

## Chapter 23

But wasn't I simply a success at the cocktail party? I know that's very selfish to put in, but it really did make me feel so pleased. I mean so much bad had happened that it just showed I wasn't such a terrible goon after all. Now the only thing next I had to worry about was going to Connecticut. But, of course, that would be much more harassing than Charleston. Up there we wouldn't even have any relatives to tell people we were nice. Not a soul would know us and we'd be up there trying to get along all by ourselves.

I decided I'd better have a talk with Arthur about it when he came home for Spring vacation. Naturally, I wouldn't tell him I was afraid to go to Connecticut, I'd just sort of ask him how he wanted us to look and stuff. Isn't life the biggest worry in the world, though? Soon as you get through with one thing, bang, you have to go flying off into something else. Always having something to worry about.

I do wish we could have stayed in Charleston longer. I would've adored to have been hanging around when Winky announced she was going to marry Tom. I could just hear Aunt Pett and them, but on the way back to Ashton Mother and I had a deep conversation about it. She said she didn't think Winky would do anything foolish like running away, but if she did she was sure Aunt Ann and Uncle Petrie would be loyal and "back her up."

"It's tragic," I said.

"What?"

"I dunno. There's nobody else for her to marry, I guess." Mother said she hoped Winky wouldn't marry just for that reason.

"So do I," I said, "but I think she is."

We didn't talk too much else about it because Mother was too concerned about Arthur. That was the main reason we had to leave Charleston. Father had called and said he was all right but that we'd had a letter from Arthur. He didn't say over the phone what it was about. He tried to, but Mother didn't understand it too well. Sometimes Arthur's letter can be extremely confusing, especially over long-distance. Anyway, we had to get on back and, besides, I was dying to talk to him about Connecticut like I told you.

Well, it wouldn't've made any difference if I'd talked my head off to him. Nobody could talk to him hardly! You see, what happened was---and this is the worst thing that has ever happened--- Arthur had grown sincere! Just since Christmas. You've never seen such a mess in all your life. The first thing we did when we got home was to read his letter. Right off the bat, he announced he was bringing the most unpopular boy in the entire school home with

him. "It's Bob Leyden and he's started up again!" Somehow it had become Arthur's duty to be nice to Bob Leyden; "...Only last week the Head thanked me personally for my spirit in aiding the handy-capped." At the end of the letter he said for Mother not to worry because "old Leyden" had these rubber sheets he took around with him all the time.

Mother was furious! She said she didn't have enough sheets to be changing them all the time and it did look as if Arthur could be a little more considerate of his own family. "Why can't Arthur help out some normal boy?" she asked.

I didn't want to say anything. Not about that! I could just hear everybody in Ashton talking and, besides, we'd already been exposed to the public too much already. But Father said it wouldn't hurt us to be nice to the boy. He said if necessary he would go down and buy some extra sheets.

Mother despises Father when he starts getting humble that way, so she went down and bought the sheets, six of them. Then she had Velvet string this rope between the two oak trees in our back lawn. "We may have some additional washing to do next week," was all she told Velvet. I guess that was why she was sort of upset when Arthur's next letter came, I mean she had gone to all that trouble and everything and Arthur wrote that Bob wasn't coming:

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...His parents said he couldn't come because he's got to go to this doctor the Head recommended. The Head told Mr. and Mrs. Leyden that if Leyden didn't get cured for good, he believed it was a good idea for them to keep him home permanently psychologically. Poor old Leyden. You ought to see all these alarm clocks and everything he's got. I'm like the Head, though. He says he thinks it's unthinking the way all the boys tease him. And yesterday the Head told me privately that I stand a good chance of getting the Amos T. Caldwell award because I've started showing all this character. He said all the masters had been noticing me and he hoped I don't flunk anything. I told the Head how I had always believed in

the helpless and down-trodden. You have to if you want to get the Amos T. Caldwell award. It's the highest award a boy can get. I gotta go.

Cordially,  
A.

Mother became "extacized" over the award. "Arthur's just like my father," she said. "I don't think I ever heard Father say an unkind word about anybody." Arthur was the same way, she said. She just hoped Arthur would get that award and show everybody. "My, Allison, he really is maturing, isn't he? It makes me feel quite sad, really."

I thought about that for a while. Mother didn't mention me--- she hardly <sup>was</sup> does in conversation---but it seemed to me I was maturing too, just about as much as Arthur. Of course I haven't had the exposure to as much intellect and travels as Arthur has, but I've even taken up reading the old boring Sewanee Review. It doesn't have hardly any pictures in it and I force myself to read it once a day. Articles and everything. <sup>Also, soon, I would be in Connecticut.</sup> That'll make eight states I've been in in my lifetime, I mean counting the ones you go through to get to Connecticut. That's pretty good, don't you think?

Anyway, on Thursday, down we went, back to the old train station aga to welcome Arthur again! The little colored children across the track had grown ten thousand inches since Christmas. I tell you, when I die, they're going to put on my tomb stone: "SPENT LIFE IN TRAIN STATION!"

Arthur was the only passenger to get off the train this time. But immediately I noticed something different about him. At first I thought it was his glasses but I remembered he had blue

"Well, I haven't gotten it yet," he said, turning all the way around to smile at her. "I really don't deserve it. It's just like Albert Schweitzer says... 'A thoroughbred doesn't need the ear of corn.'"

"Did he say that?" Mother asked.

"Uh huh. We've taken up old Schweitzer in English." He turned back to Father. "Such a great man. If only there were more like him in the world."

Nobody said much else until we got home. I didn't say hardly anything. For one thing, I wasn't real sure who Albert Schweitzer was. Wasn't that hysterical? I know now, though, of course, and he is kind of like Arthur, in some ways.

For instance when we got home, there was Isaiah, ready to help with the luggage.

"Isaiah, how are you?" Arthur said very gloomily.

Isaiah said he was all right and then reached down to the luggage.

"Oh, no," Arthur said. "Let me. I never want to consider myself too good to carry my own baggage."

Isaiah kind of half-way raised up.

"Now, you rest," Arthur commanded Isaiah.

"Gosh, Arthur," I said.

"Yes, sister?"

Throw up! Arthur has never called me "sister" before. I hate that---brothers that call their sisters "sister." It's exceedingly tacky to me, but he had such a kindly tone. I just said "nothing" and we went on in the house.

That night after dinner, Arthur bored us nearly all to death, talking about Knox Campbell and Albert Schweitzer. He hated Knox

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Campbell now because Knox didn't care a thing in this world for anything except football and all these girls he had in New York. Albert Schweitzer wasn't like that. Knox was always making people do things for him, but a man like Albert Schweitzer wouldn't let a worm work for him if he could help it. He thought we ought to fire Velvet and Isaiah.

"Whatever for?" Mother asked.

"How would you like to be some slave in somebody's house?" he asked Father.

Right away Mr. Hopper came popping back into my mind. I was thinking ~~about~~ <sup>that</sup> Arthur had probably got that from Mr. Hopper instead of Albert Schweitzer.

"Pay them any-way," Arthur said. "We've got a lot to learn down here in Georgia. A great deal."

"What do you mean, Arthur?" Mother asked. my mind. I

"We have to learn to accept challenges and work--~~even~~ <sup>if</sup> we're jeered at. We gotta get the old ~~ideas~~ <sup>molded</sup> ideas out of our brains."

"Where did you get all that?" Father asked.

"Get all of what?"

"~~ideas~~ <sup>molded</sup> ideas and such."

"Just thought it up."

"I see," Father said.

We all just kind of stared for a while. It was pretty unpleasant, so I said: "Hey, Arthur, Aunt Ann really did give a cocktail party when we were in Charleston. It was divine!" (I've started saying divine quite frequently now.)

Arthur didn't say a thing. He just sat there, staring at me and then started shaking his head.

"I enjoyed it thoroughly," I said.  
He looked at Mother. "I think that's rather careless of you."

"What?" Mother asked.

"Need I explain." He looked back at me. "Did you know that alcohol eats up your liver? Did you know that it takes your brains away? Did you know that it ~~breaks~~ breaks down your fatty acids until you're just this glob of---"

"That's enough, Arthur," Father said.

Arthur looked terribly distressed. "No," he said, lifting his hand, "just look at Knox Campbell. There he was---- a nice guy and---"

"Don't say guy," Mother said. "It's ordinary."

"Well, this nice, clean American. Now he's practically alcoholic. Craves the bottle. Just sits up in his room, lift!" He looked back at me. "His liver is just this pathetic-eaten-up---"

"I said that was enough," Father said.

Arthur certainly had gotten peculiar. He used to simply worship cocktail parties, at least last year he did.

"What are your fatty acids?" I asked.

"I think we've talked about that enough," Mother said. "Nevertheless, Arthur, I'm proud of you. I hope you never will start having drinks."

"I don't plan to. I've seen what it does to a man."

"Of course," Mother said.

Father just kind of slunk down in his chair. He just never can understand Arthur.

"But, Arthur," Mother said, changing her tone of voice, "did we tell you we're planning to come to get you in June?"

I nearly died, but Arthur was very cheerful. He didn't sound like he would be ashamed of us at all. "You are!? Gosh, then you can be there for the awards and everything!" He didn't even sound his sincere way any more.

"I think we can," Mother said. "Do you really think you might get the character award?"

"There's a good chance," he said, looking back and forth at Mother and Father like he was watching a tennis game. "I don't know of but one other boy that might get it---David Totten--- but he's always secretly going around calling everybody 'son of a bitch'. The masters never---"

"ARTHUR!" Mother said.

"Yes," Father said. "I don't want to hear that expression in this house again---ever! Do you hear that, Arthur David Tot

"I didn't say it, I said he said it. Amos T. Gabody 'son of would turn over in his grave if he knew somebody like that got the award. Old Totten says worse than that too."

"Felicia, I think you should go up to bed," Mother said.

"I'm not tired." Shoot, I wasn't going to miss what that boy said for anything.

"Yes, but I think it's time."

"Oh, all right," I said and did my old immature thing of walking out of the room with my hip out of joint. It makes every-one so furious.

"And don't do that any more," Mother called. "You may freeze that way."

"Okay, I won't." But I did it all the way up the stairs. I can be such a child sometimes, just plain right down silly, like Velvet says, but it irritates everyone so.



When I got to bed, though, I started thinking how very kind it was of Arthur to say he was glad we were coming up to Connecticut. Down in Ponte Vedra, you remember, even Father said he thought Arthur was ashamed of us. Frankly, I just hoped he would stay in his sincere mood until after we'd come and gone. I knew what it was going to be like up there. Arthur did too, I bet. He'd seen everybody else's parents a dozen times---people driving around in cadillacs and giving buildings and things. And there we were, not even being able to build a new bathroom hardly. I started thinking about what that man in Charleston had said about me. ~~Don't you remember?~~ <sup>being</sup> He said I was "quite a girl." I think about that quite often. When things start getting kind of bad at school, like boys walking down the hall with Melissa Stewart or somebody, I think about what the man in Charleston hardly and it makes me feel a hundred times better. n had said a

gal 88 Well, anyway, I don't know how long Arthur and them stayed downstairs. It must have been late because Arthur didn't get up until eleven o'clock the next morning. Father wanted to know if we thought Albert Schweitzer slept that late. But Mother said for Father not to be "flip" about Arthur. "He's just feeling his way, that's all. Let's not worry about him. Things could be a great deal worse."

But he kept on acting funny. Later on that week, Velvet said she thought Arthur had got "sanctified." "He acts just like somebody what's sanctified."

You don't know what sanctified is, but Velvet's got this one friend, Martha Mae Johnson, and she's sanctified. Every day at noon she changes the sheets on her bed and lies down with Jesus---just for twenty minutes. Velvet told me about it. She

has to sit out in the living room until Martha Mae gets out of the bed. Also she says she yells so loud in church "cant nobody hear nothin' for her carryin' on like a crazy person." Velvet wouldn't be sanctified for anything.

"No, he's not that," I said. "He's just trying to get the Amos T. Caldwell award."

"What's that?"

"It's the highest award a boy can get. We'll be up there to see him get it, too."

"Well, I wish he'd hush that racket upstairs. It gimme the sick headache."

See, Arthur had also started staying up in his room typing on the typewriter. He doesn't really know how to type. So all you could hear were these great long pauses and then an occasional click on the keys.

"Arthur don't know nothin' 'bout no typewriter," Velvet said. "He's just playin' up there."

"Mother says he's thinking."

"How come he thankin' on the typewriter then?"

"I dunno." But I told her I thought Arthur <sup>really</sup> ought to see some of his contemporaries around Ashton. They'd think he'd probably gone insane or something, never coming out of the house or anything.

~~I guess that's why I told Carolyn Dunwoody what I did. Actually I don't know whether I ought to put this in or not. I don't know why I said it. It just came out. Oh, well---what happened was I ran into her, smack dab on the post office steps, and she spoke:~~

~~"Arthur's home isn't he?" she asked.~~

~~I started getting this extremely sad look on my face. "Yes," I said.~~

*Suggest cutting  
T. B.*

"I haven't seen him. I just heard he was sort of---"

"No one has seen him," I said.

"Is he sick or something?" Carolyn Dunwoody has the most green eyes you ever saw and she was vastly interested in my conversation.

"He's pretty sick, Carolyn," I said and kind of lowered my head.

"What's the matter with him?"

"TB." I looked at her straight in the eye. "Arthur has TB."

That's exactly what I said! I can't tell you for the life of me why I said it. It just came to me and I said it. Carolyn nearly died and even walked half-way home with me. I told her not to tell a soul because Mother had practically ~~col~~ Arthur over it and didn't want to be disturbed with having to answer the telephone all the time. Carolyn said she wouldn't tell ~~anybody~~ and I think she liked me better then than she ever had before.

Well, the next day the new rector suddenly came to call. The fox-hunting rector Mr. Ewing wanted for our church had refused to leave Virginia and come to Ashton, so we got Dr. Lee, this very old rector from Arkansas. Mother said she was going to be loyal to the church and support the rector from Arkansas for all he was worth because it was the church, ~~after all~~ that came first. Anyway, I couldn't imagine why he'd come to call on us again because he'd already made his pitiful little first call. But I found out! He said he wanted to tell us how sorry he was to hear about Arthur and he knew how Mother was feeling because his own sister had suffered the pangs of TB for years.

"Why, Dr. Lee," Mother said, "what are you talking about?"

He looked at me and then at Mother in this confused way. "It is true, isn't it? Your son does have tuberculosis?"

"Why---" I thought Mother was going to fall out of the chair. "Heavens! However did you get such an idea?"

I decided just to concentrate on this one spot on the wall. They say if you do that, it'll keep you from hushing. All the time Dr. Lee was apologizing and gasping, I kept looking at that spot. It helped immeasurably.

But after he'd gone---well, you know what happened. Uh huh, Mother found out.... She wanted to know how in the world I could possibly say such a thing about my own brother, and Father said it was a dishonorable thing to do. They hated me for five straight days. Even Arthur. See, I think Arthur'd fallen madly in love with Carolyn Dunwoody and she absolutely opened to go out with him because of his disease. Arthur told in the was just teasing, but she didn't believe him. So all poor Arthur could do was pretty much stay up in his room all night, typing and clicking.

Well---and this is the terrible part---Arthur just clicked too long. He went and did the worst thing almost he's ever done in his entire livelihood. It embarrassed us all out of our minds, but when it was over Mother said she thought Arthur had just fallen too much under the influence of Mr. Hopper and the Amos T. Caldwell award. I, too, am of that opinion. ~~I think you will share that opinion also, but the point is~~ you never can know all about a human being. You don't know what ever really makes them do anything.

See, it all started off one day when we were having lunch and Isaiah told Father he was wanted on the telephone. It's pretty

insane but we always answer the telephone during meals. A lot of people don't, but we think it's rude not to.

Anyway, we heard Father say, "Whaaaat? What are you talking about, Charlie?"

Mother put down her fork and listened. "It must be Mr. Henry. Wonder what he wants with Allison?"

Arthur stopped eating and his eyes behind his glasses got very wide.

"It's rude to listen to other people when they're talking on the telephone," I said.

But then Father's voice got louder. "No, Henry. No, I never wrote anything for your newspaper in all my life. Yes. Yes. I know. Well, you go down ther and stop the press then! Somebody's just trying to make a---- What d'you mean you can't steptalking

"Heavens," Mother said. "Allison shouldn't talk such an old man like that."

No, I n

"I guess he's gotten something wrong again," I said. Everybody in Ashton knows about Mr. Henry. He's editor of our weekly newspaper---The Ashton Courier---and he's always getting things wrong.

Father came back in the room and his face was redder than his tie. "Somebody wrote some damn fool letter to the paper and signed my name!"

"What was it about?" Mother asked.

"I don't know. I didn't ask him." F<sup>u</sup>ther stood up. "Now I've got to go read what I've written for the whole town to see."

"Poor Mr. Henry," Arthur said. "I guess he does get things confused. He must be talking about my letter."

Father just stared at A<sub>r</sub>thur. There was a white line round

his mouth and for a moment I was frightened. "You!" he said.

"Why in the name of heaven did you sign my name then?"

"I didn't," Arthur said sadly. "I signed my initials and last name. I guess they are the same. Never ~~thought~~ thought of that."

Father didn't say anything. He walked out of the room, but in a few minutes he came back and he looked more harassed than I've ever seen him: "I wish we'd never heard of that Hopper fellow, Sarah. You can write your cousin Hugo that for me, please! He's..." He didn't finish and in a few minutes we heard the back door slam violently.

~~Now, now, don't you see? Didn't I tell you?~~ Even in the beginning didn't I tell you how profoundly Mr. Hopper's article had affected Arthur? That and the Amos T. Caldwell award had practically torn our life asunder. Arthur's article ~~ward the~~ most obscene thing you've ever read. I decided I'd never ~~go~~ of the house again, not as long as I lived. Even in the

You don't know how terrible it was. Honestly. Still, though--- I fear I must say, in all fairness to Arthur, I guess we didn't know exactly why he'd written his article. We didn't know until we---well, until we got to Connecticut. Then we found out.

How strange <sup>and tragic</sup> life is!

~~at the time of the trial~~