

submitted by:  
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PART I

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Chapter 1

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From the beginning you must know that the word "sorrow"  
is a word I'm very partial to. It gives you a good feeling  
inside and besides, if I want to, I can sit all alone up in my  
room and think about Mother or Father or somebody dying  
and I can cry and cry all by myself. I know it sounds peculiar,  
but if I'm in the mood I can make myself cry any time I want  
to.

It's like my father's voice, the word sorrow, especially  
when we're at the farm. The farm is <sup>where</sup> ~~when~~ he mostly likes to  
have his high ball and talk about the soil. My father is quite  
well known for his unusual sense of the soil and he's exceedingly  
anxious that my brother Arthur and me learn to sense it too.  
You see, Father is a banker but he's also inclined to a number of  
spiritual ovulations. The Ashton Chamber of Commerce gave him  
an award for it two years ago. That's where we're from. Ashton.  
Ashton, Georgia.

it on 13  
hole

My mother is originally from Charleston, South Carolina but she's rather partial to Ashton anyway. The only thing about her is she's never been very fond of shirt-sleeves. She's much more interested in the way the English do things because they go on for centuries before ending up back in shirt-sleeves. Charleston is a little that way, too and Mother doesn't see why it can't be the same in Georgia.

Just frankly speaking, no one in our family has ever worn shirt-sleeves---at least not for years, not even during Carpetbagger days. Still, up until last year we were pretty frantic about ourselves. See, my brother Arthur is the last of the Whitfields. Of course, I'm one, too, but the girl---the last born---and only he can carry on the name. So it's all up to him now.

Arthur's two ~~and~~ one-half years older than <sup>not</sup> (I'll be fourteen in exactly eighteen and one-half days. July 17.) <sup>still,</sup> ~~But~~ I just can't tell you how much we've worried over Arthur. With him being the last of the Whitfields---well, it's been ~~exas~~ ex-as-perating! We thought he would positively never reach the Age of Transgression.

When he was a mere child even, he came back from his first day at school with a drawing of a red and blue apple. On the red side he had written "blue" and on the blue side "red." I remember Mother sadly showing this to Father, and in that strange, far-sounding voice she gets sometimes, she said, "You know, Allison, 'as the twig is bent, so is the tree.'" She had looked at Arthur then and Arthur, a blond, frowning boy with glasses, looked up at her almost wonderingly. But she only shook her head and sighed a sigh that seemed to last through all those terrible years Arthur crept through the Ashton Grammar School. And then a kind of hope

this way

appeared. He matured.

All this just happened last year. Up in Connecticut. Suddenly one day we turned around and there was Arthur---matured. It was a great joy to us all, as you can imagine, and it pretty much changed our lives---especially mine. That's what I wish to tell about, but I fear, and selfishly, it's most about me since Arthur had to go and get sent away. It's quite pitiful.

~~My~~ Mother is of the opinion that Arthur has had the profoundest influence on my life of anybody. I heard her telling Mrs. Ewing. But I'm not really so sure. I mean, there's my cousin Winky over in Charleston. She's exceedingly inspirational even if she is going to have to marry a cheap-rich northerner. It's torn my life asunder, Winky marrying someone like that. She'll lose all her heritage and have to live up in the north somewhere. She's affected me profoundly, Winky has.

And there're others. People in Ashton. Mrs. Ewing. She's the richest person in Ashton. And quite a number of my friends. My father is of the opinion that we're nothing but just a mix-up of everybody we know. I share this belief also. There's this one girl in Ashton---she's got four telephones in her house--- and she too has pretty much made me the way I am.

So, you see, it isn't just Arthur that's affected me, although I think it was him that first introduced me to the world of sorrow. His life, up until last year, was literally brimming with it. The main thing about him was he just never seemed to have any "interests." When Mother was his age, she was interested in everything. But Arthur just seemed to want to stare and flip through worthless magazines all the time.

For a long time we thought he was the way he was because of

his eyes. He's had to wear glasses ever since he was five even. At recess sometimes you could see him---always the last in line, looking as if he wanted to cry and his glasses almost bigger than he was. Mother was always talking to the principal, Miss Weems, about it. Miss Weems, though, said she didn't think spectacles had anything to do with Arthur's troubles. "He dreams all the time," she said. "He just sits there and dreams."

*galz*  
 But Father said there wasn't a thing in this world wrong with Arthur. "He's just slow, that's all." Which is probably why those horrid boys were always teasing him. They would come running up behind him and pinch him and then because they were quick and thin and could get away, Arthur never could catch them. The nicest thing about Arthur was he never complained and he never told on the boys. That is why we want something "grand" to happen to him. Mother's always going to church and praying something "grand" will happen to Arthur. I also.

The time I really prayed was after he appeared in that ~~piano~~ piano recital. This was way before he matured, but it was a special time because Mother believed at long last Arthur was getting an "interest." He would come dragging home from school and the two of them, Arthur and Mother, would sit side by side on the piano bench before the piano and Mother would count out loud as Arthur, his chubby fingers spread out over the keys and his mouth twisted in darkest gloom, fumblingly and loudly would play, "Three Little Indians." He liked the bass part, the part that sounded like a drum, and he always did this the loudest and best. But it was the top part that had nothing to do with Indians or drums that he never seemed to get somehow. Anyhow, we all went to the basement of the Ashton Grammar School to hear Arthur, in recital, play "Three Little Indians" for the one-thousandth time. Even Father came, leaving his office

in mid-afternoon. And the three of us sat together on the wooden folding chairs, anxiously waiting for Arthur's time to come.

When it was all over we rode home in silence---Mother, Father and myself crowded together on the front seat, leaving Arthur, alone, in the back seat to think out his tragedy. He had failed again, dreadfully this time. Everyone else, the quicker and thinner students of Miss Ames, the music teacher, had triumphed greatly, hurrying to the piano and without a single wrong note just rippling through their pieces. But, as Mother said, it was "sooo embarrassing, Allison." Arthur hadn't even been able to play the bass part, the part about the drums. Instead, he just struck wildly at any chord and had to begin fifty thousand different times before he finally gave up and red-faced and frowning, left the stage. And there we were, sitting tall and proud for everyone to see.

It was some time after that that Mother started getting these brown envelopes in the mail. They were school catalogues, she said, and I would watch her as she looked through the folders and stared at the pictures of all those neatly-dressed boys sitting around tables and reading books. They all looked as if they had "interests", these boys, and I knew what a disappointment it was for <sup>her</sup> Mother to look at them, other people's boys, and know what she knew about Arthur and twigs and things. Gradually, though, I learned what all the catalogues were for. I heard them talking, Mother and Father, and Mother was saying, "Something has got to be done about him, Allison." And Father said he guessed so, too, now. Then she started talking about this one school up in Connecticut. It had self-help in it, she said. The boys had to wait on tables and wax floors and stuff. Father said he was highly partial to a place like that for Arthur. "The more work, the better."

I listened and, frankly, I was horrified! They were going to send Arthur away! Way up to Connecticut! My own parents. Just doing away with Arthur. I thought of David Copperfield and a huge sorrow came down. If only Arthur'd been able to play the top part of his piano piece or gotten better grades or an interest---just anything! Still, I must say and it's really the truth: I think I really sort of enjoyed some of Arthur's troubles. I can't exactly explain it, but when I was sitting around and Mother and Father were going over and over all of Arthur's handicaps, I just sat there feeling warm and safe inside. You see, I'm quite thin and exceedingly articulated for my age. I have always enjoyed the pleasure of being the fastest runner in my entire grade. Some people might say I'm a selfish human being and I guess I am at times. But I'm also quite interested in the poor and down-trodden. And this makes up, I think, for my occasional days of selfishness. I think I'll get over it, though. It's much more spiritual if you do.

Anyway, it seemed a dreadful thing they were planning for Arthur. Way up to Connecticut! So one night after dinner I went up into his room and told him what they were going to do to him. He was sitting at his desk, tracing this picture off a magazine--- a soldier with a bayonet in his hand.

"You're gonna get sent away, Arthur," I said. "To school. All the way up to Connecticut!"

He just looked at me, his face, moon-faced and his spectacled eyes looking back at me, unblinking and round. "How doya know?" he asked.

"We've been discussing it," I said. "For hours. You have to wait on tables and scrub floors and stuff."

He put down his ~~pencil~~ pencil and didn't say anything.

"Way up to Connecticut," I said.

His eyes got rounder and I knew how afraid he was.

But the next day I discovered his drawing on his desk again and underneath the soldier was written: "ConnETicut. Conneti- CUT. Dam! I hope---THEY LIKE---me!!! Dam! Dam! Arthur. ARTHUR WHITFIELD. Georgia. I hope---" And below was a tiny picture of a man with glasses on.

I just stared at it, then very quickly scrambled some papers over it. I didn't want him to know I'd seen. It was just too vastly pitiful.

Well, we had an exceedingly difficult time getting Ar-  
thur into school. Mother and Father wrote literally every-  
body---thousands of letters---and Arthur had to go all the way  
up to the high school to take a test. We were extremely fearful  
about the test because of Arthur's scholarship, but it came out  
rather interestingly, we thought. It showed Arthur was quite  
inclined to vocabulary, but that he was very inferior when  
it came to arithmetic. He must have passed, though, because  
finally we got a letter from the school.

The letter was from the Reverend John D. Sykes, and he  
said that he was happy to inform us that Arthur had been  
accepted. He said---and he was sure all the trustees agreed---  
that he had always believed in geography and he felt a boy  
from our section of the country would add great measures to  
the school.

Mother and Father were overjoyed. I might add, I also. It had been very trying to get Arthur <sup>ac</sup> ~~ex~~cepted. Also, the letter came on Arthur's fourteenth birthday. It was his main birthday present. But ~~and I don't really blame him too much~~ <sup>very</sup> he wasn't ~~exactly~~ hilarious over it. ~~[He said he was, but you knew by the way he was hanging his head and everything that he wasn't. He hadn't paid too much attention to all the struggles we had underwent.]~~

Anyway, the next task was getting Arthur ready for school. ~~[I must say that I was rather ignored during this period, but I really didn't mind so much because it was so kind of pitiful---Arthur having to leave his own home and everything.]~~ All that late summer Mother was frantic getting him ready. Every day they would go downtown---Mother walking with quick, busy steps and Arthur dragging along behind with his rimless glasses and green baseball cap on. ~~[The baseball cap was a thing nobody understood.]~~ He wouldn't go out of the house without <sup>his cap</sup> it and nobody knew why; he wasn't on a team or anything and he never talked about baseball; he just wore the cap. ~~Anyway,~~ they would go weaving in and out of stores, buying sweaters and blankets and all that stuff. To look at Arthur you'd never guess it was him that was getting sent away. He did want this one coat, one that had a hood on it, but Mother wouldn't have it. They also had an argument about name-tapes. Arthur wanted the kind you glue on and Mother wouldn't have that either. She even made me stitch some of them on Arthur's socks. I hated it, because she was always making me rip them off if they weren't neat.



It was strange, but all the time we were doing this, Arthur never said one word about being sent away. The night before he left we had fried chicken and we were all trying to be very jolly. Father was talking about what an experience it would be for Arthur to be in the part of the country where history abounded and Mother said Arthur would love the snow, that maybe they even had skiing at school. Arthur just sat there, frowning, and finally he said in this very deep voice he has: "I don't think I'll go."

Nobody said anything for a few minutes, <sup>then</sup> ~~and~~ Mother said: "Why, Arthur! Why?"

"Just don't think I will, that's all."

"But your trunk and duffle bag are already gone!" I said. (This man with a black snake drawn on his arm had had a simply terrible time trying to get the trunk down from upstairs.)

"Yep," was all Arthur said, but you could tell by the way he said it he wasn't planning to go.

He went upstairs, and Mother and Father just sat there looking at each other. It was the most pitiful thing you ever saw and I thought about going upstairs and trying to cry but I wasn't in too good a mood, so I just stayed on downstairs and stared for a few hours. Mother said it was best to leave Arthur alone. "He needs to think for a while."

The next morning, though, she came very cheerily into Arthur's room and clapping her hands said, "Only a little while before train time!"

Arthur's over-night suitcase was lying open on a chair

by his bed. The only thing in it was his baseball cap.

"See, you haven't even finished packing," Mother said.

Arthur mumbled something and turned over.

"Up! Up!" Mother said. "Not much time."

Poor Arthur. It just wasn't the kind of day to be having to go up to Connecticut. It was warm and nice out and the sun was so bright it almost hurt your eyes to look at it. ~~It~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~was exceedingly glad it wasn't me that was getting sent away.~~

Finally, Arthur came dragging down for breakfast and during the eggs Father told him he should start thinking about going away to school as a privilege, that boys all over the country would give anything to have the opportunity he was having. Arthur didn't say anything; he just mumbled something about wanting raisin-bread toast instead of just plain white.

Later, when he came back downstairs, he was dressed and wearing his old green baseball cap.

"You can't wear that on the train," Mother said.

"Why not?"

"It just isn't becoming for traveling," Mother said.

"Now, here, take it off, Arthur."

Arthur shrugged his shoulders and stuffed it in his coat pocket.

"Put it in your suitcase," Father said.

"O---kay." Mother helped him fold it and put it in with his pitiful underwear.

All of us went to the train station. Even Velvet and Isaiah came. Velvet and Isaiah are colored and have worked

for us forever. Velvet cooks and Isaiah does everything. What I mean is Isaiah's not a real butler or chauffeur or anything. <sup>He's only Velvet's son.</sup> We're not rich and all that. I guess you'd call us only the third nicest family in Ashton. As I told you, the Ewings are the richest. They even have a swimming pool! But, anyway, Velvet and Isaiah are very partial to Arthur and that's why they came to see him off also. Poor Arthur. There he was, all name-taped and dressed in his new brown suit. He sat in a green pullman seat beside the window and I looked at him up there, bundled up in his suit and still chubby, and I thought how small he seemed and how tremendous the train was. Somehow I felt that Arthur, alone and unarmed, was going off to be killed. Then as his hand waved timidly good-bye and he tried to smile, the train began to move and I looked up at Mother; her eyes were filled with tears, but she was trying to smile anyway. I thought, "O Arthur, Arthur..." and sadly watched the great black train until it rounded the bend, carrying Arthur away, I thought, forever.

gal 4

But it wasn't forever! The very next night we were all jolted out of our beds by the ringing of the telephone. I lay in my bed and listened. I heard Father say, "Ohhhh, no." Then Mother said, "What, Allison? What is it?"

I crept to my door and looked out. Father was frowning and Mother was staring worriedly at the telephone. But then Father laughed a sort of soft laugh and said, "Well, thank you so much. We appreciate that. Yes. Yes. Tell him not to worry."

"What, Allison? What was it?" Mother asked when he put the receiver down.

"Arthur got lost," Father said and shook his head.

"Lost?" Mother said. "Where is he?"

"He's all right. He's at school now."

"What happened?" Mother and I asked together.

"He got lost in the station---in New York."

Arthur was supposed to change trains in New York, but somehow had got confused and wandered helplessly around in the station for hours. A policeman had found him sitting on a bench close to tears. The school had called to tell us Arthur had finally arrived.

"Oh, dear," Mother said. "~~Wonder~~ why ~~he~~ didn't <sup>he</sup> ask someone where to go?"

"You know Arthur," Father said. "He'd probably forgotten where he was going himself."

"I guess we should have had someone meet him there. Sometimes I forget Arthur's still such a child."

"At his age?" I asked.

"You'd better go back to bed, Felicia," Mother said. "It's late."

I walked back to my room with my hip out of joint (a thing I learned at camp) but nobody noticed. I heard Mother say: "Well, thank goodness he's there."

"He's there. He's there," I said as I fell into bed. Then, staring at the ceiling I had a vision: I kept seeing Arthur lying on some pitiful iron cot in a high cement room with bars on the windows. Blizzards were raging outside and there were howling winds.

I couldn't sleep and I kept having that vision over

and over. With all my heart I hoped they would like Arthur up there.

So finally, I got out of bed and went over to my desk. I decided I'd better write him a letter. I started off very cheerfully:

2/12/77

Hi, Arthur!

Nothing's going on here and we're literally bored out of our minds. I'm sorry about you getting lost in the train station. It must be huge. Mother and Father didn't mind at all.

I certainly do wish I was up in Connecticut. History must be abounding all over the place. I bet the snow is fun also. Isn't it? If they're mean to you, you can come home. Mother and Father won't mind at all. But it's pretty boring.

Miss White at school had to have a garter removed on her neck so we've got a substitute---Miss James. She's got this huge mole and sucks lemons in front of us all the time because she's horse.

I must return to my boring life again.

With Kindest regards

□ Your sister,

Felicia Carr Whitfield □

Very immature! But, of course, I was childish then. Only eleven. The thing was, I couldn't find a stamp so I never mailed it. I'm still quite careless like that.

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