

Conroy knelt beside him and began to wipe his cousin's torn fingers in his wet handkerchief. "I 'll never h—hit you"— He choked.

Don, face down, rolled his head from side to side. It was n't *that*. He could n't tell what it was.

It was that his God had suddenly withdrawn into the high heavens and left him; that He had shown Himself not a God of personal mercy and protection, but of distant justice and no partiality of love.

"Come on baek, Don," Conroy whispered. "I won't tease you any more. And I won't ever let any one else."

It was the end of Don's young religiosity, and it was the beginning of a mutual respect and friendship between Conroy and him. Don was incurably solitary in his inclinations, but it became a solitude of two; for Conroy developed a sort of protective devotion that was as dumb as it was dogged. If Don did not come out to join in the games of the other boys, Conroy hunted him down among his books and sat with him over them. If Don stole away into the Park, Conroy followed him up like a young "Man Friday." They played Robinson Crusoe together, and fought Indians in the Park woods, and went on wonderful exploring expeditions in those narrow wilds. Don had a very robust and buoyant spirit that charmed his cousin; and if he had any tendency to morbidness or melancholy, the companionship kept it down.

They worked together at their lessons whenever they could. If there were any fights to be fought, they

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