

Chapter 19

...Man, am I glad Mr. Hopper didn't mention me in his article. Mr. Woodford, the one that teaches English, he read it and said for you all not to worry about anybody calling you all provencials. He said just about everybody was which is the truth. Practically everybody in New York's one. Old Jimerson, though, he teaches history and after he read it he said he'd always known the South had a lot of bigguts in it. That's just like old Jimerson, though. He was in the army in Georgia and he didn't like it because he caught malaria and had to stay in the hospital practically the whole time. He said that Georgia ought to be a challenge for me to try and influence. He and these Harvard boys are going to march around the South this summer and sit at dime stores. He said they'd probably get put in jail but they thought it would be a first hand experience.

I thought your picture was pretty good, Felicia. Everybody up hear thought our house was a good example of arcitecture. This boy got kicked out of school last week for cheating. I gotta go.

With Personal Regards, A.

P.S. Knox and them said they thought Mr. Hopper sounded kind of flitty.

*gal 68*

Thank goodness, I didn't have to sit around and discuss Arthur's letter. Mother and Father'd read it at lunch and I'd had lunch at school again. I'd started up having lunch at school quite often because Junior High School is so far away from home it makes a nervous wreck out of me beating it back to class on time. Mother thought I'd started getting

nervous. She thought my experience with Mr. Hopper kind of made me that way which was perfectly insane.

The next day we had a call from Aunt Pett in Charleston and she was confounded out of her mind about the article. She wanted Mother and I to come to Charleston right away for comfort, but Mother said she would rather wait and have us come over in the Spring because she thought I'd been through enough already. That was very kind of Mother, I thought, because by Spring I was sure everybody would have pretty much forgotten about the magazine. Besides, I was pretty much dreading Charleston. I did want to hear about Winky, but I just didn't want to appear a hick, not now, not after everything, and especially not in Charleston.

Anyway, one good thing that happened was Mr. Ewing didn't sue. Mother said she thought perhaps it was because he was too busy. Mr. Ewing has a terrible time with the Japanese and labor unions. They're trying to run him out of business, so he's always having to revitalize. It's very difficult for him and it keeps him violently harassed.

Still, it was a good thing he didn't sue. We just couldn't afford to have any more publicity. But you should have seen the rest of the town! They were out of their minds with fury! Mr. Henry, the editor of the paper, wrote this front-page editorial that blasted the fool out of Mr. Hopper and the entire North. He said Mr. Hopper ought to empty his garbage in his own backyard instead of coming down here trying to make public ridicule out of the "finest flowers" of the South. The "finest flowers" was us and Father extended his gratitude violently.

The only thing was Father had to confess about me because Mr. Henry said in his editorial that he knew a girl, brought up in the home background that I <sup>was</sup> had, would never say such a thing

about colored people. That was simply terrible, I mean <sup>father</sup> ~~father~~ having to tell my "little indiscretion" that way. "Little indiscretion" is the way we refer to it now. ~~It's a much more spiritual saying, we think, than "lying."~~ Still, I was pretty humiliated, <sup>everybody</sup> ~~all the grown-ups~~ talking about what I'd done. ~~Everywhere~~ Mother went somebody would be talking about it--even in the grocery store.

The next day after the article came out, Mother dragged me out to the farm. I guess she wanted to hide me, but it was terrible being out there with nothing to take my mind off things. All I did was go dragging along by the cotton fields thinking myself to death. <sup>Sunday morning I went by</sup> ~~When I got to the Miller's house,~~ there was Nadine, <sup>ing</sup> ~~pouting~~ and picking feathers off a chicken. She was sitting on the back porch steps and she didn't have any lipstick on, so I thought she'd probably speak.

"Hey, Nadine," I said violently friendly. "What'rya doing?"

She glanced up at me like she hadn't already seen me coming down the path. "Uh," was all she said. I don't know why Nadine doesn't like me any more. I think it's because she thinks I'm rich and it's embarrassing for her not being.

"I do that all the time," I said and kind of put my arm around this grey post on the porch.

"What?"

"Pluck chickens. I hate it, don't you?"

"It aint so bad." She went right on plucking.

Nadine sometimes can be exceedingly rude. She doesn't even try to continue a conversation.

"Want me to help you?" I asked.

"I kin manage." She didn't even look up and there was this

awful silence which made me feel very unwanted.

"Hey, Nadine," I said, "I was just going to the gas station to get something to drink. D'you wanta go?"

"Uh uh."

I decided to sit down on the steps beside her. She didn't ask me and the silence was pretty bad. Finally, I said: "Oh, me, it's terribly boring today, isn't it?"

"Whar your Nigger friends?" she asked me.

I looked at her and my face bolted red. "~~Whatya talking about?~~"

"I read all about that. I read whatya said."

"Ohhh, that!" I let out this very happy tone. "Did you read it? D'yall take The News Review?"

"Papa went in town and bought it."

"We did, too. Mother went to town and bought it."

She plucked this tremendous wad of feathers off the chicken's tail. "I aint goin' to school with no Niggers."

"Me neither!" I said with profound anger.

She glanced over at me then. "How come you said so then?"

"I didn't." I sat down on the bottom step so I could see her better. "Nadine, that man was simply a disgrace. He lied all over the magazine."

"Mama figgered he did."

"Yeah, can't you see me in school with Niggers?" I could hardly get out that last word, but I said it out of loyalty to Nadine. It isn't very nice to have a nice pronunciation when you're talking to somebody that doesn't.

She picked this great black hair off the chicken's leg. "They start puttin' Niggers in the school out chere and they'll be a

couple of deaduns lyin' round too."

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"Same thing in town," I said very sincerely, but I kind of started examining Nadine's face. I wondered if she really would kill them. There was a white ring round her mouth. She might if she got mad enough. It's better to be nice to people like Nadine, because they've got terrible tempers, like those women that throw rocks and things. They might throw them at you even, I mean if they felt like it.

"We're organized out chere. Aint gone be no Niggers in my school."

"We're organized, too," I said, but just frankly speaking I didn't know what she was talking about.

"School-ins, sit-ins---" she started turning her mouth down-- "next thing they'll be wantin' marry-ins and after that they'll be some bury-ins. That's what there'll be---bury-ins--- all Nigger."

~~Boy~~ Nadine had grown into a very morbid individual. It kind of scared you, so I thought I'd better change the subject:

"Wasn't that terrible of that man to lie so, though?"

"What man?"

"The man that wrote the article in the magazine."

She looked up from the chicken at me. "Yankee trash, wasn't he?"

"Uh huh. He was simply terrible."

"All of 'em are---ruttin' round with Niggers all the time."

I started to yawn but Mrs. Miller let out this yell from inside the house and nearly jolted my heart up into my mouth. She was calling for Nadine.

"WhAAAAAAT?!" Nadine called back just as loud.

"Come 'ere and git this kettle off the stove."

"Aww," She practically dumped the chicken when she stood up.

"I guess I gotta go," I said. "See you real soon, Nadine."

"Okay." She didn't glance at me when she went in the house.

I started walking back to the cabin very swiftly. Gosh, even Nadine had heard about the article! I was a public disgrace---everywhere! Everybody knew about it! All over the world. The old lump started coming in my throat again and right soon the tears started literally pouring down my face. School was what I was worrying about the most. They were probably all at home now, hating me, getting organized to hate me until I died. I started walking like a maniac, with my fists all wadded up and my face so wet I looked like a mad woman. I saw Mother out in front of the cabin so I kind of went over by this tree and stood behind it until the jerking in my breath stopped. I didn't want to see I'd been crying, because she'd ask me why and we'd have to talk some more about the article.

he # well, What happened was, Monday morning came on and I told Mother I didn't believe I'd go to school, but she told me not to be silly and to get some "get up and come on" and just walk proudly in. So I grabbed my poor sad books off the piano and started dragging the long way to school again. I thought it was pretty unthinking of Mother not to drive me, but---like I said---she positively adores to have me walk myself to death. Actually, I thought somebody would give me a ride, but nobody did. There I was just dragging on and on and then this car passed by---an old one with a bunch of boys in it. I looked up and saw the

Foster twins. One of them started beating on the side of the car and this red-haired boy let out this yell: "See you la-ter, in-te-gra-ter!" And there were these roars of laughter as they sped on.

My heart started pounding away and I practically flew all the rest of the way to school. But when I turned the corner I saw everybody hanging around outside waiting for the bell. I started to wait but I just went on and got some get up and come on and walked as proud as I could. Well, I nearly fainted out of just pure shock. Everybody, literally everybody, started saying "hey, Felicia! Hey, Felicia!" Even this very popular girl that's older. She's never said anything to me in her life. And she said, "Hey, Felicia Whitfield." I said "hey" back in this extremely gay voice. (I may start going around with her.)

Anyhow, I was famous! You ought to have heard what everybody said. They loved my picture and Melissa thought that was hysterical about them calling me a "child." I told her I could have

~~ical~~ about them calling me a "child." I told her I could have thrown up over that. But the main thing about it was none of them had read the article. I asked Melissa if she had and she said she hadn't but that her parents had and they were eyerate over it. She said the whole town was eyerate but that her father said it wasn't our fault, the article, that it was just a bunch of damn Yankees kicking up their rears again. ~~We got hysterical.~~

Gosh, though, you don't know how happy I was over being famous. The Ashton Junior High School is the most tremendous place you ever saw and just everybody started speaking. I was famous for two straight days and wherever I'd go all these girls started flocking around asking me things about Mr. Hopper.

"You really have to be able to talk deep to talk to him," I said and they all just stared.

Well, fame doesn't last very long. Before you know it you're back in your old boring life again. One day you're everything and three days later, nothing. Everybody, I guess, thinks you're flying around in all this glory but they forget about you and go on just having fun by themselves. Also, you get your come-uppance in this world too. You betray somebody and before you know it somebody'll turn around and betray you. That's what happened to me.

I don't know when it all started up exactly, sometime after the dance, I think, but, anyway, Marilyn and Melissa started becoming these very, very popular people. They never had been before, not with boys and things, but just very suddenly almost they started becoming excruciatingly popular.

gal 70 } On Saturdays they were always at each other's house and all these boys would come by. It used to be that they were always at my house but not any more. They'd go for days without even calling on the telephone. I called them about one thousand times, but



times, but they were always doing something.

Then they started going around with Carolyn Dunwoody! Just the three of them. They thought that was about the most terrific thing that had <sup>ever</sup> happened to them. You'd always see them walking down the street, going to the movies or something. And if you just happened to be in there yourself, you couldn't even look at the movie because there they'd be, sitting all hunched down in the seats and pretending not to notice all these boys throwing popcorn at them.

They also started wearing lipstick and carrying these huge pocketbooks around with them. In the ladies' room at the movies they'd hardly speak. All three of them would be talking to each other and putting on lipstick and they wouldn't even hardly speak. I don't think all that would have happened if Mother had let me wear lipstick. She absolutely refused and there I was ~~NOTHING~~ always nothing.

All the rest of my friends, though, were pretty loyal and when we'd spend the night, we'd sit for hours talking about friendship and how people betray you ~~and all~~. That's one thing about me. As long as I live I'll always be loyal to my friends. Even if suddenly I started becoming this popular human being I wouldn't stop calling up somebody like Margaret Ann Akers just because one of her eyes goes out of joint sometimes. I'd never ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> that way!

Margaret Ann said her mother said that there were a whole bunch of rich snobs in Ashton but that my Mother and father had never been that way. I told her nobody in my family would be a snob even if it killed them. She said, "I know it", and

we sat and stared about that for hours. She too had been betrayed. I think Margaret Ann Akers is about the nicest human being in the entire universe. Her father owns the transfer business and I wouldn't care even if Arthur married her some day.

Mother said for me not to worry about Melissa and Marilyn--- that some people have their time now and others later. "Marilyn and Melissa are having theirs now, that's all."

"Well, when is mine coming?"

"It will, if you'll just be decent and honorable and kind."

Throw up! I don't know why that kind of irritated me. What I want to be is be a drunkard. I want to have dates and ride out to the Green Lantern and get madly drunk---every night. That's what some of the seniors in high school do. Sometimes you can lie in your bed at night and hear them racing around in cars, laughing. You always know what fun they're having and there you are, this unpopular person, just lying there. It certainly would be fun to go to the Green Lantern and get drunk and be popular.

Mother started talking more and more about sending me away to boarding school. She's not very partial to the atmosphere at the Ashton High School. She and Father would sit up and talk about sending me away for hours. ~~And~~ they adored it! They have definitely decided on this one one school in Virginia instead of Ashley Hall in Charleston. Mother would prefer I go to Ashley Hall because they won't let any cheap-rich people in there, but she thinks I need to soak up Virginia now since I already know Charleston. Mother said the one in Virginia is a nice school too. No cheap-rich people go there either. That's the kind of school Mother is partial to---a small one that has profound emphasis on

the Episcopal Church. ~~Ohhhhh me.~~

But, actually, it doesn't matter to me too much any more, getting sent away from my own home. Once I thought about writing Melissa and Marilyn a letter. I'd write it after I got to boarding school. It would be excruciatingly sad, all about friendship and how I was the kind of human being that would never turn my back on them. They'd read it and cry for hours, and when I came home for Christmas they'd come dashing over and tell me how horrified they were at what they'd done. I'd just smile at them and say, "You're forgiven." Aren't things <sup>also</sup> gloomy in this world, though? ~~For instance,~~ things didn't even get any better when Arthur came home for Christmas. He didn't pay any attention to me at all. He had become exceedingly intellectual, always going around talking about Robert Browning's "sanguinary period." He was writing a theme in English on it, and I thought if I heard about Robert Browning's "sanguinary period" one more time I'd scream. Dinners were ghastly with Arthur sitting up there asking us questions all the time. "...Betchah don't know who wrote 'Fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky.' Okay, beatchah don't know who wrote 'Grieve to think what man has made of man.'" Mother said she had forgotten that one, but Arthur said it was Robert Browning, of course. "But it wasn't during his sanguinary period!"

Boring. Mother was beside herself with joy! Arthur was certainly developing, she kept saying. His report card didn't show it too much, though. He didn't make a single "B." I made many, but that didn't make any difference. If I'd been proclaimed the most intellectual person in the entire world, it wouldn't have made any difference.

Also, Arthur had a date with Carolyn Dunwoody! I could have shot him dead. They went to a movie and when Mother and I just happened to be riding by on our way to the drug store we saw them walking. She told me not to even look at them. But ~~she~~ I did, once, and there was Arthur all straight and trying to be taller and Carolyn sauntering along beside him in this very wide plaid skirt and white jacket. I told Arthur I didn't think Carolyn had much character, but he wouldn't listen and called her up again!

*Gal 71* [ I would literally die of horror if Arthur married Carolyn Dunwoody. But he probably will. One thing is Arthur hasn't developed any real appreciation for the right kind of girls. We are simply dying for Arthur to marry someone with her feet on the ground. Mother says she just wants Arthur to marry somebody ~~like~~ sensible. "Just as long as she has her feet on the ground and has some practical sense." Mother thinks Arthur's quite inclined to going around in the clouds a lot. So is Carolyn Dunwoody.

One night I heard him in the kitchen. He'd just come back from a date with Carolyn and was stopping off in the kitchen. I declare, Arthur has the most tremendous appetite you ever saw. He can drink two quarts of milk in one day. It's good Father has the farm or we'd go broke, *you* sure nuff.

I came walking in the kitchen with my hip out of joint. That is an act of mine which simply irritates Arthur out of his mind.

"I wish you could see yourself when you do that," he said. He was munching on this huge sandwich.

I laughed very hysterically. "I'm the only person I know of that can do it."

"Well, it isn't funny."

~~"Surely," I said. "You're supposed to say surely."~~

He just went on munching.

"How was Carolyn Dunwoody?"

"Okay."

I sat down in one of the chairs and tilted it up against the wall. "Are you in love with her?" Nauseating. <sup>But</sup> I ~~was~~ just thought I'd ask ~~that~~. I was in an exceedingly nauseating mood.

"Love?" he asked.

"Uh huh. You're getting on in age now, you know. You could probably even get married if you wanted to."

"What do I wanta do that for?" He looked at me over his huge sandwich.

"I don't know. Can't you just see you and Carolyn somewhere? You wouldn't be able to live in the house with us. You'd have to live in this one room somewhere and there'd be clotheslines outside and these dirty babies running all over the place. You couldn't go to college or anything and you'd have to work in a filling station for the rest of your life because you'd be so ignornat you couldn't get a job in the bank."

He just stared at me with this tremendous bite of sandwich in his mouth, then he went on chewing. "You surely are peculiar sometimes."

"Why?" I asked and sat forward in the chair.

"Anybody that can sit up and think up all that. You oughtta start wearing lipstick and getting your hair curled."

"I know it. Mother won't let me."

"Shoot, you oughtta see Northern girls when they're thirteen. Most of them look like they're twenty or something."

"I know it." I let out this huge sigh. "We're just a very peculiar family, that's all." I watched him drain his glass of milk. "Arthur, why do you like Carolyn Dunwoody?"

"I dunno. She's a pretty good old girl."

"No, I mean, why do you guess she's so popular with boys?"

"I dunno. She's not silly or anything and she's pretty fast."

Embarrassing! But I pretended I didn't know. "Whatdoya mean, fast?"

"Hell, I don't know! Why don't you ask some of those stupid friends of yours."

I looked down at the floor sideways. My flip mood had gone. Arthur can be very unthinking sometimes. "I don't have any friends any more," I said.

"Why don't you?" He didn't sound concerned at all.

"They just don't like me any more, that's all."

"There's always somebody over here---girls all over the place screaming and stuff."

"Not Marilyn and Melissa. Not any more. They go around with Carolyn Dunwoody all the time."

~~#~~They're stupid anyway."

"Who?"

"Marilyn and Melissa."

"I know but---" I started frowning. "They were my best friends, Arthur."

He looked back in the refrigerator. "Carolyn likes ya," he said into the refrigerator.

"Carolyn Dunwoody?! How do you know?"

"She told me. She said she thought you were 'cute.'"

"Me?" I started beaming all over.

"Uh huh."

"Really, Arthur? Are you telling the truth? You're not just making that up?"

"Uh uh. I'm not making it up."

I got to thinking about that. She did speak to me in the ~~drug store~~ <sup>hall</sup> the other day. Maybe she really did think I was---

"Gosh," I said.

Arthur slammed the refrigerator door. "Go-night."

"Hey, Arthur," I said. I didn't want him to go to bed. I was much too fascinated to go to bed. "What did people up at school say about Mr. Hopper's article? I mean, really?"

"Nothing."

"They <sup>must've</sup> ~~have~~ said something. You wrote two of them had read it."

"They didn't say anything. Mother said you ought not to talk about it."

"Did she tell you ~~that~~?"

"Uh huh."

"Why?"

"I dunno."

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"Well, did they think we were horrible? Hicks and stuff?"  
He kind of leaned up against the refrigerator. "Aw, they think you're a hick anyway."

"Why?"  
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"~~Why~~, if you don't live in New York and go to Bermuda and stuff, they think you're kind of a jerk."

"Yeah," I said. "Hey, Arthur, what's flitty mean?"

"Huh?" And then he started bumping up against the refrigerator and howling with laughter. "Man, Felicia, ~~you can kill~~ <sup>"you're crazy!"</sup> ~~me sometimes.~~ <sup>Just joking around!</sup> I mean you can really kill me."

I couldn't help but smile, too. Arthur doesn't laugh very much but when he does everybody else laughs, too. "But what does it mean? Mother didn't know either."

"I knew she wouldn't. I didn't know either when I wrote it, but man, I know now! Ask somebody else." He kind of straightened up, all red-faced. "Hey, I gotta go to bed."

I got up from the chair. I honestly didn't want to go to bed. "I tell you what, Arthur. Let's go in the library and have a cigarette. Mother and Father both have gone to bed."

"Do you smoke?"

"Of course. I started up about two years ago. Don't tell anybody, though."

He kind of shrugged his shoulders. "~~O--kay then.~~"

We went on in the library and turned on the lights. The cigarette box was literally jammed with cigarettes.

"I can't smoke these," He said.

"Why not?"

"They don't have any filters. I can't possibly smoke without a filter. It'll give you lung cancer."

"I can," I said.

"O--kay then," <sup>M</sup> but I'm not."

"Well, just wait till I have one then. I'm terribly nervous tonight. One would do me worlds of good."

"Ner-vous," Arthur said. "You're a crazy kid."

"Mother despises that word, 'kid.' It's a Northern expression,



isn't it?"

"Yeah, but it's all right. Everybody says it."

"Just colored people down here say it." I lit the cigarette and started giggling all over the place.

~~Yeah, I do.~~ "You don't even in-hale."

"Yeah, I do."

"No, you're not. Just leaving the smoke in your mouth isn't inhaling. You're supposed to suck it on down in your lungs." He started to go.

"Hey, Arthur," I said. "Is school any better this year? I mean, do you like it better?"

He started yawning. "It's more contemplative, I guess."

"Whatdoya mean?" I blew out a great wad.

"I don't know. They keep you busy writing these long themes and essays and things."

"Like on Robert Browning's sanguinary period?"

"Uh huh. And old Walden."

"Who's he?"

"Just this man, *a writer x* He was all the time going out staring at his pond."

"You mean you do that at school?"

"There isn't any pond, but you can go to the football field and sit and think. I do that lots, at night." He looked very tragic *with his glasses x*

"What do you think about?"

"Oh, death and all."

I spewed out the smoke. "Arthur, you wouldn't ever commit suicide or anything. Would you?"

He looked up at the ceiling. "Maybe."

"Oh, Ar-thur!" I just stared at him.

"I've thought about it a lot. My id's all the time getting messed up."

"What's your id?"

"This thing inside you."

"Like your intestines?"

"No. It's up in your brain."

I looked at his brain. "Do you really think about committing suicide?"

"Hell, most people do. Really intellectual people."

"Well, stop being intellectual then. Mother and Father would absolutely die."

"They'd get over it."

"No, they wouldn't." I put out my cigarette violently.

"Arthur, you're ve-ry unthinking. You're---"

"Aw, Felicia. For hellsakes, I'm not gonna commit suicide."

"Well, I should hope not! That's certainly an immature thing to do. Can't you see us, though? We'd all be sitting around and this wire would come and there you'd be, up in Connecticut, with your brains blown out."

He kind of started laughing. "You think up the most peculiar things."

"I know it. ~~I have the nerve to tell you that.~~"

"Well, you oughtta cut it out. It isn't sanguinary. Come on, I gotta go to bed."

When we were going up the stairs I said: "Ohhh me, I have to go to a cocktail party."

He jerked around. "You?"

"Uh huh, in Charleston. Mother says I have to go this year. It's such a bore."

"Y'all going to Charleston? You and Mother?"

"Uh huh. This Spring. Mother wants to be loyal to Aunt Ann on a count of Winky."

"What's Winky done?"

"You know! That trashy boy she may have to marry."

"On that! ~~That's stupid.~~ That's stupid."

"No, it isn't stupid, Arthur. One should be most selective when choosing one's mate. We're all very concerned over who you'll marry."

"Hell, I'm not gonna get married!"

"In time you will. We'll visit you in your one room with dirty babies running all over the place and---"

"Hell," he said and went on up to his room on the third floor.

~~Arthur is very inclined to cursing.~~ \*

~~Arthur is very inclined to cursing. He developed it up in Connecticut, but it's the thing to do, you know. I just went on in my room and stared at myself in the mirror. I said "hell" once or twice and then started thinking about the cocktail party in Charleston. I decided I would be beautiful at it. How proud Arthur would be!!!!~~

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