



Coraddi
MAY 1944



MISS MOLLIE BOWIE
*wears her May Court
dress of white marquisette
from*

MONTALDO'S

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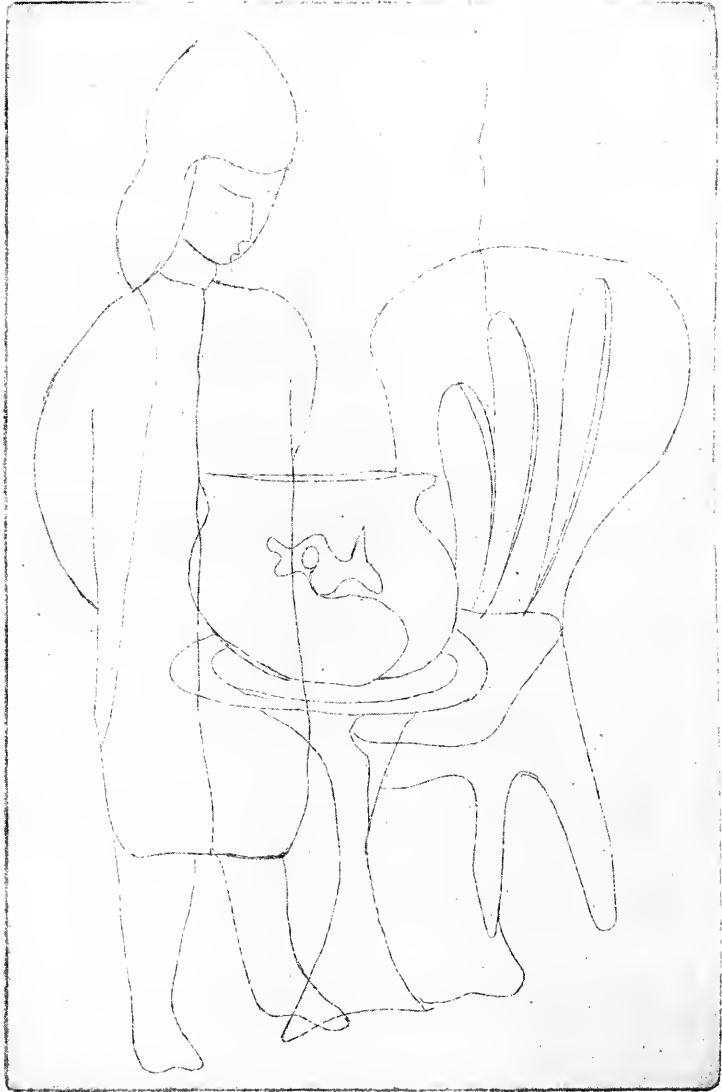
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GOLD FISH

Ginny

BREAKING GROUND

Breaking Ground can be done in early summer, and it is early summer as the cover girl, Frances Keel, reads her letter while sauntering along the familiar walk from McIver to the P.O. The camera was manipulated by Betty Bostian, rising junior, rising CORADDI photographer. Although literary magazines cast disdainful glances at the income-producing side of life, we call attention to the work of the co-photographer, Connie Cline, who gave us the portrait of Mollie Bowie, a senior maid of the May Court.

The various art staff members looked through piles of art work, hidden away in closets until exhibit time, and chortled gleefully at their luck in having access to it all. Everyone kept coming back to the Goldfish and decided that the campus should see the work of the new art editor.

Irene Kossow's "The Rabbit" has special significance for those of us who have known other rabbits. You all know Kossow, of course; you will remember her excellent narrative work and will be glad that she is a rising senior and not a blackgowned commencer.

Jean Ross is breaking ground in this issue of CORADDI with "The Gravestones Were Very White." Both the experience and the scene have a quality of timelessness which makes the story and writing worth remembering.

Biz Dilts, whose work has appeared in CORADDI since she transferred here last year, is breaking ground in a new way, for she is graduating now, and whatever she does will be breaking ground. We're already frowning

at the idea of not having her stories and poetry appear again next year. We recommend, urge, that you read her new story, "As I to The People."

All those who like Lemuel Gulliver and all those who know the land of WCUNCS will read with pleasure Angela Snell's gentle satire of both, and will probably find themselves somewhere in the interior.

Among the freshman contributions, we found a poem slightly whimsical, slightly shy, and appropriately called "Fantasy." It is with this poem that Gay Morenus makes her first appearance in CORADDI.

We found Nancy Kirby in an art lab the other afternoon, thoughtfully piling paint on a canvas, and, remembering her prolific writing, we realized that her lyric, creative spirit expresses itself in many different ways. She has been an especially good friend on the campus, and we are glad to see her graduate, but sorry to see her go. We recommend her two poems.

Jean Jorgensen is a cosmopolitan who knows Japan and other places involved in the war. We get what the erudite call vicarious pleasure from Jorgensen's poems—experience by proxy. They express an overwhelming awareness of this day and of this time. At the moment she is considering an offer to teach Japanese children in a United States settlement camp.

"Death Rattle" is an interesting name for Bonnie McCloy's humorous poem which should rouse a sympathetic chuckle from any Woman's College student.

THE RABBIT

By IRENE KOSSOW

I received a diamond in the mail today. It came in a little brown cardboard box, and was wrapped in a lady's handkerchief. The handkerchief is a pink cotton square with a spray of flowers and a wide border of machine lace. It is dingy, unpressed, and smells of "Blue Waltz." It is the handkerchief Soto had always worn in the breast pocket of his smock. His mother had given it to him on his fortieth birthday.

As for the diamond, it is only a chip, lost in the massive, elaborately carved setting of the ring. It's really quite an impossible ring, and I don't expect to wear it: not only because it is a man's ring, and a poor man's ring at that; but because it recalls too vividly our Sunday afternoon. The ring and the handkerchief, and most of all that vile dime scent—all pull me back a year to the day of my first and last date with Soto.

I remember what a hard time I had wrangling it out of my mother. I came home one evening last summer, and asked her if she'd mind if I went to see *Harriet* in a couple of weeks. She said, "Of course not, but where are you going to get tickets?"

"Oh, a friend's taking me."

"Really? Is it Roddy?"

"No . . . no . . . another friend."

"What friend?"

"Well, just a friend, Mother. His name is Hipolito Soto."

"Sounds like a hippopotamus."

"Well, he's not. Not a bit like one. In fact, he's just the other extreme—very shy and retreating. You might say almost like a rabbit . . . he really is like a rabbit, Mother, and just as harmless."

"Hmm . . . we'll see about that when he comes over."

"He can't come over . . . He lives too far."

"In that case, he can stay home. —Wait, you said Soto . . . isn't that . . . that's Spanish. Then he's from the hotel. One of those . . . those Spics!"

"Why yes, he is a Spic! He happened to be born in Puerto Rico. Is that a crime in your estimation?"

"Renee, I just won't have you associating with such people. They're not your sort at all. They live like pigs, and they're downright immoral. It's bad enough your having to rub elbows with them while you're working, but as for . . . now who is this fellow anyway?"

"Well, first of all, he's a Puerto Rican—and don't think that's a negro. He happens to be an assistant baker, and he makes eighteen dollars a week, and he can't speak English; but he bought three-thirty tickets just for me, and I'm going, and I don't care what you or Dad or the neighbors say about it, I . . ."

"Renee, not so loud! Have you taken a fit? If you must see *Harriet* . . ."

"I must not, but I want to—with him."

"For heaven's sake, what's got into you? If he can't even speak English . . ."

"Do you really want to know, Mother? I'll tell you: I'm going, because he's in love with me. Hopelessly. And of course, he knows it's hopeless, but I do feel sorry for him. It's only out of pity I'm going."

"Good Lord!"

"Mother, stop looking at me like that, and try to understand: he's a poor, rabbity creature, and all I want is to make him happy for one afternoon. Now if you had a chance to make a person happy, even a very insignificant person, wouldn't you do it?"

But my mother was still uncomprehending. To make her feel with me, I told her about Soto, his devotion, and how he came to buy the three-thirty tickets.

Soto's bakery was part of the hotel where I worked, and during our afternoon recess, I was in the habit of stopping by for a cup of tea with him. Actually, it was neither Soto nor his tea that prompted my visits, but the delicious cakes that always awaited me.

"Buenos dias, Amigo," I would greet him.

"Ah, Reena, hello. I gotta your cake."

"Have you? Lady Baltimore or chocolate with peppermint icing?"

"Which you like most. Choccola, no?"

"Soto, you're a dear. I could eat it till it pours out of my ears."

He grinned and smoothed a napkin over the table. Then he lifted the impressive cake out of the ice box, and set it before me, ceremoniously, and yet with great tenderness. When I cut a piece of no mean size, he protested, and laid another one on my plate.

"One more, one more, Reena. Wait!"

"But, Soto, how do you think I can eat all this?"

Soto was not perturbed. "One moment. One moment." He sprang away; sprang back with a saucer of ice cream and dumped it over my cake.

"Now really . . ."

"A la mode, no?"

"How in the world did you get it?"

"Ice cream chef gave me."

"Nonsense. He never gives away anything."

"He gave me."

"Soto, you really shouldn't. You can't afford to throw your money around like that."

"Please, Reena, you not mad? I like when you eat. You never eat such a cake at home; no, ha?"

"No, not such wonderful cake. Please sit down, Soto, you make me nervous. Why don't you have something?"

"I like to see when you eat."

"Oh, let's talk instead. I do hate to be stared at

when I eat . . . Say, Soto, that odd ring—where did you get it?"

He told me he had bought it ten years ago, when his wife had died, and he had gone out to sea.

"Real diamond here. Beautiful, no?"

"Very beautiful. May I try it on?"

He slipped it on my finger, but it was too large.

"I can make smaller for you. You would like it?"

"Oh, Soto, of course not!"

"It is gold. Here, look—10-K. Real. I gave thirty-two dollars."

"That is a lot of money."

Soto thought so too. He had had fifty dollars in cash after his wife's death; and before going out to sea, he had spent most of it on this rather gaudy *trinket*.—Why—I'd always had the notion that men drown sorrows in drink and sex. Then how could Soto drown his in a ring? It seemed uncanny, but now I think I understand: the ring gave him a new sense of importance. Perhaps in some way it was a substitute for his wife. She had been dead many years, but he often spoke of her.

"Very young—beautiful. Like you. Long hair, white neck . . ."

"Do you really think I'm that pretty, Soto? How old was she when you married?"

"Like you. Eighteen. I was her husband five years. Then they take her away."

"Who took her away?"

"The stars. It is in them what will happen to her, to you, me, everybody."

It was one of Soto's firmest beliefs that the stars control the strings of human destiny. It was his favorable topic. Once he was launched upon it, I knew he would drag on interminably, so I switched the conversation to a less trying subject: the movies, and how he liked them.

"Very much. And you?"

I said, yes, but I preferred the legitimate stage. Yes, theatre, you know. Like movies, only with real people. For instance Helen Hayes in *Harriet*.

The next day he showed me two tickets to *Harriet*.

"For you and me. We go together. You like it, no?"

I gasped; I fumbled; I wrung my hands. He merely sat and smiled wistfully. Finally I said, all right, I'd ask my mother, but chances were very slim.

When you analyzed the situation, I told my mother, you couldn't find a reason for refusing the poor rabbit. After all, I had known him long enough. For weeks I'd been spending every recess in his tidy, well-scrubbed bakery, eating the delicious cakes he helped to prepare. He probably thought I was poor, and couldn't get cake at home. Sometimes, when I had eaten my fill, the recess period seemed too long. There was nothing to talk about. Soto knew so little English, that our conversation had to be conducted partly in pantomime, and was consequently limited. But if we went to the play, we wouldn't have to talk . . .

My mother was still bewildered, and completely

unimpressed by my nobility of purpose. Nevertheless she had softened.

"I cannot give you permission to go to Broadway with him; but, if it means so much to you, Renee . . ."

"Not to me, Mother, to him. He's about a head shorter than I am, you know."

"Anyway, the play is out. You may see him only if he comes here, and only in the daytime." On those terms she remained inexorable.

Soto had been invited for 3 P.M. I was slightly taken aback when he arrived at 2:30. My parents were still out; only Roddy, complete with tweeds and golf clubs, was there, limbering up for his weekly match with my father. Roddy is an old friend of ours, but he is also Dr. Ferril of the city college math department. The thought of Dr. Ferril brought me a quiver of apprehension as I led Soto into the living room.

"Oh, Roddy," I said, forcing my eyes to speak between the lines, "Roddy, this is Mr. Soto. Dr. Ferril."

"How do you do," asked Roddy with courteous interest, and stooped to shake his hand.

"Gracias, sir."

"Won't you sit down, gentlemen?"

"Yes, do make yourself at home, Mr. er—what was it—de Soto?"

"Soto, Roddy, just Soto."

"Yes, of course, Soto . . . de Soto . . . what ever made me insert the 'de'? Oh, yes, a friend of mine by the name of de Soto. Do you happen to know him? A remarkable chap, and a first-rate gambler. Did all his gambling on the Stock Market. D'you remember when Burma Oil fell in . . ."

"Oh, Roddy!" But it was no use. He was already under way on one of those lengthy monologues, senseless, yet witty, and too-too debonair. There was no stopping him now. Soto merely sat on the edge of a chair. He didn't understand a word; he didn't know what was happening to him. Only after some painful minutes, when Roddy took time out for a 'Don't you agree?', did I succeed in putting an end to it.

"I don't think Mr. Soto is particularly interested in the stock market."

"Not really? But he ought to be. It is a matter of vital concern to every being at large in this nation of . . ."

"Soto, wouldn't you care for some tea?"

"Gracias, gracias," he stammered.

"Let me help you with it." Roddy was on his feet.

"No, don't bother."

"But I insist."

In the kitchen he leaned against the sink and grinned, while I prepared the tea in silence. Finally, I could not contain myself any longer.

"Will you please take that leer off your face."

"Was I leering? I'm sorry. I was merely contemplating Mr. de Soto's suit . . . the elegance of gold and purple checks . . . Do you happen to know where he gets them?"

"I . . . He has them made at Abercrombie and Fitch."

(Continued on page 14)

AS I TO THE PEOPLE

By BIZ DILTS

Every time she drove up the newly laid cement tracks of the driveway Claire felt awkward for the house. It was a good house, a well designed house, a graceful house, even. At first, she felt like protecting it because it looked so thoroughly not at home, with its clean, new brick sides and its too-white woodwork, but later she felt drawn to it because it made her less alone. When she came in sight of it she found her mind forming an equation: the house is to the land as I to the people. The Georgian red brick to the sparse, bright new grass and the stand-offish young shrubs as I to the soft-perfumed, confident-eyed women. And the sound of my heels on the new floors, of my voice among their voices.

Sometimes she was so homesick that she was actually ill. She dreamed in sleep or half-sleep that she was in the house they had left, the inconvenient, sturdy clapboard house with deepset windows. She found herself in the pattern of that life: Saturday night parties in the yard, Johnny's friends coming after school, Maria's wordless Shamrock-flavored songs . . . then she would awake in the new house, pine instead of maple outside her window and Roberta's soft shuffle and cooing spirituals downstairs instead of Maria's heavy clump and piping Irishisms. She would close her eyes again and assure herself that if she tried very, very hard she could be back.

If people would come to the house it would begin to belong to the land, she thought. They came, but they sat with their Selves in their hands and when they left, their Selves went too. Claire returned their calls, driving to their houses and walking up their grass-rimmed sidewalks. They were pleasant. And where was she from, and what did her husband do, and what church did they belong to, and did they like the South?

Roberta made the house empty, too. She didn't understand the electric stove, she didn't like to wash dishes, so she saved them for a long stretch of concentrated misery after supper, whining her spirituals at the new sink and refusing to master the new two-way drain. Claire remembered drinking midmorning coffee with Maria and tried it with Roberta, but Roberta would not drink with her. She plainly disapproved of Claire's coming into the kitchen. When she did, Roberta stood humbly before the refrigerator and stopped singing until Claire left.

Cam was different, too. The job was hard, and he always came home tired—home, Claire echoed bleakly—home to the new bricks and the faint smell of paint and the meals Roberta prepared with more valor than wisdom. She got a letter from their next door neighbors at home one day, and when Cam read it he laughed. She felt lonely then and tried to remember how long it was since he had laughed that way.

Johnny was the only one who was happy. He liked school and made friends, and little boys who said "Yes ma'am" came home with him afternoons. He talked to Roberta in the kitchen, and she heard them laughing easily in the evenings before supper. When she went out Roberta was silent and respectful, and Johnny seemed to wait for her to leave so they could talk again.

He played on the school grounds in the afternoons with hordes of hoarse-voiced boys in corduroy knickers. She saw him there one day and stopped to watch; they were playing football. Sometimes she couldn't tell which of the boys was Johnny. "Time out," he yelled, and she smiled when the other boys echoed, "Tahm at." One of them called him, without rancor, "Yankee." "Hey, Yankee—call the signals!"

While she was there a troop of colored children came by, books under their arms. They were going to Fogtown; their school was in the other Negro section, and they had about a mile and a half to walk through a white residential district. Some of them stopped and watched the football game for a minute; then they walked on. One day two of the children came to the back door to speak to Roberta, and Claire discovered that they were her nephews.

Roberta lived in Fogtown, too. It disturbed Claire to go there. Roberta was sick one day, so Claire took her some cans of soup. Colored children ran out of the clay street and watched the car with wide eyes. Claire found the house without any trouble and was admitted by a big cheerful woman who said, "Law, did you bring all 'at stuff fo' Roberta? Well, now, won't 'at sweet!" Roberta seemed genuinely glad to see her. There were little children peering from behind chairs, and the big cheerful woman said they were hers. "I brought 'em wif me so's I could watch 'em," she explained.

The house was small and badly built. The windows were closed, and there was a rancid, ashy smell everywhere. From the chair they gave her she could see the kitchen, with a sink and a big wood stove, and the front room, with dingy, massive mohair furniture.

Later she asked Roberta about the house; it seemed that they rented it for three dollars a week. None of the colored people owned their houses. The husband of one of the confident eyed women she had met owned the houses in Roberta's block. Claire told Cam about it. "That's terrible," she said. "Those houses are perfectly awful and they'll never make enough to buy their own . . . Do you suppose we could help Roberta buy her house? Then she could get it fixed up and everything, and—"

Cam chuckled without much enthusiasm. "No, no," he said. "The people who own those places



are the ones you can't tangle with here. Those guys couldn't handle owning property anyhow. Their system is to pay the rent and burn the rest of the money."

"I think it's awful," said Claire. "Everything is so smelly and dirty."

"Take it easy," said Cam. "This has been going on for quite a while, you know."

Some afternoons Roberta went home for a couple of hours and came back in time to get supper. She walked past the school ground, and she always made a point of telling Claire that she had seen Johnny there. "They' playin' ball," she would say. "They' havin' a mighty big time."

One afternoon she came into Claire's room all upset. Claire looked up, surprised. "What is it, Roberta?" she said.

"Miz Garland, you bettuh git Johnny home. He bettuh come home." She shook her head.

"Why, what's wrong, Roberta?" Claire asked. "Deya colored boy playin' wif 'em at the school. You bettuh git Johnny away."

Claire stopped. "Colored boy? Well—what's wrong with that?"

"Dey can't play together. Dey too big for that."

"Oh, Roberta, it's all right. I think—I think it's all right." She started to be pleased, but Roberta was so alarmed she decided not to. Roberta shook her head and went downstairs muttering. When Johnny came home Claire asked him about the colored boy.

"His name is Washington Cannon, but we call him Wash. He was on his way home," he said. "He played quarterback on our side and nobody

could hardly stop him. He's coming back tomorrow too."

She spoke to Cam about it, and he looked thoughtful. "It's probably not such a good idea," he said. "They don't like that kind of thing here. But I don't suppose it will do any harm, and—" he grinned—"it seems to please you. I am afraid you are a Yankee lady, Mrs. Garland."

Claire laughed. "I used to think you had to be from New England to be a Yankee," she said. "Here I am not just a Yankee, but a damn Yankee."

"Mother would be so proud," Cam said. They both laughed and Claire forgot about the little colored boy.

Johnny was excited the next day when he came home. He was dirtier than usual, and his eyes were brighter. "We had a fight," he said. "Jack was picking on Wash, so he beat him up." He said the words with relish. "He really beat him up."

"Were you in the fight?" Claire asked, amused.

"Naw,— we just watched. He called Wash a—" Johnny hesitated—"a damn nigger, so he beat him up."

Claire smiled. "Good," she said. "I'm glad." Johnny swaggered into the bathroom to get washed for supper. "Mother, why don't they go to our same schools, like at home?"

Claire watched the dirty soapsuds squash through his fingers. "There are so many colored people here," she said. "They might have fights like that all of the time."

"Boy!" said Johnny.

Johnny's school was out at 2:30, and Claire thought of him playing the next day. This experience is making me juvenile, she thought, picturing herself playing football with the perfumed ladies. Maybe that would give us something in common. It worked for Johnny, anyhow.

He came home very early. He was crying and when Claire met him at the door, she saw that he was trembling violently. "What's the matter, Johnny?" she cried. "Darling, what's the matter?"

He said things around sobs, and his mouth wouldn't close on the words. He was against her, and she felt the paroxysms of weeping with him. "They'll kill him," he said. "They're gonna kill him." Claire fell to her knees and took his shoulders. "Kill who? Johnny, kill who?"

Johnny's crying was terrible, agonized crying, his face contorted. "Wash," he choked. "Wash Cannon. They came and there are about a hundred of them and they're all hitting and kicking and there aren't enough of them and they'll kill him." His voice went from words into sobs and Claire sobbed too.

"Who are they?" she asked.

Johnny shook his head. "I don't know, but they just came and started fighting Wash, and then some colored people came, and then they got sticks and rocks and started going away, and they're all big people, and even grown men, and they're saying things at each other and hitting each other and they got bloody and I couldn't find Wash or

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THE GRAVESTONES WERE VERY WHITE

By JEAN ROSS

The dull boom of the blasting at the cemetery had been stopped nearly an hour when the procession started from the house a little after three. I sat between Inez and Mama in the front seat of Inez's car beside the scuppernong vine waiting for the other cars to start moving out of the yard. The hearse had already gone and I could see the sun glinting on the line of cars as it wound slowly up the road and went out of sight behind the pines at the bend.

Inez rolled down the window on her side a little. "I'm glad it's warming up."

"Yes." Mama unclasped her pocketbook and then snapped it shut again. She began taking off her black gloves.

"Did you all get here before dark last night?" Inez stepped on the starter as the car ahead jerked forward suddenly.

I had been reading the paper by the dining-room fire when the car turned in. The sound of it had waked up Toby and he had jumped up barking, excited at the sound of heavy footsteps so quick in the kitchen, and the door's slamming.

I pushed open the kitchen door, and he crawled under the stove while I opened the oven door to make sure there wasn't anything to burn. The dust was floating away from the road and was settling in the hollow below the garden; the chrysanthemum bushes in the shadow of the house looked cold and wilted; I knew it was going to be cold again that night.

And we had just been talking about Granny—she was sick, and Mama had been thinking about going to stay with her a few days, and we were talking about whether I ought to go along or stay there. Mama had looked very serious, kneading the dough and looking down at it while she talked. I thought about the dough, and how white and sticky it was on my fingers when I was trying to get the biscuits made in a hurry before Daddy got too hungry, with Mama not there to ask questions to. And I couldn't decide which would be worse, that, or having Aunt Allie, who couldn't ever remember whether I was thirteen or fourteen, pat me on the shoulder and say, "So Lucy had to come along with her Mama, too, hunh?", while I stood there not saying anything, just smiling. But I did like to stay there; and sleep in the front porch room, and hear the turkeys in the yard, and cars passing before it was light. And the piano and organ and talking-machine, all in the parlor—though I wouldn't be able to make much noise with her sick, of course. Doris and Mary would be there if Aunt Anna was staying a while; at least somebody would be sure to come by. But Mama seemed to sort of want me to stay, at least the way she said, "You can stay here if you want to—or go, it doesn't matter," made me think maybe so.

I was still looking out of the window, thinking about it, and sort of hoping she would change her mind about going or something would decide it for me without any trouble, when I heard the screen door slam. I was a little surprised to hear it so soon after she'd gone out, and I decided it must have been a salesman, and she didn't buy anything from him. I turned around as she came in the door. Her eyes looked a little larger, and rather tired, but she was very calm and almost matter-of-fact as she laid her glasses on the table.

"Who was it?"

"Marvin. He said he'd wait for us to try to get ready and go back with him. Mama's dead."

"Dead! Good gracious!"

"Go be getting our things together while I put out this fire and see if I can find Daddy."

I heard the stove lid bang down while I went through the dining-room into the hall. It didn't take us long to get ready, and the motor was still going when we went out; Daddy was standing by the car with one foot on the running board, talking to Uncle Marvin.

The sun had just gone down behind the cold-looking pines, solid on the horizon, when we left the road that wound through the fields of broom-straw, and low pines, and there was the house, before the road went up another hill. We turned in and came to a stop behind the only other car in the yard. I got out, and a loose-eared dog came loping across the yard making noises, "Br-up, br-up," and I was afraid of him, but Mama didn't even see him. We started across the yard. No one came out until Mama was opening the screen door, and then Aunt Ellen, in a white apron, had come out of the sitting-room that opened onto the back porch, her yellow hair looking sort of rough. She had opened her mouth in a kind of sob.

"Oh, Jessie, she went to sleep, so easy."

Mama almost sobbed then, too, and I followed them into the sitting-room. Aunt Anna had on her best brown dress. I smiled at Doris and Mary, and they looked at me, sort of surprised. Then there was a silence until Aunt Ellen came back in with two chairs, and I sat down in one of them at the foot of the bed.

"How's your cold, Anna?" Mama asked.

"It's worse. And I wanted so bad to come and stay with Mama and look after—"

"Ah no, she didn't expect you to come."

Aunt Anna put her elbow on the arm of her rocker, and stared at the fire, rocking once in a while. Nobody said anything; once in a while somebody swallowed or cleared a throat. I heard a car bounce on the road. Other cars kept coming—at least three or four in the next two hours. Mary and Doris and I had gone out on the back porch when some of them came in. Aunt Lela

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POETRY

FURLOUGH

*This moment—
Against cold backdrop
of torn newspapers left upon a vacant seat,
and women asleep in attitudes of death,
while urgency repeats the endless names
of people wanted at an Information Desk
—no matter that you never catch the name—*

*This moment
Must not last.*

*Let us go out into fading afternoon
where a clear white sky
Sends sunrays slanting late between thin buildings
And a high wind rises with the night—*

*Let us escape
To find forgetfulness
Of naked electricity
Until the final moment
When we return again
To say goodbye.*

—JEAN JORGENSEN.

FANTASY

*Down the longest path,
Straight into the sky,
Absent-minded, carefree,
Away stroll I.*

*I forget to make the turn
To my ten o'clock class.
I forget to keep my feet
From the wet, fresh grass.*

*I forget to keep my feet
From the soft, sweet air,
And I climb the white sunlight
Like sliding up a stair.*

*In the clear morning clouds,
No one will find me.
I laugh as all my lecture notes
Go floating down behind me.*

—GAY MORENUS.

MEMORANDUM

*Remembering now the sureness,
The communality of dreams
In the dark infancy of day,
I lament only the disparity
Between that time and this
And wonder at your forgetfulness,
But wonder without doubting
The impeccability and truth
Of anything that is yours.*

—NANCY KIRBY.

INSECURITY

*Today, my love,
I fear the military mind,
The men of war,
Who, versed in strategy
Of wise assault,
Can point with decision
To a spot upon the map—
Oblivious of the fact
That yesterday
In church
I lit a single candle
For your safe return.*

—JEAN JORGENSEN.

DEATH RATTLE

*I'll miss those midnight snacks,
and borrowed filthy lucre,
I'll miss those daily bread lines
and examination stupor,
and being jangled out of bed
with a thousand volt shock
by that three-alarm warning
that my roommate calls a clock.
I'll miss those winter evenings
with my beloved studies,
I'll miss my beautiful D's and E's
and my moronic buddies.
But on graduation morning,
do you think that I will sniffle?
Ha! Sentimental as I am
I shall but breathe a "piffle!"
Education's very fine,
and though I don't mean to upbraid it
I'll grab my sheepskin by the tail
and yell "bigawd, I made it!"*

—BONNIE McCLOY.

LAND OF THE WCUNCS

Another Voyage by Lemuel Gulliver

By ANGELA SNELL

The presence of humans continuing to be as obnoxious to me as when I first landed in England after my sojourn with the Houyhnhnms, I determined on May 14, 1714, to avail myself of the benefits of the sea air, which I felt would alleviate my peculiar malady. I engaged a skiff for boating on the Thames. Hardly had I rowed out into the middle of the Thames when I was caught by a violent undertow and carried out to sea.

I had drifted several days when I perceived a wide black line extending across the ocean as far as the eye could see. Taking an observation, I discovered that this line was the Pope's Line of Demarcation and that I was somewhere in the vicinity of the Americas. My reckoning put me in the latitude of 41°15 minutes south and in the longitude of 150°16 minutes west, which was neither here nor there.

Suddenly I spied a blue haze on the westerly horizon. Applying myself to the oars, I rowed swiftly to the west. Much to my joy I discovered the haze to be an island. Having thanked Providence for my safe landing, I cast my eye about me to discover something to satisfy my hunger. Finding nothing available, I was forced to drink my health and eat my words. I then proceeded to survey the island to ascertain upon what shore I had landed.

Suddenly, much to my amazement I heard a shrill cry "*Wolf, wolf, wolf!*" Expecting to see a pack of carnivorous beasts descending upon me, I turned in the direction of the cry. A band of females suddenly appeared advancing toward me. These females, unlike any I had ever seen, surrounded me and quickly bound me with silver chains from which hung silver hearts and other bangles. I was snatched up by this angry horde, carried to a red-brick, box-like building, and deposited bodily in a room. These females were like unto the women of England about the face, for these females had two eyes, two ears, a nose, and a mouth. Their hair was different, for some wore it curled like a poodle dog's and others left it drooping upon their shoulders like spaniels' ears. The bodies of these females were queerly shaped. Their waists appeared to have slipped to their hips, for the blouses they were wearing, made of a woolen material which conformed admirably to their body contours, extended below their hips. Below their blouses hung brief skirts similar to the kilts of Scotsmen. These skirts left their bare legs, I mean limbs, exposed to view. These females were astonishingly unrestrained in their movements.

After I had collected my wits, one of the females spoke in terms almost unintelligible to me, famil-

iar as I was with foreign tongues. "*Give 'im the works, goon child!*"

The female to whom this was addressed replied, "*I'll give 'im not only the B.A., the B.S. but also the third degree.*"

Then addressing herself to me she said, "*What's buzzin', cuzzin? No hemales allowed in the land of the WCUNCS during the week.*"

I replied respectfully with the tale of my journey.

The leader then said to me, "*Are you kidding? That's some line, brother.*"

A female of more mature aspect addressed the group. "*Lizzen, kids,*" she said, and pointing to me, "*this drip is a genial specimen of an archaic man. Let's keep him here to help us dig that Old English jive. He can jaw a little, and we'll get the drape of the real pronunciation.*"

Thus it was decided that I was to remain in the land of the WCUNCS. One of the females was appointed to teach me their tongue, which was *slanguage*. Through this personage I learned much about the land of the WCUNCS. The sole inhabitants of this land during five days of the week were women. On the sixth day the females journeyed to the mainland where they captured males. The men were held captive on the island for two days, upon the expiration of which they were returned to the mainland. This was the only contact which the females had with the mainland. Although particularly bloody battles were fought among the inhabitants of the mainland, the females gave them no heed. Yet the damsels took peculiar delight in adorning themselves with the insignia of the fallen combatants. The maidens most heavily laden with these trophies were known as *pin-up girls*.

The island of the WCUNCS was set aside as a school for young females. Here the girls studied the art of being slaves to men—the very men whom the girls captured by their feminine wiles.

Having learned the language sufficiently well, I was offered a tour of the island conducted by my tutor. Upon leaving the building in which I was incarcerated, we were accosted by a female of ferocious mien. She seized me by the arm and said, "*I'm a fiz ed major. C'mon and cut a rug with me.*"

My first impulse was to salute her as her rank of major required, but she carried me off to a darkened room where sounds comparable to the music of African savages issued from a glowing, red box. The major flung me around in a wild dance which my guide later told me was *jitter-bugging*. I found myself bounding against the wall and back into the arms of my partner like a rubber ball. My guide finally rescued me from the

clutch of this Amazon, but not before I was sorely bruised.

My guide and I then continued on tour of the island. Upon the exact center of the island stood an ivory tower. It was here that the various courses in the art of becoming slaves were given. Above the vast door of the tower were inscribed these words, "*The course of true love ne'er did run smooth.*" Upon entering the tower, my guide ushered me into a room from whence came fearful groans and noises of cracking bones. Filled with horror, I perceived several females creeping around on the floor in a painful manner. Others were hanging from bars as if stretched upon a rack. Still others were lying in a prone position and then gradually walking their feet up to their hands like an inch worm. My guide soon dispersed my impression that this was a torture chamber by telling me it was in reality a class in body mechanics, the first step in making the females beautiful slaves.

We next entered a room where lay a pool of brackish liquid. My guide explained that the damsels were dipped into this pool like sheep, baked in an oven, and hung out to cool. Upon the completion of this process the girls had a glazed coat of cosmetics plastered over their entire bodies. The girls were considered very beautiful then.

My guide informed me that the love making course had been discontinued for it had been discovered it was better to let nature take its own course.

The most important course offered was the course in coquetry. Here the girls learned to sigh becomingly. The instructor named Stankie was a native of Sumatra. These natives were renowned for their ability to *swoon-croon* as it was called. My guide conducted me to a darkened theater. Stankie stalked upon the stage and groaned into song. His bedroom technique had a curious effect upon the girls. Some fainted ecstatically. Others leapt about like jumping beans. All uttered poignant cries of "*He sends me,*" "*Solid,*" or "*Take me, Stankie, I'm yours!*" The heaving mass of girls resembled a living ocean, squirming, billowing, rising, falling with frenzied cries of the females. The biological explanation of Stankie's effect upon the girls, my guide informed me, was that the peculiar pitch of the crooner's voice caused sound waves, the breakers of which swept the girls off their feet.

Having observed me in the audience, the females desired to ascertain my opinion of their crooner. I replied in the vernacular, "*Stankie stinks!*"

These blasphemous words enraged the crowd and caused the females to rush upon me to tear me limb from limb. Fighting my way through the hysterical mob, I ran swiftly to the cove where my skiff lay hidden.

I rowed myself with the utmost haste out to sea. After drifting several hours, I was picked up by the captain of a ship bearing the English flag. The captain kindly offered to see me safely

home to England. During my journey I meditated on the obnoxious behaviour of the swooning girls. When I arrived in England, my wife greeted me by swooning. I became a thorough-going misogynist.

BUSINESS LETTER TO A BUSINESS MAN

Dear Sir:

This is to acknowledge:
Nothing.

We presume

You did not send one (1) lot

Because you have not got

Just what we ordered.

Not to say that your great firm

Is eaten with an inner worm

Of rust and negligence—

No sir, diligence

Is your by-word.

Absurd

To think your stock has sunk

Just because you are defunct

In one (1) product.

Do not apologize,

Sir, we are wise

And realize

You thrive

Whether retailers are alive

Or not.

We simply wrote to state the fact

That this would be our last contact,

Involving no contract.

(That, sir, being a mutual act.)

Thank you for the kindness you showed before.

We will trouble you no more.

Hoping your business will ever boom,

Affording you a marble tomb,

Now we close,

Remaining the same—

Oh, one thing more,

Would you look around on the floor

(It would be very kind)

Just look to see if you can find—

(If it's too much trouble,

Don't heed it,

But some old year

We might need it)

Dear Sir,

Would you write to tell

What the hell

You did with my immortal soul?

—NANCY KIRBY.

CAMP TO CAMPUS



NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

The mosquitoes down here are quite large. Why, just today a fellow from the Air Base was telling us one landed at the field the other night, and they put ten gallons of gasoline in it before they realized it was a mosquito.

SOMEWHERE IN CHINA

I got four swell letters from you yesterday, but I couldn't read one of them because it had been "washed in the drink" some time or other. I am sending the wet one back to you because I think maybe it will do the same thing to you that it did to me: it made me realize just how hard they try to get out mail to us—both ways. I couldn't help wondering what happened to the guys who were bringing it over the "hump." I guess I won't "gripe" quite as much from now on when mail doesn't come as often as I think it should.

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

But heaping insult on injury, my "working" partner was definitely a character. He neither worked nor stayed out of the way. He was about five feet, ten inches tall—average—with the quaintest rusty-colored mustache devotedly hovering over his never stilled lips. He seemed to want to impress me with his magnificence and importance and I didn't have the heart to discourage him, so he talked on and on without showing the slightest signs of fatigue. He had nondescript squinty eyes which seemed to place his Roman nose in quotation marks. His chin had a receding tendency and appeared to seek an acquaintanceship with his "Adam's Apple." His shoulders, despite the effort of padded clothes, fell incongruously in a straight line from his neck to his hip.

AT SEA

This life is better than I dreamed, but different. It is definitely the biggest experience to date in my life, and yet it is so simple—so peaceful. . . . Many is the time I've thought of you, and how you'd go nuts if you could be here. The sky is an altogether different affair—never have I seen such moons, such sunrises and sunsets—Always the world is beautiful, no matter what its mood—but not only is life good this way, there is something peaceful and satisfying about the whole set-up. The crew that was going nuts while we were in port is now content and happy. We spend days bathing in the hot sun, taking life easy—but it isn't boring—it's indescribable. . . .

Then we have the people: a more interesting lot could not be cooked up, from the captain to the mess boy they're an education. I see now what a cloistered life I've led—there's a tremendous other world which the people in the places we've known may know, having been around, but don't live in. . . .

SOMEWHERE IN CHINA

The shows we have here are the ones you see at home, and just as you say they are all about war. I don't see why they go to the trouble of bringing them over here because we don't like them. We go just to be doing something. Every time they turn out to be war stories, you can hear a groan go up from the men. It's not fair having war as a job and war for recreation. I guess they want us to see them so we will get mad, but God knows if being bombed out of our beds in the middle of the night won't make us mad, nothing will—if looking into the guns of Zeroes, watching A.A. shells blow holes in the ground so close you can smell the burnt powder, seeing your buddies go down in a burning ship, waiting for ships to return that never come back, not knowing where they are or how they are—If all that won't make a man mad I guess it's a hopeless case, because propaganda pictures won't do it.

SOMEWHERE IN ITALY

In the confusion of combining efforts to fight this war, we find ourselves rubbing elbows with soldiers of several countries. We have always been with the English—now it's the French, every type of man from North Africa and all the corners of the British Empire, and, of course, the Italians. Most of them have no idea as to how to run vehicles; especially those fellows from places where there are none except army vehicles. We get all kinds of ideas about the war. The English have the most convincing, "By God, we've seen London"; most French have a story about restoring honor, getting back to France; Moracs aren't sure—seem to care less; men from the far corners fight "cause we are a part of an Empire that had to go to war." Most of them seem to love a good fight. . . . Like, as long as they can do it hand-to-hand—and can't understand why the hell we use machines. . . . I wonder how many years it will be until these united men are fighting each other. And on whose side our children will fight. The right side, of course. But one's own side is always the right side, isn't it?

SOMEWHERE IN NORTH AFRICA

Another surprising feature is the number of reasonably modern buildings in the cities. However, such a thing as elevator service never seemed to occur to the builders, and it is nothing unusual to have to walk up five or six stories in a so-called modern building. Another paradoxical situation is that they'll build a so-called modern building and yet have the poorest excuse for sanitary fixtures and illumination; most of the stairways have "blind spots" which will break your neck if you can't watch your step.

It is also most interesting to be traveling along a good macadam highway and off a short distance see a camel caravan which looks as though it had been plucked bodily out of the Bible. I've counted as many as 100 of these beasts patiently plodding along with their Arab attendants and these latter, too, have not changed an iota since Biblical times, if we are to believe the pictures we see in the Bible. Certainly a fine example of contrast between the modern and the ancient. These Arabs are a peculiar lot. Their religion teaches them that insofar as cleanliness is concerned, it is only required to wash their hands, their feet and face—and they practice that literally. Flies are ever present by the millions, and the wonder is that there is any Arab race left at all. The vast majority live in hovels. Whatever and whenever, he takes a notion to go to sleep, that is precisely where he lies down and goes to sleep, be it on the sidewalk, shoulder of the highway, or smack in the highway.

SOMEWHERE AT SEA

Even in our relatively uneventful isolated life here, we see things that add interest to our days. The other night there was a rainbow of the moon, a pale yellow arch, seemingly only a short distance from the ship. Several weeks ago we saw a small sailboat, not more than thirty feet long, in the rough, cold sea, more than 300 miles from land. We passed within fifty fathoms of it, but neither vessel gave any sign. It seemed a little weird . . . human lives almost colliding in this vast nothingness, and yet ignoring each other. . . . What they were doing out there is still a mystery to us. Then there are the albatrosses. Those wonderful, large birds which follow and encircle the ship. . . . They have wingspread between six and ten feet, sometimes coming so close you can almost touch them. For the last two days we have had thousands (no exaggeration) of what the bosun calls terns, following us with the albatrosses. They are small birds, even smaller than the gulls on the Hudson back home. We're in a whaling area now. As yet I've seen none, but doubtless will.

The radio is a source of entertainment and a cause for nostalgic musings. Last night I heard the last movement of Brahms' First—also a lot of popular numbers and an occasional commentator. All the popular U. S. programs are available, but often at rather unusual hours. It seems one can't get out of touch, not that one wants to. Good old American commercial, luxurious, non-atmospheric ways appeal to one after a little of the more colorful but less sanitary and organized ways of the rest of the world.

SOMEWHERE AT SEA

My roommate, the junior gunnery officer, acted as chaplain at the little service we had last Sunday for the gun crew. I was standing there on the after gun-deck listening only slightly to his cowboy drawl falter over the prayer as my mind was wandering elsewhere, when suddenly my ears recorded a startling thought. He expressed his "faith in the eternal immorality of the human soul."

FORD ORD, CALIFORNIA

Last night I went to town for a few hours just to get away from a million uniforms, crowded barracks and anything that smells of G.I. I wandered around the small town of Monterrey, then walked up the highest hill in town, leaned against a pine tree, and looked out over the vast expanse of Monterrey Bay towards the ocean. I saw the dim twinkling lights of the town below me, a great thrill, and had a few moments of objectivity. I had a heart-to-heart talk with myself, and felt much the better for it. I need something like that occasionally, even if it is hard on the old ego.

SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

That one line struck me in the face. I sat down for some time afterwards and tried to think of some of the hard times you people might have. Try as I did, I could find nothing that showed that you were having it tough. . . . I received the idea that you did not relish the idea of going to these dances in the gym. Let's see—the last time I danced with a woman was well over a year ago. . . .

The last time I really saw a white woman was eight months ago. And it will be eight to ten months more before I see another one again. That is . . . if my luck holds out.

Did you ever in your life spend such a great amount of time away from those you love? . . . It's a queer feeling to talk to someone and out of the blue have the person change the conversation three or four times for no reason at all. It is not their fault that this has happened to them. You would deem the person insane, but we would not; for we know that they have been through a lot, and in most cases they will go through a lot more. Then you have the fellow who has been through hell and back, and he has the attitude of "I don't give a good damn." He is not just speaking, he means it. This type of fellow you will catch staring into space for minutes at a time. That's not bad at all, but the blank look in the eyes is the thing that gets you.

SOMEWHERE IN CHINA

We had quite a treat last night—Joe E. Brown was here and gave us a swell show. It was the first entertainment of the sort that the Eleventh Bomber Squadron has had since it first came to China. Cookie, I wished you could have seen these boys laugh. I haven't seen them really laugh since I have been here and I guess they really needed it. They applauded Joe so much he had tears in his eyes when the show was over. They always have felt that the Fourteenth Air Forces was forgotten by the "wheels" in Washington—so when Joe came in it made them feel like they amounted to something.

SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

There is one fact that we do mind; when we think about it we boil with rage. Every day that passes in this war men are dying, they are dying just so you and your friends may go on living the type of life that you are now existing. They are dying just because they want to see you live the soft retired life that you are now doing. They are dying so as you will not have to see the horrors that they have seen. The hard cruel fact is that you accept this death as a matter of fact. My God, I can't see accepting a man's life as a matter of fact. But yet you do. Why should you bother yourself with such troubles, for you and your kind are well away from all this. And you can well afford not to notice such things. Really, we envy you. Some day, though, you are going to hear that some one you know very well has stopped one, and then perhaps you will realize that this mess is not to be treated lightly. Until this does happen, go on and live a full life, for there are many that will never know what life is.



THE RABBIT

(Continued from page 5)

"Hmm. But then he's quite a cavalier. Doesn't your mother care to meet him?"

"He was supposed to come at three."

"Ah, but passion flies . . ."

"Shut up."

"You know, Angel, your taste in men is so varied. First I recall that halfback from Cornell; and then the fastest motorcycle—in Pennsylvania, was it?—And then Dr. Ferril . . ."

"Sinking low, don't you think?"

"And now Mr. de Soto."

"Soto, I told you!"

"Angel, you're sweet when you pout. I love the way your lower lip curls. Come here, let me kiss it."

"No."

"Why, Angel!"

"Oh please, Roddy . . ."

"That's better . . . Bittersweet. Where do you want to go tonight?"

"I haven't the slightest intention . . ."

But by the time the water was boiling for tea, we had decided upon the Casino.

Soto drank his tea hurriedly, like a dose of castor oil, and we were off. At the door Roddy shook hands with Soto again, and asked him where he got his clothes.

"From store," said Soto.

"Extraordinary.—Oh, Renee, I have a message from your mother: take him out the back way," he whispered in my ear.

I bit my lip; but then I did take him out the back way.

We went to Coney Island. Coney Island is the best place in the world for anonymity. On Sundays it teems with sailors, and careless, greasy women, and young girls who are old before their time. The scarcity of the respectable element suited me, for that afternoon I was peculiarly susceptible to raised eyebrows.

We started off by going to Lowes Coney Island. Here Soto became involved in a complication at the box office. Despite the cashier's efforts and the nudging of the queue, he seemed unable to grasp the fact that two sixty cent tickets cannot be paid for with one dollar bill. Inside we had the bad fortune to sit behind two bald men, who kept glaring at me, and grumbling something about "a hell of a stink from the Five and Ten."

After the show we went to Feltman's for beer and hot dogs. Our check amounted to forty cents; but Soto, in a splurge of defiance, told the waiter to keep the change from a dollar. The waiter bowed, and thanked him effusively. His servility was balm to Soto's soul, for Soto himself was the most servile of men.

Somehow, we found so little to say to each other that afternoon, that while it was still early, I said we had better go, my mother would be expecting me.

On our way to the subway we passed an archery range, and I noticed a gawky soldier shooting with a conspicuously bad technique. "That fellow ought to keep his shoulder down, at least," I said.

"You can shoot, Reena?"

"Yes, somewhat."

"Try, try . . ."

He started eagerly picking up arrows from the ground, until the proprietor came around and tapped him on the shoulder. "Hey, wait a minute, Bud, they're six for a dime, case you wanna try."

So I began to shoot. The whole range was probably less than thirty yards, and I did fairly well. By and by a few people came around to watch. A drunk yelled, "Lookit, she's got something there," and another, equally hoarse, yelled back, "Yea, but look at him!"

To this day, I don't know whether Soto understood, but he suddenly became aroused, and decided to shoot too. He must have aimed directly at the target, because all his arrows flew up and hit the ceiling. And the more determined he became, the more conspicuous were his misses. People began to jeer.

"Hey, he's after that there spider."

"What a joik; what a joik!"

I tried to explain to Soto that his point of aim should be below the target, but the finesses of technique were beyond his comprehension. Finally, the proprietor told him to cut it out, Bud, he was breaking all his arrows. Soto paid him, and said "Gracias, sir."

At the station Soto decided he had to have a picture of me, and had a man in a booth cut out two silhouettes of my profile. Marlene Dietrich might as well have posed for them. "My, what an imagination," I exclaimed, "I never would have recognized myself."

"You don't like it, Reena?"

"Why, it's a lovely profile, but it isn't mine."

"Like you—just. I carry it here with me. On sea, everywhere. For souvenir."

"Are you going back to sea?"

"Merchant Marine."

"How exciting! When are you going? What do you do at sea, anyway?"

"I am baker. Baker always important. I go next week, when I leave hotel."

"But why? You get your meals there, and your mother lives close by."

"But why I go? For you. You not there in hotel, then for me is left nothing."

"Oh how sweet, Soto! Are you really going to sea on my account?"

By the time we reached home, I was already late for my date with Roddy. To speed things up, I decided to bid Soto farewell at the door—the back door. He seemed reluctant to leave.

"Reena, I want to say something. If I would have one million dollars, I would marry you."

"Oh, that really would be something. Well, you just make a million dollars, Soto, and come back to see me, all right?"

"When I see you again?"

"Well, I don't know. I'm going back to school soon . . . But people's paths often converge unexpectedly."

"Reena, you are beautiful."

"Now, Soto, that is a gross exaggeration. I'm interesting perhaps, but much too honest to think myself beautiful."

"You will take the ring, please?"

"I really can't. Nice young ladies don't accept diamonds from gentlemen; that is, unless . . . Well, no, Soto."

"But you like the diamond?"

"Of course. It's lovely. I'll tell you what:—you will it to me."

"Will you? What it means 'will you'? I give you."

"No, no, you give me after you die," I said, and stopped short.

* * * *

We had quite a frolic that night. Roddy and I, —a good many laughs over Soto. Soto at tea; Soto at the box office; Soto as Robin Hood.

"Oh Roddy, you're mean," I giggled, "down-right mean. What if Soto isn't like Soto at all? What if he's a real Spaniard? What if he's had more affairs than you? Why, maybe right now he's living with some fiery Spanish Carmen . . ."

"No doubt. He probably strangled his wife to get her."

"Oh, rabbits don't strangle people."

"But they are malodorous."

"I never smelled a rabbit. Anyway, that's not his natural smell. He buys it at the Five and Ten."

"How did you stand it all afternoon?"

"Oh, I managed, thank you. You see, the hopelessness of his passionate devotion compensates for a great many things. Besides, he's the first man who's ever gone to sea on my account. Isn't that a worthy triumph?"

* * * *

Soto was a triumph, but only a minor one. I rarely thought of him during the past year, and then only as the epitome of absurdity. Soto, his gallantry, his passion, his pink lace handkerchief, were always good for a laugh . . .

But somehow now that I have his ring, all at

once, nothing about Soto seems funny anymore. He was a rabbit, yet—why do we mock rabbits? They are, after all, sweet and simple creatures. There are many of them, but they all want to live . . .

Well, it is always like that, I suppose: One is apt to feel sentimental about the dead . . . Still, I wish I had not laughed.

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NORTH ELM STREET

AS I TO THE PEOPLE

(Continued from page 7)

anybody—” His voice collapsed, and he buried his face against Claire’s breast. “Oh Johnny, darling,” she said. “Oh, no . . .”

Cam was home early. He rushed into the hall and called her. “Are you all right?” He shouted. “Claire, where’s Johnny?” She met him in the hall.

“You know then . . . Johnny’s in there. He saw most of it, and he’s awfully upset. You know—what happened?”

“Yeah.” He stared at her. “Johnny saw it?”

“M-hmm. Was— was the little boy killed? Do you know—”

“Three of them were killed, and a white man. The whole police force is in Fogtown. They’ve got a bunch of them in jail, and they’re guarding them.” Cam remembered that his hat was still on. He threw it on a table and went to the hall window. “Oh, God,” he said. “And you say Johnny saw it?”

“Yes . . . Cam, what’ll happen?”

He looked at the door to Johnny’s room. “They won’t come out of Fogtown for days,” he said. “They are about quiet now, but—” He strode toward Johnny’s room.

It was the next day that Claire drove off the smooth asphalt of Ashe Street into Fogtown. I have to see them, she thought. There’s something I can tell them, something I can say that will make it less hopeless.

It was the next day, but there were no washes on the lines, no pigtailed children playing on the dirt sidewalks. The shotgun porches were empty and bare, and the windows were like blank eyes. Claire turned into a narrower street and hesitated about going in the narrow drive into Roberta’s yard. She finally drew up beside the ditch and, getting out, walked the plank across it to the paintless house. She knocked. There was a tense silence. She shivered a little and knocked again. The door opened jerkily. Roberta looked different, prouder, confident, like the heroine in a Sophoclean tragedy, Claire thought.

“I ain’t comin’ today, Miz Garland,” she said. “Ain’ nobody comin’ out today.”

“Roberta, I want to talk to you,” Claire told her. “I want to—to—please—may I come in?”

Roberta frowned. She shook her head and opened the door. Claire saw that there were people in the room, men and women standing stiffly around the edge of the fireplace. She went in and looked around at their faces. I must ignore them, she thought; I mustn’t hear what they think. “Roberta, it—I’m—Roberta, I have to see her. That boy’s mother. Go with me, Roberta.” Her voice rose. The faces were impassive.

“I ain’t goin’ out. You shouldn’t a come down here, Miz Garland.”

“Roberta, I’ve got to see her—it was my fault, but I didn’t know, Roberta, how could I—”

“Ain’ nobody goin’ out.”

There was nothing to appeal to in the faces. The people did not move, did not look at her. Claire straightened and took a heavy breath. “Where does she live. Will you tell me where she lives?”

She drove back to the wide street and into another narrow one. The house was painted a dull yellow, and there were umbrella trees in the yard. The leaves were gold in the dust. Claire went up the wooden steps, across the porch. She did not have a chance to knock; a small round-shouldered Negress faced her in the doorway. Behind her was a tall, dark-skinned boy whose eyes rolled up at her because his head was lowered.

“Mrs. Cannon?” Claire began. “Mrs. Cannon, I wanted to— I came because— it was my fault, but I didn’t know how it could happen, and I wanted to tell you—”

The woman was looking across Claire’s shoulders. Her face was completely blank.

“Mrs. Cannon, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry,” she said. “I—” she advanced a step and was aware of more people behind the doorway. They stiffened and Mrs. Cannon narrowed the angle of the door.

“Mrs. Cannon, I didn’t—” They were silent. Claire stifed a sob. “I wish it had been my boy,” she cried. Her voice rang into the wooden house. The dark faces had absolutely no expression; the heads did not move. Claire turned and went to the car again. She heard the door of the yellow house close.

The Georgian house rose from the sparse green lawn, and the stand-offish trees trembled with disinterest in the gusty wind. Claire turned into the new cement drive and stopped the car. Her mind arranged an equation, and she tried to push it away, it and the hard, dark, blank faces.

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THE GRAVESTONES WERE VERY WHITE

(Continued from page 8)

didn't seem to want to go in; she kept standing there crying with her face in one of the old coats that was hanging on a hook. I wondered if they didn't smell musty, but she didn't seem to notice it. Aunt Carrie was patting Uncle James on the back, while he took his glasses off to wipe his eyes.

After a while Doris and Mary and I went in the kitchen, where all the young people were sitting around in a circle the size of the room, talking and having a good time in a quiet sort of way. I knew most of them at school, but not so very well. They asked me if Inez was coming the next day, and then if we were going to spend the night. Doris said they wouldn't, but I knew we would, and I wondered where everybody was going to sleep. But of course somebody would have to sit up all night; Pauline said her mother was going to. I wondered if Mama would.

After a while Doris and I went back to the sitting-room, across the back porch. The stars were very high and sharp, and the sky looked almost black. The air was very cold, and it felt good when we opened the door to the sitting-room. They had taken down the bed, and Grandma Williamson had been put on a cot; the room looked bigger, and most everybody was standing up. We went through the door that joined it to the parlor. There were a lot more people there then.

After a little while, Mama came in to sit in the parlor while the undertaker, who had just come, was doing the embalming in the sitting-room. She smiled at everybody and began talking to Pauline's mother. I wanted to go over and sit beside her all of a sudden. When she got up to go back out, I got up too, and followed her.

"Mama—I'm so sleepy, have any of 'em left?"

"I imagine they'll go to leaving soon. I'll find out where we're going to sleep in a little while."

I got a drink of water from the bucket on the back porch shelf, and met her as she came out of the sitting-room again.

"Go on to bed in the back porch room. Becky's going to sleep in there, and me too, if I go to bed."

"You're going to sit up?"

"Part of the time."

I had been sitting on the edge of the bed in the dark taking off my shoes when Becky, Aunt Claire's only girl, came in. Aunt Claire was following her, carrying some folded blue blankets under her arm and the glass lamp with the smoked chimney in her hand.

"Going to be cold. Better sleep in your slacks, Becky."

"O. K."

The window beside me was stuck and wouldn't

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go down all the way. I heard Mama come in once or twice. She lay down a little while on the other side; Becky was in the middle. She came around once and pulled the blankets over my back and tried the window again.

It had still seemed like night when Aunt Claire came in, looking very large with a man's overcoat thrown around her, and whispered to Becky that it was five-thirty. Becky got up in a while, but I

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stayed on; it was so warm after she left. Then I kept hearing bed-springs creaking in the next room, and doors opening, and closing again, until I thought everybody must be up but me.

Mary Emma, Aunt Ellen's oldest girl, came out of the kitchen as I was drying my hands on the cold, wet towel that hung on a nail by the back porch door.

"Hello. Sleep warm enough?" she asked.

"Yeah. It was pretty cold, wasn't it?"

She threw the water that had been left in the pan out through the screen, and followed me into the kitchen. Becky was standing by the stove. She didn't look at me.

"Go on in and eat," Mary Emma said.

"No, I'm not very hungry. You go on—there's not but another place or so."

"I've already had breakfast. Then you go on in, Becky."

Becky looked at me sort of sullenly, "Go on. I couldn't eat anything anyway."

I went in and sat down beside Pauline's mother, Miss Daisy, who was forking out an egg. She smiled at me, and I was scared all of a sudden that I was going to cry.

"Have a seat. You want some coffee?" She handed me the eggs, but I looked at hers spreading in a sort of orange jelly and didn't take one. Mary Emma brought in the coffee pot. I ate pretty quickly, since I wasn't very hungry, and went out through the kitchen. Becky was gone, but Mama and Aunt Anna were there.

"And how are you, Miss Louise?" Aunt Anna patted me on the back; her voice was too high and sounded a little quavery. She started saying something else to Mama, so I went out, and to the room where we had slept. After I made up the bed I went to the sitting-room. Uncle George and another man, Pauline's brother, I thought, were sitting close to the fire when I came in. They slipped back to make room for a chair for me, but they seemed to stop talking after that. Becky came in and waked up Jimmy, who had been sleeping on the opened-up sofa at the foot of the bed, and began helping him dress in the usual coaxing way. "Come on, Jimmy, put on your shoes like a good boy." After awhile I went back to the kitchen again.

After a while Mary Emma came in and got her black coat off the chair behind the door.

"Like to go over to the house with Becky and

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me?"

"Yes—I would." I was relieved to have somewhere to go at last.

We went out across the yard, where the gravel was crusted with frost; and under the cold shadows of the barn and crib Uncle George was standing and talking to Pauline's brother, with a cigarette in one hand and the other in his overcoat pocket, and his eyes on the ground until he nodded to us. We went up the hill to Aunt Ellen's slowly, with Becky in front and me last.

Aunt Ellen had been feeling bad and was in a bad humor. She was sitting in a rocking chair in front of the fire.

"Hello. How you all? You get another chair out of the kitchen, Ruby."

We sat in a semi-circle around the fire, with our coats still on. Becky still had on the slacks.

"I've done took one aspirin and looks like I'm going to have to take another if my headache gets any better."

Mary Emma came back in. "Mama, Bill's not staked the cow; he's out there with his slingshot, not doing nothing."

Aunt Ellen got up and opened the little window that was just a hinged wooden square out of the wall—that was the house Granny's daddy had built, and called, "Bill, now don't you forget that cow, you hear?" I didn't hear any answer.

Ruby brought some cookies she had made the day before, and we all took one. I was getting hungrier then, and wondered what we had for dinner. There would be a crowd there, large as a reunion.

"She don't look natural, lying on her back like that," Mary Emma said. I remembered that she used to have to go down and spend the night with Granny every night for a long time, but Ruby had for the last year or two.

We didn't talk much. Becky seemed almost angry about something.

"If she hadn't been so bent on going to Armistice Day—coldest day this year, till right now—"

"But she wanted to, and see Vera"—that was Uncle Clay's wife—"Clay'd been on her mind a lot. His death's one thing shortened her days."

"She never did grieve for Aunt Mary like she did for Uncle Clay," Mary Emma said. I wondered if she remembered when Aunt Mary died—it was the year I was born—or if she had just heard her mother say it a lot.

When the clock struck ten-thirty, Becky and I went back down the hill. The house below looked small from the top of the path. There were more cars in the front yard, and around the scuppernong vine by then. Going across the yard and then the back porch, I smelled the coffee broiling. That was the smell I always associated with the house. And I thought about mornings there with just Granny and Mama and me in the house. I felt

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somehow as if I didn't know her in the morning—coming back hoarse and phlegmatic from dreaming about people a long time ago—Grandma King, who hadn't been so sure she was going to like her as a daughter-in-law—people before I was born even . . .

The car bounced as we went over the gully between the road and the gravel churchyard, and I began to think about our going in, wondering if Inez would want to sit in the family section. People were standing around the church doors, and getting out of cars; the cars behind us were still rolling over the bump regularly behind each other. The car of flower girls had stopped behind the hearse, and they were lined up taking baskets from the undertaker. Mama went over to the car behind us, where Aunt Anna and some of the others were. Inez and I went on in; she went first. We stopped at the row beside the window, and I followed her in, past the knees of two men and a woman in a brown coat.

The church was rather quiet; the choir was watching the flower girls come in, with uneasy eyes. They were really too old to be flower girls; they were her nieces, mostly married. I heard the pallbearers on the steps.

They all sat in the three front rows of the middle section. Inez took a hymn book from the back of the seat in front; the piano sounded a little stringy. I was glad I was beside Inez; she was always calm at funerals. I was hoping "Nearer My God to Thee" wouldn't come first, but it did, and I held a corner of the hymn book. There were a couple of sobs from the middle section. "Doris and them, poor children, they're so tenderhearted," Mama had said.

They went up to look at her next, row by row. The older people had a sort of quiet look on their faces. I knew Aunt Ellen would stop the longest—and cry louder than anyone else. I knew Inez wouldn't go, so I didn't either.

The preacher was a little grey-haired man with dark eyes and a firm mouth, and he read the obituary notice as though he hadn't seen it before, and then talked—he always made talks at funerals. "For the greater part of her life, I did not have the good fortune to know this good woman . . ." I remember how the trees looked from the window beside me, mingled colors away off, and I could see the wind ruffling the broomstraw in the field beyond the churchyard.

I felt sort of empty in the stomach when he began to come to the end. I didn't know the last song. The people beside the stove opposite the choir looked a little wider awake. The men were taking hold of the coffin in the slight hush after the song. The undertaker and his assistant hurried to get the flowers all given out. The family followed the pallbearers out, aisle by aisle; and after they reached the door, everybody else stood up and began going out both doors. I followed Inez as she moved out behind the woman beside her.

I shivered as we went out in the cold air; oh well, burying did not mean anything—she had already been dead nearly a day. The flower girls stood in a circle around the grave, under the tent. Mama and the aunts and Granny's only sister occupied the canvas folding chairs arranged at one side. The pile of dirt and flint rocks and big iron rocks they had had to blast out lay on the other side.

The preacher was reading "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ." I could hear people talking in low voices on the edge of the crowd. "For I am persuaded that neither life nor death . . ."

I looked out toward the cemetery. The wind was blowing in the trees there, turning up the pale undersides of the leaves. Beyond the dark-coated people and the colors of the wreaths, the gravestones were very white.

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