

Chapter 27

Class Day was remarkably stimulating. At least Mother and Father thought so, and later that night Mother said she was overjoyed they had picked just that school for Arthur. "It has such fine standards," she said. I guess she's right. Everybody was exceedingly intellectual, even some of the boys that performed. There was only one bad thing that happened and you would have collapsed through the pew.

First off, though, we had Morning Prayer and then Mr. Sykes got up to welcome us. He talked about hard work and Russia. At first I didn't see what Russia had to do with Class Day, but Mr. Sykes said it had everything to do with it, that if we didn't start working hard and praying hard we were going to end up like ~~the~~ Caesar and them did. He also thought it was a good idea for people to start giving up so many pleasures because everybody was getting fat and soft.

That was very interesting, I thought, and Father said it was a "remarkable performance." We don't have anyone in Ashton that can talk like Mr. Sykes and it was a privilege to be able to hear him. In just one year I've grown exceedingly partial to intellectual strivings. You have to if you don't want to turn out an idiot.

Anyway, when Mr. Sykes got through, this boy from Kansas played his original piece on the organ. He was a genius and everybody nearly keeled over. The name of the piece was "Caliban" and the music teacher explained Before hand that it was about the man in Shakespeare who was half-beast and half-man, but went around hearing beautiful music anyway. When the beast part came in, the piece got very loud and modern and when the man came in it got very treble and ripply. You could tell how taken Mr. Sykes was with it all. He sat up there in the bishop's chair and kept his mouth closed the whole time. It was remarkable that a boy that young could think up all that. If somebody in Ashton had heard it, they would have died. You couldn't clap, though, not in the chapel, so you just had to kind of show the boy you liked it by smiling very broadly.

When that was over, the boy whose mother was a poet and had rabbit's eyes recited "Wounded Gland." He looked pretty much like his parents except his hair was red, not pink, and he had terribly sunken-in cheeks. His poem was very beautiful and probing---about this sixteen-year-old boy that lies down in a bed of flowers and thinks all the time. It rhymed all the way through. I'm really not very good at understanding a lot of poetry, only Robert Browning, but I understood that one. It was the most mature thing you ever heard. There ^{ere} was one line in there that said "The harsh finger points and the wounded gland weeps." That's where he got the title from. Before he recited it, Mr. Sykes said he thought it would be

interesting for us to notice how young men write today, that in his day people didn't stress psychiatry so much. Psychiatry is when you go crazy.

I don't know whether people liked the poem or not. Father kept hanging his head. He doesn't read poetry very much---only the Sewanee Review and War Between the States books. But I ^{gal} saw the ⁹⁷ boy's parents sitting on the other side of the chapel and his mother kept smiling and moving her head all over the place. I guess she was awfully glad her son had turned out like she had. The father didn't look so glad, though. Insurancemen never are very partial to poetry.

Anyway, after that, the terrible thing happened. This very fat boy got up and was going to sing a solo---"Morning On The Holy Hill." It was horrifying. While the organist was rippding through the introduction, the boy kept standing there, staring at everybody. You knew how terrified he was and then on the first note he let out a croak. He had to stop and the organist had to go through the entire introduction again. All these boys kept trying to hide their grins and the boy tried again, but nothing happened. I could feel my hands all popping out with perspiration and I could have just marched right out of the chapel. He never did sing. Finally he said out loud: "Shucks, I just don't think I'll fool with it" and sat down.

Everybody started kind of trying not to laugh and then Mr. Sykes got up and patted him on the back and told us he knew we all had had experiences like that and if you felt like you just didn't want to fool with a thing, you shouldn't try. "That's all right, Horace," he said, turning all the way around to the fat boy. "That's just all right." Even the boy's hands were red and

he just sat up there, shaking his head and frowning. What I kept thinking about was the poor boy's parents. I never felt so sorry for anybody in all my life. I thought those boys were mean to laugh. Arthur didn't. I could see him and he was just staring straight ahead. I guess he knew how it was.

Right away after that, though, they got around to the awards. The first thing was the awards for the senior class. Every subject had an award---history, English, science---everything, and all these bow-legged boys with big shoulders kept walking up to Mr. Sykes to get cups and things. I wonder why it is that so many boys when they get older are bow-legged? It looked to me as if they were walking that way on purpose, hunching up their shoulders and everything, but I suppose they wouldn't do a thingthing, that in chapel. There was this one very handsome boy that gotking upetally everything. He was blond and had matriculated for all that years. Just by looking at him you could tell how brilliant he was, also athletic. Athletics is practically the most important thing in almost every school in Connecticut. Arthur told me, "If you're not on some kind of team, you're pretty bad." I was certainly glad Arthur was on the tennis team. But, anyway, the handsome senior was also Senior Prefect, which is a thing Arthur also wants to be some day. He told me at Ponte Vedra. *He won't be, though. Very seldom do Southerners triumph in the north. It's tragic.* Anyway, I knew it was getting time for the Amos T. Caldwell award to be called out. It's an award for the whole student body, not just seniors. I mean even if you're only thirteen or something and show this huge tendency toward character, you can get it even then. I don't know what Arthur was thinking. There was this light that reflected on his glasses, so you couldn't see his eyes. Eyes are

are the only thing that can tell you what somebody is thinking. All I know is, I just sat there hoping he would get it. For some reason I kept remembering all the terrible years of Arthur's youth. Glasses, D's... It's strange, but for some reason when I think of Arthur when he was a child, I can't ever seem to picture him laughing. I guess he never had very much to laugh about. Everybody always carrying on about his grades and boys teasing him. Just about the only person he ever played with in grammar school was Isaiah. He'd come dragging back from school and right away start calling for Isaiah. Isaiah was the nicest person in the world to him, playing baseball with him and everything. Isaiah was dying for Arthur to get on a team, but he never did.

I guess Arthur must have been a dreadfully unhappy child. It's terrible when someone suffers in silence. I do sometimes feel a lot of things happen that I wouldn't tell anybody, especially, play Mother and Father. As you know, ^{Mother and Father} they believe in having "spunk" and "rising above" things. They literally despise anybody that goes slumping and whining around, even if they are unhappy. Mother says we've all got to be unhappy some of the time and there's no sense whining about it.

I don't know why I started thinking about Arthur's youth and all. The award, I guess. As I said, he wanted it so and he really is a very kindly person. He's never, NEVER been mean to me. Anyway, I just sat there, thinking about all that and then this fantastic revelation came down upon me. It's terrible when you suddenly have a revelation about somebody like your own brother. But that's what happened. In just one flashing, split second it came down on me that Arthur wanted to get that award, not for himself, but for us!

He's the most unselfish person you ever saw, and after all those years we let him suffer alone too. ~~He's dreadfully nice and people like that, as I've told you, always make me want to cry. I felt like crying over Arthur. I don't know why. Just stupid, I guess.~~ 87

12 # ~~How sad the world is! How tragic it is!~~ How sad the world is! How tragic it is! Arthur didn't get the Amos T. Caldwell award. Instead, a tall, thin boy with a brown crew cut walked up and shook Mr. Sykes' hand. Mr. Sykes even patted him on the back and you could tell by the way the boy was hanging his head and everything that he had all this character. But poor Arthur. He didn't look to the left or the right and his glasses seemed to be getting bigger and bigger. Mother looked down at the gloves in her hand and I guess maybe we felt even worse than Arthur did. He really had tried. by the way

Arthur's name was called out for being the boy that this year had the most windows and "with the best spirit" for the year ~~1960~~ 1960-61. We congratulated him heartily for this and kept mentioning how grand it was he had gotten it for two straight years. We never mentioned the other award.

gal 285 But when it was all over we went back out on the lawn again. Arthur was putting up a brave front, beaming and introducing us to all his friends. Bob Leyden was there and by the way he was grinning and everything I guess he had got cured. Arthur, though, said he had gotten tired of old Leyden. "He's got this new thing now. He keeps thinking he's going to stop breathing and has to run to the window all the time."

"How really unfortunate for him," Mother said. And then Knox Campbell came up! Knox Campbell looked like a happy little chipmunk and not like an alcoholic at all. He had this bristly dark crew cut

that needed cutting and these beady dark eyes that looked like he was laughing at everything.

"Well, Knox," Mother said, "how nice to meet you!"

Knox shook hands with Mother and Father and then sort of hit Arthur on the shoulder. "How 'bout old Whitfield here? Biggest window washer in Connecticut! Big stuff. Yeah?"

Arthur didn't say anything. He just sort of jabbed a finger into Knox's diaphragm. Boys can be these very stupid people sometimes. We just had to stand there watching them jab each other. Then Knox kind of leaned on Arthur's shoulder and started talking to Mother and Father. "Missus Whitfield," he said exactly like Peg Woods at Ponte Vedra, "how 'bout letting old Whitfield come to the Cape with us this summer? My mother and father have this house, see." He glanced at Arthur. "We'd have a ball each other.

I guess Arthur had got to liking Knox again. I started talking what he'd said about Knox and Albert Schweitzer---about Knox just liking football and girls. I suppose Arthur wasn't very partial to Albert Schweitzer any more.

"We think you should come to see us in Georgia," Father said.

Knox started grinning all over the place. "Man, wouldn't I be something in Georgia! They'd probably ~~lynch~~ lynch me."

"That's why we want you to come," Arthur said. And Knox nearly killed himself laughing. We had to laugh, too. Knox was a violently happy human being.

"Yeah," he said. "Caintcha see me goin' round you-allin' it all ovah the plantation?" He hit Arthur on the shoulder. "You got any girls down theah, boy? Hey?"

"There're lovely girls in Georgia," Mother said.

"Yeah?" Knox said, and then I could feel my face getting

red. Knox glanced at me and I knew what he was thinking. I guess he thought if the girls were anything like me he'd better not come. I hated Knox Campbell. I thought ~~he~~ was rude.

He punched Arthur again. "Hey, how 'bout old Horace croaking himself to death up there in the chapel? Man, he's a real star, that guy. What about that, huh?" He kept asking Arthur everything.

"Yeah," was all Arthur said.

"Funny? I thought I'd die."

"That was most unfortunate," Mother said. "I know he must have felt simply wretched about it."

Knox started shaking his head. "Old Horace. I don't think I'll ever forget that guy."

While they were talking, I looked around the lawn to see if "old Horace" could hear us. He was way over by the ~~knock~~ tree, just standing there alone with, I guess, his parents. All three of them were pretty fat and had thick noses. I thought ~~it~~ was terrible of everybody not to go up and speak to them. I saw that Mrs. Phillips and what must have been "Chawlie boy", her son. He was this exceedingly tall boy that looked old and bored. He must have been a senior but he didn't get any awards at Class Day. They started walking toward the main building and "Chawlie-boy" had his arm around his mother's waist. I hate boys that do that to their mothers. It looks stupid, like they were trying to show everybody their mother is this very young person or something. I could just see them walking around ~~Rom~~ that way, just the two of them, going around with their arms around each other looking bored at all the Italiens. I was glad "C_nawlie boy" wasn't a friend of Arthur's.

I looked back at Mother. She started to say something, but

just as she did this very thin boy that also wore glasses came up to us.

"This is my roommate," Arthur said. And he introduced us, "Frank Overby."

"Well, I gotta go, old man," Knox said. "Glad to have metcha, Missus Whitfield. Mr. Whitfield. Bye-now, Felicia."

"Bye," I said. That was nice of him to say something to me, I thought. Knox wasn't really so bad after all.

But Arthur's roommate was very strange. He just kept grinning and never said very much. He had sort of yellow teeth, too, and a not very good complexion.

Mother kept trying to say things. We had friends in Lake Forest, she said---"The Fallenasbees." She wondered if Frank knew them by any chance.

"Yes," Frank said and then went back to grinningtagatoo, and remembered that Arthur had said his roommate was very smart. You'd never know it to look at him.

"Is Arthur neat in his room?" Mother asked. I guess she couldn't think of anything else to say.

Frank looked at Arthur and for some reason started giggling. I guess there was something pretty funny about their room, because Arthur kind of laughed too.

"Come on now, Overby," Arthur said. "You know that was your junk all over the room when old Perry came around."

Frank looked at Mother. "He's pretty neat, I guess."

"Well, it's the first time, then," Father said. And Frank began to giggle again.

gal 99.5 After he had gone, Mother said she thought Frank Overby was

"a bit difficult."

"Aw, he just gets kinda nervous," Arthur said. "He's a pretty good old guy."

"Don't say that, Arthur," Mother said.

"What?"

"Guy."

Arthur didn't say anything, but then all of a sudden he got this very solemn look in his eyes. The blond senior that had taken all the awards at Class Day was standing by the lemonade table waiting for one of the white women to fill his glass.

Arthur turned and stood in front of us. "That's Seymour Yates." He kind of whispered it.

"I'd like to meet him," Mother said casually.

"No, I don't think so."

"Why not?" Mother said. "I think it would be nice to congratulate him."

Arthur frowned. "He's Senior Prefect."

I knew Arthur didn't want to introduce us, but then ^{when} we went by the table, he said, "Seymour?" very quietly. Seymour apparently didn't hear him, so he said it again. "Seymour?"

Seymour jerked around and he was very handsome. "Yeah? Oh, hi Arthur!"

"Seymour," Arthur mumbled. "These are my parents."

Seymour looked at us questioningly with the bluest eyes you ever saw, and when he smiled his teeth were even and wide. He shook hands with Father and then said, "How-do-you-do, Missus Whitfield," to Mother. "And this must be your sister, Arthur?"

"Yeah," Arthur said.

"How-do-you-do?" I said to him and all the time I kept think-

ing that the ~~girl~~^{girl} he married would be the luckiest girl in the entire world. I kept thinking about Winky. If only Winky could marry somebody like him, but, of course, he wasn't from Charleston.

"You certainly took the honors today, Seymour," Father said. "Congratulations!"

"Thank you, sir," Seymour said and then looked at Arthur. "Arthur here didn't do so badly himself."

"Yes, we're very proud of him for that," Mother said.

Arthur kind of frowned. I guess he didn't want Seymour to know we were proud.

The waitress handed Seymour two glasses of lemonade. "Would you like some, Missus Whitfield?"

Mother said "no, thank you." And then he kind of indicated the glass to me and then Father. We both said "no, thank you" to

Seymour Yates was excruciatingly polite. "I guess I better take these over to somebody else then." He smiled very broadly.

"I'm so glad to have met you." He glanced at Arthur. "Good luck, Arthur! Come and see me at Yale."

Arthur nearly fainted. "I will!" he said, too gladly, I thought. When he was gone Arthur was still beaming. "He's the nicest boy in the entire school. He really is."

"He certainly seems it," Mother said.

"Don't you think so, Dad?" Arthur wanted to know.

"Nice lad," was all Father said.

"Yeah," Arthur sort of sighed.

And then Arthur's English teacher came up. Mr. Woodford. He was a tall, sandy-haired man that talked sort of like an Englishman except he had a broken nose; it kind of turned toward the side. I was afraid he was going to tell us Arthur hadn't passed, so I kept

looking up at the sky. But then all at once he started saying these very startling things and I looked at him square in the eye.