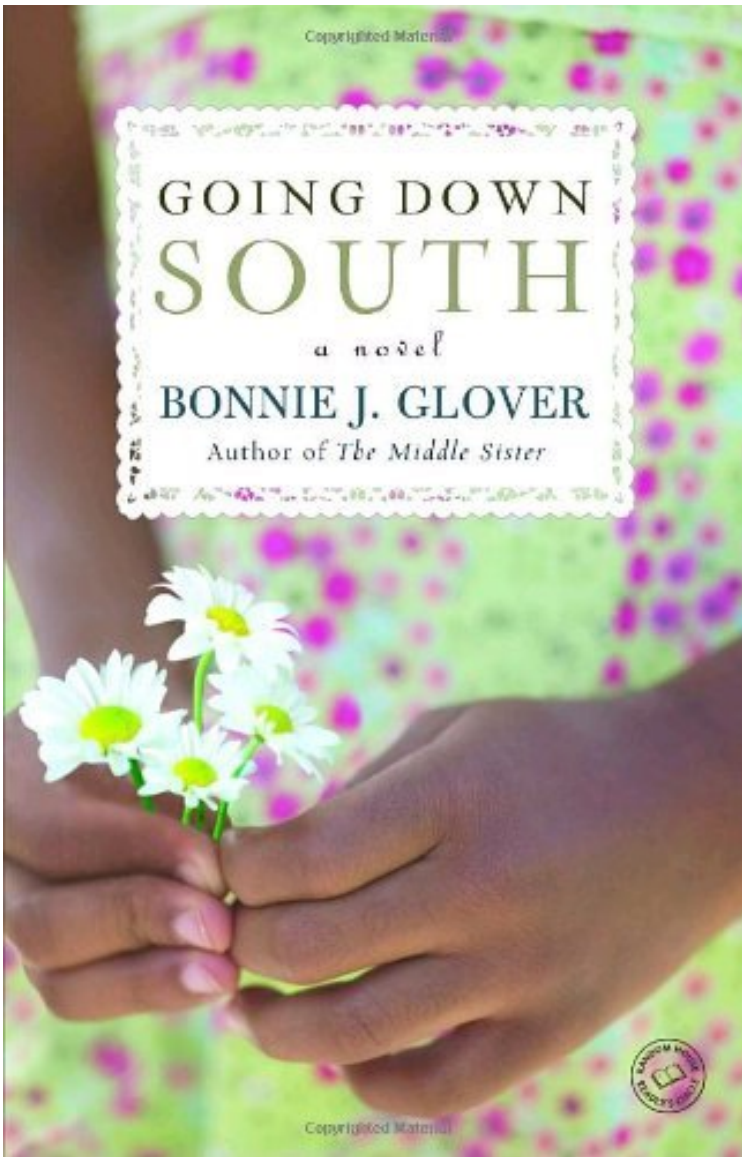


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# Going Down South: A Novel



*Par Bonnie Glover*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the author of *The Middle Sister* comes a heartwarming tale of second chances and the unparalleled love between mothers and daughters. When fifteen-year-old Olivia Jean finds herself in the family way, her mother, Daisy, who has never been very maternal, springs into action. Daisy decides that Olivia Jean cant stay in New York and whisks her away to her grandmothers farm in Alabama to have the babyeven though Daisy and her mother, Birdie, have been estranged for years. When they arrive, Birdie lays down the law: Sure, her granddaughter can stay, but Daisy will have to stay as well. Though Daisy is furious, she has no choice. Now, under one little roof in the 1960s Deep South, three generations of spirited, proud women are forced to live together. One by one, they begin to lose their inhibitions and share their

secrets. And as long-guarded truths emerge, a baby is born a child with the power to turn these virtual strangers into a real, honest-to-goodness family. Praise for Going Down South: Long live Olivia Jean, Daisy, and Birdie! These three daughters, mothers, and women are smart, feisty, and funny. Their stories will break your heart in the very best way. I absolutely loved Going Down South! Carleen Brice, author of Orange Mint and Honey From the Trade Paperback edition.

Part One Olivia Jean Her father, Turk, went down first, holding his work boots by the strings with his overnight kit tucked under one arm. He walked on his toes, taking the seventh step down with a side maneuver because he knew it creaked. He had learned his lesson the hard way from her mother, Daisy, waiting at the top of the stairs one night about five years ago. His foot strayed and pressed ahead when he should have gone to the left or the right. He might have made it past her if it hadn't been for that step. She had dozed off, and there were ways to get around Daisy when she was asleep. But he was in no state to remember all of the things he should have remembered. And besides, Daisy was sitting with her legs flung across the top of the landing just so she could catch him. Clutched in her right hand was a broom leaning forward at a cockeyed slant, straw bottom down and ready to do damage. That night in March, Olivia Jean had just passed her tenth birthday and should have been asleep when he touched lucky stair number seven and it whined loud enough to wake her mother. Daisy grunted, choking on a snore, and was on her feet lightning quick without even rubbing her eyes or wiping the thin line of drool at the corner of her mouth. She gripped the broom in both hands, turned it upside down, and swung it at Turk's copper-skinned head. He leaned away in time but she started at him again. Her robe fell open, and Olivia Jean saw long, thick legs under a nightgown that stopped near her coochie, and then one of her titties fell out as she lifted her arm and aimed again. Olivia Jean was crouched at the keyhole of her bedroom door, jaw wide, the scene surprising her so much that she banged her head against the doorknob as she tried to get a better view. Daisy kept swinging as if she were trying to get at a spider in the corner or a big, fat cockroach that always appeared out of nowhere when company came to visit. There was rage in her swinging, rage reserved for bugs, bad impressions, and drunken husbands. Then her other titty bounced free, and Turk fell back, clutching the railing. It seemed as though he was as surprised as Olivia Jean was. In all her days Olivia Jean had never seen Daisy's girl parts, and seeing them then, when her mother was in the middle of trying to kill her daddy, was enough to freeze Olivia Jean right where she was on her knees, peeking into the dim hallway when she should have been curled up asleep with her Raggedy Ann tucked under her arm. That was when Olivia Jean took a deep breath, stood up, opened the door, and ran out of her bedroom. Turk wasn't grabbing the broom or telling Daisy to stop or trying to move away or anything. He had leaned back, dropped his arms, and let Daisy continue to hit him with the broom across his shoulders, moving him backward as if she were going to push him down the stairs. Olivia Jean knew someone was going to call the police if they didn't stop. At four in the morning people should be in bed, going to bed, or at least thinking about going to bed, not on a rampage like Daisy was, beating Turk with the straw end of a broom while she danced around the hallway half-naked. So when Daisy raised her broomstick higher, above her shoulders, aiming for the top of his head, Olivia Jean jumped in front of her father. No one moved. The only sound had been the swish of the broom as it waved through the air and its connection with Turk's body a muffled whack, whack, whack and, too, the sound of Daisy's heavy breathing from all the work she was doing beating Turk. Now things were still except for Daisy's heaving shoulders and breasts. Olivia Jean felt her heart pounding so hard that she thought it might thud out of her chest. Then Daisy smiled one of those low-down smiles she used when she punished Olivia Jean. She aimed the broom, and almost hit her daughter; the straw brushed the air, tickling the end of Olivia Jean's nose. Olivia Jean had felt the panic rising in the pit of her stomach as the broom swept toward her. Daisy laughed when Olivia Jean flinched. Daisy's breathing was hard, and Olivia Jean smelled the last cigarette Daisy had smoked and the Ponds face cream her mother rubbed into her elbows every night. She dropped the broom as Olivia Jean tried to shield Turk, her arms thrown out so that she covered a fraction of his belly. Daisy was giving him the evil eye the whole time, but he was busy ducking behind Olivia Jean as though Daisy were still hitting him, his hands in the air trying to block the broom she was no longer swinging at him. He didn't know Daisy had stopped. All of his moving almost made Olivia Jean fall off the landing; his daughter had to plant herself in front of him, solidly, and not move. Olivia Jean was close enough to smell his body, which reeked of underarm musk and day-old pee. She wrinkled her nose and tried not breathing for seconds at a time. Olivia Jean moved away once the broom rested at Daisy's side. But she stayed near, trying not to glance at her mother's face, since it was frightening when the older woman tightened her lips, raised her eyebrows, and sucked in her cheeks. Olivia Jean was scared of what would come next, but she wasn't going to let Turk stand up to Daisy all by himself. He was

her daddy, and even if Daisy did turn the broom on her, Olivia Jean was determined to take the beating. At ten years old, she loved Turk Stone with every ounce of heart she had in her thin body. And hated her mother with equal passion. Daisy moved in close to Turk. She pointed a long finger at his chest. He had stopped twitching, but the eye he was able to keep open was streaked with red and the other was half-closed. He fell back against the wall. Damn, girl, stop slingin them things around. I cant think straight watchin em titties jumpin at me all over the place. Close your robe, Turk said. Turk, I aint playing with you, coming up in this house all hours of the night. You better stop this tomcatting around or Ima stop you. Her voice never rose. It whispered slick across the hallway. The righteousness of it made Olivia Jean tremble. Daisy turned with the broom and swished back into the apartment. The girl heard the dead bolt turn with a sharp click, and then Turk and Olivia Jean were alone in the hallway. Dont worry, baby, he said as he sank to the floor on the second step. Olivia Jean sat down by him. He laid his head on her lap. Again she held her breath, because he smelled. As soon as he fell asleep, so that his head became heavy on her lap and his mouth opened with one long inhale that became a gasp for air, he woke himself up. She aint gonna stay mad. She let us in by day. Olivia Jean counted to 3,563 before the door opened. Now Daisy was in flannel pajamas buttoned up to the top. Next time, dont get in the middle of grown-folk business. Daisy didnt meet Olivia Jeans gaze. She held a half-smoked cigarette in one hand along with her favorite ashtray, the one she swore was good crystal given to them by a Mr. Shorty Long when she and Turk married. This was the same ashtray she would sometimes throw at him when he came home from work too late. This ashtray, Daisy would say after each bout of throwing it at Turk, is a testament to good, quality workmanship. The kind you dont get these days. There were dents in the wall and chipped linoleum on the floor from where Mr. Shorty Longs present had landed, but never even a hairline fracture in the crystal itself. Olivia Jean didnt know if it was a testament to good workmanship or just plain dumb luck that nothing had happened to it. She did know enough to stay out of the way when Daisy aimed at Turk, since Daisy didnt have a good aim. Holding the ashtray in one hand and the cigarette in the other, she twisted a thumb in Olivia Jeans direction, her signal for Olivia Jean to hit the road, go to bed. It wasnt easy moving Turks head from her lap. Daisy didnt help, but Olivia Jean didnt expect help from her. When the girl crept out of bed the next morning and peeped in the stairwell, Turk was still there, a blanket thrown over him, now using Daisy for a pillow. Olivia went back into her bedroom, slammed the door, and got ready for school. That night in late August as they slipped out of their apartment and down the stairs, Daisy made Turk carry his shoes so his footsteps were barely heard, but there were other noises coming from his body. Because he was so big and uncoordinated, when he walked down the stairs his shoulders bumped against the wall, and his breathing was loud, like a fish gasping for air. Olivia followed him with her traveling bag, but not too close. She owned one suitcase, a pink one with a poodle on the front that had real hair and two glued-on pink barrettes. The suitcase kept bumping her legs as she walked down the narrow flight of stairs. Daisy shored up the rear, and every few steps she told the other two to hush up as though Turk, a grown man, and Olivia Jean, a teenager, were children on a field trip. Daisy was dressed especially for sneaking out of their apartment; she wore a tan A-line dress cinched at the waist with a wide belt, a camel-colored scarf over her head, and big rhinestone-studded sunglasses. In the middle of the night. Olivia Jean wanted to ask about the sunglasses, but she already knew what her mother would say: Olivia Jean, the first thing people notice about you is your clothes. Youve got to learn how to make a good impression. From Publishers Weekly Glover weaves the stories of three generations of African American women in a tale both familiar and surprising. In the early 1960s, 15-year-old Olivia Jean tells her parents she is pregnant, and her father, Turk, and mother, Daisy, decide to take Olivia to Daisy's mother's house in Cold Water Springs, Ala., to avoid a scandal in their Brooklyn neighborhood. The plan is for Daisy and Turk to return to Brooklyn and leave Olivia in the care of her grandmother, Birdie. But Birdie insists that Daisy remain as well. Daisy is deeply resentful of her mother, who ran a bootlegging operation in their dry county when Daisy was young, but she agrees to stay, and over the next few months, all three women learn about themselves. While the arc may seem familiar, Glover does an admirable job of avoiding cliché (as when Daisy and Birdie attempt to resolve their conflicts with a wrestling match) and provides readers with an absorbing setting and a complex family. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.