

The Magic Bag

Y York

Me and my bad friend Flo was down in the brush by the railroad tracks smoking her daddy's cigarettes like she makes me do. I don't like to but she calls me puny when I don't do it. Flo shows me money that bad Tom gives her so she don't tell on him. Bad Tom is always trying to see girls' skin that's supposed to be covered. Flo lets him cause he gives her money; nobody else does 'cause he don't wash, but Flo don't wash also.

I stall getting my dreaded cigarette, poke around in some train garbage like I'm fascinated, so maybe she'll forget I'm not smoking yet -- and that's when I find the plain but at the same time fancy, fabulous bag. It is soft like a fine quilt, but doesn't smell like polyester. A color close to purple, but not really, with a mysterious dark stripe down the middle.

I got my back to bad Flo, and try to hide it before she can steal it off me, but she knows I got something. She says "what you got there?" Nothing. "Then why are you so still, give me that." She doesn't even know what it is; she just knows if I want it she wants it.

She turns me around and her eyes go wide when she see my plain but at the same time fancy fabuious bag. She grabs it off me, holds it to herself, dances around, says it's gonna look real good with her Sunday stuff, and I'm too pitiful to own a fine bag.

I watch her suck on that cigarette and think maybe she's right. I don't have Sunday stuff. If I carry that bag, it would always stick out, look like I just stoled it.

Flo steps out her cigarette and I stand there feeling sorry for myself, she pulls the string to open the top of the bag, sticks in her hand -- sticks in her whole arm, pokes her head on in to see where her arm's gone, and real sudden like, she flips into the air and her whole self gets sucked into that bag. -- the bag sits on the ground, just like when I first saw it.

"Flo? Flo! Flo, you in that bag?" Boy, I feel stupid standing in the woods talking to a bag. I touch it with my toe. "Hey, Flo, you can't make me smoke cigarettes anymore, ha ha ha ha ha. You can't make me steal candy from Mr. Neal' store. ha ha ha ha ha ha."

The bag doesn't weigh any more than it did before. In the bottom of my brain I think maybe I should feel bad, but I don't. Flo's a sickness I could never get cured of. Now she's in the bag. I decide to bury it so Flo can't escape, come get even with me, think that I planned this like some bad trick; I didn't; if she hadn't been such a big thief, stealing it off me, it could be me in that bag.

I stick flo in my pocket and take her deep in the woods to the secret place she showed me where nobody goes. Start kicking up the dirt with my shoe, then digging with a flat rock. Boy

digging a hole in actual ground is very hard. I don't want to leave her shallow buried because I don't want her to escape. It takes me forever to dig half a foot. I'm huffing and puffing when I suspect I am not alone.

I jump up right before bad Tom jumps on my back. I musta smelled him. "Hi, Bad Tom. Whatcha doing here?" He says "I could ask you the same thing." I say, "Oh, just planting corn. Ha ha." The look on his face, boy this is not going to be pleasant. "hey, girl, he says. Want to see something fun?" Makes my skin crawl. But also makes my brain start to work.

"You got something fun, Tom? Wow, I got something fun too." I take the bag from out my pocket. His eyes go wide just like Flo's and he says "gimmethat." I better not, Tom. Something terrible might happen if you see what's in this bag. He comes real close, grabs my bag, rips it open, sticks in his hand. And he's a goner, just like Flo. Flipped up into the air and sucked down into my bag.

I heard myself call it mine. And I start thinking about all the people who treat me bad. I stuck the bag back in my pocket and headed back home. I stopped at the station to see if I could jimmy a candy out of the machine. I was kicking the machine and turning the knob of the hershey kiss when the south-north train pulled into the station. I looked out the window because I heard some foreign woman swearing. She towered over this little man, who covered his head like he thought she might whack him one.

Her coat was a cape, close to purple but not really, with a dark mysterious stripe down the back. "Oh, no." She looked toward my window. I knew she couldn't see through the dirty panes of the station glass, but I shook down to my toes from her glance.