



Be Good, Sweet Maid: The Trials of Dorothy Joudrie (Life Writing)

Audrey Andrews

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January 21, 1995: Dorothy Joudrie is arrested for attempting to murder her estranged husband. Soon after, Audrey Andrews begins to write her book. Audrey and Dorothy had known each other as children, but the identification of Andrews with Joudrie goes beyond merely the accident of a childhood acquaintance. It has to do with being subjected to the same societal constraints placed on girls and women during the years immediately following World War II, the years in which they had prepared for their adult lives. Expectations, placidly accepted then, are now seen as unrealistic and unreasonable. Did these expectations have some part in causing the tragedy in Dorothy Joudrie's life?

When Andrews attempted to understand why Dorothy Joudrie had tried to kill her husband, and to write Joudrie's story, she began to examine her own life, her own expectations — those she had of herself and those others had of her. She also realized that telling the story of anyone is an intricate and often ephemeral pursuit. Any story she wrote could only be her version of Joudrie's experience. Nevertheless, it was important to be as honest as she could about her interpretation of that life. She determined to show carefully and accurately the damage that had been done to one woman — damage that is still being done to many others — through prejudice, attitudes, traditions and the institutions that are still the foundation of our society, and of our lives, everyday.

The result is a fascinating account of events leading up to the trial, the trial itself and the effect of Joudrie's trial on the life of Audrey Andrews.

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