

## **Effie in the Cotton Fields - by Fabu**

Mississippi sky is stretched out blue  
in the glimpse before heading out  
most times barefooted  
tramping on chilly, dewy ground  
to finally arrive at rows of ghostly fields.

No one sees dark turn light  
except your hands become clearer  
working the earth  
the cotton bolls stick and cut your fingers  
as you pull softness out from prickly hulls.

You can't get no red on the fluffy  
so you suck your hurt fingers  
while the other hand continues picking row after row  
the boys pick cotton  
while baby sister chops weeds.

Effie Florida Cunningham is in the fields  
blackish curls tied up in a flour sack square  
pastel limbs bent over chopping weeds  
round growing cotton stalks  
from seeds that elder brother Robert planted.

He planted cottonseeds shallow in worked over soil  
to chop during months of growing then pick  
and stuff tight in croaker sacks  
before dragging King Cotton to be weighted  
in exchange for writing on the family book

As she sweats and her back hurts  
Effie is the fields dreaming  
what Pa might buy her on store credit  
iffin this year they don't owe more than they made  
iffin this year.

*Poem about my maternal grandmother Effie Florida Cunningham Partee.  
It received an Honorable Mention award for the William Stafford competition  
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