

**A STUDY
IN EBONY**

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A study in ebony by Dotia Trigg Cooney

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By
DOTIA TRIGG COONEY



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TO THE MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND

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A STUDY IN EBONY

CHAPTER I

"Now, Miss Gilmo', I do wish 'at you would look at dese ole grasshoppers. Ole Mr. Grasshopper do make me so tired—he tries to be so manish. Do you know 'at he chaws terbacker? Yas, ma'm, he do. He takes ole dry leaves an chaws 'em up, an' makes lack 'at dey is terbacker."

The lady addressed looked up; a little brown-skinned girl about six years of age stood before her. She was small for her years, having an old face that would have been homely but for two large bright black eyes. Her name was Ethey. She was the child of Mrs. Gilmore's cook and had been an occupant of the house only two weeks; but those two weeks had given her ample time to take the mistress of the house under her wing, both for protection and instruction.

"Yas, ma'm, he chaws terbacker—see where he done spit anbeer on my han'," showing a small brown spot on the palm of her hand as proof of the accusation. Then, opening a small paste-board box with air-holes cut in sides and top, she disclosed two fine, healthy looking grasshoppers, eating cornbread on the bottom of the box. "I calls dis dey house, but dey calls it de lock-up. An' dey use to try awful hard to git out, tell I crumelled cornbraid in de box. Now dey stay tarble satisfied, tell dey gits dey little se'ves filled up.

"An' now heah," taking a similar box from the porch step, "is one er dem outdacious little yeller buffin' butterflies. She stuffs herself, too, ev'ry chance she gits. She is mighty inn'cent lookin', but she is de biggis' rogue! An' what e'er you does, don't you e'er lay down you cornbraid, ef you don't want it et up. Ef I goes to sleep on de step 'fore I done et up all my cornbraid, when I wakes up dat little thief done et it. She is too good fuh nothin' to work fuh her livin'—jes think 'at she aint got nuffin to do but sail 'roun' an look pretty. But little ole Miss Butterfly better look out, I'm tellin' you! Yistiddy I saw ole Mr. Blue Jay mos' swaller her sister whole. She come a sailin' fruh de air wif her nose stuck up at de ants an de grasshoppers, an ole Mr. Blue Jay pounce down on her, an in jes 'bout two pecks all her fine cloze wuz gone. An' I wuz'nt sorry, neither, 'cause she is sich a turble rogue.

"Miss, did you know 'at ole Mr. Blue Jay wuz Satan's own chile?" Receiving a negative reply, she continued: "Yas'm, he is, an' he packs san' to de debel ev'ry Friday mornin'. Now you think, you doesn't recollect e'er seein' no blue-jays on Friday, does you? My gran'mama say 'at she is look fuh 'em lots er times; but she aint e'er seed none, 'cause dey is so busy doin' Satan's work."

Stopping and looking at a group of little colored children going to school, she said: "Uh-uh! Take keer! Look, Miss, won't you! Please, ma'm, look at dem little imps er Satan! See how dey is rubber-nakin' at me 'cause I's heah on dis porch close to you, keepin' dem wile beasts from