

SHOES

It feels like it's at least a hundred and fifty degrees in this hot sun, but for me, it's just another gloomy summer day in Tulsa. I'm standing on the corner of fifth and Cincinnati, waiting for the bus that will take me home... to South Haven.

I just finished doing the monthly grocery shopping at Mccree's Grocery Store, located on the corner of Greenwood and Newton St. We used to live a block away on Oklahoma St. before we moved a few months ago, to this other place.

When Aunt Margie died it seems like our whole world fell apart and in due time, we landed in the most desolate place I have ever seen. It's a small community called South Haven. Its south of Tulsa nearly twenty miles away. These were light years for me, having left the only world I knew, in the city.

There used to be only me, and Walterene my big sister, at first. Then, Buddy came along. "The Stork" brought my brother; momma nicknamed, "Wee Buddy", because he was so small. Then the bird made another house call a year later, and I had another sister named Lavern. I think the stork brought a wave of doom over our house after then, 'cause when I was about eight-years old, my baby sister died. She was a pretty doll baby. I heard the hushed whispers, that the doctor had cut her navel cord too short, and she bled to death. But, I was too young to understand what that meant at the time. I just know that they wrapped her in a white sheet and carried her away after she died. 1944 was a bad year for us.

Shortly after that, another disaster hit us; our house burned down and our troubles began full time. I had to leave the only home I had ever known... where all of my friends lived, and where the "Maw berry tree" was. We grew up around the tree all of us Miss Ollie's kids, me, Cliff, Ernestine and Blue Boy. And anybody else in the neighborhood who just passed through on their way to Kings' Park a block away. In summer the tree was always loaded with kids who came by and filled their stomachs with the sweet and plentiful morsels.

The tree actually belonged to Miss Ollie and her family, they lived in the big house and we lived in the small house in back of her's.