was good dark, Montee would say, "I believe I will go rabbit hunting ". Mama would say to him, "it's mighty cold out there monkey, you are going to get frost bitten." And before mama could even finish her sentence Montee would say, "more rabbits are out in the cold night like tonight." Rabbits seemed to have liked cold weather. If you were out walking at night you could see them all over the road.

After he put on his warm clothes he would reach up on top of the chifforobe and get his old flashlight. He would mount the flashlight on his head and tie it down with some wires. With the light on his head, it would give off light a few feet ahead of him. After the flashlight was securely mounted, he would get his shotgun and head out to the fields. As he walked out the door, I would look out the window at the moon and watch it glow with a magnificent ray of light and the stars would illuminate the sky. Then I would see daddy, fading into the darkness with his flashlight aglow.