

Chapter 25

□ We didn't hear too much from Arthur after he left. Mother said Arthur had grown into a very poor correspondent the last year. He was studying hard, he wrote, and he and the tennis team had beat all these other schools. I didn't pay much attention. I still hadn't had a date with a boy and Meliss^a and Marilyn were getting more and more popular every day. You'd always see them walking down the hall with boys.

I just pretty much walked alone. But I'd walk fast, with my head hanging down, so I couldn't see anybody. I literally just tore around to classes. Mother still wouldn't let me wear lipstick or high heels. She said I could ^{when} when I got to be fourteen, but that I had all my life to wear it and when I finally did I'd probably get bored with wearing it. But I don't think so.

Anyway, as May came on and then June we started getting ready

for the trip up to Arthur. "We have to look decent now," Mother kept saying, "for Arthur's sake." We couldn't go to Atlanta to buy any northern clothes, though. We were still being loyal to Mr. Morris and had to get all our clothes there. I wish Father wasn't so terribly loyal. It's embarrassing. Even when people from big cities come to visit us, Father has to drive them around and show them everything. You'd think Ashton was Atlanta or Savannah. Father even takes visitors in the library to see all these stuffed birds that are in there. He says there's nothing like those birds anywhere in the entire world, but I'll bet there are.

Honestly, though, I didn't want to look like an idiot up in Connecticut. Mother couldn't find anything for me at Morris's, so I had to go back over to Mrs. Hodges, the dressmaker's not had the old gas heater going, even in May, and I had to bet there for literally hours while she stuck pins in me. I hate Mrs. Hodges. She's very insulting. She's always making remarks about my long legs. "Just like sticks," she says, and cackles this simply dreadful laugh. We used to go to another dressmaker. She had a daughter and is excruciatingly nice, but she got sick. Nice people are always getting sick.

Anyway, Mother and Mrs. Hodges decided on this "little jumper and blouse" for me. A brown one. It was the saddest looking thing you ever saw. I had wanted one of those dresses that you wear these huge p^etticoats under, like the ones Mary Ann Akers wears to church (She's Methodist.) But Mother said "no"; she thought the best thing for me to do was just try to look "neat." She wouldn't let me buy the hat I wanted either---one with a veil on it. She wouldn't even let me wear a hat.

Well, that's how we went to Connecticut. All the way up in the car I started up this new kind of talk--rolling my r's and pro-noun-cing ve-ry dis-tinct-ly. It drove Mother and Father crazy. Mother thought it was funny at first, but then she said I was making her nervous and for me to "pu-leeese" stop it. Frankly, she was making me rather nervous, too. She kept on saying she hoped "something grand" would happen to Arthur.

I knew she was making reference to Arthur's character award and, as you know, I was hoping about that too. I mean it was still pretty embarrassing around home, about the letter to the newspaper and his breaking his nose the way he did and everything. If he did get the award and in a place like Connecticut, people would start thinking different about him. He'd show everybody, especially some of those stupid boys that used to tease it win grammar school about his eyes. Also, I guess all thatter tole that went to night clubs would think we were pretty goddevarselves.

I kept thinking about this all the way up in the car. Mother wouldn't let me forget it. Connecticut is the furtherest place away you ever saw. I thought we would positively never get there. One thing that made me sort of mad, though, was every time anybody saw our license tag with "Peach State" written on it, they'd start grinning. I don't see anything so funny about Georgia. Northerners are very peculiar people. They think if you're from the South that that is one of the funniest things they've ever heard. You just say where you're from and then they start grinning and saying "you all" all over the place. Father said not to pay any attention to it, because the last two words in the Bible are "you all" and that was good enough for him.

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Gosh, but I think riding in a car for miles and miles is the most nauseating experience I can think of, especially about two-thirty in the afternoon. You've already had lunch then and you know you've got miles and miles of nothingness until dinner time. The way you could tell you'd sort of gotten up north was by the filling-station operators. They weren't nearly as polite to you and they started talking exceedingly fast and energetically. Everything they said sounded like nothing but a bunch of "R's" and "L's" all run together. You can hardly understand them. Their bathrooms were nicer, though.

Well, we finally got there and first off we went to the hotel instead of the school. The name of the hotel is the Hotel Browne and I had heard Arthur talk about it before. It's where everybody goes to eat when somebody's parents come and they're terribly disappointed. The Hotel Browne is the ugliest hotel you ever saw. It has wicker chairs out on this porch in front and all these older people sit out there and rock all the time. My room had big-flowered wall paper on it and a yellow streak across the ceiling. I didn't see anything so good about Connecticut.

At lunch we were waited on by this white woman. She couldn't understand a thing I said. I asked her ^{for} some water and she thought I'd said "waw-waw."

"Perrrrrdon me," she kept saying.

"Water," I said. "I would like some water, please."

"Waw-waw?" She kind of grinned. "I don't underrrrsteyand."

Finally, Father held up his glass. "Water, please, miss."

"Oh, waterrrrrr. You folk must be Southernerrrrs."

Horribly embarrassing. And, too, all the people talking in the dining room made me nervous. They sounded so harsh and

loud, especially the ladies. You've never heard anything like it in your life.

After lunch Mother called up the school and wanted to talk to Arthur. But this man that answered the phone said we couldn't talk to him because he was still in study hall. That was terrible, I thought, not letting somebody's mother even talk to you. Mother said she thought it was a little odd, too, but she knew the school had rules. About three o'clock, though, Arthur called us. He said for us to get there early tomorrow morning because there was going to be a kind of reception on the lawn before the awards, and all the parents were invited. I could have died of just pure fear.

Arthur called
morning because
lawn before
we die