

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

Courage to Run

A STORY BASED ON THE
LIFE OF HARRIET TUBMAN

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Used by Permission

© 2009 by
WENDY LAWTON

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

Published in association with the Books & Such Literary Agency, 52 Mission Circle, Suite 122, PMB 170, Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5370, www.booksandsuch.biz.

Editor: Cessandra Dillon
Interior Design: Ragont Design
Cover Design: Barb Fisher, LeVan Fisher Design
Cover Photos: Bettmann/Corbis

ISBN: 978-0-8024-4098-3
Printed by Bethany Press in Bloomington, MN - 6/15

We hope you enjoy this book from Moody Publishers. Our goal is to provide high-quality, thought-provoking books and products that connect truth to your real needs and challenges. For more information on other books and products written and produced from a biblical perspective, go to www.moodypublishers.com or write to:

Moody Publishers
820 N. LaSalle Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60610



Contents

1. How Long, O Lord?	9
2. Go Down, Moses	17
3. A Long Way from Home	29
4. God's Goin' Trouble the Water	39
5. Wade in the Water	49
6. I Hear the Train A-Comin'	59
7. 'Buked and Scorned	69
8. Oh, Freedom!	83
9. Steal Away	95
10. Keep A-Inchin' Along	107
11. It's Me, O Lord	119
12. Let My People Go	127
Epilogue	135
Glossary	139

How Long, O Lord?

Araminta Ross!”

Minty heard Annie’s call, but the young girl’s toes just wiggled deeper into the warm dirt as she sat partially hidden by the drying bush. A slender snake slowly zigged its way toward the fields, enticed out of winter hibernation by the balmy morning. The buzz of insects announced that the cold spell was over. Minty hugged her brown knees as she lifted her face to the warmth and opened her mouth as if to invite the sunshine deep inside.

“Minty, you ain’t foolin’ Annie. Git yourself in here and tend to these little’uns.” The timeworn woman punctuated her words with the sound of a willow *switch* whipping against the door frame of the cabin.

It didn’t take much for Minty to imagine the feel of that *switch* against the back of her legs. The old slave woman rarely used it, but it was long remembered by the children.

“Comin’.” Minty jumped up and tried to brush the dirt

off her rough linen *shift*. She gave up. It was so soiled already, a little more dirt hardly mattered. "I'm comin' fast as I can, Annie."

"You help git these babies fed, or Annie'll teach you some sense."

Annie talked tough, but Minty already knew that most of it was bluster. Annie loved her babies, including the grown ones like Minty.

A trough half full of cornmeal mush was placed on the hard-packed dirt floor and children toddled toward it from all sides of the cramped cabin. Minty handed pieces of mussel shells to those children who were old enough to use them as utensils. The littlest ones used their fingers and managed to find their mouths most of the time. Children weren't issued clothing until they were almost ready to work, so cleanup was always easy.

Minty was born a slave on a plantation near Bucktown in Tidewater, Maryland. Her *basket name*, given to her on the day of her birth six or seven years ago, was Araminta, but everyone called her Minty. When full grown, she would be called by her mother's given name—Harriet. Her mother never used the name Harriet. She went by Old Rit, even to her children most of the time. Minty didn't see why she couldn't have Harriet now since Old Rit never used it. Her mother just laughed when she asked, and told her, "Be patient, honey-girl. By 'n' by. Jes' be patient."

Minty hated those words. They were her mother's answer

to everything. How could she be patient when she longed to jump and run and grow up all at the same time?

Minty's father, Ben, and Old Rit were slaves on the same plantation, owned by Edward Brodas. Most of the slaves on the Brodas Plantation lived in the Quarter—a collection of ramshackle cabins located in a dirt clearing between the barn and the fields.

Minty loved the closeness of the cabins and the way it made all the slaves in the Quarter sort of feel like family. Minty's cabin was like all the others—rough-hewn timber walls chinked with mud, covered by a sagging roof. Inside was a single room with a packed dirt floor. A *wattle and daub* fireplace stood against one end. There were no partitions or windows. The dark, smoky room was home to Minty's entire family. Piles of worn quilts and scratchy blankets lined the walls and served as the only furnishings, but most of the living was done outdoors anyway. In one corner, a deep hole had been dug out of the floor. An old board covered the opening. Rit's hoard of sweet potatoes stayed cool long after harvest in this potato hole.

A broken piece of mirror was fastened to the wall near the door by two bent nails. It was too high for Minty, but every now and then Ben would lift her up so she could see. Wasn't much to see. She was small for her age, but sturdy. "Built like a bantam rooster," Ben used to say. Minty liked that. Those bantys were tough little birds. She laughed at the thought of herself hopping around the yard, scrapping for corn.

Old Rit worked in the Brodas house all day, helping the Missus. Ben worked in the woods cutting timber.

"Didn't used to cut so much timber," Ben said one day

after work, “but times been settling hard on the Brodas Plantation lately.”

Many nights Minty pretended to be asleep and listened to her parents’ whispered conversations.

“Started on a new stand today, Rit,” her father whispered, talking about a new grove of trees he was to cut down.

“What’ll he do when the timber runs out?” Rit asked.

Minty could always tell when her mother was worried because she’d rub her thumb and finger together real fast-like. Her rough hands made a sound like someone was sanding wood. That sandpaper rhythm often lasted long into the night.

“Tobaccy’s bad these days. Not much call for cotton, or wheat neither,” Ben whispered. “Just ’smornin’ I heard the field hands marking time with a singin’ of ‘Poor Massa.’”

“Master Brodas best not catch wind of it,” Rit said. The rubbing sound got faster. Minty knew the words of the song:

Poor Massa, so they say;
Down in the heel, so they say;
Not one shilling, so they say;
God Almighty bless you, so they say.

Rit slowly sucked air between her teeth—a sound that meant trouble was brewing. “Been noticing things lookin’ pretty shabby ’round the Big House. Don’t look like Master’s growing enough of anything to keep the place goin’.”

“Seems Master’s mostly raisin’ colored folk these days for hirin’ out or worse,” Ben said.

Minty knew what her father meant by “worse.” Each time

How Long, O Lord?

the slave trader came to nearby Cambridge, Master rode into town. Since the invention of the cotton gin, plantations down South couldn't seem to get enough slaves. Congress halted the slave trade in 1808, so no more slave ships could land, bringing newly captured slaves from Africa. The only way to get more slaves was to buy them from other plantations.

Each time Master returned, Minty's stomach ached and she couldn't get a bite of food to go down. She waited for the sorrowing to begin. It didn't take long. Screams and cries erupted throughout the Quarter as families were told that one of their own had been "sold South." Late into the night, groups of slaves huddled together to sing in mournful tones:

This time tomorrow night,
Where will I be?
I'll be gone, gone, gone,
Down to Tennessee.

Sometimes they recited Scripture in unison: "The Lord is my Shepherd . . ." When the reciting finished, a lone voice broke the silence:

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.

Other voices joined in to swell the song:

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.

When all the folk were sung out, the night hushed. Even the crickets, whippoorwills, and hoot owls quieted. Slaves made their way back to their cabins, and long into the night you could hear the *keening*, weeping sounds of those who knew they'd never set eyes on their loved ones again.

Minty's own family still sorrowed. She had ten brothers and sisters, but just before harvest last year, two of Minty's sisters were sold South. Never would the young girl forget the picture of her sisters, chained by neck and leg shackles to a *coffle*—a chain gang of slaves—gathered from other plantations. The slave driver kept snapping his rawhide whip toward the *coffle* so that none of the slaves dared linger. Tears silently streaked her sisters' dusty faces.

Minty sat atop a fence post and watched them until she could no longer even see the dust from their trail. She continued her vigil for hours longer, squinting into the sun. Her stomach ached for days afterward. At night she listened to her mother rock back and forth on the floor, crying and praying, "How long, O Lord? How long?"

Annie was too old to be sold. She was too old to work the fields, either, so Master set her to tending the children in the Quarter. Minty helped Annie by tending and feeding the little ones. After the children finished scooping up the last of the mush, Minty carried the tray back to the cookhouse. She loved the happy jumble of toddlers and babies in Annie's cabin, but oh, how she hated being cooped up indoors. Whenever she was in the cabin she felt jumpy—kind of like she couldn't breathe.