



Two Soldiers, William Faulkner

## Two Soldiers

ME AND PETE would go down to Old Man Killegrew's and listen to his radio. We would wait until after supper, after dark, and we would stand outside Old Man Killegrew's parlor window, and we could hear it because Old Man Killegrew's wife was deaf, and so he run the radio as loud as it would run, and so me and Pete could hear it plain as Old Man Killegrew's wife could, I reckon, even standing outside with the window closed.

And that night I said, "What? Japanese? What's a pearl harbor?" and Pete said, "Hush."

And so we stood there, it was cold, listening to the fellow in the radio talking, only I couldn't make no heads nor tails neither out of it. Then the fellow said that would be all for a while, and me and Pete walked back up the road to home, and Pete told me what it was. Because he was nigh twenty and he had done finished the Consolidated last June and he knowed a heap: about them Japanese dropping bombs on Pearl Harbor and that Pearl Harbor was across the water.

"Across what water?" I said. "Across that Government reservoy up at Oxford?"

"Naw," Pete said. "Across the big water. The Pacific Ocean."

We went home. Maw and pap was already asleep, and me and Pete laid in the bed, and I still couldn't understand where it was, and Pete told me again — the Pacific Ocean.

"What's the matter with you?" Pete said. "You're going on nine years old. You been in school now ever since September. Ain't you learned nothing yet?"

"I reckon we ain't got as fer as the Pacific Ocean yet," I said.

We was still sowing the vetch then that ought to been all finished by the fifteenth of November, because pap was still behind, just like he had been ever since me and Pete had knowed him. And we had firewood to git in, too, but every night me and Pete would go down to Old Man Killegrew's and stand outside his parlor window in the cold and listen to his radio; then we would come back home and lay in the bed and Pete would tell me what it was. That is, he would tell me for a while. Then he wouldn't tell me. It was like he didn't want to talk about it no more. He would tell me to shut up because he wanted to go to sleep, but he never wanted to go to sleep.

He would lay there, a heap stiller than if he was asleep, and it would be something, I could feel it coming out of him, like he was mad at me even, only I knowed he wasn't thinking about me, or like he was worried about something, and it wasn't that neither, because he never had nothing to worry about. He never got behind like pap, let alone stayed behind. Pap give him ten acres when he graduated from the Consolidated, and me and Pete both reckoned pap was durn glad to get shut of at least ten acres, less to have to worry with himself; and Pete had them ten acres all sowed to vetch and busted out and bedded for the winter, and so it wasn't that. But it was something. And still we would go down to Old Man Killegrew's every night and listen to his radio, and they was at it in the Philippines now, but General MacArthur was holding um. Then we would come back home and lay in the bed, and Pete wouldn't tell me nothing or talk at all. He would just lay there still as a ambush and when I would touch him, his side or his leg would feel hard and still as iron, until after a while I would go to sleep.

Then one night — it was the first time he had said nothing to me except to jump on me about not chopping enough wood at the wood tree where we was cutting — he said, "I got to go."

"Go where?" I said.

"To that war," Pete said.

"Before we even finish gittin' in the firewood?"

“Firewood, hell,” Pete said.

“All right,” I said. “When we going to start?”

But he wasn’t even listening. He laid there, hard and still as iron in the dark. “I got to go,” he said. “I jest ain’t going to put up with no folks treating the Unity States that way.”

“Yes,” I said. “Firewood or no firewood, I reckon we got to go.”

This time he heard me. He laid still again, but it was a different kind of still.

“You?” he said. “To a war?”

“You’ll whup the big uns and I’ll whup the little uns,” I said.

Then he told me I couldn’t go. At first I thought he just never wanted me tagging after him, like he wouldn’t leave me go with him when he went sparking them girls of Tull’s. Then he told me the Army wouldn’t leave me go because I was too little, and then I knowed he really meant it and that I couldn’t go nohow noways. And somehow I hadn’t believed until then that he was going himself, but now I knowed he was and that he wasn’t going to leave me go with him a-tall.

“I’ll chop the wood and tote the water for you-all then!” I said. “You got to have wood and water!”

Anyway, he was listening to me now. He wasn’t like iron now.

He turned onto his side and put his hand on my chest because it was me that was laying straight and hard on my back now.

“No,” he said. “You got to stay here and help pap.”

“Help him what?” I said. “He ain’t never caught up nohow. He can’t get no further behind. He can sholy take care of this little shirttail of a farm while me and you are whupping them Japanese. I got to go too. If you got to go, then so have I.”

“No,” Pete said. “Hush now. Hush.” And he meant it, and I knowed he did. Only I made sho from his own mouth. I quit.

“So I just can’t go then,” I said.

“No,” Pete said. “You just can’t go. You’re too little, in the first place, and in the second place—”

“All right,” I said. “Then shut up and leave me go to sleep.”

So he hushed then and laid back. And I laid there like I was already asleep, and pretty soon he was asleep and I knowed it was the wanting to go to the war that had worried him and kept him awake, and now that he had decided to go, he wasn’t worried any more.

The next morning he told maw and pap. Maw was all right. She cried.

“No,” she said, crying, “I don’t want him to go. I would rather go myself in his place, if I could. I don’t want to save the country. Them Japanese could take it and keep it, so long as they left me and my family and my children alone. But I remember my brother Marsh in that other war. He had to go to that one when he wasn’t but nineteen, and our mother couldn’t understand it then any more than I can now. But she told Marsh if he had to go, he had to go. And so, if Pete’s got to go to this one, he’s got to go to it. Jest don’t ask me to understand why.”

But pap was the one. He was the feller. “To the war?” he said. “Why, I just don’t see a bit of use in that. You ain’t old enough for the draft, and the country ain’t being invaded. Our President in Washington, D. C., is watching the conditions and he will notify us. Besides, in that other war your ma just mentioned, I was drafted and sent clean to Texas and was held there nigh eight months until they finally quit fighting. It seems to me that that, along with your Uncle Marsh who received a actual wound on the battlefields of France, is enough for me and mine to have to do to protect the country, at least in my lifetime. Besides, what’ll I do for help on the farm with you gone? It seems to me I’ll get mighty far behind.”

“You been behind as long as I can remember,” Pete said. “Anyway, I’m going. I got to.”

“Of course he’s got to go,” I said. “Them Japanese—”

“You hush your mouth!” maw said, crying. “Nobody’s talking to you! Go and get me a armful of wood! That’s what you can do!”

So I got the wood. And all the next day, while me and Pete and pap was getting in as much wood as we could in that time because Pete said how pap’s idea of plenty of wood was one more stick laying against the wall that maw ain’t put on the fire yet, Maw was getting Pete ready to go. She washed and mended his clothes and cooked him a shoe box of vittles. And that night me and Pete laid in the bed and listened to her packing his grip and crying, until after a while Pete got up in his nightshirt and went back there, and I could hear them talking, until at last maw said, “You got to go, and so I want you to go. But I don’t understand it, and I won’t never, and so don’t expect me to.” And Pete come back and got into the bed again and laid again still and hard as iron on his back, and then he said, and he wasn’t talking to me, he wasn’t talking to nobody: “I got to go. I just got to.”

“Sho you got to,” I said. “Them Japanese—” He turned over hard, he kind of surged over onto his side, looking at me in the dark.

“Anyway, you’re all right,” he said. “I expected to have more trouble with you than with all the rest of them put together.”

“I reckon I can’t help it neither,” I said. “But maybe it will run a few years longer and I can get there. Maybe someday I will jest walk in on you.”

“I hope not,” Pete said. “Folks don’t go to wars for fun. A man don’t leave his maw crying just for fun.”

“Then why are you going?” I said.

“I got to,” he said. “I just got to. Now you go on to sleep. I got to ketch that early bus in the morning.”

“All right,” I said. “I hear tell Memphis is a big place. How will you find where the Army’s at?”

“I’ll ask somebody where to go to join it,” Pete said. “Go on to sleep now.”

“Is that what you’ll ask for? Where to join the Army?” I said.

“Yes,” Pete said. He turned onto his back again. “Shut up and go to sleep.”

We went to sleep. The next morning we et breakfast by lamplight because the bus would pass at six o’clock. Maw wasn’t crying now. She jest looked grim and busy, putting breakfast on the table while we et it. Then she finished packing Pete’s grip, except he never wanted to take no grip to the war, but maw said decent folks never went nowhere, not even to a war, without a change of clothes and something to tote them in. She put in the shoe box of fried chicken and biscuits and she put the Bible in, too, and then it was time to go. We didn’t know until then that maw wasn’t going to the bus. She jest brought Pete’s cap and overcoat, and still she didn’t cry no more, she jest stood with her hands on Pete’s shoulders and she didn’t move, but somehow, and just holding Pete’s shoulders, she looked as hard and fierce as when Pete had turned toward me in the bed last night and tole me that anyway I was all right.

“They could take the country and keep the country, so long as they never bothered me and mine,” she said. Then she said, “Don’t never forget who you are. You ain’t rich and the rest of the world outside of Frenchman’s Bend never heard of you. But your blood is good as any blood anywhere, and don’t you never forget it.”

Then she kissed him, and then we was out of the house, with pap toting Pete’s grip whether Pete wanted him to or not. There wasn’t no dawn even yet, not even after we had stood on the highway by the mailbox, a while. Then we seen the lights of the bus coming and I was watching the bus until it come up and Pete flagged it, and then, sho enough, there was daylight — it had started while I wasn’t watching. And now me and Pete expected pap to say something else foolish, like he done before, about how Uncle Marsh getting wounded in France and that trip to Texas pap taken in 1918 ought to be enough to save the Unity States in 1942, but he never. He done all right too. He jest said, “Good-by, son. Always remember what your ma told you and write her whenever you find the time.” Then he shaken Pete’s hand, and Pete

looked at me a minute and put his hand on my head and rubbed my head durn nigh hard enough to wring my neck off and jumped into the bus, and the feller wound the door shut and the bus begun to hum; then it was moving, humming and grinding and whining louder and louder; it was going fast, with two little red lights behind it that never seemed to get no littler, but jest seemed to be running together until pretty soon they would touch and jest be one light. But they never did, and then the bus was gone, and even like it was, I could have pretty nigh busted out crying, nigh to nine years old and all.

Me and pap went back to the house. All that day we worked at the wood tree, and so I never had no good chance until about middle of the afternoon. Then I taken my slingshot and I would have liked to took all my bird eggs, too, because Pete had give me his collection and he help me with mine, and he would like to git the box out and look at them as good as I would, even if he was nigh twenty years old. But the box was too big to tote a long ways and have to worry with, so I just taken the shikepoke egg, because it was the best un, and wropped it up good into a matchbox and hid it and the slingshot under the corner of the barn. Then we et supper and went to bed, and I thought then how if I would 'a' had to stayed in that room and that bed like that even for one more night, I jest couldn't 'a' stood it. Then I could hear pap snoring, but I never heard no sound from maw, whether she was asleep or not, and I don't reckon she was. So I taken my shoes and drapped them out the window, and then I clumb out like I used to watch Pete do when he was still jest seventeen and pap held that he was too young yet to be tom-cattin around at night, and wouldn't leave him out, and I put on my shoes and went to the barn and got the slingshot and the shikepoke egg and went to the highway.

It wasn't cold, it was jest durn confounded dark, and that highway stretched on in front of me like, without nobody using it, it had stretched out half again as fer just like a man does when he lays down, so that for a time it looked like full sun was going to ketch me before I had finished them twenty-two miles to Jefferson. But it didn't.



Daybreak was jest starting when I walked up the hill into town. I could smell breakfast cooking in the cabins and I wished I had thought to brought me a cold biscuit, but that was too late now. And Pete had told me Memphis was a piece beyond Jefferson, but I never knowed it was no eighty miles. So I stood there on that empty square, with daylight coming and coming and the street lights still burning and that Law looking down at me, and me still eighty miles from Memphis, and it had took me all night to walk jest twenty-two miles, and so, by the time I got to Memphis at that rate, Pete would 'a' done already started for Pearl Harbor.

"Where do you come from?" the Law said.

And I told him again. "I got to get to Memphis. My brother's there."

"You mean you ain't got any folks around here?" the Law said. "Nobody but that brother? What are you doing way off down here and your brother in Memphis?"

And I told him again, "I got to get to Memphis. I ain't got no time to waste talking about it and I ain't got time to walk it. I got to git there today."

"Come on here," the Law said.

We went down another street. And there was the bus, jest like when Pete got into it yestiddy morning, except there wasn't no lights on it now and it was empty. There was a regular bus dee-po like a railroad dee-po, with a ticket counter and a feller behind it, and the Law said, "Set down over there," and I set down on the bench, and the Law said, "I want to use your telephone," and he talked in the telephone a minute and put it down and said to the feller behind the ticket counter, "Keep your eye on him. I'll be back as soon as Mrs. Habersham can arrange to get herself up and dressed." He went out. I got up and went to the ticket counter.

"I want to go to Memphis," I said.

“You bet,” the feller said. “You set down on the bench now. Mr. Foote will be back in a minute.”

“I don’t know no Mr. Foote,” I said. “I want to ride that bus to Memphis.”

“You got some money?” he said. “It’ll cost you seventy-two cents.”

I taken out the matchbox and unwrapped the shikepoke egg. “I’ll swap you this for a ticket to Memphis,” I said.

“What’s that?” he said.

“It’s a shikepoke egg,” I said. “You never seen one before. It’s worth a dollar. I’ll take seventy-two cents fer it.”

“No,” he said, “the fellers that own that bus insist on a cash basis. If I started swapping tickets for bird eggs and livestock and such, they would fire me. You go and set down on the bench now, like Mr. Foote—”

I started for the door, but he caught me, he put one hand on the ticket counter and jumped over it and caught up with me and reached his hand out to ketch my shirt. I whapped out my pocketknife and snapped it open.

“You put a hand on me and I’ll cut it off,” I said.

I tried to dodge him and run at the door, but he could move quicker than any grown man I ever see, quick as Pete almost. He cut me off and stood with his back against the door and one foot raised a little, and there wasn’t no other way to get out. “Get back on that bench and stay there,” he said.

And there wasn’t no other way out. And he stood there with his back against the door. So I went back to the bench. And then it seemed like to me that dee-po was full of folks. There was that Law again, and there was two ladies in fur coats and their faces already painted. But they still looked like they had got up in a hurry and they still never liked it, a old one and a young one, looking down at me.

“He hasn’t got a overcoat!” the old one said. “How in the world did he ever get down here by himself?”

“I ask you,” the Law said. “I couldn’t get nothing out of him except his brother is in Memphis and he wants to get back up there.”

“That’s right,” I said. “I got to git to Memphis today.”

“Of course you must,” the old one said. “Are you sure you can find your brother when you get to Memphis?”

“I reckon I can,” I said. “I ain’t got but one and I have knowed him all my life. I reckon I will know him again when I see him.”

The old one looked at me. “Somehow he doesn’t look like he lives in Memphis,” she said.

“He probably don’t,” the Law said. “You can’t tell though. He might live anywhere, overhalls or not. This day and time they get scattered overnight from he — hope to breakfast; boys and girls, too, almost before they can walk good. He might have been in Missouri or Texas either yestiddy, for all we know. But he don’t seem to have any doubt his brother is in Memphis. All I know to do is send him up there and leave him look.”

“Yes,” the old one said.

The young one set down on the bench by me and opened a hand satchel and taken out a artermatic writing pen and some papers.

“Now, honey,” the old one said, “we’re going to see that you find your brother, but we must have a case history for our files first. We want to know your name and your brother’s name and where you were born and when your parents died.”

“I don’t need no case history neither,” I said. “All I want is to get to Memphis. I got to get there today.”

“You see?” the Law said. He said it almost like he enjoyed it. “That’s what I told you.”

“You’re lucky, at that, Mrs. Habersham,” the bus feller said. “I don’t think he’s got a gun on him, but he can open that knife da — I mean, fast enough to suit any man.”

But the old one just stood there looking at me.

“Well,” she said. “Well. I really don’t know what to do.”

“I do,” the bus feller said. “I’m going to give him a ticket out of my own pocket, as a measure of protecting the company against riot and bloodshed. And when Mr. Foote tells the city board about it, it will be a civic matter and they will not only reimburse me, they will give me a medal too. Hey, Mr. Foote?”

But never nobody paid him no mind. The old one still stood looking down at me. She said “Well,” again. Then she taken a dollar from her purse and give it to the bus feller. “I suppose he will travel on a child’s ticket, won’t he?”

“Wellum,” the bus feller said, “I just don’t know what the regulations would be. Likely I will be fired for not crating him and marking the crate Poison. But I’ll risk it.”

Then they were gone. Then the Law come back with a sandwich and give it to me.

“You’re sure you can find that brother?” he said.

“I ain’t yet convinced why not,” I said. “If I don’t see Pete first, he’ll see me. He knows me too.”

Then the Law went out for good, too, and I et the sandwich. Then more folks come in and bought tickets, and then the bus feller said it was time to go, and I got into the bus just like Pete done, and we was gone.

I seen all the towns. I seen all of them. When the bus got to going good, I found out I was jest about wore out for sleep. But there was too much I hadn’t never saw before. We run out of Jefferson and run past fields and woods, then we would run into another town and out of that un and past fields and woods again, and then into another town with

stores and gins and water tanks, and we run along by the railroad for a spell and I seen the signal arm move, and then I seen the train and then some more towns, and I was jest about plumb wore out for sleep, but I couldn't resk it. Then Memphis begun. It seemed like, to me, it went on for miles. We would pass a patch of stores and I would think that was sholy it and the bus would even stop. But it wouldn't be Memphis yet and we would go on again past water tanks and smokestacks on top of the mills, and if they was gins and sawmills, I never knowed there was that many and I never seen any that big, and where they got enough cotton and logs to run um I don't know.

Then I seen Memphis. I knowed I was right this time. It was standing up into the air. It looked like about a dozen whole towns bigger than Jefferson was set up on one edge in a field, standing up into the air higher than ara hill in all Yoknapatawpha County. Then we was in it, with the bus stopping ever' few feet, it seemed like to me, and cars rushing past on both sides of it and the street crowded with folks from ever'where in town that day, until I didn't see how there could 'a' been nobody left in Mis'sippi a-tall to even sell me a bus ticket, let alone write out no case histories. Then the bus stopped. It was another bus dee-po, a heap bigger than the one in Jefferson. And I said, "All right. Where do folks join the Army?"

"What?" the bus feller said.

And I said it again, "Where do folks join the Army?"

"Oh," he said. Then he told me how to get there. I was afraid at first I wouldn't ketch on how to do in a town big as Memphis. But I caught on all right. I never had to ask but twice more. Then I was there, and I was durn glad to git out of all them rushing cars and shoving folks and all that racket fer a spell, and I thought, It won't be long now, and I thought how if there was any kind of a crowd there that had done already joined the Army, too, Pete would likely see me before I seen him. And so I walked into the room. And Pete wasn't there.

He wasn't even there. There was a soldier with a big arrerhead on his sleeve, writing, and two fellers standing in front of him, and there was some more folks there, I reckon. It seems to me I remember some more folks there.

I went to the table where the soldier was writing, and I said, "Where's Pete?" and he looked up and I said, "My brother. Pete Grier. Where is he?"

"What?" the soldier said. "Who?"

And I told him again. "He joined the Army yestiddy. He's going to Pearl Harbor. So am I. I want to ketch him. Where you all got him?" Now they were all looking at me, but I never paid them no mind. "Come on," I said. "Where is he?"

The soldier had quit writing. He had both hands spraddled out on the table. "Oh," he said. "You're going, too, hah?"

"Yes," I said. "They got to have wood and water. I can chop it and tote it. Come on. Where's Pete?"

The soldier stood up. "Who let you in here?" he said. "Go on. Beat it."

"Durn that," I said. "You tell me where Pete—"

I be dog if he couldn't move faster than the bus feller even. He never come over the table, he come around it, he was on me almost before I knowed it, so that I jest had time to jump back and whup out my pocket-knife and snap it open and hit one lick, and he hollered and jumped back and grabbed one hand with the other and stood there cussing and hollering.

One of the other fellers grabbed me from behind, and I hit at him with the knife, but I couldn't reach him.

Then both of the fellers had me from behind, and then another soldier come out of a door at the back. He had on a belt with a britching strop over one shoulder.

"What the hell is this?" he said.

“That little son cut me with a knife!” the first soldier hollered. When he said that I tried to git at him again, but both them fellers was holding me, two against one, and the soldier with the backing strop said, “Here, here. Put your knife up, feller. None of us are armed. A man don’t knife-fight folks that are barehanded.” I could begin to hear him then. He sounded jest like Pete talked to me. “Let him go,” he said. They let me go. “Now what’s all the trouble about?” And I told him. “I see,” he said. “And you come up to see if he was all right before he left.”

“No,” I said. “I came to—”

But he had already turned to where the first soldier was wropping a handkerchief around his hand.

“Have you got him?” he said. The first soldier went back to the table and looked at some papers.

“Here he is,” he said. “He enlisted yestiddy. He’s in a detachment leaving this morning for Little Rock.” He had a watch stropped on his arm. He looked at it. “The train leaves in about fifty minutes. If I know country boys, they’re probably all down there at the station right now.”

“Get him up here,” the one with the backing strop said. “Phone the station. Tell the porter to get him a cab. And you come with me,” he said.

It was another office behind that un, with jest a table and some chairs. We set there while the soldier smoked, and it wasn’t long; I knowed Pete’s feet soon as I heard them. Then the first soldier opened the door and Pete come in. He never had no soldier clothes on. He looked jest like he did when he got on the bus yestiddy morning, except it seemed to me like it was at least a week, so much had happened, and I had done had to do so much traveling. He come in and there he was, looking at me like he hadn’t never left home, except that here we was in Memphis, on the way to Pearl Harbor.

“What in durnation are you doing here?” he said.

And I told him, "You got to have wood and water to cook with. I can chop it and tote it for you-all."

"No," Pete said. "You're going back home."

"No, Pete," I said. "I got to go too. I got to. It hurts my heart, Pete."

"No," Pete said. He looked at the soldier. "I jest don't know what could have happened to him, lootenant," he said. "He never drawed a knife on anybody before in his life." He looked at me. "What did you do it for?"

"I don't know," I said. "I jest had to. I jest had to git here. I jest had to find you."

"Well, don't you never do it again, you hear?" Pete said. "You put that knife in your pocket and you keep it there. If I ever again hear of you drawing it on anybody, I'm coming back from wherever I am at and whup the fire out of you. You hear me?"

"I would pure cut a throat if it would bring you back to stay," I said. "Pete," I said. "Pete."

"No," Pete said. Now his voice wasn't hard and quick no more, it was almost quiet, and I knowed now I wouldn't never change him. "You must go home. You must look after maw, and I am depending on you to look after my ten acres. I want you to go back home. Today. Do you hear?"

"I hear," I said.

"Can he get back home by himself?" the soldier said.

"He come up here by himself," Pete said.

"I can get back, I reckon," I said. "I don't live in but one place. I don't reckon it's moved."

Pete taken a dollar out of his pocket and give it to me. "That'll buy your bus ticket right to our mailbox," he said. "I want you to mind the lootenant. He'll send you to the bus. And you go back home and you



take care of maw and look after my ten acres and keep that durn knife in your pocket. You hear me?"

"Yes, Pete," I said.

"All right," Pete said. "Now I got to go." He put his hand on my head again. But this time he never wrung my neck. He just laid his hand on my head a minute. And then I be dog if he didn't lean down and kiss me, and I heard his feet and then the door, and I never looked up and that was all, me setting there, rubbing the place where Pete kissed me and the soldier throwed back in his chair, looking out the window and coughing. He reached into his pocket and handed something to me without looking around. It was a piece of chewing gum.

"Much obliged," I said. "Well, I reckon I might as well start back. I got a right fer piece to go."

"Wait," the soldier said. Then he telephoned again and I said again I better start back, and he said again, "Wait. Remember what Pete told you."

So we waited, and then another lady come in, old, too, in a fur coat, too, but she smelled all right, she never had no artermatic writing pen nor no case history neither. She come in and the soldier got up, and she looked around quick until she saw me, and come and put her hand on my shoulder light and quick and easy as maw herself might 'a' done it.

"Come on," she said. "Let's go home to dinner."

"Nome," I said. "I got to ketch the bus to Jefferson."

"I know. There's plenty of time. We'll go home and eat dinner first."

She had a car. And now we was right down in the middle of all them other cars. We was almost under the busses, and all them crowds of people on the street close enough to where I could have talked to them if I had knowed who they was. After a while she stopped the car. "Here we are," she said, and I looked at it, and if all that was her house, she sho had a big family. But all of it wasn't. We crossed a hall with trees growing in it and went into a little room without nothing in it but a

nigger dressed up in a uniform a heap shinier than them soldiers had, and the nigger shut the door, and then I hollered, "Look out!" and grabbed, but it was all right; that whole little room jest went right on up and stopped and the door opened and we was in another hall, and the lady unlocked a door and we went in, and there was another soldier, a old feller, with a britching strop, too, and a silver-colored bird on each shoulder.

"Here we are," the lady said. "This is Colonel McKellogg. Now, what would you like for dinner?"

"I reckon I'll jest have some ham and eggs and coffee," I said.

She had done started to pick up the telephone. She stopped. "Coffee?" she said. "When did you start drinking coffee?"

"I don't know," I said. "I reckon it was before I could remember."

"You're about eight, aren't you?" she said.

"Nome," I said. "I'm eight and ten months. Going on eleven months."

She telephoned then. Then we set there and I told them how Pete had jest left that morning for Pearl Harbor and I had aimed to go with him, but I would have to go back home to take care of maw and look after Pete's ten acres, and she said how they had a little boy about my size, too, in a school in the East. Then a nigger, another one, in a short kind of shirttail coat, rolled a kind of wheelbarrer in. It had my ham and eggs and a glass of milk and a piece of pie, too, and I thought I was hungry. But when I taken the first bite I found out I couldn't swallow it, and I got up quick.

"I got to go," I said.

"Wait," she said.

"I got to go," I said.

"Just a minute," she said. "I've already telephoned for the car. It won't be but a minute now. Can't you drink the milk even? Or maybe some of your coffee?"

“Nome,” I said. “I ain’t hungry. I’ll eat when I git home.” Then the telephone rung. She never even answered it.

“There,” she said. “There’s the car.” And we went back down in that ’ere little moving room with the dressed-up nigger. This time it was a big car with a soldier driving it. I got into the front with him. She give the soldier a dollar. “He might get hungry,” she said. “Try to find a decent place for him.”

“O.K., Mrs. McKellogg,” the soldier said.

Then we was gone again. And now I could see Memphis good, bright in the sunshine, while we was swinging around it. And first thing I knowed, we was back on the same highway the bus run on this morning — the patches of stores and them big gins and sawmills, and Memphis running on for miles, it seemed like to me, before it begun to give out. Then we was running again between the fields and woods, running fast now, and except for that soldier, it was like I hadn’t never been to Memphis a-tall. We was going fast now. At this rate, before I knowed it we would be home again, and I thought about me riding up to Frenchman’s Bend in this big car with a soldier running it, and all of a sudden I begun to cry. I never knowed I was fixing to, and I couldn’t stop it. I set there by that soldier, crying. We was going fast.