

Chapter 22

How then, at last, does one say good-bye?

On her second trip to study hall Felicia carried a corrugated box to put her books in. The box was marked in bold, black letters: "WHEN YOU MOVE, CALL MYERS AND DONALD, TRANSFER AND STORAGE, ST. LOUIS, MO."

How pointless and cold the words were now, as cold, really, as the row upon row of empty desks. Everyone was at gym. Felicia could hear their voices outside, high and distant, broken only occasionally by Miss Brocks' piercing whistle. Felicia had waited until this hour to pack her books. It was the only time she could think of that the room would be completely empty. Besides, everything else had been done now, the last dress folded and placed in her trunk, her blankets, sheets, and towels, all carefully name-taped, were stuffed into her duffle bag, waiting for their hapless journey back to Georgia again.

She opened the top of her desk. Inside, neatly placed, were her books: French, the two English books, a copy of "Pride and Prejudice",

her algebra book, history, and beside them, her notebooks and a pamphlet marked "Irregular verbs". She took up the books and as she did the algebra book fell to the floor. She picked it up and there in the back was the calendar she had drawn with the red circle around May 31 and the word "Pennsylvania!!!" beneath it. She looked at it for a moment, and it was as if someone else had drawn it, long ago. But then everything seemed as if it had happened long ago, years ago, and to someone else.

Was she really leaving? So much of her had gone into this place. It seemed impossible she would never see any of it again. Only a few weeks ago she had been thinking of all the days, months, and years ahead here. Life after Chesney Hall was some vague horizon she could never quite fully see. And yet she had leapt over the years in a day. In a matter of just one hour she would walk away and never see any of these people again.

She placed the books in the box, folded the top, and then sighing heavily, sat down at her desk. She folded her hands as if she might have been in class. Ahead was the empty monitor's chair, facing the rows of desks like an accusing finger. Over the chair was the small blackboard and written were the words: "Junior-Senior banquet May 25th!!!"

Odd, the school would go on.

She looked back at the top of her desk. Lightly scratched near the ink well was her name. "Felicia Carr Whitfield, 1963." She remembered when she had done that, right before Christmas vacation. There had been no assignments for the next day, and, idly, she had scratched her name with a broken pen. Afterward she had been worried someone might discover it because Chesney Hall "gulls" never scratch their names on desks. "Do we, gulls?" "Noooo, Miss Eu-banks."

But now the name was there for everyone to see. Perhaps another new

girl would come here some day, sit in her desk, see the name and maybe she would wonder who Felicia Carr Whitfield was and what ever became of her. So that was all that remained of her here, her name scratched on a desk, one legacy, in her time.

Miss Brock's whistle blew again. And as if it were her cue, Felicia stood up and picked up the box of books. "Well, so long," she said to the study hall and once more glanced down at her name on the desk.

girl 98 Blessedly, the halls were empty as she walked back to her room. She didn't want to see anybody, least of all any of the faculty. They all looked at her so curiously as if they were studying her, a specimen to be studied. No one had come into her room that afternoon either, not even Cannon. She half believed Cannon had been ordered to stay out of the room; she wasn't sure, but it wasn't like Cannon, curious as she was about most things.

Everything in the room was as she had left it, the empty bureau drawers still open, her two suitcases, closed and locked, and the trunk and duffle bag ready to be sent out ^{by} Miss Gates, probably tomorrow. Patsy's bed was still unmade and everything was still on her dresser, the silver brush and comb, the small leather jewelry box and the pen sketch of Gigi, a slender handsome young girl with enormous, sad eyes.

Only Cannon's corner suggested permanency now. Suddenly Felicia remembered the address and five dollars Mrs. Dedham had given her. She had completely forgotten and she didn't want to face Miss Gates again, or anyone for that matter. She had already planned that she would take her two suitcases and wait outside near the gate for her father.

"I'll just leave it with Cannon," she thought. "Write her a note." There was a stationery box on the floor by Patsy's bed, Chesney Hall stationery with its small but impressive crest. She had already packed

her own stationery, Chesney Hall's, for what reason she didn't know.)

She sat down on Cannon's cot and began to write on top of the stationery box:

Dear Cannon:

7 Patsy and her mother want somebody to pack up her things and send them to this address. They don't want to have to come back here again. The five dollars is for whatever it costs.

Felicia hesitated for a minute. She really ought to say something else to Cannon. "A whole year," she was thinking. "I've known Cannon for a whole year." She began to write again.

7 Well, I'm leaving now. My father will be here any minute I guess. I sure have enjoyed rooming with you, Cannon, and I hope you pass everything and have a good summer in St. Louis.

7 I'm sorry if I got into any trouble or anything with Miss Eubanks or anybody. Well, so long, Cannon and good luck. Really.

Felicia

Her throat had begun to ache again. She really liked Cannon. She really did. Maybe she would see her again sometime. Maybe they would run into each other years and years from now. "I wonder if we'll even recognize each other."

Felicia got up and put the note on Cannon's pillow. She looked at her watch. Four forty-five. Gym would be over soon. She'd better hurry. She took up both her suitcases and then standing at the door looked about the room. Somehow she wanted to burn it on her mind, plant it there, so that all her life she would never forget it, never forget a chair, or a table or anything about it. The last thing she saw before she closed the door was Cannon's brush, lying on the table beside her cot. "Eighty-eight, eighty-nine, ninety..." Cannon seemed to be counting.

She closed the door and, picking up her bags again, walked out into the hall. At the head of the stairway she rested one of the bags to get a better hold of it. She looked down the circular stairs to see if anyone

was in the hall below. There was no one.

She started to pick up the bag again when a voice behind her said:

"Wheetfield! Wheetfield!"

She turned. It was Madame de Crèvecoeur, breathless, flushed, and frowning, her black cotton dress long and wrinkled as ever.

"Oh, Madame," said Felicia.

"You are going away now, eh?"

Felicia dampened her lips and nodded her head.

Madame took hold of her arm. "Now, for Madame, you must not forget your irregular verbs, non! You will study hard, eh?"

"Yes, I will, Madame. I won't forget."

Madame's face seemed to soften. "You are going away, eh? Now?"

Felicia nodded.

"Ah, mon enfant. Eet is sad, eh?"

"I guess so," Felicia said. Her throat was aching terribly now.

But she beamed at the round, sad face.

"Oui, eet is ^{pad,} ~~sad~~ But remember, remember what Shackspear say. He say 'There ees a special providence een the fall of a sparrow'. He was right, theese man, eh?"

Felicia nodded again.

"You will forget theese day, my sparrow. You will forget."

Felicia wanted to say something. She couldn't. She shook her head. She wanted to say she would never forget.

"Ah, yes."

Felicia turned abruptly and began her trip down the stairway.

"Adieu, ma petite."

Felicia glanced back at her. "Good-bye," she called. But then she saw her father. He was coming through the main door below. He was tall,

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slightly bent, and as he looked about him there was a certain bewilderment on his face.

It was then the tears began streaming down Felicia's face. "He has come," she thought. "He has come to me."