

Chapter 14

The reason I hate the Woods is because of what they did to Arthur. I don't mean Mr. and Mrs. Woods especially. What I mean is Margaret and Jonathan. Peg. "Everyone calls me Peg at Farmington," she said in this slurpy voice she'd gotten up.

Let me tell you about Jonathan and Peg. They are these very handsome people, both of them. Jonathan is tall and blond with this bored, bony face and white teeth. At Ponte Vedra he gets very tan and his eyebrows very light. His nose never gets red. The only thing that gets red about him is his cheekbones, and they don't get too red because he tans so much. He's always known how good-looking he is and you ought to see him on the beach. He wears these black and white checked bathing trunks and comes walking out and never speaks to anybody. He doesn't even make any splash when he goes in the ocean.

It's funny, but Peg is a brunette. Her hair is never messed

up and she wears it straight and under, except for this one wave she has on the side. She has green eyes and her mother's nose-- straight and not too long. Even when she was ten you would have thought she was fifty. Neither Peg or Jonathan have ever laughed. Years ago when they used to come to Ponte Vedra they had a white governess. She never laughed either and Mother used to make Arthur and I go over and have a tea party on the lawn with them. Jonathan never would let anybody else have any cookies and he sat there, gulping them all down and that governess never said one word to him. She hated Arthur and I because we didn't live in Virginia.

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The really odd thing is both Peg and Jonathan always have an awful lot of friends at Ponte Vedra. I don't see why, but they're always going around with a bunch of people. Jonathan is this big golfer and he and his father are always boring everybody about it. I think that's the most tiresome thing in the world-- people that sit around talking about their golf game all the time. No one on earth is interested in it except themselves. Peg plays tennis and I saw her one day. She has this white tennis dress and she serves the ball like she was doing a ballet dance. She's also very lazy, and when she gets through playing, her face never gets red or anything like mine does. She just very gracefully goes over and plops herself down in a chair. Peg is extremely popular but I don't know why because she never laughs and she's always looking like she was half bored to death. I guess that's the way you have to be to be popular.

Anyway, while Mother and I were bringing glasses out on to the patio and getting ready for the Woods, I just happened to say that if I went to Princeton the one club I wouldn't want to be

in would be ^lvy. She asked me why and I told her.

"Why, Felicia, I think Jonathan is a charming boy. His mother told me he was doing so well in college."

"Just because he got in that club," I said. "What's so good about that?"

"It's just a very interesting club, that's all," Mother said.

"I bet it's filled up to here with snobs," I said, holding my hand up to my throat.

Mother put down a glass on the tray and looked at me. "Felicia, since when ^{have} you gotten so interested in the word 'snob'?"

START "I've always been interested in it," I said. "There're about one million in my grade at school."

"They're not snobbish to you, are they?"

"No, but they're snobbish to just about everybody else. If you happen to be poor and live in some little gray wooden house, they think you're absolutely horrible."

"Well, that of course isn't very nice of them." She counted out some paper napkins and put them on the table. "But you be nice to Jonathan and Margaret. Remember you're entertaining."

"I'm not," I said. "I'll just be sitting here and staring like I always do. Nobody cares whether I'm here or not."

And they didn't. About six o'clock they came piling onto the patio, all dressed-up. Mrs. Woods is a brunette ~~with~~ with these streaks of gray in it. She's also very tan and has Jonathan's white teeth. She's the only one in the whole family that laughs, but every time she does you know she doesn't mean it. She was wearing a dark-blue polka-dot dress with long white beads. I guess she wanted us to see how tan she was.

The sun was going down and we all stood there like idiots watching the sun sink into the water. Jonathan and Peg were very bored, and then Arthur came out with his white coat on. I thought he looked very nice because he was smiling and shaking hands with everybody except Peg. He pretended she wasn't there. And then he dragged this chair up and sat by Mrs. Woods. I heard him say ^{to} her: "Mrs. Woods, do you go to the Stork Club? I mean, have you ever been there?"

I guess that sort of surprised Mrs. Woods because she started batting her eyes and said: "Why, no, Arthur. Mr. Woods and I don't enjoy night clubs very much."

"You don't?" Arthur asked and glanced up at Jonathan who was still standing and looking down at Arthur in a very inferior way. "I go all the time," Arthur said. "I've been to the Stork Club and the Kopa and even down in Greenwich Village."

"Granitch," Jonathan said. "Granitch Village, for god-sakes." He gave out this extremely sneering laugh.

Mrs. Woods turned to Mother, which I thought was very rude of her because Arthur had even drug up a chair to sit beside her.

Peg came over and leaned on this chair near Arthur. She was wearing a green dress and the left side of her hair was held back from her face. "I'm literally dying for a drink, ~~Jewry,~~" she said to Jonathan.

"Do you drink?" Arthur asked her and his eyes grew quite wide.

"Occasionally. Don't you?"

"I do when I'm in New York," Arthur said. "I don't do it too much in Georgia."

"Oh?" Peg said and kind of pushed her hair back some. She went over to Mother. "Missus Whitfield, this is terribly cute of you to have us over and everything, but I think I'm just going to have to dash. We're meeting some people for dinner."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Margaret," Mother said. "But you were sweet to come by."

"Well, I literally couldn't have stood it if I didn't get just a tiny glimpse of you and Mr. Whitfield." She looked very bored back at Jonathan who was drinking this very pale drink Father had poured for him. "~~Jawny~~^{Jawny}, I really think we've got to dash!"

Jonathan glanced at his watch. "Yes, we're meeting some people, I guess." He went over to Father and shook hands. "Thank you for the drink, Mr. Whitfield. Peachy."

"Sorry you have to go, Jonathan," Father said.

Jonathan didn't say anything and went over and thanked Mother. He told her he thought it had been peachy too. ~~Don't you think that's a stupid word? Peachy?~~

Nobody said anything to Arthur and ~~me~~^I and they started down the patio steps.

"Jawny," Mrs. Woods said. "I think Arthur would like to go with you."

Both of them turned and stared at Arthur as if they'd never seen him before.

"Oh, I don't have to go," Arthur said.

"Of course, you do," Mrs. Woods said. She turned to Mother. "There's an awfully nice group of young people here this year,"

"Would you like to come?" Peg asked Arthur in this very quiet voice.

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"Yes, he would," Mrs. Woods said, as if she were doing some huge favor for Arthur.

"Why don't you go with them, Arthur?" Mother said. "Arthur hasn't met any young people yet," she said to Mrs. Woods. (I guess it didn't make any difference that I hadn't met any either.)

"Okay then," Arthur said, and right away Jonathan and Peg started walking away. There was only room enough for two on the walkway, so Arthur trailed behind them, grinning. I knew how happy he was, and I hadn't minded too much not being asked. I guess nobody even thought of me because I'm such a goon.

"So cute, aren't they?" Mrs. Woods said, watching them as they turned to go up to the back patio. You knew, though, she was only talking about Jonathan and Peg.

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I thought we positively never would go to dinner. After Arthur and them left, we sat for hours talking about Barry Goldwater. Boring. Boring. Boring. Mr. Woods with his half-bald head and tremendous nostrils thought Barry Goldwater was practically the saviour of the universe. He thought people that didn't like Goldwater were communists.

Father didn't say what I knew he was thinking, but he thinks Barry Goldwater is inferior. I've heard him at home talking to Mother, and I know for a fact Father is not inclined to communism. He's quite partial to President Kennedy because he reads books and tries to keep up with what's going on. Mr. Woods, though, thought Kennedy wanted to give the government away. Boring.

Mother and Mrs. Woods were extremely nice to each other. Mrs. Woods kept talking about her ancestors all the time. She had this

relative that was in Millard Filmore's cabinet when he was President and now she has his portrait hanging in her house. She said it was so interesting because the man looked exactly like Jonathan. People were always coming in her house and saying it was a spitting-image of Jonathan. For the life of me I can't understand why anybody would want something that looked like Jonathan sitting up on their wall. Mother, though, ^{thought} that was just a lovely thing for Mrs. Woods to have. At least she said so.

I didn't get to say a thing, as is my custom, ~~you know~~. I just sat there, staring at the ocean and drinking coca colas. I drank three and on the last one I thought I was getting drunk. Lial Anderson---this friend at home, said she drank six once and got so drunk she couldn't even stagger home. Mother had this little plate of peanuts on the table and every time I got a chance I'd grab a handful and eat one at a time. I didn't have to pass because everybody just grabbed. [I really didn't mind not talking too much, though. My face was literally throbbing with sunburn and it was pretty chilly. ~~It gets pretty chilly at Ponte Vedra at night. Most of the time you have to wear sweaters. But I~~ just didn't much feel like making the effort of conversation with an older person. That really takes an awful lot of energy when you think about it.] S?

Mr. Woods started getting louder and louder with his talk about Barry Goldwater, and Mrs. Woods finally said she thought it was time for us to go to the dining room. I guess she thought Mr. Woods was getting drunk. He did sort of sound like it but I guess it was just his Virginia accent. The Woods said "about" for "about" and "hoose" for "house." It's kind of nice in a way. I thought about maybe developing a Virginia accent. [It's nice, but

~~but I wouldn't be snobbish like the Woods.~~ ^{Thank to} 7 9?

They were all very jolly going over to the Inn and I just kind of trailed behind them. Sometimes I remind myself of a slave. Thank goodness, though, the Woods sat at their own table and we at ours. Across the room was this long table where Arthur and about seven other people were sitting. I kept looking at them and I thought they should have given Arthur a better seat. He was all squashed in between these two older boys and nobody was saying anything to him. Everybody there looked like they were about Jonathan's age, but it didn't make any difference to Peg. She and this blond girl were talking to all the other boys and Arthur was looking down at his plate. I told Mother I thought it wasn't very nice of them to squeeze Arthur in like that. "How can he eat?" ~~I asked.~~

"I suppose they already had the table planned," Mother said. "They couldn't have known Arthur was coming."

"They all look so old," I said.

"The girls are his age," Mother said and then I saw her slowly put her fork down. She was looking at Arthur's table.

I turned, too, and the terrible thing was everybody was leaving the table. Everybody but Arthur! They all got up, even Jonathan and Peg, and not one soul said one word to Arthur. Not even good-bye!

"Where're they going?" I asked.

"I don't know," Mother said. "They seem to have left Arthur."

Poor Arthur. There he was, just sitting at that long table all by himself. Other people were looking at him too, and he wasn't eating or anything. He was just sitting there, looking down at

~~at~~ his plate with his shoulders all humped up.

"That's mean of them," I said. "They didn't even say good-bye."

I don't know why Arthur didn't get up or anything. Maybe he just didn't want to, with everybody staring and everything.

"Darn it!" Father said. And then he got up and went over to Arthur. I thought ~~he~~ ^{Father} was mad or something, but he wasn't. He kind of put his arm around Arthur's shoulder and leaned down and said something.

Arthur didn't look up, so Father sat down beside him and started talking. After a while they both got up and came over to our table.

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"Arthur and I are going out on the town," Father said. "We're going to a movie and then afterward, we're going to stop somewhere and have a bite to eat."

"Where did the other people go?" I asked.

"Dancing," Arthur said.

"Didn't they ask you?" Mother said.

Arthur shook his head.

"No one asked you?" she said.

Arthur just kind of looked away.

"That doesn't make any difference," Father said. "We'll show them. Won't we Arthur? We'll show them!"

Arthur nodded and I could have cried. [~~I hate the woods.~~
~~I hate, HATE them! Why are people so rude?~~] -2?

After dinner Mother said she believed she wanted to just go on back to the room. I guess she was feeling so sorry for Arthur that she just didn't have the heart to stand around in the lounge being nice to people.

I'm certainly glad we went back, though, because just about as soon as we got to the patio the phone started ringing. It was my Aunt Ann calling long distance from Charleston. Aunt Ann is Mother's sister and Mother's very partial to her.

"Oh, Ann!" Mother said. "What's the matter? Is something wrong with Pett? ... Oh, you had me frightened for a minute.... Why, yes, Ann! We'd love to have her. Will she fly down? Fine. I know. I know. Yes, I know. We'll do the best we can. Felicia will be so happy to see her..... I don't know. I guess we'll come over maybe in the ~~Spring~~ Fall. I want Felicia to come too. Oh, lovely! Yes, yes...."

"Who's coming?" I asked when she put down the receiver.

"Winky," Mother said. "Ann thinks she needs a change. I guess it's that boy she's interested in. Ann is simply frantic she may marry him."

I nearly passed out with delight. Winky coming to Ponte Vedra! She is my most favorite cousin in all the world. See, she's tragic. She's twenty-seven years old and still not married. It's the most pitiful thing in the world because she's had offers to marry and everything, but for the life of her she just can't seem to find anybody with the right connections, and all. You know, somebody from Charleston.

"Gosh, how long will she stay?" I asked, beaming violently.

"Just for the weekend. It'll be lovely to have her, won't it?"

"Sure will," ~~I said and kind of sighed with the pleasantness of it all.~~ Winky's a thousand times nicer than the Woods. She went to Wellesley and she's the most unsnobbish person you ever saw. ~~You'll like her, even if she is so tragic.~~ Also, I thought

I might could tell her what I'd done when Mr. Hopper was at home.
She wouldn't tell a soul. That's the kind of human being she is.
She's exceedingly inspirational.