

black Esther, inspiring her people to defend themselves in oppression and in prison; John Wilkinson, as the scorned woman whose wrath exceeded Hell's fury. And perhaps she saw herself as Jael.

For the marker in her Bible had been a clipping from the August 6 *Washington Daily News* relating the story from Judges 4:18 of the woman inviting the fugitive Sisera into her tent:

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here, that thou shalt say, No.

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

Were it not for the fact that throughout the Joan Little saga the Bible was made so much of, this story might be of only passing interest. But the saga was Southern, and to a Southerner no sinister or foreboding references in the Bible could be read to indicate wickedness rather than salvation. Sentimentality over religious passion can set people free, as Jerry Paul had proven many times in his practice. So when Joan Little took the stand on August 11, 1975, Paul would have her read the inscription in the Bible found in

her cell. The scrawl and the touching manner in which it was read were intended to melt the coldest heart on the jury—if there was any cold heart:

“This Bible was given to me on the fourth of July 1974, by Mr. Charlie Oden, to help me to endure the stress and hardships I was going through. It has helped me to make a lot of decisions and has comforted me when I had no one to turn to, so I called on God. Since the sixth month, 6, 1974, I have really learned the true meaning of faith and prayer. Faith more than anything, St. Luke, 5th Verse, 50th Chapter to 54th Chapter; also St. Mark, 14th Chapter from the 27th to the 32nd Verse; also John 14; also Jeremiah, the 3rd to the 14th Verse. These are just a few of the readings that have caught my attention during this time. I only pray that more young people can convert themselves before it is too late and turn more toward Jesus Christ for support and strength in these troubled times of today. I am no Christian or anything, but I am praying every day and night that I may get closer to God. To those of you that are without mothers and fathers, just think how blessed you are to have someone to love you and to be there when you really need them. Others, God is your parents for ever and ever and he'll always be there so you are never alone. Pray with all your heart and soul and he will answer your prayers. He can help you when no one else can or will. God will never turn you down. He is a forgiver of all sins. Each and every day, praise God and the many blessings he gives you and always believe in God and through God all things are possible if you only believe. Thank God our Father.

“Joan Little, 5th month, 8th, 1974”

Just as the prosecutors paid no attention to the Jael clipping, neither did they pay any attention to the citations in Joan's Bible. Had they done so, their summations might have been more powerful. To

begin with, they would have found that there is no St. Luke 5:50-54; the chapter ends with the thirty-fifth verse. Could she have meant St. Mark 14:50-54, the only chapter of the four she mentioned with that many verses?

And they all forsook him [Jesus], and fled.

And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

Therein lie the themes of betrayal in adversity, nakedness, warmth, and flight. And in Jeremiah 3:14:

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord: for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

The Lord speaks to the backsliding, offers the chosen deliverance. In John 14:

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

The theme of possession and mission. And, most important, St. Mark 14:27:

And Jesus saith unto them. All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

The theme of vengeance and chaos.

If the prosecution had argued that she was motivated by a distorted faith, in which a wrathful Jehovah possessed the sinful and the downtrodden and sent them on missions of vengeance, it would have been stronger than what they did argue with the pitiful Peachey as their instrument. A distorted faith would certainly have fit her family background. For her mother, Jessie Williams, was a religious fanatic. She would often consult a "root worker" or conjurer, who could purportedly cast spells through the use of roots with mystical powers: tree bark tea to bring back a wandering lover, quinine and mistletoe to accelerate birth, yellow root for a good appetite, snake root for anemia and diabetes. This voodoo of rural Southern blacks is deeply believed, according to Golden Frinks. Not Pentacostal, not Methodist or Baptist, the practice is inspired by the sections of the Bible dealing with leprosy and magic, and it is not unusual that a root man would be paid "to throw" for a person—or put a hex on an enemy. Frinks had said to Ms. Williams before the trial,

"Now Joan's going to trial. We've got people praying for her all over the country, and we've done all we can do now. If you know any place you can go, where you can find a root man who can do anything else, you go do so."

Joan Little was an "outside child," and as the oldest of her mother's children she was forced into the role of baby sitter for her mother's five children by Joan's father and four by her present husband. As her mother was off with her religion, and her father by