

He was there then from as early as I can recall coming into myself. I knew then that the voice from the horn of the unicorn was real. Looking into the well, of course, was a time to look forward, and also, to see if the meat looked fresh that we had put there this morning to keep fresh and not to spoil.

As Mama appeared from the hill, she hollered, “Girl, get from that well before you fall in!”

I jumped down and ran to see Mama so that we could get the meal to start our evening supper. But, today we could leave the meat in the well, because Mrs. Era, whom Mama had washed for today, had given Mama enough meat for our night’s meal. Mama and sister worked all kinds of jobs, and we lived a relatively good life. My mother, my sister and I, all alone; we grew a garden, and we lived well.

My Sister and I had been conceived, as they say-out of wedlock. That was not looked upon then as good in those days, so we lived alone in our little house, and we lived well. My sister and I worked together to get the things that most girls had who had fathers at home. We would work the fields, cut crossties, wash for the white ladies in our town. We did many jobs so that we could have what we needed.

My father, whom I knew from a distance, could not accept us because of his mama’s standards for my mother. Rachel, her name was, felt that my mother would not be obedient enough to her demands to marry her son, so she forbade her son to even see us or my mother. I recall one day though, that we were in the store, and my father who was there that time, gave me the twenty cents I needed to buy the material I wanted to make a dress. I guess his mama was too strong for him or he was too weak to her, but that’s

all I can remember him ever doing for me. I do know his mama picked out his wife for him. It was told in the community that for eleven years he was not allowed to sleep with his bride and that his mama and his bride, picked out for him by his mama, shared the same bed until his mama died. I believe his mama, my never-shared-grandma, died at the age of 99. That is when, people say, he started sleeping with his wife.

My father's people were what the community people called *good livers*. They were landowners, had their own smokehouse, and farmed their own land, so they were what we called then a proud people, people with their own.

My mother soon started dating another man who I will always remember. A man of fair complexion, a man she soon married, a man along with whom came a great change in our lives.

I knew then my mama was making a mistake. I told her, "Please, Mama, don't marry Mr. Seals." I could see, even then, that his character and my character would clash.

But she refused to listen and we moved from our little house into his bigger house. I knew that Mr. Seals had had a wife who had died earlier, and that together they'd had five children with the baby being a girl only three years old when he married my mama. So this child called my mother "Mama" also.

Mr. Seals was a man that drank a lot of whiskey and who underwent an extreme personality change when drinking. Oh, my, how I disliked him drunk or sober. He was the meanest, most awful, conniving man I ever knew. I can never recall him ever working a day in his life. Mainly, he existed off other people.

One memory stands out most clearly. I can remember his conniving my sister and me out of our piano money. My sister and I worked, sacrificed, and planned and saved a long time for money to buy a piano from the Sears Roebuck and Company in Chicago. After school we had cut crossties until nightfall for months to earn money for that Sears piano. Finally, we had enough. As soon as we had the money together, we ordered our piano C.O.D. Mr. Seals knew we'd earned the money. He also knew the piano had arrived.

One Saturday morning he hitched the horses to the wagon and said, "I'm going downtown. If you want, I will bring your piano back."

My sister said, "Okay", but I was skeptical so I asked Mama if we should let Mr. Seals bring our piano back.

She said, "Well, why not? He is going that way!"

"But Mama", I cautioned. "He may not bring it back."

"But, Jane," Mama reasoned. "You may have to hire someone, and Mr. Seals will do it for nothing."