

1894

*Sunday, November 25th*

Since I've formed this habit of writing everything down, I have to do it, even if I don't prepare my lessons. Today I'm going to tell something here that I don't want to write for Seu Sebastião. I can keep it a secret for a few days and then mama will have to know. It's just before examinations and I've said to mama over and over again that I can't present myself for the exams with my uniform all faded, and mended at the elbows, and she hasn't paid any attention. Mama's very good, of course I know that. I swear I wouldn't exchange her for any other mother in the world. But the life she leads, never going out of the house except to go to grandma's, does me a great deal of harm and embarrasses me. I know that if she compared me with the other girls and saw how different my uniform is, she'd do something about it. But she never sees anyone except grandma, the aunts, and the Negroes at

the *chácara*. I have absolute faith in my prayers to Our Lady. Whenever I'm in trouble I say the rosary and some powerful prayers I've just learned and I can be sure that she will certainly help me. I'm convinced that the idea that came into my head yesterday was from Our Lady. She didn't have any other way of helping me and so she gave me this inspiration. How could I have thought of such a thing myself? Particularly since the idea came to me after I'd begged her very contritely yesterday, to find me some way of getting a dress for the examinations.

In her drawer mama has a gold brooch that papa always says is going to be mine. I don't think much of this brooch since papa sold the diamond out of it. I don't like false stones and it doesn't even have a false one. I've already told him that he can give it to Luizinha. How can you explain that yesterday, just as I finished praying, such an idea came into my head? Mama says that this month there isn't any money to give me for a new uniform for the exams. Next month will be vacation and I won't need it any more. If I should speak to her about selling the brooch to a goldsmith I know she wouldn't agree and would hide it from me. I've pondered over this a lot since yesterday and I see that the only way to get a dress is to sell the brooch. I'm going to sleep on it tonight and I'm going to talk about it to Our Lady quite frankly. If she doesn't take the idea out of my head, it's certain that I should have the dress for the exams. Everyone in the house is asleep and I'm the only one awake now, at eleven o'clock.

Since my father's advice about only talking to my notebook, my life has grown worse and I think I'm getting even thinner. The girls at School all talk about my thinness and I wish they had all the chores I have, to see if they wouldn't be thin, too. If I could only sleep well, and eat peacefully, I know I'd get fatter. But for a long time I haven't even had half an hour for lunch.

Now I'm going to stop here, kneel, and speak to Our Lady again about my life. Only she can help me. Tomorrow I'll tell

here, in my dear diary, what I've decided to do about the brooch with a hole, without any diamond in it.

*Tuesday, November 27th*

I finally carried out my plan of taking the brooch and selling it. Could it be called stealing? I don't think so, since the idea was given to me by Our Lady.

But I must admit that I was very brave. The idea stuck fast in my head for two days in a row. Today I got up early and the first thought that came to me was that wretched brooch. And everything conspired to help me. Papa has a drawer with a bell where he keeps everything and it was in the drawer. I took the opportunity of their all being in the kitchen and turned the key very slowly, so as not to make a noise, and took the brooch. I took it to Seu Mendes. He weighed it and gave me thirty *mil reis*. I think he cheated me, I'm sure it's worth more, but I was so pleased at the sight of the money that I didn't complain. From the shop I went to the dressmaker and handed over the money for her to make me the dress.

I'm overjoyed with my idea; I'm going to make a blue wool dress with a jacket and a white vest; which will look like a uniform but also be good enough to go out in. I'm already dreaming of how elegant I'm going to be! Mama will only learn about my selling the brooch when the dress comes. I'm so happy that I even know what I'm going to say. When the dress comes I'll show it to mama and say, 'This was bought with the money from the brooch that papa said was for me when I grew up. When I'm grown up I'll have my teacher's job or a husband, and I won't need a brooch with a hole in it. Now is when it can be useful to me.' I know that mama's going to ask me why I didn't speak to her before taking this step. I'll answer, 'Because I knew that the Senhora wouldn't let me, and I had to have the dress for the examinations.'

*Saturday, December 1st*

My dress came today. I like it so much and I'm so happy!

Everything turned out the way I'd hoped. When mama and my sister and brothers saw it arrive, they rushed to see it, without understanding anything. I immediately told mama what I'd done and I was surprised at her not saying anything to me, and even more amazed when she went to her room, got thirty *mil reis*, gave them to my brother, and told him, 'Go to the goldsmith's shop and tell him I'm sorry I sent the brooch to be sold and that I want it back.' Renato went and came back saying that the goldsmith said he'd already melted it down and couldn't return it. I know Seu Mendes is lying. He wouldn't be so foolish as to melt down such a well-made piece of jewelry as that. I know he put a diamond in it and sold it, or he's going to sell it. But I don't care what happened to it. I'm so pleased with my dress and the success I'm going to have at School. Sooner or later things come true. My father is perfectly right when he says, 'The unlucky don't cry forever.' The remorse I might have felt disappeared when mama produced the thirty *mil reis* to get the brooch back. I'm very pleased with myself. I know I'm going to manage my life better. I'm smarter.