

Chapter 10

Arthur really was developing. It was highly inspiring. Of course he hadn't matured yet or anything, but it looked like he had a chance ~~now~~ <sup>x</sup> You have no idea of all the opportunities he was having, night clubs and everything. Frankly, it made me feel rather pathetic. You see, I'm not a very widely traveled human being. The only place I've ever been is to Florida and Charleston and once to North Carolina when I went to camp. It's perfectly insane, but I've never hardly even been out of the South.

I guess that's another reason I grew so interested in Arthur's letters. See, I was really such a child---simply dying to mature myself. I got so tired of Mother and Father sitting around wanting Arthur to mature that I thought I could show them how good I was too. I guess you'd call Arthur a kind of pioneer, though, because actually he did mature first. I did only a month later, though. Mother and Father were thrilled.



~~But~~  
 And too, like I told you, his letters did help to get my mind off Mr. Hopper<sup>x</sup> and all. I just wish you knew how I was dreading that article. Even now I don't much like to talk about it. My hands start getting all wet and my stomach gets sick inside. I'd much rather talk about Arthur<sup>1/2</sup> on the ~~hill~~<sup>hump</sup> to maturation than I would about me dreading stuff and all. Besides, it's selfish, and Arthur getting matured's what I mostly wanted to tell you about anyway. Some of it's pretty pitiful but not all.

For instance, <sup>one</sup> ~~one~~ afternoon we got this letter from him and his handwriting was completely changed; you couldn't hardly read it. It was more of a printing than anything else and he asked us how we liked it. He said he hoped we did because this was the way he was going to write all the time now. Knox, his roommate wrote that way, he said. Knox also said everybody at Harvard wrote that way, but Father said if they did he didn't understand how anybody ever got out of Harvard.

It was the rest of the letter, though, that hurt us so. He said his clothes weren't right:

<sup>1/2</sup> ~~1/2~~ ...They don't wear the same kind of things up here they do down there. Knox says some of my suits are kind of hicky and he said when you get to be almost fifteen it's stupid to wear ties that have scotty dogs all over them and it is. He says his mother knows this store in New York City and if you'll just send me the money she can charge and I can pay her back. I can get my shoes hear all right. Knox knows the kind--like his. They call them white bucks but they don't have any down there in Ashton so don't go around trying to find them. Knox says he guesses I'll need about a hundred dollars for all this, that's all. Well, I gotta go.

Sincerely, □  
 A.

~~Poor Arthur~~ <sup>1/2</sup> ~~wasn't that pitiful~~ The only thing about it



Mother had such a terrible time reading <sup>it</sup> that she read white "lucks" instead of "bucks."

"White lucks!" Father said and <sup>he</sup> didn't sound hurt at all. "What in the world has come over that boy? A hundred dollars to make a sis out of him. I wish Arthur still had that boy who wet the bed for a roommate."

"Now, Allison," Mother said. "Perhaps the Northern boys don't dress like we do down here." But she added very sadly, I thought, that she thought Southern boys always looked nice.

"Of course they do!" Father said. And then he started telling about Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris is a bald man that runs Morriss's Store in Ashton.

"Bob Morris know what he's doing," Father said. "He and his father have been in business for more than a hundred years. If any boy doesn't think Bob Morris's clothes are good enough, he just doesn't know what he's talking about."

"Allison, really," Mother said. "Just because Mr. Morris is in the Rotary Club with you. Now let's just do this for Arthur. You know you wouldn't want to be different either. You know you wouldn't."

"White lucks, my eye," he said, and walked out of the room. But you could tell by the way he said it he wasn't planning to send Arthur the money.

It was all just too pitiful for words to me. Arthur up there, looking poor and hicky. The next day at school I started looking at all the boys' feet. Not one of them had on white shoes. All they had on were just these tremendous, terrible-looking brown things----the same kind Arthur wears. No wonder he didn't like it



*there he was with his*  
 up there. ~~What would you have done if you'd had to wear huge~~  
 horrible brown things <sup>and</sup> when everybody else ~~was~~ prancing around  
 in nice white ones ~~X~~ You'd feel terrible too.

Anyway, during singing I got this very cheerful idea. We  
 have singing once a week at school---all the schools in Ashton  
 do. This one teacher, Miss Leroy, comes in and blows a whistle  
 and we sing out of these books she brings. That day we just  
 happened to be singing "Poor As I Am." It starts off:

*gal 38*  
*poetry*  
*center on longest*  
*line.*

*1/2 x*  
 What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
 If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb  
 If I were a Wise Man I would bring a---  
 But, oh, oh, what can I give Him?  
 Poor as I---yam.  
*1/2 x*

Naturally, I started thinking of Arthur. Well, I went  
 and thought up the most immature thing you've ever heard of.  
 You see, I've got thirty-three-dollars and fifty-two cents in  
 the bank. I know it's very vulgar to mention your income ~~and~~  
~~all~~, but my money's been piling up in the bank ever since the  
 first grade, ever since ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> started up Bank Day. Every Tuesday,  
 see, we have Bank Day in which you are forced to deposit ~~a dime~~ <sup>money</sup> ~~X~~.  
 The principal at the end of the day puts it in the regular bank  
 downtown for you. So with all I'd banked, plus some my uncle gave  
 me, amounts up to pretty much.

So you know what I did? Honestly, it showed no sense at  
 all on my part. What I did was, see, I got one of Mother's  
 checks at home and wrote out one for thirty-three dollars and  
 fifty-two cents. I cashed it at the grocery store where Mother  
 cashes some of hers. I didn't have any trouble at all. Mr.  
 Becket---he's the grocer---said he was charmed to do it for me.  
 When I got home I found a ~~stamp~~ stamp and I just put the money in



an envelope without writing a letter or anything. I wanted Arthur to be surprised and not know where in the world it came from. I mailed it that very afternoon, but I made sure the money was wadded up in a neat piece of paper.

*START*  
Frankly, I was pretty happy about doing that. It's much ~~more~~ better to give than to receive, you <sup>know</sup> (Funny thing, though, my being so nice and everything kind of made me want to cry. People that do nice things always make me want to cry. I could just see Arthur in his white shoes and I knew how happy he would be. I thought it was cruel of Father not to send the money. I know Father isn't made of money or anything and a hundred dollars is a huge amount, but it did look like he could've sent half anyway.

Well--- I got caught. I'm the most stupid person in the world sometime. I'm so ignorant when it comes to economics it's simply a disgrace. I didn't know you had two kinds of ways to bank. I just thought if you had the money in the bank and wrote a check you could get it out. I still don't see why it isn't that way. See, all my money was in the savings part and I didn't have anything in the checking part so my check came back to Mr. Becket marked I didn't have any fund in there.

Mr. Becket called up Mother and she was stunned out of her mind:

"Why, Felicia?" she kept asking me. "Why did you do such a thing? Where is the money?"

"In an envelope." Her mouth was all pinched together.

"Well, go get it. This minute."

I just stood there, staring back at her.

"Well?"



"I can't get it."

"Why not? Have you spent it?"

I shook my head.

"What did you do with it?" She looked exasperated.

"Sent it to Arthur."

"TO ARTHUR! Did he ask you for it?"

I shook my head and kept on staring at her. I can stare just as hard as she can if I want to. We just stared at each other---for simply hours.

"They why?" she asked again. "Why did you send it to him?"

I thought I might as well go on and tell her. So I did.

She collapsed:

"Felicia, Felicia, Felicia, I don't know what I'm going to do with you."

I started beaming. I was so relieved she wasn't foaming with madness.

Finally she said she appreciated the sentiment in my act but that I'd gone about doing it in a very unwise way.

"I just wanted to help some," I said. "You know if Mr. Hopper writes a pretty bad article <sup>about</sup> ~~about~~ us, it wouldn't be too good for Arthur up there." I just thought I'd kind of add that in. I <sup>thought</sup> ~~thought~~ I might tell her about what <sup>all</sup> ~~all~~ I'd done---maybe.

"Mr. Hopper isn't going to write an article about us."

"I think he is," I said. Poor thing. She didn't know a thing about the picture.

"Well, that has absolutely nothing to do with this."

"I guess not." I didn't want her to start getting in a bad mood again.



Father, though, was pretty harassed. He didn't understand why the girls at the bank didn't first show him the check when it got there. He thought what I'd done would probably reflect back on all our character, because he said what I'd done was not quite honest. But he guessed it was because all the girls were pretty new at the bank and that, after all, it was just as well what I'd done because it also taught me a good lesson in economics. Boring. Father's very anxious I learn something about economics in case I ever get married or anything. Father thinks the worst thing in the world is for a person to marry a girl that is care-less about economics.

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But the main reason he was so hacked up was because he had sent Arthur the money also and ~~he, too,~~ <sup>too, he</sup> had to pay me mine back. As I've told you, my father is a very nice man, but he gets quite disturbed over money. He just literally loathes it when the bills start coming in. It's pitiful. It puts him in a horrible mood. I wish I would hurry up and marry somebody rich so I could help him out in these matters. He worries too much.

Well, there was pitiful Arthur up there, simply loaded to the gills. I ~~bit~~ <sup>bit</sup> he'd never had so much money in all his life. He wrote us a very nice letter in reply. He thanked me violently for the gesture on my part. He knew it was from me, he said, because of the way I wrote the envelope. He also thanked Father and said he was really glad he'd gotten all his new things because Knox had asked him to visit in New York for mid-semester vacation. He said they'd probably be going to a lot of ~~very~~ <sup>right class</sup> swish places and he didn't want to look "hicky." (Tragic.) But he also said he would write and tell us how much he would need.

That last, of course, was the worst thing he could have done.



"How much he'll need?" Father asked. "I guess he will."

Arthur just didn't know what kind of atmosphere was going on at home. Father said he couldn't wait to get Arthur home and show him what a dollar looked like. He said he didn't know how he'd reared up two persons like us. But Mother said to remember it was Arthur's birthday and that it was interesting, she thought, for young boys to have "experiences."

"Like night clubs?" Father asked.

"Now, Allison, you know better than that."

"Well, I don't. That Knox boy doesn't sound too bright to me. Arthur ought to be studying instead of thinking about white lucks and New York all the time."

~~Later, though, he said he guessed it was all right if Arthur went to New York and, of course, Mother was violently overjoyed. That's all she wanted to talk about, Arthur and New York, Arthur and New York---just for days. To tell you the truth, I finally found all that talk exceedingly boring. I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm the most peculiar person you ever saw. One day I'm pitying Arthur to death and the next day I'm bored all over the place about him. Just imagine! ARTHUR up in New York City! I kept seeing him sitting in some great silver night club, and there I was---at home, sending him money and working myself to the bone. Frankly, I found all this obscene beyond imagining.~~

My own life, in comparison, was just an endless line of cold sun and cracked sidewalks along which I would walk the way to school and then back again. Nothing good was happening to me. Only one sort of pale thing. I got forty-two valentines



on Valentine's Day. I didn't get one from a boy, though. Mary Ann Akers got three from boys, but she's this very plump person. You have to be plump for the boys to like you. I didn't care, though. There wasn't a soul else in school that could run faster than me and I hadn't made any "D's" either. ~~Still, there was Arthur up there, visiting in castles and waltzing around in night clubs. And he had made a thousand "D's."~~

Then to add to all this, <sup>4</sup> Arthur's letter describing his visit in New York was three pieces of theme paper packed with joy. When I got home from my obnoxious music lesson, Mother had just finished reading his letter. I saw it in her hand, the folded pages all wadded up and half-sticking out of this very small envelope. Her face was flushed and she seemed happier almost than I'd ever seen her.

"We've had the grandest letter from Arthur!" she said. "I'll read it to you when your father comes home."

"That's all right," I said. "I'll read it now."

"No now, let's wait until he comes. Allison likes to be with us when we read Arthur's letters."

I don't know why we always have to have a ceremony every time we get a letter from Arthur. They <sup>aren't</sup> ~~were~~ all that important, I don't think. But that night we sat down in the library and Mother read it to us. It was the longest letter Arthur had ever written and Mother said his new handwriting was improving vastly:

<sup>1/2</sup> ...First off, we went up on the train---I and Knox and another boy. The other boy was going to his house outside of New York which isn't too far from where Knox and them live. We stayed in the club car most the way and then we ate. But guess what? A ~~chauffer~~ <sup>chauffeur</sup> met us at the train. He was white and looks like Uncle Alex.



We got in this huge black cadillac, in the back, and then we drove and drove until we got to this huge grey house made out of stone and it was Knox's house. Knox's Dad is really rich but he isn't really Knox's Dad. Knox said his real Dad was dead but he acts very nice. Mrs. Campbell is surely pretty. She's Knox's real mother. He told me about it. But I can't tell. I had a room all to myself and this high bed. We ate in the hugest dinning room you ever saw. It had a fireplace in it, not like ours, but it was all made of silver. At dinner Mr. Campbell said I had a good vocabulary for a boy my age and he asked me what I was going to do and I said I guessed I'd have to be a farmer like you. Mrs. Campbell was always talking about me and how polite I was. She said she was glad Knox was getting Georgia from me. She said he needed manners. Anyway that night they got all dressed up and Mr. Campbell put on this top hat and a coat that had velvet around the collar and Mrs. Campbell put on on this blue dress and long fur coat and they took Knox and me to the---STORK CLUB! We sat in stripped seats and Mr. Campbell told this waiter he knows to bring us some cherry wine. Knox drank his and got blotto! But I didn't. There was a man in there that's been married 15 times---a real old man and Mrs. Campbell said he was going to get married again. The Stork Club is real small. But afterwards we went to the Kopa and it's even smaller but costs a lot of money. Mr. Campbell said Knox couldn't have another glass of cherry and I couldn't either. So we got a coke in there but Knox said they always put whiskey in all the cokes anyway and he was really getting blotto, but I didn't. That was the best night.

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Along about the last we had this dance. We didn't have it until then because I told them about me not being able to dance too good. But Mrs. Campbell showed me how until I got so I could do it just fine. She used to dance in a night club and really knows how. Anyway, all these girls came. Knox's girl is a real dame. Sue. But there was one ~~there~~ there better than she. Rose. Knox said he thought she had the hots for me and she would write. I haven't gotten one yet, though. Northern girls are a whole lot different from Southern ones. They're much more grown up and they hit you all the time. Also they yawn. Knox said one thought the way I talked was cute, but I don't think she'll write. You ought to hear the letters Knox gets from his girl---at the end. Know what I mean? Anyway, Mrs. Campbell said I could come back any time at all. I think I will. I sure do like them. And, oh yeah, she was glad I knew how to tip. They've got these two women for maids---white ones. And I gave them ten dollars a piece. Mrs. Campbell said she thought that was too much of me but I told her how surprised and all we were when Mr. Hopper didn't tip Isaiah and Velvet one dime for all they'd done for him. They didn't do anything for me, the white ones, but I just thought I'd tip them anyway. Anyway, Knox says he wants me to come up in the summer but Mr. Campbell said



Knox had to go to camp again. But Knox says he's not going because he's too old and I don't blame him. Well, that's all. There's a whole lot more, but I gotta go.

Love,  
A.

1/2 ltr.

Well, we were all astounded by the letter. When Mother finished reading it, she looked up at us. "Weren't they grand to Arthur?"

"Ten dollars!" Father said. "They must think Arthur's a millionaire."

"Yes, we'll have to tell him to be more conservative. But weren't they lovely to him?"

Father wasn't smiling. "Used to dance in a night club," he said.

"Who?"

"That Mrs. Campbell. Isn't that what Arthur said?"

Mother glanced at Arthur's letter. "Oh, that! Arthur just probably got that wrong. Anyway, she was certainly nice. I'll have to write her right away." She opened Arthur's letter again and silently re-read the end.

"What about all those girls?" I said.

Mother glanced at me but she didn't say anything. Then she looked past me, into space. After a while she said, "You know, Allison, I do think Arthur's developing. Don't you?"

"Developing what?"

"Oh, you know what I mean---becoming more mature somehow."

"More mature?"

"Oh, you know," she said and left Father and I alone. *no Father,*

"I do wish Arthur could make better grades," I said, but



I don't think he heard me. He was smiling and I knew he was getting very pleased over Arthur. He wouldn't get pleased over me even if I went to a thousand night clubs. Nothing about Arthur seemed very pitiful to me any more. Only me.

But then his next letter made me feel considerably better. ~~It~~ affected me profoundly. It caused Mother, ~~though~~, no end of worry and Father said he thought Arthur had gone crazy. ~~I declare, as I told you, we've nearly worried ourselves into the grave over that boy.~~