Coraddi

Fall

1954

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CORADDI

Woman's College of the University of North Carolina
Greensboro, N. C.

Editorial

AS WE SEE IT

The shine of the four glossy pages in the center of this Coraddi will probably catch your eye, and cause you to examine them closely. Then, no doubt, you will be surprised to see that they contain a little animal picture story, "A Sandra Story", by Lee Hall. "A Sandra Story" is part of a book or Sandra stories which Miss Hall has written for children. Possibly you will exclaim, as we did at first, how odd it is for an amusing, cartoon-like story to be included in such a literacy "literary" literary magazine as Coraddi. However, after you have been captivated by the lovable Sandra and Be, you will see that such a story is just as much fun for adults (even literary ones) as it is for children. A Sandra Story may be just what you need to take your mind off your studies and your eyes off pages of solid black print. It also more than likely is what Coraddi needs to convince us that light, amusing work can be done by students to great effect, and that we need not always eliminate or minimize humor in our writing, with the thought that humor will worsen our work's quality.

If you enjoy reading "A Sandra Story", do tell us about it, and we may be able to persuade Miss Hall to contribute another Sandra adventure to a later issue of Coraddi. If you really enjoy "A Sandra Story", and are intrigued with the characters, perhaps we can arrange with the author to start manufacturing Sandra stuffed animals, sweatshirts, and stickers.

A story which is entirely different from "A Sandra Story" in that it is completely serious, but one which definitely deserves mention, is "Humans, Blades, and Faith" by Nancy Poe Fleming. The members of Coraddi staff agreed that this story was extraordinary for a piece of student writing, because its author was not afraid actually to say something important, to express a big idea, and to express it seriously and emotionally, perhaps even passionately. So many student writers, afraid of running the risk of overwriting by writing of something important to them, deal with trivial themes, and rely on usual narrative methods and description, and subleties of technique for success in their work. Truly, it is refreshing to find a student story mainly concerned with getting across a powerful theme. We ask you to take special note of this story because, no matter what technical flaws you may locate in it, you cannot fail to be impressed by the importance and sincerity of what it has to say.

We want to say just a word of thanks to those students who contributed material to this issue of Coraddi. We hope that you will continue polishing your material and sending it to us. One of our major goals is to obtain student interest in Coraddi, and with that goal in mind, we appreciate all your contributions, whether they are eventually printed or not, equally. And with that thought, we promise not to bombard you with any more treatises about The Purpose of Coraddi for the rest of the year.

frontispiece by Lee Hall

FAULKNER
A Fable

Random House
1954

a book review
by Jo Gillikin

In his latest book, William Faulkner has as his theme what he stated in his acceptance speech for the 1950 Nobel Prize for Literature. That statement is: "I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal . . . because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past." Faulkner carries out this theme mainly through the use of symbolism and the speeches of his characters. The modern day version of Christ's last week on earth brings out Faulkner's belief that it is a writer's privilege to help lift man's heart by reminding him of man's glorious past.

In the final scene between the old general and the corporal when the old general offers the corporal a chance to rule the world with him, both characters express their belief that no matter what happens man will endure and prevail. The old general is a symbol representing both the author and God the father; whereas, the corporal symbolizes Christ and man.

A FABLE is the story of a French corporal, who with the help of twelve followers, persuades a French regiment to mutiny. The mutiny spreads to the British, American, and German regiments which are on the front line. However, only those soldiers ranking lower than sergeant are truly persuaded to mutiny, the higher ranks not participating at all in the mutiny. The division commander requests that all the French regiment which began the mutiny be shot. There is a trial scene in which strange things are revealed about this French corporal. The decision reached is that of death for the corporal Christ and the man martyr.

The most important characters associated with the corporal are: the old general who is the corporal's father; Magda, who is a prostitute and who was also to be the corporal's wife; the corporal's mother who gives birth to him (the illegitimate son of the old general) in a manger; Polchek, who betrays him; and his sister who buries him.

Faulkner has not individualized his characters too much, using them as prototypes, so that his theme becomes the accent of the novel. As is true of most of Faulkner's main characters, the corporal and the old general do what they do, not because they want to, but because they are driven on by some great, unknown force. The corporal could be compared to Joe Christmas, the main character in LIGHT IN AUGUST, a previous book by Faulkner. Subconsciously, Faulkner has portrayed Christmas as the "imperfect saviour" and "martyr" of mankind. Christmas is to atone for all sin which was committed against him by those who did not understand his motivation and background. It is a Faulkner characteristic to reuse characters of previous stories, usually adding on to the previous story. Another example of this is the horse and cart device used for carrying the dead corporal to what was his earthly home to be buried. Faulkner had used that idea in an earlier novel, AS I LAY DYING.

Although Faulkner abandoned his usual rhetoric style, he still uses the long cut back so familiar in THE SOUND AND THE FURY.

What is so very confusing in this novel is that Faulkner narrates a chapter, having perhaps only one detail in that chapter which relates at all to his main plot. It is not until two-thirds of the book has been read that the reader recognizes the connection. Illustrative of this is the chapter about the race horse. The only connection there with the rest of the story is the negro minister who plays only a minor part in the novel. This chapter could be left out and no meaning whatever would be lost. Most confusing is Faulkner's extensive use of the pronoun "he". At times, there is no hint as to whom "he" is until the reader has already finished reading about twenty pages. The diction of the novel is highly poetical and and very beautiful.

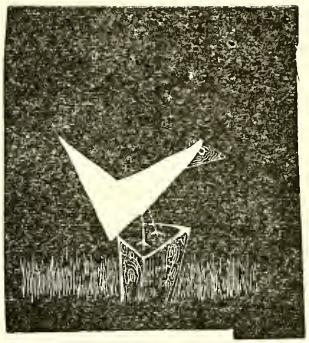
Faulkner succeeds in his theme, although he presents many thoughts contrary to his main theme. It is quite probable that Faulkner's novel, A FABLE, will be among the greatest novels in "the dusty lumber room of literature."

How We Cheated the Bank

Debora Marcus

I never would have thought of it myself. I don't have a good mind for ideas, and besides, I never would have had the nerve to try anything crooked, especially in my first job. My sister Geraldine thought of it. And Geraldine made me do it.

I had got the job as ledger clerk or bookkeeper for the bank, a real busy Bronx branch of a big downtown company that catered mostly to local storekeepers who really raked in the dough, the day after high school graduation. I had only been working for them three weeks, and was just beginning to pick up some speed on the bookkeeping machine, when Geraldine told me about her idea. We were sitting at the kitchen table, hungry for supper, listening to the spaghetti pop in the boiling waer. You see, Geraldine and I had been living in this little hole of an apartment in the East Bronx ever since Mama had died three years before, when I was fourteen. Geraldine didn't go to work; she thought she was too good for most of the jobs she could have got. She just sat around the house all day, looking out the window, nosing into the neighbors' business, smoking cigarettes, and drinking coffee. She had wanted to take me out of school and send me to work right after Mama died, but the law wouldn't allow it, so I spent the next three years in high school, being called a "useless, lazy slob" by my sister all the time. We had a pretty hard time getting by on the little insurance Mama had left us and the small checks we got every so often from our Uncle Charley in Houston, Texas, but then, we had always had it rough, since papa had died when I was a baby, so we were used to being pretty poor. It helped some when I got my job, although I didn't make much.



Karen Martin

Anyway, like I was saying, Geraldine and I were sitting at the table this night. I was making designs on the oilcloth table cover with the prongs of my fork, because Geraldine was staring at me. She had a crossed right eye, and her stare always bothered me. She just kept staring at me, and then she said, "Dolores, I've been thinking. I've been thinking about a way we can make some money. And you've got to help me."

Now Geraldine was the most money-mad and the tightest character I've ever known. I guess when you've been poor all your life, you're bound to be stingy, but not like Geraldine. She was just in love with money. She took every penny of my salary and all the money Uncle Charley sent us. I never even saw the ten dollar bills he sent me every birthday and Christmas. Also she had gypped me out of my share of Mama's jewelry, an old-fashioned pinky ring with a big aquamarine and two diamond chips, and a crystal necklace. She hated to spend money, and was always complaining about the high prices and about how broke we were, although we bought only the cheapest, and really weren't quite as bad off as she made out we were. Whenever she could, she'd pocket a few pennies in an old gray purse in her dresser drawer, where she kept the few letters she'd got years before from a New Jersey bank teller who had turned out to be married.

Of course, I never said anything to her about what she did, because she was twelve years older than me, and I was scared to death of her. When she got mad at me, she'd slap me around and scream at me so loud the neighbors would knock on the door to see if anything was the matter.

"Listen," Geraldine went on, and she looked like she was trying real hard to make me understand what she was going to say, "I learned a little about the bank business from Dave." Dave was the New Jersey banker. "Now you bookkeepers each handle a ledger with a certain number of customers' statements in them. Now, you know there are a lot of these dormant accounts, because these big firms that have too much money to put in one account, they open two, and use one, and just leave the other with a fortune in it. Now if I opened up an account in your bank, you could very easily shift some money from one of those dormant accounts to my account within the same ledger, and nobody would notice the difference, because your balance would be the same, because actually no money would have left the bank."

It took a minute or so for me to understand what she was driving at, but when I did my mouth dropped open. "Geraldine" I said, "I can't do that. I'm new on the job, and I can't try anything smart. They'd fire me for sure, and then I wouldn't be able to get another job."

Geraldine started to get mad at me. "What are you so worried about? In a big place like that, do you think they'd watch what a little dope like you does? They don't have to be so careful. They got money to burn, and they can spare some for us."

"Geraldine, I can't." Now I even imagined a squad car racing after me.

Geraldine got up, yanked me out of the chair by my shoulders, and began to shake me. "You lousy little brat!" she screamed. "Is that the kind of gratitude you show me after I slave around the house for you all day, cook your meals for you, everything? Listen, you do this or I'll break your stupid little head for you. I'll throw you out of this house." I knew she meant it, so I had to give in, and say I'd do it.

Of course the first time I was really scared to death. Two days after my little talk with Geraldine, Jerry Campbell, the chief clerk, came up to me while I was sweating over my machine, and said, "I've got something for you." He handed me a stiff yellow piece of paper, a statement for a new account, Geraldine's. (Luckily, our last name is Lipton, and my ledger held L-Q, so I didn't have to find some excuse to switch with one of the other girls.)

Well, the time had come. If I didn't do it then, Geraldine would give me murder when I got home. Not far in back of where I put Geraldine's sheet there was a guy's that had two accounts, one under Alfred Littner, and the other under Alfred Littner and Sons, Hardware. The second account had only been drawn from once since 1938, and it was worth $30,000.36. I looked around for a minute, at the hot little room that all the bookkeepers were jammed into. The other girls were all punching away quickly at their machines, chewing gum or ice from the cokes we had brought in after lunch. I must have stood out like a sore thumb, just sitting there while everyone else was so busy. But they all knew I was pretty slow, still being a beginner, so nobody thought it was funny that I was flipping ledger sheets and chewing my nails. Also, the machines made so much racket that they couldn't notice that I was breathing extra hard. So, I credited a hundred dollars to the account of Geraldine Lipton and when I got to it, debited the same amount from the account of Alfred Littner and Sons, Hardware. I thought I saw, out of the corner of my eye, Jerry Campbell headed at me, but he walked past me to give a late credit slip to one of the other girls. I also got real scared when the time for proving came, because we checked each other's work, but one of the dumbest girls there, Lenore, proved mine, and she wouldn't have noticed anything wrong if I was a million short. Still, I took so much time out to look at her to see if she seemed suspicious that I didn't get much done on the ledger that I was proving, and finally May, the head bookkeeper, took it away from me and finished it herself, because I was holding things up, and she wanted to get the final figure for the afternoon.

It got a lot easier after the first time. I really didn't have too much chance to give myself away, because I had never had much to do with the other girls. I never ate lunch with them, as I didn't have any money to eat out, like the rest of them did. I had to walk home for lunch every day, a good twenty minute walk each way if you practically ran, and when I went past the Bathgate Avenue section, where the fish and dry goods dealers had their stuff displayed in boxes sprawled over half the street, I had to get off the sidewalk and walk in the gutter if I wanted to make it in that little time. That walk was the worst part of the day, because all the time I felt like everybody was staring at me, although I didn't know a soul, not even the people in my apartment building. It's funny, but at work I felt safer than I did in the street, because there you were almost protected by your machine, and everybody else was so busy working that they never noticed you. The only time the other girls talked was when they were picking up the debit and credit slips for the next day, and then I never joined in their conversation. I wouldn't have said much anyway, because I was shy, and they thought I was a funny kid, a mouse.

After a while, I got pretty used to what I was doing. There were about five accounts that I took from, and I kept varying these accounts, taking from one one day, another the next, and so on. I even began almost to enoy it, you know, looking forward to something a little different every day.

Ellen Kjosnes

I only had one really big scare. That was on the Thursday of the second week that I had been phonying the accounts. Thursday is payday at the bank. Jerry Campbell came by, and gave all the other bookkeepers their pay envelopes, but he skipped me. A few minutes later, he came back, and said, "Dolores, Mr. Weill has your envelope. You're to go up to him to get it." I just about died. Mr. Weill was the assistant manager of the branch.

"Sit down, Dolores. I want to talk to you." Mr. Weill was tapping the desk with my envelope. Mr. Weill was from the East Bronx too, and wasn't much better than the rest of us, but he liked to put on ritzy airs because he sat in the front office with the manager, and wore a tie and jacket to work every day. "How is everything back there, Dolores?" He pointed to the bookkeepers' room. "Are the other girls treating you well?"

"Yes sir."

"And how is your work coming? Are you getting the hang of the machine?"

"Yes sir."

"No problems? Everything okay?"

"Yes sir."

"Good. I just wanted to find out how you were doing. I always like to check with the new girls to

(Continued on page 18)

Humans, Blades, and FAITH

Nancy Poe Fleming

The night air was wandering aimlessly among the stooped rays of the seemingly romantic moon, which was now retreating rather shamefully for a more distant refuge. The rays no longer fired off the inner feelings of this lone girl. Her heart beats were no longer steady—loud and strong; they were now fast then slow; there was no earthly coordination. Lifelessness and stillness encased the tear-stained face. She had seen her world crushed to the very bottom.

He left her.

Tonight he had come back to her from the war. He had left an unknown man and had returned a "flag-ridden" hero.

They met on the pier; that's where he left her; that's where he said he would come back to her.

Her hands were held by his; her eyes were studied by his; her lips were kissed by his and all this happened while the stars roamed around somebody's heaven. Their life was in fulfillment, but for a moment—but a moment of joyful resonance. He pushed the child away from his freshly pressed suit—kissed her cheek and said life was tender, but like that.

The mountain's snow had lost the reality fight and would dethirst millions in its new physical state.

She turned to see him walk away; he might as well be dead—his physical state could offer her nothing and she already had partaken of the spirit of this man.

Love had been there; thoughts of it had been there and thoughts are of a retainable nature. Yet the laws of it had been disbound and spilt in clear-cut manner; and to do this is courageously dangerous and a rarity of the more wholesome of the thinning ways.

She let him go without question. Love was love no matter what the question is or was.

She would go home and sleep; the peaceful escape of stuff.

It was nothing more than the war, always the war and nothing more and that was it and the search for excuse was ended and love could continue to thrive.

Rebecca never went to bed that night. She found the letter from John. The one she knew would be there; the one that said the hero was no hero and then said that he had an incurable illness; that the amputation was a failure.

His mistake was only natural and she knew that, only he didn't but could.

But hers was a natural plight, too. Only it was of the more immediate nature.

"Have you seen John?"

"Has John been in tonight?"

And the answer was the same from one to the other. She looked but not in truth. He had walked away; he would never be accessible to her, to them . . . she looked for the sake of looking.

And the town sat on the corner and cussed the communists and put in verbal explanation what God had really meant to be and most likely even God would find it foreign. The town bum remembered John when he had been a boy and had always known that he would some day be a fine grown man; they used to go fishing together and he knew the first time he saw how Johnny bated his hook that the lad would be an outstanding man and a credit to life in general. And he had hated to see Johnny marry that damn snob; what Johnny needed was a good working gal to stay home and cook good stable food and sleep in only one bed . . . and then a red-headed fellow grunted and said he didn't approve twin beds for married folks but what else could he have done, he had a family to feed, and when Rebecca and Johnny had decided to buy the twin set of beds he couldn't refuse to sell and the twin beds were the more expensive.

She didn't love him if she had she'd have gone down to the train to meet him when he came home; not good for a man to have a woman like that it'll eat at his soul . . . it's catching God knows it is; she was a bad woman. And furthermore they knew she was a crazy woman but no she wasn't crazy; she was evil—and crazy people didn't have sense enough to be evil. They had seen her go down on the river bank and paint and it wasn't the river she was painting and it wasn't the trees either, wasn't nothing when you want to know the truth of the matter. They knew all about the damn woman . . . The man behind the cigar puffed smoke around the heads of those surrounding him and said John was the man to run for legislature — people wanted men like that. Then he sat up and told of the 25 commies John had killed almost barehanded. That was a real American for you; he showed that Red guy what he was up against—a country that had sons who respected his country and would fight like hell to defend it. He would ask Johnny first thing in the morning.

Beverly Schoonover

And John walked through the town and saw weary houses that boyish eyes had seen as mansions far apart and people who had lost in magnitude as years grew

old. The people stopped to speak and tell the son he had done well; they noticed his medals and glued their eyes on the shiny objects and continued to bow low. Would he speak to the church women—and awkwardly he smiled and turned to cry inside.

And on and on he walked until his feet no longer held him steady on the railroad track; they seemed to overlap and hinder his balance and he was uncrowned as the great speedster of the criss-cross when a small boy passed him at a childish speed. The children gathered with heads held slightly forward and heard every sigh and utterance so made and imagined a million more. He told them he was tired and must leave but they knew Johnny would never grow tired . . . and a small child knelt by his bed and prayed that war would come back; then he slept and saw another parade with himself in Johnny's place riding down Main in a yellow topless car with his first grade teacher cheering his very being . . . the band played loud; there was an awful flutter of stupid colored confetti and much noisy noise and all of a sudden he was back at the railroad as a sure-footed boy who knew just where he was going—to the river to fish . . . Then a man appeared and the boy slipped from the track and balance lost its innocent fortitude.

You might say it was the war; you might say it was the human; you might say it was nothing. Man wouldn't dare, yet his kind did—would or did. The world was in a state—A jumping state—a state of decision in essence—to jump or not to jump. And then again "jump" is a word; another word; another human significance lost and discovered a million times by a many millioned peopled people.

The boy; the man walked away from the stunted town to the river.

The one that was peacefully black in its present state of perceptibility to the things which percepted and all things did percept; they had no other choice—just the way was theirs and that was not really theirs but a loan from the unknown, the more discreet factor; that in the way, varying variable.

Each pebble one after the other sunk in darkness only the thrower remained visible and then one didn't sink it stayed afloat. There had been a boy in his company who hated the dirty enemy and felt he had to kill; just kill that's what he wanted to do; kill every dirty Jap in sight—that's what he said he wanted to do and when told they weren't Japs he was fighting this time he said in the return breath that he was going to kill every dirty Red in sight then if that's what they were fighting.

And when a pebble doesn't sink there is not much man as man can do.

Even when he held his head and wept the pebble floated on. But he had said life was like that only now he wasn't sure it was so tender, maybe in strong pretense——most things that were, were in pretense.

John stood and stood and waited but the river didn't become darker nor did it become lighter. He found no reason why it should.

Reason was because of reason and it's all a matter of Webster and can be taken in a most optional dose as words are a bother and hell is so utterly close to each open door and we all hide in at least one empty closet and these mostly always contain a trap for the mouse and a mouse for the trap thus one is lost to illogic.

And often illogic is the highway of the wisest of the unwise.

John turned from the darkened river and walked on and passed a shack where a child was being born so he took a medal off and gave it to the future father for his first child. And then turned to leave that situation.

In a matter of speaking a painful pain was felt and a son was born to two parents who did well to belong to the human race. They already owned a radio that played loudly at full volume and now their esteem was lifted to even greater heights—they owned a son; a red-faced son.

> "Let us have a little talk with Jesus—makes it right . . . Now neighbors of the airways remember the new copies of FAITH go on sale . . . May God bless you . . . don't forget to purchase FAITH . . . Tune in next . . ."

> "Christianity was K.O.'d in the 10th . . . Have you brought your week's supply of . . . or . . . how are you fixed for . . ."

The child was thus born amid humans, blades and FAITH; and in an atmosphere of mostly such.

Now he had been born again.

He favored the human lying on the bed—no, he favored the one with the red nose—no, he favored the one with the—no, he favored the one with the pig-tails.

He favored his own damn self only he wasn't allowed that; it wasn't the rage. So he forgot all, even that he favored himself and thus became a human and thus became a human. Hurricanes are like that. They roar off in jet-like force to man knows not where and then stop dead.

And the earth revolved and light was excluded and people slept because that was when people sleep; then a baby cried because it wasn't yet in the know about the this and that of the earthly way of life.

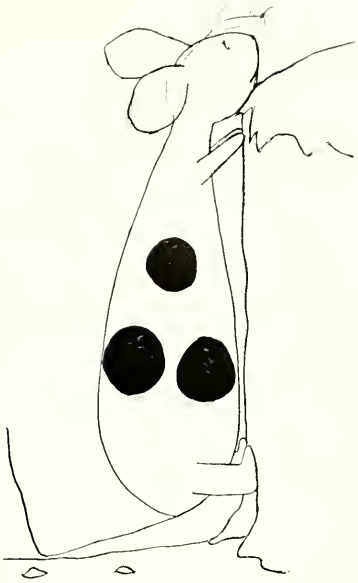
It cried and its keeper fed it because that was the natural thing to do and because the co-keeper needed his sleep and a crying baby makes sleep difficult. But the baby really wasn't crying because he was hungry he was really fighting for the existence he had left behind; but every time he protested the earthly life he was fed and after many many times of this he began becoming hungry every time he cried . . . then he lost that perspective and mixed up fighting with hunger until they became one and in the end cried for hunger alone.

(Continued on Page 19)

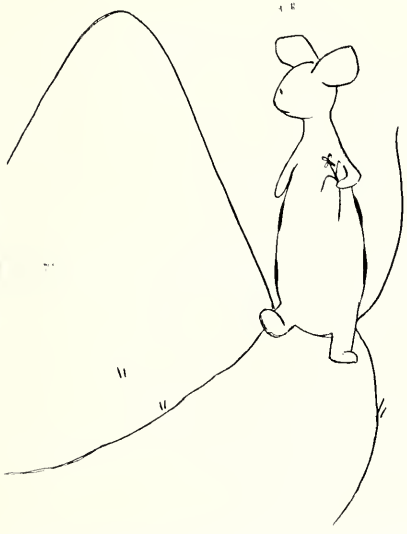
A SANDRA STORY

LEE HALL

1 ONE DAY SANDRA WAS WALKING THROUGH TALL GRASS.



2 AND CLIMBING DOWN STEEP BANKS.

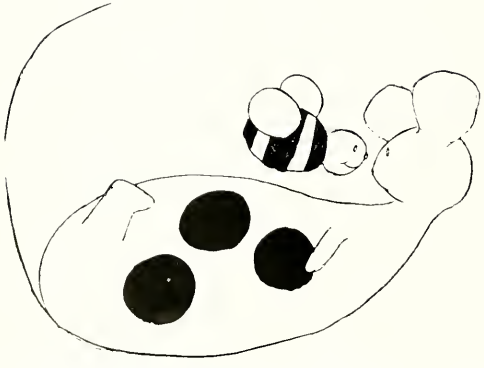


3 HE WALKED AROUND ONE SMALLISH MOUNTAIN AND EXAMINED IT CLOSELY.

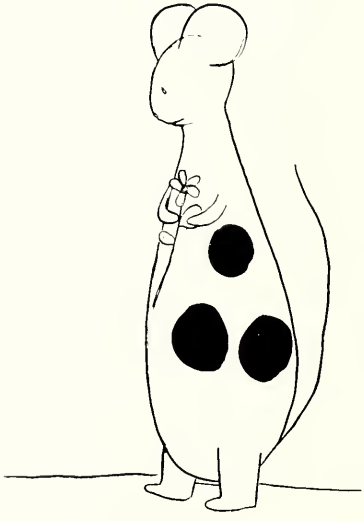
4 AFTER A WHILE SANDRA GOT TIRED. HE LAY DOWN UNDER A LARGE TREE AND PUT HIS TIRED FEET IN THE AIR. HE HAD HIS EYES CLOSED SO HE DIDN'T NOTICE THE HOLE IN THE TREE.

5 WHILE SANDRA WAS UNDER THE TREE, BE WAS IN THE TREE. SANDRA DIDN'T SEE BE COMING OUT OF THE HOLE HE ALREADY HADN'T SEEN BECAUSE HIS EYES WERE STILL CLOSED.

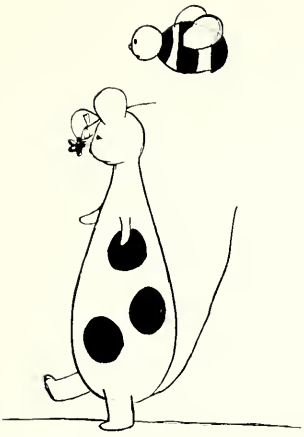
6 BE STOOD ON SANDRA'S STOMACH AND SAID GOOD MORNING THREE TIMES. BUT SANDRA DIDN'T HEAR BECAUSE HIS FEET WERE STILL TIRED AND HIS EYES WERE STILL CLOSED.



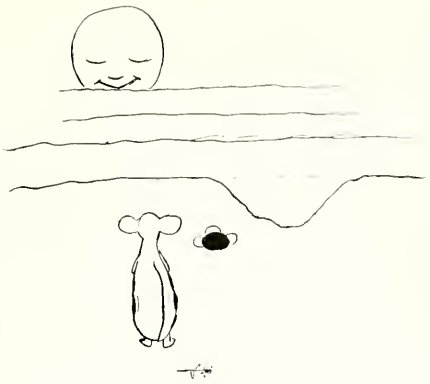
7 SANDRA SAID BE LET'S GO FOR A WALK. I ALREADY WALKED SANDRA SAID WHILE HE OPENED HIS EYES. ANOTHER ONE THEN SAID BE WHO WAS ENTHUSIASTIC. ALL RIGHT OR VERY WELL SAID SANDRA.



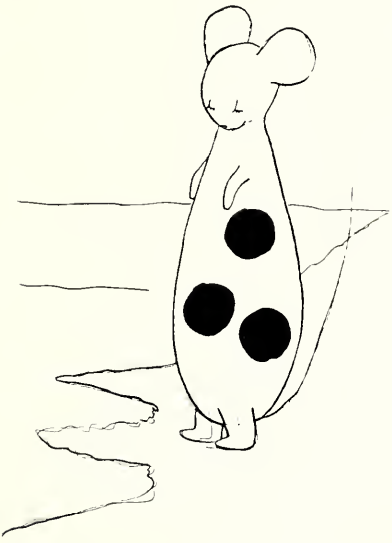
8 SANDRA STOOD UP AND FOUND HIS FLOWER. I AM READY BE SAID SANDRA.



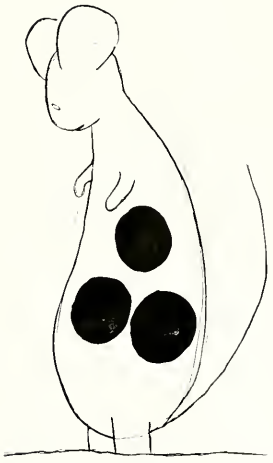
9 BE REALLY DIDN'T GO FOR WALKS BECAUSE HE FLEW INSTEAD. OFF THEY WENT THOUGH. BE WAS FLYING AND SANDRA WAS WALKING. THEY WALKED A LONG TIME AND WENT VERY FAR.



10 SOON THEY CAME TO THE OCEAN AS THE SUN WAS GOING DOWN BEHIND IT. SANDRA SAID BE, THIS IS THE OCEAN. IT IS BIG AND I LIKE IT BE SANDRA SAID AS HE PUT DOWN HIS FLOWER.



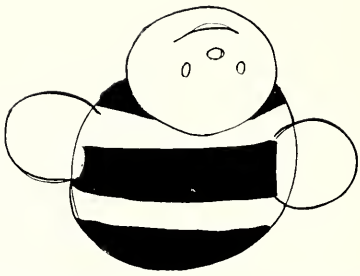
11 HELLO OCEAN SAID SANDRA. WHY ARE YOU COMING SO CLOSE TO ME? SANDRA LOOKED DOWN AND WATCHED THE OCEAN.



12 THE OCEAN DIDN'T ANSWER. IT JUST CAME CLOSER AND CLOSER UNTIL IT COVERED SANDRA'S FEET.

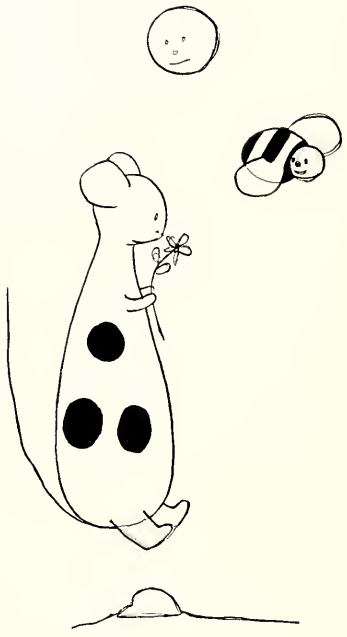
OH SAID SANDRA GET OFF MY FEET.

13 AND THE OCEAN REALLY DID. BE I AM A BOSS SAID SANDRA. I TELL THINGS WHAT TO DO.



14 BE SMILED AT SANDRA AND SAID TO HIM WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO?

15 WELL SAID SANDRA MY FEET ARE WET. I WOULD LIKE TO FIND FLOWER AND GO BACK TO THE TREE. I DON'T LIKE TO BE A BOSS.



16 BY NOW MOON WAS WATCHING THEM AND EVERYTHING WAS VERY STILL. BE LED THE WAY WHILE SANDRA PLAYED HIS FAVORITE HAPPY GAME. HE JUMPED OVER PEBBLES WITHOUT DROPPING THE FLOWER ALL THE WAY TO THE TREE.

On "Or Ever the Golden Bowl"

Carole Altman

Editor's note: Many students have been heard to comment to the effect that the poetry published in Coraddi is obscure, incomprehensible, or "just doesn't mean a thing" to them. We feel that most Coraddi poetry does have a meaning, and that that meaning can be found. To support our statement, we are publishing the following analysis of "Or Ever the Golden Bowl", a poem which appeared in the Winter 1954 Coraddi. The reader must bear in mind that this analysis is not the only possible interpretation of the poem, but only one writer's views of its elements and meaning. Probably the most important thing for the reader of this article to note is that it is indeed possible to discuss and analyze Coraddi poetry in the same manner that one deals with other poetry, or with most other writing, for that matter.

Or Ever the Golden Bowl

By Barbara McLellan

Silence—not the dim fade of much frequented forests
Nor the worn and ragged image of black angled
pinetree
Supposed-serene above brown masking mesh
Of needle and filigree filtered run-stream hush—
Not this silence. Neither so quiet
Nor so still but stopped, held up whole
And moving. Where is something frozen,
Something cold in the moon, just melting?

The worn mind finds it rarely—It is
Breath held by a juggler's mind between cold teeth,
Teeth the martyr grinds, innocents whistle through,
Buddha never bares. In the sky on a summer night
Orange light prophetically leaps for dumb thunder
Unsounding on ready ears: this is silence—or
The steady echo of mute sand dunes repeats the image
Of the sea. Not to be sure but to see.

Nay, nay and yea, yea gives way to the wailing wall
But on the deaf page in the closed book the little
phrase,
Vinteuil's is still leveling alike time and desire—
Harmonics certainly heard without one lifted bow.
The craze, contentment, soft-needled forest floors,
Is a decay necessity goes on denying, demanding still
Something less sane, more wise, the bridging leap
Toward silence, the grave and golden vanity.

Many critics have said the best poetry should not be finally understood by the intellect lest the illusion of actually sensing its truth be lost. Barbara McLellan's "Or Ever the Golden Bowl" evokes emotionally satisfying suggestions which define Silence without exhausting themselves in intellectual rationality. At the same time, however, the poem speaks at length in terms of the external and explicit, thus defining itself also to the intellect. This does not mean that because the poem's appeal to the rational is so strong one cannot feel its truth sufficiently to classify it with the best poetry. In this instance it merely means that the interpreter becomes quite susceptible to correction if he be incapable of communicating what the poet has said—an unfortunate situation indeed should the interpreter be of the sensing the truth school. (Should there be need of justifying the following interpretation, this criterion, although well used and simple enough, will serve: poetry, because it is an ultimate concentration of essence and because its readers are somewhat individual, suggests varying amounts to different people.)

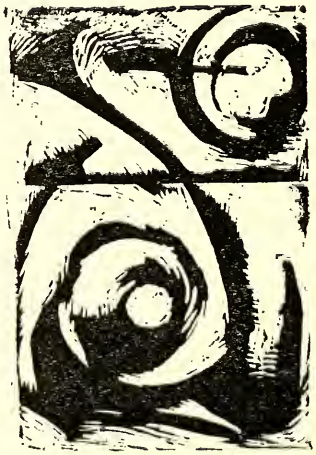
"Or Ever the Golden Bowl" defines Silence through negation and through positive statement. Miss McLellan refutes both the egotistical belief that silence is golden and the conception of silence as the quietness of what people call serenity, but which is actually a sterile noiselessness brought about by corruption or a choking out. Thus it is in a manner the conventional idea of Silence being denied. (One should keep in mind here Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as a criticism of life.) This negation, although boldly stated, is not malicious, and debunking the traditional conception of Silence is not painful to the reader. True Silence, Miss McLellan seems to say, cannot be a void but is rather a stillness impregnated with misty yet complete perceptions of the essence of things. In such silence there is, of course, no concrete assurance that an insight is being experienced; but there is a certain communion which reveals the marrow of recesses to the perceiver. If this be true, then poetry itself is one of the greatest examples of Silence in the World. Miss McLellan's work becomes Silence as the reader discovers its essence through both an emotional and a rational understanding.

In a stanzaic consideration of "Or Ever the Golden Bowl" the first of the three eight-lined divisions by far surpasses the others in imagery, word choice, euphony, and theme treatment. There is in this stanza nothing omitted or wasted. Beginning with the first word, Silence, Miss McLellan states her theme and goes directly into a negation-positive definition cycle, revealing the approach to be used. The two figures used within the stanza—a worn forest to represent

decaying serenity, and the incomparable "something frozen, something cold in the moon, just melting" to symbolize Silence—are the most beautiful of the entire poem. The euphonic forest scene passage with its "dim fade", "black angled pinetree", "brown masking mesh", and "filigree filtered sun-stream hush" appeals very strongly to vision; the latter moon-temperature image is directed to the sense of touch. This stanza is also the most euphonistic of the three as "so still but stopped"; "whole", "frozen", "cold"; "moon, just melting"; and the excerpts already mentioned above quite clearly reveal.

The second stanza is an articulate elaboration of the definition-negation cycle found in the first. "Breath held by a juggler's mind between cold teeth, Teeth the martyr grinds, innocents whistle through, Buddha never bares" seems to represent Silence—the quietness in which some realization comes so quickly and faintly that it is mutely received. Yet each symbol can also represent what Miss McLellan has apparently said Silence is not—a sterile, vain quietness. Although this ambiguity may be intentional it does not improve the poem's appeal to either the intellect or emotions, and therefore it seems unnecessary. The remaining portion of the stanza, however, gives more lucid representations. Silence is described as hearing thunder when there is nothing more than an orange light and as finding in sand dunes a semblance of the ocean. In this stanza the phrase "the worn mind" and the words "orange" and "prophetically" do not parallel the excellent choice of words in the first division of the poem. Miss McLellan's use of oxymorons (dumb thunder and echoing sand dunes), however, is both discreet and aesthetic.

The approach of the last portion of "Or Ever the Golden Bowl" is almost exclusively that of concentrated reasoning; it appears to be a summary of the previous stanzas of the poem and a realization of society's refusal to acknowledge Silence. Of necessity, Miss McLellan seems to say, Silence will continue to be the adulterated, "grave and golden vanity" (silence is golden) of present-day conception; yet those who hear "Harmonics . . . without one lifted bow" cannot help but realize that the true Silence is a birth-giving Golden Bowl.



Maxine Goodwin

CONFESSION

by Jerry Kaplan

Too many men remind me of my father:
Men with wrinkled faces and dirty nails
Who light their cigarettes with wooden matches
and carry tums in their pockets.
I meet my father on every street-car
And never speak to him.

Dinah

Mary Wells Edwards

Joshua sat at the end of the tobacco row with his hoe lying across his ankles. His overalls were torn off just above the knee and a few strings from the unhemmed bottoms trailed in the dust. I watched his feet rising straight up from the hoe handle, and thought how they looked like big black gloves hanging on an upside down clothesline. Every now and then he would take a handful of the dry dust and pour it over his right foot, leaving it a shade lighter in color, with a little grey pyramid on his big toe.

He said, "Ain't gwine rain. Ain't gwine rain 'til de hoot owl hollers in de day time and de moon got a ring around it in de night. Ole' Mr. Tom's cussin' and Mr. Bull's prayin', but . . ."

"It ain't Mr. Bull. It's Mr. Bill. And you'd better stop calling my daddy Mr. Bull." That was my brother Thomas who was sitting on the other side of Joshua.

"That's what I said, Mr. Bull. Don't you be givin' me none o' your backtalk."

I sat still. Thomas was nine, two years older than me, and he talked the most. "You don't say Mr. Tum. Why do you say Mr. Bull?" he was asking.

Mr. Tom owned the farm next to ours and he sort of looked out for Joshua. I guess he was sort of nice —kept Joshua's little house fixed and gave him work all the time, but he said "nigger" right in front of him. When I was younger I used to wonder how Joshua felt when Mr. Tom called him a "no good nigger." I knew I'd a felt awful funny if I'd a been a nigger.

Joshua picked up the ragged straw hat that lay beside him in the dust and fanned lazily with it. His kinky gray hair was the same color as the dust.

Thomas opened a new argument. "Don't you ever work, Joshua? No wonder Mr. Tom calls you a no-good nigger. You're always sittin' at the end of the row. I don't ever see you working."

Joshua said, "You young'uns don't ever leave me alone—always pesterin' me. One o' these days I'se gonna leave here. I's gonna leave all this dust, 'n 'bacco behind and get me a good job."

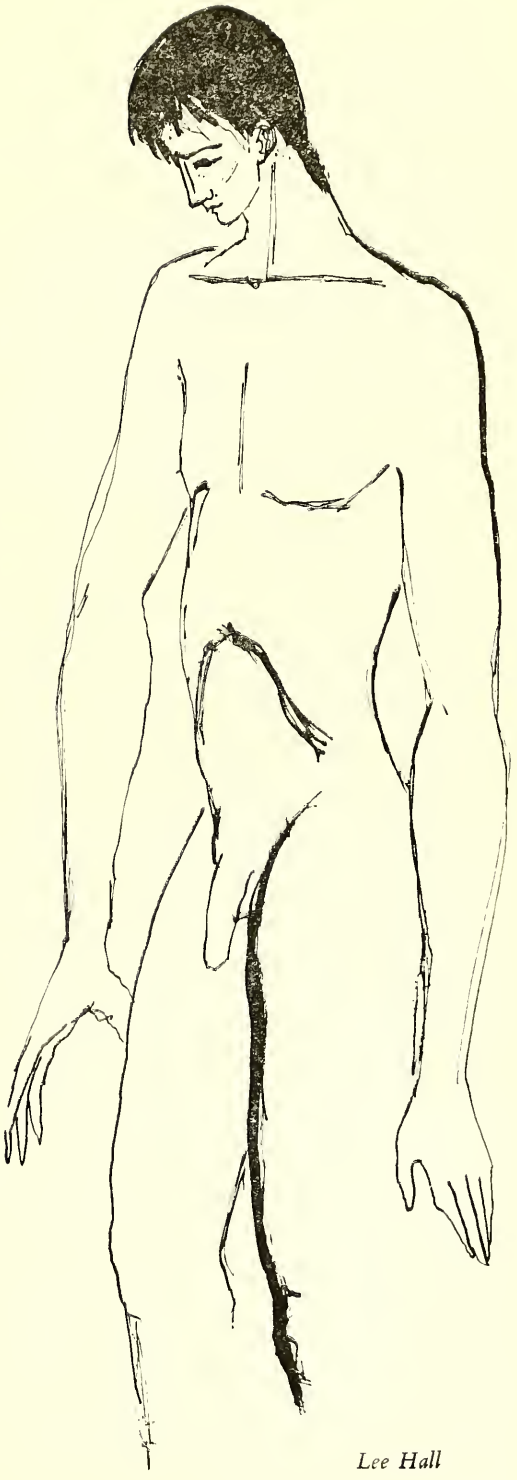
"Where you goin'?" I asked.

"Oh," he answered, "to Cha'leston, maybe, or maybe New Yawk."

I waited for Thomas to say something and when he didn't, I asked, "How far is it to Charleston, Joshua?"

"I dunno. Maybe 500 miles. I been there once. I . . ."

"It is not. It's only 150 miles to Charleston. I asked my Daddy last night, and he told me. He's goin' to take me when I'm eleven."



Lee Hall

"Joshua," I said, "whatcha gonna do in New York?"

"Lawd, young'un, you jest don't know. They'se big money up there. My girl's up there already, makin' good."

Thomas said, "I'll bet you don't ever leave here. You're gonna be sittin' at the end of this tobacco row next year this time. Old Mr. Tom's . . . Get outa here. Here comes Mr. Tom."

Joshua scrambled up and started chopping between the hills of green, real fast. I watched him chop one little plant off into the dust and quickly cover it with more dust.

Jean Burgin

Thomas yelled, "Whatcha waitin' for? You crazy or sumpin?" He was all the way up to the shelter beside the tobacco barn, and I ran to catch up. The dust burned my feet as I ran, and I kicked my heels high into the air. We stopped under the shelter and sat on an old tobacco truck that was still there from last year. I saw a little tobacco worm crawling along the ground and put my foot out in his way. It felt good, feeling him wiggle across my toes. He was nice and damp, and he crawled on across with no trouble, as if I hadn't blocked his path at all.

Thomas said, "Why dontcha kill him 'fore the 'bacco gets big and he eats it all up?"

I didn't kill him. He looked so peaceful and unconcerned, crawling on across the ground. Thomas was mad. "I'm gonna tell Daddy you let a big ole' worm get away, and he won't like it. You don't have to help catch 'em this year, and I do. That's why you're so anxious to let him get away."

But he'd felt so good and cold on my toes with the earth that was cool from being under the shelter cooling the bottoms of my feet. "Ah, come on," said Thomas· "I'll race you to the ditchbank."

The next day was Friday and we couldn't stay in the house because Mamma was cleaning. Thomas said we'd better not go down to the field 'cause sometimes Mr. Tom complained about us bothering Joshua from his work. So we played like the Lone Ranger and Tonto awhile, but it was so hot and the dust was so awful and Thomas would never let me be the Lone Ranger, so I wouldn't play.

Just before supper that night we went over to Joshua's house. We thought maybe we could get him to tell us a little more about New York. It smelled awfully good just outside, like Joshua was cooking cornbread, and we knew we'd get some. But it wasn't Joshua at the stove. It was a girl. And Joshua was just sittin' at the table lookin' at her and grinnin' so hard you could see his gums an inch above his teeth. We just stood in the door, and Joshua said, "Come on in young'uns. This is my girl, Dinah."

The girl turned around and smiled and said, "Come on in, kids. We'll have food pretty soon."

So we went on in and sat down with Joshua. I couldn't think of anything to say, and Thomas was awfully quiet, too. But Dinah kept talkin', askin' us about school and such.

"I'll bet you like the summer better, when you don't have to go to school," she said.

Thomas didn't answer, and I said, "Yes'm." And then I could feel myself turnin' red 'cause you don't say Ma'am to niggers, and I thought Thomas would say something about it later. Right now he was staring down at the table. I kept wondering what we'd do about that, too. Mamma wouldn't like it, us eatin' at the table with niggers.

And Dinah kept on talkin' and askin' questions, and she never said "ain't" just like my teacher never said "ain't," and I was afraid to answer her, 'fraid I'd say something wrong. She sounded sort of like my mother did that time Thomas brought Richard home from school. And she looked sort of like my mother, too, except prettier. And when I thought about what I was thinkin' I blushed again.

Then she started settin' the table, and she was fixing places for Thomas and me too. I knew we should go. She put a knife and fork down beside me, and I couldn't help touching it to see if it felt just like my Mamma's. I drew my hand back real quick, but she looked at me a little funny and then smiled that nice smile.

When we were all ready to eat, Thomas got up and said, "Mamma's havin' chicken for us tonight. Guess we better go." And we both ran out the door and down the path. When we had jumped the ditch, we both stopped runnin'. But we never said a word for the longest time. Finally, I said, "Thomas, are you sure Dinah's a nigger?"

"Sure, she is," he said. "Can't you see she's black. But, golly, I felt funny in there. Wonder how long she'll be here."

I thought Thomas would say something to Mamma about it· but he didn't and I was glad. I was afraid she would say that Dinah was just a nigger that didn't know her place, and I didn't want her to say it. I did ask Daddy what made some people black and some white, and he said, "Well, some of us are born white and some black and there ain't a thing we can do about it."

Saturday we went to town to see Red Ryder. Thomas and I went to the show every Saturday because we didn't want to miss the continued picture that had the Lone Ranger in it. There weren't any seats down front and we had to sit about middle way back. I kept looking up at the balcony that was just above us where all the colored people were. I had never noticed before but I could hear them sayin' things, and I thought they must be angry at us. Then I thought, "Suppose the balcony falls down." Some-

times they do, I'm sure they do."

"Thomas," I said, "Let's move down front."

"The seats are all full down there, and you know it. Be still."

But I couldn't watch the picture because I was scared that it would fall, and I had to keep looking up. Finally some people left and we moved up to the front row and it was all right.

That night I dreamed that we were at the picture show and the balcony was falling and I was right underneath and I couldn't move and on the screen was Dinah's face, smiling and smiling. And then I woke up. I wanted to wake up Thomas, but I knew he'd call me a fraidy cat, scared of a dream, so I just slipped over real close to him and put my hand on his back inside his pajamas that Mamma had made out of the last colored chicken feed bag we had got. I was supposed to get a pair out of the next one. I went back to sleep and dreamed about millions of beautiful flowered chicken feed bags.

Sunday we had to go to Sunday School. It wasn't too bad. They just have preaching once a month, so it's all right except on preaching Sundays. We had to go right past Joshua's house. We usually stop in and get a piece of cornbread on the way, but we walked right past. I was glad Thomas didn't want to stop. We both looked in as hard as we could but we didn't see anybody—not even Joshua. We went on and stopped by the branch. Some little minnows were flitting around and we tried to catch some, but the water was awfully low and we couldn't get to them. We were late and Thomas' shoes creaked because he had got them wet. We sneaked in and sat on the back row of our class. But everybody turned around and looked anyway. Mr. Hokeberry was talking about Cain and Abel and how Cain killed Abel and then God turned Cain black. I tried to listen to what he was sayin', but I'd heard Daddy say the same thing lots of times. And I felt real funny, sort of embarrassed for Mr. Hokeberry and for Daddy and for Dinah.

We went down to the field Monday and Joshua was there. He was just starting at the end of the row. He'd soon be through hoeing this field. We just stood around. Nobody said anything, and I kicked a rock at the end of the row. It hurt my toe and I wanted to cry. I'd been hurt worse lots of time, but I wanted to cry anyway. Finally, Thomas said, "Dinah still here?"

"No, young'un" said Joshua. "She had to go back to work—left this mornin' real early. Sure do miss her, but she's better off up there." Joshua looked like maybe he'd stubbed his toe, too. He sat down and we sat down, too.

Thomas said, "Well, you still think you might go up to New York?"

"Dunno. I's gettin' pretty old. Dinah says I can go and live with her, but I dunno."

I reached over and started pulling at one of the strings on Joshua's overalls, and he put one arm around my shoulders—first time he'd ever done that.

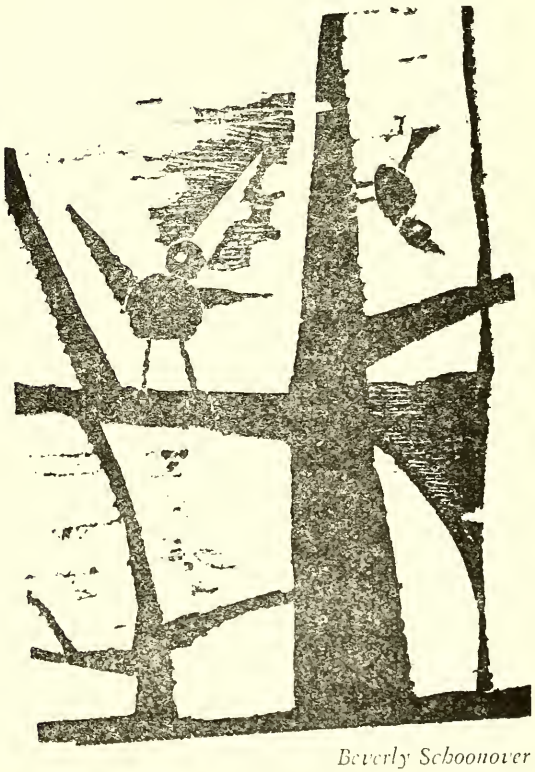
Thomas said, "I'll bet you don't go. You're too lazy to leave and go any place. Mr. Tom says so."

Joshua just smiled, but it wasn't his big grin. I couldn't see his gums at all, just a little of his teeth, yellow from chewing tobacco. We didn't stay too long.

When we left and walked on down to the branch, Thomas kept talking about how lazy Mr. Tom said Joshua was. I just wished he'd be quiet. We sat on a big rock with our feet dangling over. They just would touch the bottom. The branch was getting awfully dry.

Thomas said, "Boy am I glad that Dinah's gone. I felt awfully funny with her around." And I felt like cryin' again, and I was thinking how I hoped all my children would be born white, not niggers.

It rained that night.



Beverly Schoonover

(Continued from Page 6)

see if everything is all right, and about the only excuse I can find to talk to you is to call you up here to get your pay envelope. Here."

Boy, I was really shaky walking back to my machine. It took me a few days to get over that one.

Wouldn't you just know that Geraldine wouldn't say a word of thanks to me for all I was doing for her? When I came home after the first day, she asked, "Did you do it?" and when I said yes she asked, "Did anybody see you? Are you sure nobody saw you?" After that she really didn't mention it again, except every now and then she'd say in a nervous way, "Are you sure nobody's noticed you? Are you sure you haven't done anything stupid to give yourself away?"

Our lives went on pretty much as they had before. Geraldine cashed a check on her account about once a week. I never knew when she had done it until I got the debit slip and later, the cancelled check at the bank. Of course, she never spent a penny of the money. She didn't offer me any for my trouble. In fact, she never even offered to blow me to a decent meal, not once. That old gray purse of hers just kept getting fatter and fatter, and I often found her sitting and looking into it, fingering money inside the purse, not taking the money out, but counting it inside the purse, when I came home from work at night. She still complained as much as ever about the high prices and about how we were practically starving to death.

Jean Burgin

As for me, sometimes I felt worried and sometimes I didn't. Sometimes I saw myself caught, then fired, and walking the streets looking for another job, scared to come home and tell Geraldine that I had been dumb enough to get myself caught. And then other times, I felt like they couldn't possibly get me, I felt so good. It all depended on how other things went, you know, the weather and all that. Anyway, I had plenty of time to feel anyway I wanted, because I had no friends, and after work I never did anything but sit at the window and look out in the street, at all the talking people walking together, or lie on the bed and stare at the cracks in the ceiling. One thing I never did feel like was a criminal, maybe because I wouldn't let myself feel that way. I just felt like I was doing something my sister made me do, the same as I felt about wearing cheap, ugly little girl's clothes because my sister made me. I never could really see them sending me to jail, because I was sure anyone could see right away that I wasn't really bad, but just obeying Geraldine.

We got caught after about two months, just when I was beginning to feel pretty much at ease about the whole thing. It was stupid of us to have kept on with it that long, because the ledger sheets from the dormant accounts were getting pretty full, and somebody was bound to notice sooner or later. But Geraldine wouldn't let me stop, even though she had a big pile by that time. Well, you can push your luck a little too far.

One day May, who was an old maid, much older than Geraldine, was proving my ledger, when she started staring a hole through one of the sheets. Then she picked up the sheet, clicked on her high heels over to me, and said, "Dolores, what is all this activity doing on a dormant account?" It was Stanley Morrell, and Co., and I had already debited $845 from it.

"I—I don't know," I said, but I guess I didn't say it very well, because she dragged me up front to see the manager, a sloppy German guy named Friedlich. He knew there was something fishy, and he finally dragged the whole story out of me, although it took him a long time to get me to admit that Geraldine was the brains behind the whole deal

Then, well, you never saw such confusion in your whole life. They kept telling me what a disgrace I was to the bank, how they had trusted me, and never would have suspected me, how this was going to cause a big scandal and ruin the bank's reputation and probably get them all fired, and how they would see to it that I got mine, all right. And all this time they were running around and trying to call the police and the downtown office of the bank, and Mr. Weill kept saying, "Terrible! Just terrible!" and they all were still trying to be pretty calm about it so the customers wouldn't know anything was the matter.

I won't say much about the trial and all that, because I was just weeping buckets and didn't even know what was going on during most of it, and I don't understand much of that legal business anyway. You can read about it in the papers; I hear it made headlines, because the bank was so big and famous that any swindle there would be big news. They never let me get a hold of any of the newspapers, the ones that had accounts of it, though. One thing I did find out is that this embezzling business is pretty serious stuff. Especially with a bank. Interstate commerce, and federal interests, and all that junk.

Anyway, the upshot of it all was that I got two years in the reformatory, on account of my being so young and under the influence of my sister. And Geraldine, well, she was pretty calm at first, but then the grilling got too much for her, and she really cracked down, and became a nervous wreck or at least, so I am told. I wasn't allowed to see her, and don't really know what happened. They had been

planning to give her a pretty long stretch in jail, but after she broke down they sent her upstate to a rest home. My own sister, as good as in a nuthouse! I had always said to myself that she was crazy, but of course I never really meant it.

Geraldine writes to me here in the reformatory very often. They must have given her something to make her forget all about our swindling, because she never mentions it in her letters, and once, when I said something about it in one of mine, she wrote and asked me what I was talking about. All she ever writes about are the few nice times we had together, and she makes those sound a lot better than they really were, and she says she hopes we'll be together again soon.

I always answer her letters.

Ellen Kjosnes

HUMANS, BLADES AND FAITH

Continued from Page 8

You might say it was the war; you might say it was the human; you might say it was nothing.

And when they found his body they bowed their heads and knew that that woman had caused all this; that damn woman and they wanted the body to be hers and then they would just leave her there and let things walk over her forever; they would leave her there because they would never want to touch her—they would never want to touch her, and then they would go burn her paintings and the evil would be gone.

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