Cyclone in Silent Land, F. Scott Fitzgerald

Unpublished Fitzgerald story featuring the nurse “Trouble.” The ex-chorus girl turned nursing student.

Glenola McClurg and her adventures with the young doctor Dick Wheelock was a character that Fitzgerald hoped to have in a series of recurring stories for The Saturday Evening Post. Unfortunately, the present story, his first attempt, was rejected by the magazine which only reluctantly accepted a second, vastly different version titled "Trouble" before advising the author to drop the character.

I

“Why don’t you just pull the socks off? Get an orderly to help you. Good Lord, that’s what I’d do if a patient kept me up all night with idiotic calls.”

“I’ve thought of that,” Bill said. “I’ve tried to think of everything in my whole medical training. But this man is a big shot—”

“You’re not supposed to pay any attention to that—”

“I don’t mean just rich—I mean he has the air of being a big shot in his own profession like Dandy and Kelly in ours—”

“You’re nervous,” said the other interne. “How’re you going to lecture to those girls in two hours?”

“I don’t know.”

“Oh, lie down and get some sleep. I’ve got to get over to the bacteriology lab and I want to get some breakfast first.”

“Sleep!” Bill exclaimed. “I’ve tried it plenty times tonight. Soon as I get my eyes closed that ward rings.”

“Well, do you want some breakfast?”

Bill was dressed—or rather hadn’t been undressed all night. Harris had finished dressing and after adjusting his necktie suggested to Bill Craig:

“Change your whites. You’re mussy.”

Bill groaned.

“I’ve changed them five times in two days. You think I run a private laundry?”

Harris went to a bureau.

“Put on these—they ought to fit—I used yours plenty times last fall. Come on now. Slip into these—breakfast is on the schedule.”

Bill pulled himself together and started living on his nervous system—enough to live on, for it was solid and he was a good physical specimen with a tradition of many doctors behind him; he struggled into the proffered whites.

“Let’s go. But I think I ought to leave some word for this man on the way.”

“Oh, forget it. Come on—we’ll have breakfast. A man that won’t take off his socks!”

But Bill was still fretted as they went out into the corridor.

“I don’t feel quite comfortable. After all the poor guy hasn’t got anybody to depend on except me.”

“You’re going sentimental.”

“Maybe.”

And now up the corridor came Trouble, Trouble so white, so lovely, that it didn’t identify itself immediately as such. It was sheer trouble. It was the essence of trouble—trouble personified, challenging…

… trouble.

Starting to smile a hundred feet away it came along like a flying cloud—began to pass the internes, stopped, wheeled smart as the military, came up to both of them and figuratively pressed against them. All she said was:

“Good morning, Dr. Craig, morning Dr. Machen.”

Then Trouble, knowing she’d done it, leaned back against the wall, conscious, oh completely conscious of having stamped herself vividly on their masculine clay.

It was a curious sort of American beauty, very difficult to show the charm of it because it was the blend of many races. It was not blonde, nor was it dark; it had a pride of its own; it was rather like the autumn page from the kitchen calendars of thirty years ago with blue instead of brown October eyes. It went under the registered name of Benjamina Rosalyn—Trouble to her friends.

What more did she look like? To the two internes she looked like a lovely muffin, like the cream going into the coffee in the breakfast room.

This all happened in a moment. Then they went on, Bill insisting after all on stopping at the desk and leaving a note as to where he could be found.

“You’re going nuts about that old man,” Harris warned him. “Why don’t you concentrate on clipping his sympathetic nerves like we’re going to do tomorrow? That’s when he really will need help.”

Miss Harte at the desk was saying:

“It’s a call for you from Ward 4, Dr. Craig. Do you want to take it?”

Harris pulled him toward the dining room but Bill said:

“I’ll take it.”

“You’ve got to lecture in half an hour. You’ll miss your breakfast.”

“Never mind. It’s from Room 1B, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Dr. Craig.”

“Gosh, I’d like to hear your lecture to those probationers,” said Harris disgustedly. “But go on—boys will be boys.”

Bill went into 1B on Ward 4. Mr. Polk Johnston, robust and fifty, sat up in bed.

“So you came,” he said gruffly. “They said you probably wouldn’t but you’re the only person here I can trust—you and that little nurse they call Trouble.”

“She’s not a nurse—she’s only a probationer.”

“Well, she looks like a nurse to me. Say, what I called you here for is to know the name of that operation again.”

“It’s called sympathectomy. By the way, Mr. Johnston—let me take that sock off, will you?”

“No,” the man roared. “I thought you were doctors, not chiropodists. I’ll keep my sock on. If you think I’m crazy how did I make my money?”

“Nobody thinks you’re crazy. Now Mr. Johnston, I’ve got to go along and lecture—I’ll be back.”

“How soon?”

“Say an hour.”

“All right then. Send the little girl.”

“She’ll be at the lecture too.” Bill escaped on the old man’s groan.

The hospital was housed in three buildings connected by cloisters of plane trees and bushes. When Bill came outdoors on his way to the classroom he stopped for a moment, leaning against a protrudent branch. What was this feeling of intense irritation—maybe he was never meant to be a doctor.

“But I’ve got the physique for it,” he thought. “I’ve got the courage—I hope I have. I’ve got the intelligence. Why can’t I kill this nervous business?”

He went on, pushing a bush out of his way.

“I’ve got to face these girls as something. Pull yourself up, Bill, my boy. You were hand picked for this lecture job and they’re going to be plenty other patients to run you ragged.”

From where he was in the green cloister he could see the probationers flocking into class, twenty of them, and he took advantage of the fact to organize the few words that would inaugurate his lecture while they examined the rabbit. The rabbit was anesthetized, the heart exposed and ready to respond to adrenalin, to digitalis, to strychnine. The girls would take their seats and regard the phenomenon. They were nice girls, ignorant as a rule, but nice. He knew some doctors who didn’t like trained nurses.

… Forty years ago, those doctors said, girls went into this because they had heard about Florence Nightingale and a life of service. Many still did go in for it in that spirit, others simply went in for it. The best hospitals tried to weed these out. It took three years to be a nurse—in one more year you could be a doctor. If a woman was serious why not take the whole thing? But then Bill thought:

“Poor kids. Half of them hadn’t any sort of education to start with, except what we give them…”

The flock of girls were in. With his notes and two books under his arm he followed.

“Sweet heaven!” he exclaimed, and decided to wait by the door till they quieted down. For a moment he looked over the parapet, over miles of morning, thinking again about himself. Then, at the moment when he started to go into the classroom, the green skirt of a probationer blew out the door frantically.

“Dr. Craig—” she panted.

“What’s the excitement?”

“You ought to see what! It’s about the rabbit.”

“Now listen. Calm down. Now what?”

He couldn’t tell whether the girl was laughing or crying. His exasperation came to the fore—figuratively he took her by the shoulders and shook her.

“What nonsense! What on earth?”

He marched her into the classroom before him. An echolalia of idiotic laughter filled his ears—and he pushed his way through to the center of it crying: “What’s the matter?”

—and came upon Trouble. There she was in all her gorgeous beauty, standing beside the rabbit split for dissection, weeping wildly.

He couldn’t believe his eyes that it was she—because in spite of being God’s gift to men she had shown more promise than any other probationer.

—A girl suddenly fainted at his side and he pulled her up. Hysteria had swept the room and he saw that this girl had caused it by the sheer force of her personality—this girl who knocked him sidewise every time he saw her. All in a split second he decided not to shout, but he spoke through gritted teeth.

“You bunch of quitters,” he said. “You bunch of quitters!”

He was losing control of himself and he knew it, but he went on.

“You’re trying to help people—and you’re scared of a dead rabbit. You—”

The girl, with all the beauty going out of her face, managed to throw her shoulders back and face him.

“I’m so sorry, doctor,” she sobbed. “But I kept rabbits when I was a girl and here’s this little bunny—split open—”

Then he said the word—a big word. It did not deny that they were females but it denied that they belonged to the race of homo sapiens, but rather a certain four-footed tribe. Even as he heard it resound about him, the door opened and the superintendent of nurses came in.

He looked at her—all the temper rilled suddenly out of him.

“Good morning, Mrs. Caldwell.”

“Good morning, Doctor.” He saw in her face that she had heard, that she was shocked and amazed.

“All you students go out of here,” he said. “Wait on the terrace. Lecture’s postponed for a few minutes.”

There was a confused moment with the girls trying to apologize, and not knowing whom to apologize to. They realized that something epochal had happened, that they had been sworn at by a doctor, but they didn’t know how to evaluate the act or estimate the consequence.

“Why, Dr. Craig!” Mrs. Caldwell said. She came up to him almost like Trouble in the corridor.

“Why, Doctor—have my ears mistaken me or did I hear you use that word to those girls—” she faltered on the pronouncement of it. Her very fooling about with it renewed his exasperation, and he hinged his career on his arrogant answer.

“You bet you heard it.”

“And those young innocent girls—and you say that in front of them. I know where

my duty lies!”

“Go and do it then.”

“I certainly shall, Dr. Craig. And I prefer that the lecture be called off this morning.”

Bill sat down in the deserted classroom. Perhaps he shouldn’t have been a doctor, he thought again. He had no intention of apologizing or of trying to fix it up in any way. They would fire him. That was almost certain. He would go and say goodbye to Mr. Polk Johnston and Harris; he’d try to keep them from firing Trouble.

… That’s where he stopped thinking, simply stood there looking out the window, his hand sometimes absently touching the rabbit. He was very glad his father was dead—his father had been a doctor.

II

Bill sat across the desk from the superintendent, half an hour later.

“Now, Doctor Craig—exactly what did happen?”

“I lost my temper and swore at them.”

Dr. Haskell arose and took a few steps down the room, and then back to his chair. He was a fair man; Bill had always liked him.

“Go on fire me, sir,” he said. “I know I deserve it.”

“All right. I’m going to fire you. I’m glad you’re going to take it that way. I knew your father—”

“Oh, please skip that. You’re not going to penalize anybody else, are you?”

“Well naturally. Mrs. Caldwell inquired around and Miss Rosalyn’s got to go. Not that that excuses you.”

“She’s as good now as any graduate nurse in the hospital.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Haskell dryly, “it seems too bad.”

“And I want to tell you something about Johnston.”

“Who’s he? How does he come into this case? What department’s he in? Is he an orderly?”

“No, he’s a patient.”

“Oh, you mean Mr. Polk Johnston, the hypertensive. Now you’re making sense. What about him?”

“I’d like to tell you about him.”

Dr. Haskell who had sat down got up again:

“We know about his socks that he won’t take off.” He said, “We know he’s rich as Croesus, and his people control some American hospital. He and his brother are in Shanghai or Canton. Have you anything to add to that?”

“Just this: I know he’s awful scared and he may try to stall off the thing. If he leaves here without an operation something tells me he’s not long for this world—”

The door opening interrupted Bill. It was the private secretary.

“Dr. Haskell, it’s Mrs. Caldwell, and she has that nurse with her. I can’t seem to remember her name—the pretty one they call Trouble.”

“I don’t want to see them now. Anyhow I thought Mrs. Caldwell was taking care of that herself.”

“Let them come in, sir, please,” Bill begged suddenly.

“I don’t see why I should.”

“Please, sir,” Bill repeated.

The secretary looked from one to the other—at the young desperate face, at Dr. Haskell deciding.

“Oh, let them in then.”

“Thanks,” Bill said.

Mrs. Caldwell and Trouble were both rather white; all the lovely color had left Trouble’s face till it was pale as the white fur of the rabbit that had caused the scene this morning.

The older woman spoke.

“Now, Dr. Haskell—”

She was interrupted by Bill’s voice:

“Now Mrs. Caldwell, do you think it’s just to dismiss a girl for one small attack of nerves?”

Dr. Haskell turned to him and said: “Will you be quiet, sir?”

“Thank you, Dr. Haskell,” said Mrs. Caldwell. “Lately, he’s been the most difficult, the most difficult—”

“The most difficult what?”

“Well, I can’t stand swearing. I was brought up on a farm in the Pennsylvania hills and we never learned those tough words. How am I expected to stand them—I—I—”

The younger nurse was at her side now: “Oh, Mrs. Caldwell—don’t worry about it now.”

Dr. Haskell had nodded at the door, and Bill catching the gesture, got up and closed it.

Mrs. Caldwell got control of herself. “This girl is just too pretty, that’s all,” she said.

“What!” Dr. Haskell demanded.

“You know it, everybody knows it. She’s too pretty for this.”

“Since when did that disqualify anyone?” Dr. Haskell said. “It seems to me I’ve seen hundreds of pretty nurses in my time.”

“I should hope so,” said Bill.

“I wasn’t speaking to you, Dr. Craig. I was under the impression you’d

resigned.”

Then they all spoke at once:

“Excuse me,” said Bill.

“I guess it was all my fault,” said Trouble.

“No wonder they all call you ‘Trouble’,” said Mrs. Caldwell.

“I thought this was supposed to be a hospital!” thundered Dr. Haskell.

But Bill was not to be subdued. The sweet parting of the young girl’s hair as she had bent over Mrs. Caldwell moved him intolerably, and he knew the long hours, the daily nursing, the hard duty that was the lot of the probationer as they learned their little beginnings of anatomy and chemistry. There was more excuse for her break than for his.

“I’ll apologize to Miss Rosalyn for the language I used, if that’ll help her case,” he said. “She certainly didn’t do enough to provoke what I said.”

“But you didn’t apologize to me,” said Mrs. Caldwell.

“I will if it’ll help her.”

“And I thought at first you were very much of a gentleman,” said Mrs. Caldwell.

“I thought maybe I was, but I guess I was wrong.”

“That’ll do, Dr. Craig,” said the superintendent. “This has been very unfortunate. I bid you goodbye, sir, and wish you the best of luck in the future.”

With a despairing look at Trouble Bill turned quickly and left the room.

And now it was Trouble’s turn. And she knew very well that she was being punished just as much for her flirtations as for her attack of nerves this morning. Well, to these people medicine was an idol, and she had stuck chewing gum around the alabaster pedestal…

“We will refund your tuition,” said Dr. Haskell gently.

She went back to her room and faced herself in the mirror. Throwing herself on her bed she wept for a moment; then she got up and packed her bag, the same bag she had once carried as a hoofer on the four-a-day.

“And here I am,” she said, terribly sorry for herself, “just because I wanted to be something more than just good to look at.”

There was an extra package to be made of left-overs and she had quivered the last string into place when an orderly knocked at the door.

“You’re wanted at 1B on Ward 4.”

“Yes I am. I’m leaving. I’m fired.”

“Well, they told me to tell you.”

“All right.”

She closed the door. Then she realized suddenly that she still had on her nurse’s uniform.

—All right, she thought, “I’ll go down and tell that old Johnston I will marry him. He’s thought of nothing else for a week.”

On the way downstairs she passed a young nurse who grabbed at her arm as she passed.

“We’re all so sorry, Miss Rosalyn.”

She was touched, but the same sort of ill-humor that had possession of Dr. Craig this morning made her say:

“Call me Trouble, please.”

“All right, ‘Trouble’ then, we’re all sorry.”

The ward was deserted. She could see no one at the desk but it didn’t worry her. She didn’t hesitate. She took a deep breath, made an instinctive motion at her sides as if brushing off something and went into the room.

The room was empty.

So was the bed. It had been stripped clean of sheets and blankets—the evidence of what had been done with them was bound about the bureau which had been laid on its side to hold the improvised rope trailing over the window-sill into the dark afternoon. Mr. Johnston had escaped.

She reacted simply and spontaneously.

—The man must have been crazy with fright, she thought. He’ll kill himself trying to get through that gravel pit down there. In his condition!

She hadn’t shinnied since she was a baby but once she was over the sill the knotted cords between sheet and sheet helped her, and when she fell on her face at the end she didn’t feel her nose to see if it wobbled.

“My face never brought me any luck,” she said to herself as she started across country. “I hope it’s ruined.”

For a moment she almost believed herself but she was woman enough to cross her fingers.

Bill Craig came into the room less than two minutes after Trouble had left it. He saw exactly what she had seen but his first instinct was to ring the patient’s bell. When a nurse arrived he said:

“Do you know anything about this?”

“Why, Dr. Craig! He seemed all right this morning and Miss Rosalyn went in to say goodbye so I went for a quick coffee—”

“Miss Rosalyn was here?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, notify the ward interne what’s happened, will you?”

“Yes, Dr. Craig.”

He waited till she was gone before climbing out the window.

It had been a red morning, and now it was a rapidly darkening afternoon as Bill turned into the station. The station lights were on and his borrowed whites

seemed yellow in the light of half-burned out lamps. Unless a train had already carried the old man away he expected to see them both there: he understood Mr. Polk Johnston's flight from the operation and he was almost sure that Trouble had cither fled with him or followed him. The station was the natural destination—he left it to the hospital staff to search their own vicinity—for himself he scarcely looked out the window of the cab he caught on the outskirts of the small city.

In a minute he spotted them across the dingy waiting room, and turning into the cafeteria watched them through the smoky glass. She was sitting very still on her corner of the bench, her lovely eyes cast down gazing at nothing. As always he seemed to see something new in her. Trouble has that awesome quality, Trouble and Beauty, of showing new facets without preparation. People who passed her, salesmen, casual travelers, stopped for the break of an instant, stared, and then went on…

Bill finished his coffee and stood up from the counter, thankful to Harris for the whites—when he had accepted them it was without any idea of what the day would offer. They were scarcely soiled, scarcely mussed. As he approached the pair on the bench he saw that Mr. Polk Johnston, on the contrary, showed signs of his recent experience. What had looked to Bill like a swarm of bees incomprehensibly gathered upon him presently developed as a great gathering of burrs. They clung around him, as unnecessary epaulets on his shoulders and shin-guards on his knees; a full cluster adhered to his waist line and service stripes of them trailed down his cuffs.

They were engrossed in conversation when he addressed them.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Johnston. Good afternoon, Miss Trouble."

Mr. Johnston looked at him with startled eyes.

"And what are you doing here?" he demanded. "—did they send you after me?"

"No, I came of my own accord."

Johnston relaxed.

"What did you do to your nose?" he inquired.

"Well, you see, Mr. Johnston, that ladder you made wasn't strong enough for three people in succession and the joke was on me. One of the knots gave way half way down."

Trouble laughed.

"I could have made it better," said Johnston resentfully, "if I had the time."

Bill had a picture of the whole hospital swarming suddenly out the window and down Mr. Johnston's rope-ladder.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"About twenty minutes," said Trouble. She looked at her wrist watch. "It took me about an hour—I got a bus at the city limits."

"I hitch-hiked," said Mr. Johnston complacently. "I got here only five minutes after she did."

"I got a taxi," said Bill, "and came in a poor third. We ought to enter the Olympics like Bonthron and Venski and Cunningham."

"Hm!" said Mr. Johnston. He did not seem as friendly as upon previous occasions—in fact Bill got the sense that his presence was considered an intrusion.

“I'm not going to the Olympics,” Mr. Johnston continued, “in fact my intention is to go to Tibet this summer. I understand they have a drug that relieves high blood-pressure without this crazy operation.”

“That’s a long way,” said Bill.

“Oh, I’m not going alone. Miss Trouble has just consented to go with me—in the capacity of my wife.”

“I see,” said Bill, but he felt his face reset in a curious uncomfortable way.

“I see you don’t like the idea,” said Johnston observantly. “Old man’s darling and all that. Well, why didn’t you ask her when you had the chance?”

And then suddenly Bill did ask her, not in so many words but by looking straight into her rather stricken blue eyes.

“Internes are not in a position to ask anyone to marry them.”

Trouble hardened protectively.

“You to ask me, Dr. Craig! You that only this morning referred to us as—”

“Can’t we skip that,” said Bill. “We’re out of the hospital now. Anyhow I guess I’ve intruded.”

“You certainly have,” said Trouble, trying desperately to make her eyes fall into line with her bitter voice. What was her choice—back to rock with her mother on the porch of a farmhouse through the best days of her life, or back with her sister making three night stands in movie houses from Bangor to Tallahassee.

So engrossed was she with her thought that only Bill’s eyes, leaving hers suddenly, made her look at Mr. Johnston. He was dead white, the left side of his face was twitching in time to his right hand and arm which played an invisible drum. Bill grabbed his shoulders just in time to keep him from slumping to the floor.

“Stay with him!” he ordered abruptly. “I’ll get coffee.”

III

He sent it back at a run by the cafeteria waiter and phoned the police emergency department for an ambulance. When he came back a small crowd had gathered.

“Stand back!” he ordered without raising his voice. “This man is very sick indeed.”

“What are you going to do?” Trouble demanded.

“Wait for the ambulance. Did he take all the coffee—pour it all into him, Trouble.”

“I couldn’t quite. I could feel his pulse in his shoulder. He just about hasn’t got any.”

“I didn’t think he would.” Again he motioned the crowd away from the bench, and beckoned the huskiest bystander.

“Give me a hand, will you? I’m going to try artificial respiration.”

He straddled the man and went through the motions. Just when he was sure it was hopeless he caught the quiver of a reaction beginning; simultaneously Trouble

said in his ear:

“The ambulance orderlies have come. What shall I do?”

“Have them stand by.”

“Yes, Doctor.”

“Need any help, sir?” one of them asked.

“No—just keep that crowd back—”

Life was returning to Mr. Johnston—it came in a gasp, a lurch, then a sudden grasp on his faculties that made him realize his predicament, try unsuccessfully to sit up and almost with his first breath begin to gasp orders.

“Who are all these people? Take them away! Have them removed.”

“You lie down.” Bill smiled inwardly, as he climbed off the resuscitated torso, thinking: “What does he suppose they are, waiters?”

“Off we go,” he said to the orderlies. “You brought in a stretcher of course.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, load him on. We go to the Battle Hospital.”

He started to follow, somewhat exhausted by his exertion. He felt alone; then he saw what was the matter—Trouble was hanging back.

“Am I supposed to go?”

“Come on, you idiot. Of course you are. Hurry up. They’ve got him in.”

“Do you think anybody there would ever want to see you and me again?”

“Come on now. Don’t be stupid.”

In the darkness of the ambulance Mr. Polk Johnston weakly demanded a cigar.

“I don’t think they furnish them,” said Bill.

“Then I want to go in some ambulance where they do. You ought to know—you’re the only doctor any good out there.”

“Well, I don’t think I can supply you with—”

Dr. Craig never finished that sentence. He was tossed forward precipitately to land on the chair ahead in the approximate straddling position he had used on Mr. Johnston. He saw Trouble flying past him at the same jolt, heard her yelp as she took it on a shoulder against the unbreakable glass. Mr. Johnston was flung up and back like a doll. It was a full minute before Bill could reach around the darkness of the ambulance and get out to see what had happened—then he saw plenty.

They had been run into by a school bus which lay, burning, half on its side against a tall bank of the road, with the little girls screaming as they stumbled out the back. He made a lunge for one who was afire, bumped into Trouble who had chosen the same one and rolled over on to another, beating at the flames with his hands. The two orderlies being in front had guessed the situation earlier and were already at it.

“Is there anyone left inside?” Bill cried after the first wild moment.

Simultaneously he saw that there was one, and acting deliberately wrapped a handkerchief around his palm and smashed the glass. The ambulance driver put his thick gabardine coat over the sill and they dragged the little girl over it. Bill was burning himself and he rolled for a moment in a wet ditch. Half a dozen other cars had come up and they had help now. A quick roll call of the girls by one of them showed no one missing.

“Anyone who lives close go for some flour,” Bill said. “You girls pile into the ambulance—all of you. One of you orderlies stand by the door and see that no clothes are still smoldering. Don’t let anyone you’re not sure of get into that ambulance.”

“Yes, Doctor.”

“Then go on, quick as you can. Emergency Ward.”

“How about you, sir?”

“I’m all right. I’ll get someone to take me.”

He went back to the ditch and plastered his hands with wet mud—then he discovered Trouble beside him doing the same.

“Let's get a hitch right over,” he said. “I think maybe they’ll let us in now, don’t you?”

“How about Mr. Johnston?”

“I hadn’t thought about him. He’s off to the hospital in the ambulance. I hope they’re not sitting all over him.”

“They’re not. The orderlies lifted him out to make room. He’s lying over across the road.”

“Alive?”

“Very much so. They’ve tried twice to get him into that car.”

“The old devil. I’ll get that sock off him now or know the reason why.”

He repeated this remark as he knelt to take Johnston’s pulse.

“No, you won’t,” Johnston answered.

“Why won’t I?”

“Because it’s off. I felt sort of ashamed the way you people have to work, so I thought I’d do that for you.”

Bill stooped to the exposed foot.

“Well, I’ll be a son-of-a-gun. It’s nothing but a supernumerary toe!”

“You think that’s nothing! It’s worried me all my life.”

“We’ll take it off tomorrow.” Bill stood up. He breathed. “So that’s all it was. Well, it’ll cost you the expenses of all these little girls.”

“No,” insisted Mr. Johnston, obstinate as ever. “It’ll cost me enough to build you a pediatric wing for your damn hospital—if they’ll take you back. You and your girl.”