

# The Silent Partner

BY TOYA BROWN



Ora and I always giggled as we walked from seat to seat in the classroom every morning before school. It was our little ritual to keep from being bored during the 1 1/2 hours before class would begin. It was especially funny that day, because we had left our muddy shoe prints in all the desks on that gloomy, rainy morning.

Needless to say, The Reverend Mother was not amused to see mud in the desks that we did not have time to clean before her arrival. The elderly nun questioned the class for the name of the culprit(s). Someone rendered the name of Ora Harris for punishment. After an admission of guilt, she was asked why had she walked in the seats. Ora explained, and added to the statement that another person had walked in the seats, also. When asked the name of the other student, Ora stood quietly with her head down. That, of course, was my cue to come forward, but I continued to sit---inconspicuously, as The Reverend Mother asked the class two more times. No response. When Ora was threatened to receive 10 swats in her hands as retribution for her “dirty deed” and 10 extra ones for the “silent partner,” Ora, after a few moments, slowly raised her opened palms. I felt that surely I was not expected to confess or intervene---we were only eight-years old---I could NOT endure the “lash!” Coward. I thought that after the first ten swats, Ora would retreat and “call me out.” So I waited . . . and waited . . .

I held my head down as Ora passed me to return to her seat, tears streaming down her face and hands trembling from the pain. I thought that she would NEVER speak to me, again. I kept my distance at recess as she sat alone on the fire escape. But, after a while, as though nothing had happened, she approached me to play with her. During the next three years that I attended that school, she never mentioned the incident. . . and neither did I. After I enrolled in a public, middle school, I thought I would never see Ora, again.

Sixteen years later, as I sought an authentic relationship with Christ through confession, repentance and obedience, the Spirit brought the “muddy shoes” incident to mind and asked me to seek forgiveness from Ora. I found myself squirming, again, offering a multitude of reasons to cover the guilt and shame that I now felt.

After an intermittent search for thirty-six years, I found Ora. Before I dialed her number, the Spirit required that I pay restitution for the swats that Ora had endured for my sake. I inquired, "How much?" The Spirit responded, "Ten dollars for each swat." After a moment, I figured that \$100 was a fair price; I could do that. Quickly the Spirit injected, "Times four." I gasped, "\$400!" The Spirit said softly and smoothly, "Remember David. . ." (2 Samuel 12:1-5). I was reminded how King David had to pay four times the amount of restitution for his adultery with Bathsheba.

After I overcame my shock and reluctance, I called Ora and found that she had forgiven me years ago. I urged her to accept the restitution, and she said that God had answered her prayer and provided the money for a specific need. More importantly, she was able to convince her son, who felt that people took advantage of his mother's kindness, that God truly works on her behalf. As we talked, I asked her why had she not told The Reverend Mother that I was the "silent partner." She reiterated, "I knew, even as a child, that God would work things out." Such faith!

And He has. Jesus, during the Passion, stood silently before Pilate and endured the "swats" to His body for His "silent partners," the disciples. On that dark afternoon, Christ hanged and died on a rugged cross, enduring the pain and agony in His HANDS and feet, to redeem a lost world. Those who confess their sins, take up their crosses and follow Him will be healed, by His stripes, and they will reign with Him throughout eternity. Through Jesus, and metaphorically, through Ora, so will I.