

John Jakes

THE NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF
The Kent Family Chronicles

NORTH



AND

SOUTH

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JOHN JAKES



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C D E

BY JOHN JAKES

The Kent Family Chronicles

The Bastard
The Rebels
The Seekers
The Furies
The Titans
The Warriors
The Lawless
The Americans

In memory of
Jonathan Daniels
Islander, Southerner, American, Friend

With the exception of historical figures,
all characters in this novel are fictitious.
Any resemblance to living persons,
present or past, is coincidental.

*Lover and friend hast thou put
far from me, and mine acquaintance
into darkness.*

PSALM 88

NORTH

A N D

SOUTH

PROLOGUE: TWO FORTUNES

1686: *The Charcoal Burner's Boy*

The lad should take my name," Windom said after supper. "It's long past time."

It was a sore point with him, one he usually raised when he'd been drinking. By the small fire, the boy's mother closed the Bible on her knees.

Bess Windom had been reading to herself as she did every evening. From watching her lips move, the boy could observe her slow progress. When Windom blurted his remark, Bess had been savoring her favorite verse in the fifth chapter of Matthew: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The boy, Joseph Moffat, sat with his back against a corner of the chimney, whittling a little boat. He was twelve, with his mother's stocky build, broad shoulders, light brown hair, and eyes so pale blue they seemed colorless sometimes.

Windom gave his stepson a sullen look. A spring rain beat on the thatch roof. Beneath Windom's eyes, smudges of charcoal dust showed. Nor had he gotten the dust from under his broken nails. He was an oafish failure, forty now. When he wasn't drunk, he cut wood and smoldered it in twenty-foot-high piles for two weeks, making charcoal for the small furnaces along the river. It was dirty, degrading work; mothers in the neighborhood controlled their errant youngsters with warnings that the charcoal man would get them.

Joseph said nothing, just stared. Windom didn't miss the tap-tap of the boy's index finger on the handle of his knife. The boy had a high temper. Sometimes Windom was terrified of him. Not just now, though. Joseph's silence, a familiar form of defiance, enraged the stepfather.

Finally Joseph spoke. "I like my own name." He returned his gaze to his half-carved coracle.

"By God, you cheeky whelp," Windom cried in a raspy voice, overturning his stool as he lunged toward the youngster.

Bess jumped between them. "Let him be, Thad. No true disciple of our Savior would harm a child."

"Who wants to harm who? Look at him!"

Joseph was on his feet and backed against the chimney. The boy's chest rose and fell fast. Unblinking, he held the knife at waist level, ready to slash upward.

Slowly Windom opened his fist, moved away awkwardly, and righted his stool. As always, when fear and resentment of the boy gripped him, it was Bess who suffered. Joseph resumed his seat by the fire, wondering how much longer he could let it go on.

"I'm sick of hearing about your blessed Lord," Windom told his wife. "You're always saying He's going to exalt the poor man. Your first husband was a fool to die for that kind of shit. When your dear Jesus shows up to dirty His hands helping me with the charc, then I'll believe in Him, but not before."

He reached down for the green bottle of gin.

Later that night, Joseph lay tense on his pallet by the wall, listening to Windom abuse his mother with words and fists behind the ragged curtain that concealed their bed. Bess sobbed for a while, and the boy dug his nails into his palms. Presently Bess made different sounds, moans and guttural exclamations. The quarrel had been patched up in typical fashion, the boy thought cynically.

He didn't blame his poor mother for wanting a little peace and security and love. She'd chosen the wrong man, that was all. Long after the hidden bed stopped squeaking, Joseph lay awake, thinking of killing the charcoal burner.

He would never take his stepfather's name. He could be a better man than Windom. His defiance was his way of expressing faith in the possibility of a better life for himself. A life more like that of Andrew Archer, the ironmaster to whom Windom had apprenticed him two years ago.

Sometimes, though, Joseph was seized by dour moods in which he saw his hopes, his faith, as so much foolish daydreaming. What was he but dirt? Dirty of body, dirty of spirit. His clothes were never free of the charcoal dust Windom brought home. And though he didn't understand the crime for which his father had suffered and died in Scotland, he knew it was real, and it tainted him.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted . . ." No wonder it was her favorite verse.

Joseph's father, a long-jawed, unsmiling farmer whom he remembered only dimly, had been an unyielding Covenanter. He had bled to death after many applications of the thumbscrew and the boot, in what Bess called the killing time: the first months of the royal governorship of the Duke of York, the same man who had lately been crowned James II. The duke had sworn to root out the Presbyterians and establish episcopacy in the country long troubled by the quarrels of the deeply committed religious and political antagonists.

Friends had rushed to Robert Moffat's farm to report the owner's gory death in custody and to warn his wife to flee. This she did, with her only son, barely an hour before the arrival of the duke's men, who burned all the buildings on the property. After months of wandering, mother and son reached the hills of south Shropshire. There, as much from weariness as anything else, Bess decided to stop her running.

The wooded uplands south and west of the meandering Severn River seemed suitably rustic and safe. She rented a cottage with the last of the money she had carried out of Scotland. She took menial jobs and in a couple of years met and married Windom. She even pretended to have adopted the official faith, for although Robert Moffat had infused his wife with religious fervor, he hadn't infused her with the courage to continue to resist the authorities after his death. Her faith became one of resignation in the face of misery.

A spineless and worthless faith, the boy soon concluded. He would have none of it. The man he wanted to imitate was strong-minded Archer, who lived in a fine mansion on the hillside above the river and the furnace he owned.

Hadn't old Giles told Joseph that he had the wits and the will to achieve that kind of success? Hadn't he said it often lately?

Joseph believed Giles much of the time. He believed him until he looked at the charcoal dust under his own nails and listened to the other apprentices mocking him with cries of "Dirty Joe, black as an African."

Then he would see his dreams as pretense and laugh at his own stupidity until his pale eyes filled with shameful but unstoppable tears.

Old Giles Hazard, a bachelor, was one of the three most important men at the Archer ironworks. He was in charge of the finery, the charcoal forge in which cast-iron pigs from the furnace were remelted to drive off an excess of carbon and other elements which made cast iron too brittle for products such as horseshoes, wheel rims, and plow points. Giles Hazard had a gruff voice and a bent for working his men and apprentices like slaves. He had lived within a ten-minute walk of the furnace all his life and had gone to work there at age nine.

He was a short, portly fellow, possessed of immense energy despite his weight. Physically, he might have been a much older version of Joseph. Perhaps that was one reason he treated the boy almost like a son.

Another reason was that Joseph learned quickly. Joseph had come to Giles's attention last summer, about the time he was beginning his second year at Archer's. Giles had been discussing the apprentices with the man in charge of the furnace. The man had bragged about how nimbly Joseph worked his way around the sand trough, where bright molten iron flowed out to many smaller, secondary troughs that resembled piglets suckling on the mother sow. The look of the main and secondary troughs had long ago led to the name "pig iron" for the finished castings.

Giles had seniority at the ironworks and so had no trouble arranging the boy's transfer to the finery. There Giles put him to work handling the long iron bar with which three or four pigs at a time were maneuvered so that the bellows-heated charcoal would melt them uniformly. The boy developed a nice touch, and Giles soon found himself paying a compliment.

"You have a good hand and a natural wit for this trade, Joseph. You have an agreeable disposition, too—except, as I've noticed, when the other apprentices rag you about your stepfather's occupation. Take a leaf from the owner's book. He's strong-minded, all right. But he knows it's better to hide it sometimes. He sells his product with smiles and soft words, not by bludgeoning his customers when they resist."

Privately, the older man doubted the boy would listen. The mold of Joseph's life was already formed, and the molten iron of his character was already pouring into it; circumstances and illiterate parents had no doubt condemned the boy to a life of obscurity. Unless, of course, one of his occasional violent outbursts didn't condemn him to death in a brawl first.

Yet, perhaps because Giles was growing older and realized that he had been foolish when he chose a bachelor's life, he continued to encourage Joseph. He taught him not only the trade of ironmaking but its lore.

"Iron rules the world, my boy. It breaks the sod and spans the continents—wins the wars, too." The Archer furnace cast cannonballs for the Navy.

Giles raised his great round cheese of a face to the sky. "Iron came to the earth from, quite literally, only God knows where. Meteor iron has been known since the earliest days."

The boy asked quickly, "What's a meteor, Master Hazard?"

A smile spread over Giles's face. "Shooting star. Surely you've seen 'em."

The boy responded with a thoughtful nod. Giles went on to talk about a great many things that gradually acquired meaning for Joseph as he learned more of the trade. Giles discoursed on the history of iron making. He spoke of the *stückofen* and *flüssofen* that had existed in Germany since the tenth century; of the *hauts fourneaux* that had spread in France in the fifteenth; of the Walloons of Belgium, who had developed the finery remelting process about sixty years ago.

"But all that is just a tick on the great clock of iron. Saint Dunstan worked iron seven hundred years ago. He had a forge in his bedroom at Glastonbury, they say. The Egyptian pharaohs were buried with iron amulets and dagger blades because the metal was so rare and valuable. So potent. I have read of daggers from Babylon and Mesopotamia, long millenniums before Christ."

"I don't read very well—"

"Someone should teach you," Giles grumbled. "Or you should teach yourself."

The boy took that in, then said, "What I meant is, I've never heard that word you used. *Mill*-something."

"Millenniums. A millennium is a thousand years."

"Oh." A blink. Giles was pleased to see the boy was storing the information away.

"A man can learn a great deal by reading, Joseph. Not everything, but a lot. I am speaking of a man who wants to be more than a charcoal burner."

Joseph understood. He nodded with no sign of resentment.

"Can you read at all?" Giles asked.

"Oh, yes." A pause, while the boy looked at Giles. Then he admitted, "Only a little. My mother tried to teach me with the Bible. I like the stories about heroes. Samson. David. But Windom didn't like my mother teaching me, so she stopped."

Giles pondered. "If you'll stay half an hour extra every night, I'll try."

"Windom might not—"

"Lie," Giles cut in. "If he asks why you're late, lie to him. That is, if you mean to make something of yourself. Something other than a charcoal burner."

"Do you think I can, Master Hazard?"

"Do you?"

"Yes."

"Then you will. The race is to the driven, not the swift."

That conversation had taken place the preceding summer. Through the autumn and winter Giles taught the boy. He taught him well, so well that Joseph couldn't help sharing his accomplishments with his mother. One night when Windom was away somewhere, roistering, he showed her a book he had smuggled home, a controversial book titled *Metallum Martis*, by the recently deceased Dud Dudley, bastard son of the fifth Lord Dudley.

Dud Dudley claimed to have smelted iron successfully with mineral coal—or *pit coles*—as Joseph read during his laborious but successful demonstration to Bess.

Her eyes sparkled with admiration. Then the light faded. "Learning is a splendid thing, Joseph. But it can lead to excessive pride. The center of your life must be Jesus."

He disliked hearing that but kept quiet.

"Only two things matter in this life," she went on. "Love of God's son and the love of one person for another. The kind of love I feel for you," she finished, suddenly clutching him against her.

He heard her weeping, felt her shivering. The killing time had whipped out of her all hopes but her hope of heaven, all loyalties but her loyalty to him and to the Savior he was coming to distrust. He was sorry for her, but he meant to live his own life.

They said nothing to Windom about the lessons. But evidently some glimmer of pride displayed itself in Bess's manner, angering her husband. One summer night, not long after the quarrel over Joseph's taking Windom's name, the boy came home to find his mother bloodied and bruised, half conscious on the dirt floor, and Windom gone. She would say nothing about what had happened. She pleaded until Joseph promised not to carry out his threats against his stepfather. But the core of rage was growing steadily within him.

As the Shropshire hills turned gold and red with the coming of another autumn, Joseph's progress grew so pleasing to Giles that he took a bold step.

"I'm going to speak to the ironmaster and ask him to let you spend an hour each week with the tutor who lives in the mansion. Archer's own boys can't keep the fellow busy all the time. I feel sure Archer will permit the tutor to give you a little mathematics, maybe even some Latin."

"Why should he? I'm nobody."

Old Giles laughed and rumbled Joseph's hair. "He will be happy to gain a loyal and well-educated employee at virtually no cost. That's

part of it. The other part is that Archer's a decent man. There are a few in the world."

Joseph didn't really believe him until Giles told him Archer had consented. Excited, the boy forgot his natural caution as he ran home that night. Heavy mist lay on the river and the hills, and he was chilled when he reached the cottage. Windom was there, grimy and half drunk. Joseph, so thrilled at the idea of someone else thinking well of him, ignored his mother's warning looks and blurted the news about the tutor.

Windom didn't care for what he heard. "In Christ's name, why does the young fool need a teacher?" He studied Joseph with scorn that ran through the boy like a sword. "He's ignorant. As ignorant as me."

Bess twisted her apron, confused, not knowing how to escape the trap created by the breathless boy. She walked rapidly to the fire, knocking over the poker in her nervousness. Joseph's eyes were on his stepfather as he said, "Not anymore. Old Giles has been teaching me."

"To do what?"

"To read. To better myself."

Windom snickered, twisting the tip of his little finger back and forth in his nostril. He rubbed his finger on his breeches and laughed. "What a waste. You don't need book learning to work in the finery."

"You do if you want to be rich like Master Archer."

"Oh, you think you'll be rich someday, do you?"

Joseph's lips lost color. "I'll be damned to hell if I'll be as poor and stupid as you."

Windom bellowed and started toward the boy. Bess left off her nervous stirring of the stew kettle hanging on its chain in the hearth. Hands extended, she rushed to her husband. "He didn't mean that, Thad. Be merciful as Jesus taught we shou—"

"Stupid pious bitch, I'll deal with him as I want," Windom shouted. He cuffed her on the side of the head.

She staggered, slammed her shoulder hard against the mantel, cried out.

The pain somehow destroyed her allegiance to the Savior. Her eyes flew open wide. She spied the fallen poker, snatched it, and raised it to threaten her husband. It was a pathetic gesture, but Windom chose to see it as one of great menace. He turned on her.

Frightened and angry, Joseph grappled with his stepfather. Windom beat him off. Bess, terrified, fumbled with the poker, unable to get a firm grip on it. Windom easily ripped it from her hand and, while Joseph watched, used it to hit her twice on the temple. She sprawled

on her face with a thread of blood running down her cheek.

Joseph stared at her for one moment, then in uncontrolled rage lunged for the poker. Windom threw it against the wall. Joseph ran to the hearth, seized the kettle chain, flung the hot stew over Windom, who screamed and pressed his hands to his scalded eyes.

Joseph's hands were burned but he hardly felt it. He raised the empty kettle and smashed it against Windom's head. When Windom fell, his cries subsiding, Joseph wrapped the chain around his stepfather's neck and pulled until it was half embedded in the flesh. Windom finally stopped kicking and lay still.

Joseph ran out into the mist and vomited. His palms started to burn. He began to realize what he'd done. He wanted to break down and cry, to run away, but he didn't. He forced himself toward the open door. Once inside the cottage again, he saw his mother's back moving slowly. She was alive!

After many attempts, he got her on her feet. She muttered incoherently and laughed occasionally. He put a shawl around her and guided her down the misty lanes to Giles Hazard's cottage, two miles distant. On the way she faltered several times, but his urgent pleas kept her going.

Giles came grumping to the cottage door, a candle illuminating his face. Moments later, he helped Bess to his still-warm truckle bed. He examined her, then stood back, fingering his chin.

"I'll run for a doctor," Joseph said. "Where do I find him?"

Old Giles couldn't conceal his worry. "She's too badly hurt for a doctor to do any good."

The news stunned the boy, bringing tears at last. "That can't be."

"Look at her! She's barely breathing. As for the barber who serves this district, he's illiterate. He can do nothing for her, and he'll only ask questions about the cause of her injuries."

The statement itself was a kind of question; Joseph had only blurted that Windom had hit her. "All we can do is wait," Giles concluded, rubbing an eye.

"And pray to Jesus."

Joseph said it out of desperation. Giles put a kettle on the fire. Joseph sank to his knees by the bed, folded his hands, and prayed with every bit of his being.

There was no sign that the prayer was heard. Bess Windom's breathing grew slower, feebler, although she survived until the river mist floating outside the cottage began to glow with light. Gently, Giles touched Joseph's shoulder, jogged him awake.

"Sit by the fire," Giles said, pulling a coverlet across Bess's bat-