



Lynch Victim's Mother
Sarah Brown

Bio & Character Sketch of Sarah Brown

1865 – February 3, 1940

Age in April, 1923: 58 Age at Death: 74

Age when picture was taken: (est) 55

Sarah Akers Brown was likely born in Columbia, MO in 1865. She was married three times. Her first husband was James T. Scott. There were two children born from that marriage, Akers Scott and James Scott. Her second husband was Charles Clemens, whom she married after moving from New Mexico to Chicago after her first husband died. After Clemens died, she moved home to Columbia where she met and married her third husband, James Brown, to whom she was married for the rest of her life. (There were no children produced from Sarah's second and third marriages.)

Sarah died in 1940 after a fire at her house. She was badly burned and taken to a local hospital where she succumbed a few days later.



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Character Sketch

Sarah loves her two sons. James and Akers, more than anything, but she slightly favors James because he has brought her three grandchildren that she can share her life with.

Sarah is comfortable, now living with her third husband James Brown, after her first two husbands died. She has no problem working – and she has experience as a hat maker – but her life with James Brown has been good enough for her to live without working.

Sarah is shocked to see her son charged with raping a young white girl. She knows it just cannot be possible that he is the assailant. When she hears from Rev. Caston that James does NOT want her to visit him in jail she immediately dismisses his wishes and goes to visit him anyway.

Sarah is religious and she counts Rev. Caston as one of her very best friends. She feels their values point in the same direction.

Upon hearing about James' lynching, Sarah is completely beside herself, collapsing on the floor. She is crushed.

But Sarah is a good Christian woman and – perhaps with the help of Rev. Caston – when she hears that Regina has now identified another man as her attacker, she realizes that Regina is very sheltered, probably having very rarely seen black people up close in her young lifetime, and she forgives her. But Sarah also sees herself as the lone qualified spokesman for her son James, and she openly criticizes the DA, the Sheriff and those who allowed the mob to take her son from the jail and kill him.

Sarah is a lady, a proud black woman who – when pushed far enough – will forget “her place” and very clearly and loudly speak her mind. When the trial ends in a “Not Guilty” verdict, Sarah's glance at Ruby Hulen says it all - “See, I told you, I've lived too many years and never seen anything resembling justice in my lifetime – unless, of course, you're white.”

Sarah Brown walks through the living room toward the front door. Gertrude composes herself just enough to meet Sarah's eyes and speak in a hushed, breaking voice.

GERTRUDE

Mamma, they took James from the jail tonight. A mob took him to the bridge...

Sarah's eyes widen.

GERTRUDE

And they hung James! They hung him from the bridge!

SARAH (to Jack)

OH NO! OH No! No! Not my James!

Gertrude opens her arms. Jack and Gertrude envelop Sarah as she drops to her knees and sobs.

SARAH

Oh God! Lord Jesus! Not my James! He's a good boy! He never hurt anybody! Oh Lord! Let me die! Lord! Let me die!

SIDE

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Hulen enters. Gertrude and Sarah sit in chairs facing his desk. He closes the door behind him.

HULEN

Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Brown I want to thank you both for coming.

SARAH (interrupting)

Mr. Hulen, I did not come here because you asked me. I came because I wanted to know if what we read in the newspapers today was true. Did that young girl identify a different man as her attacker?

HULEN (sitting)

Yes. Yes ma'am she did.

SARAH

Because she identified my son, you indicted him. The mob killed him. While you and five other men stood by.

HULEN

Yes ma'am, I know. I'm so very sorry. We did what we could that night but it wasn't enough. Not nearly enough. Mrs. Brown, I can't bring James back. But we will get justice for him at next week's trial. I promise you.

SARAH

You'll have to forgive me if I have lost faith in any promises of justice, Mr. Hulen. I've lived too many years and never seen anything resembling justice in my lifetime. Unless of course, you're white.