

O-Bonnie

by Olive L. Sullivan

It was Saturday and my cousin Moira was in town for Thanksgiving. Now tell me why we have to have a week when our relatives all descend on us to eat and talk and be thankful when we could go about our busyness without all such foofaraw and be Thankful ev-Ary day of the week? Now don't get me wrong I love my cousin Moira but she does talk and talk and talk so a Body can Not think hardly. I was hiding from her—she wanted ev-Ary Body to take a walk together but that is just foolishness—when I walk in the woods I want it to be quiet—well little Zoe could Not find both her socks and she was explaining to my brother Marcus how she had left them right Here by her shoes the ones that light up when you dance or run real fast—I kindly wish I had a pair of those shoes but they do not make them in my size, my feet are real big like gunboats, Marcus says but I do not know what a gunboat is, I know what a bass boat is but you do not fish for guns and Marcus who is

Not Good With Children said why don't we just get you another pair and Moira said oh for goodness sake where is Aint Mary-Clare, she was just here I declare you is all like a Herd of Cats and she went outside and Aint Mary-Clare came in the other door wiping her hands on a dishtowel and said why where is Moira I know I heard her talking and I said she is always talking and that is how we know she is alive and Aint Mary-Clare said O-Bonnie it is sometimes a Curse to see too clearly and to say Exactly what you see. She always says O-Bonnie like that, like it is my name, but it isn't, just Bonnie is all, but names is funny because oncet I ast her if she Aint Mary-Clare then who is she and Marcus laughed so hard his face turned red as a Cherry and Aint Mary-Clare's eyes got real wide and she said O-Bonnie Aint is just a title means I am your mother's sister poor Diana and anyway I was telling you about Moira who came back in and said there you are, are we ready and Marcus said he had Something Important to do and we should go without him and I think he really did Not but did not want to go so he lied which he is always doing which is not a good thing but we left him anyway and Zoe said she was ready even though she only

had one shoe on and her overalls hitch was hanging down her back because she grewed so much they was too tight in the crotch but that weekend she wouldn't wear nothing else and Aint Mary-Clare said she would have to slide em off her when she was asleep and give em to the charity bag and Zoe did not sleep a wink for two days until she fell smack face down into a plate of potatoes left over from our big turkey dinner and we had to sit her up so she didn't drown in the brown gravy and she slept right through having her face washed and all—so Moira got us all lined up and marched us out the door and said Bonnie why'n't you lead since you know all the paths in the woods and I said to myself I wasn't showing her my secret spaces but I would take her by the spring and the pond she would like that and make-be quiet but she did not shut up the whole walk. It is one thing for Zoe to ast questions but Moira is a grown lady and a school teacher, but we walked and me and Zoe were shuffling our feet in the leaves and giggling but the dust made Moira sneeze so we stopped and then Moira ast if we would see any wild animals and I said Not Likely with the racket we is making and Zoe said she saw a giraffe oncet at a

zoo and did we have giraffes and I said no but I heard a man shot a goat oncet, he thought it was a Deer and he tied it to the roof of his car and drove it down out of the hills and showed it off so proud the boys at the gas station like to bust a gut because he still thought it was a deer and they wouldn't tell him otherwise and they still have a Polaroid picture of it up on the post by where they sell the beef jerky and bait and Zoe said O-Bonnie is we gonna get to fish and I said make-be next time— can you imagine being a fish minding your own business and big old giraffe face sticks down into the pond and starts to drink? and she said they have blue tongues as long as your arm I know 'cause I fed one a marshy-mellow oncet and it wrapped that tongue all the way around my hand and— sloop— pulled it right off. Your hand? I said, show me and she said no silly the marshy-mellow, that's what they eat, and I said imagine that blue tongue snaking down into your home if you was a fish and Moira said I don't think the fish have to worry about giraffes and I said okay then a bear, think of that, a big old bear face shoving down into your living room and then a big old bear paw scooping you up and throwing you down its big toothy bear

maw and nothin' you can do about it—I declare I would not be able to set foot nor fin rather outside my door and Zoe said are there Bears and I said yes but we won't see one because we are making Too Much Noise and then Aint Mary-Clare said she was tired so we went home. Me and Zoe went ahead and Moira's voice followed us like the sound of the creek over rocks or the way a 'lectric fan sounds like a radio that ain't quite tuned in and you think it is talking or make-be picking up a radio signal that has bounced off of Mars or whatnot and come down in the sleeping porch on a summer's night by mistake and then you start to think the fireflies are making patterns with their lights and make-be it's a code and then when you try to tell someone like Marcus or Aint Mary-Clare they make faces like baboons with stomach gas and say O-Bonnie you have such a wild 'magination go to sleep but now Moira and Aint Mary-Clare are talking about Wills and Aint Mary-Clare says Moira must be sure to take care of old Mr. Alan Duggan and Moira says who is Mr. Alan Duggan and Aint Mary-Clare says he collects vintage cigar boxes, the wood ones, not the cardboard ones—although those are my favorite with the bright colored pictures of Cuban

girls with big flowers like Rose of Sharon in their hair black as night, but Rose of Sharon is white or lavender and the Cuban girls' flowers is Red as a Berry and Moira says never mind all that, why do I need to take care of him? I declare you should all someday when you have a few minutes set down and write up a list of ev-Any Thing you think is important for someone to know when you Die with one sentence explaining why it is important and what in the name of the merciful Lord we are supposed to do about it—she always calls on the name of the Merciful Lord when she is exercised or upset enough though she don't step foot in church from one end of the year to the other—that is one thing we can agree on because I don't neither, not since they made me go to Mama's funeral and wear a scratchy new dress and black shoes that hurt my feet. When I want to be close to Mama I go into the woods by myself or I take Zoe and show her the things Mama used to show me and then I feel like She is Watching me but in a good way not like that creepy Butler boy who likes to peep into the ladies Room when they are resting as Moira calls it when we do our bidness in the toilet. So we were sitting at the big pine table after supper and Aint Mary-Clare

gave ev-Ary Body a piece of paper and a little stub of pencil and we commenced to making our lists and Moira said what are you All a-doing and Aint Mary-Clare said we is making your list and Moira laughed and said I wish my students were like you-All I tell them to write a list and they all look at me like I am from the Moon and someone asts if they have to write it on paper and I say of course and then that boy has to borrow some paper and a pen because all he has to take notes is his phone—which made me laugh when she said it because how do you take notes on a phone and Marcus says he will show me later—and Moira says and then they want to know how many Items should be on the list and do they have to use complete sentences and I said do we and she said what Bonnie and I said do we have to use complete sentences and she just gave me a Look and said and then when I walk around the Room to see how they are doing some of them will only have one Item on the list while I myself have thought of enough Items to fill the whole blackboard and yet you have all written your lists without ever being instructed and Aint Mary-Clare says snappish for her or we could be writing our lists Moira if you would stop talking so Moira gets

up and pours herself a cup of tea and then when she has walked around to read over ev-Ary Body's shoulders she sits down and says I declare Aint Mary-Clare has the longest list, and I look at it as she writes next to me and sure enough she has covered the page with her spiderly handwriting—the letters look like twigs, they are all different sizes and they make a pleasing pattern on the paper if I let my eyes go all soft and then Moira says what about you Bonnie, you have writ nothing at all and I said that's because I don't want you to do nothing when I am Dead, the only thing I care about will take care of itself and she said O you and Aint Mary-Clare said O-Bonnie and I saw that my name was the first thing on her list for Moira but there was no sentence or explanation why because I guess she thought Moira would know all about me but lord I hope I Die before Moira gets her hands on me—make-be I will just run away if Aint Mary-Clare dies. I tried to run away when Mama died but Aint Mary-Clare she took me in, and there is Zoe who is now my sister. Aint Mary-Clare got her from another cousin somewhere —make-be if Aint Mary-Clare Dies I will live with Zoe so I put that on my list, Zoe, with my sentence saying I would like for

me and Zoe to live together in this house forever and later when we read our lists out loud Moira's eyes get all wet and red and Marcus starts to cough and has to drink a slug of whiskey to get control of himself and Aint Mary-Clare takes my big red hand in her pale little birdy-claw hand and she says O-Bonnie like it is my name.