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Author: Dorothy Whitehill

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"It's easy," Chuck laughed, holding out his hand to Phyllis, "you are Don's girl."

PHYLLIS

A TWIN

BY

DOROTHY WHITEHILL

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THELMA GOOCH**

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"It's easy," Chuck laughed, holding out his hand to Phyllis. "You are Don's girl" *Frontispiece*

"She had never been made a fuss over except by Phyllis in all her life and she couldn't understand it"

"Vers two of you," he said gravely

"Something white caught her eye"

PHYLLIS, A TWIN

CHAPTER I

PHYLLIS

A glorious autumn day spread its golden sunshine over the city. In the parks the red leaves blazed under the deep blue sky, and the water in the lakes sparkled over the reflections of the tall buildings mirrored in their depths. People walked with a brisk step, as though they had but suddenly awakened from a long drowsy sleep to the coolness of a new, vigorous world.

In a house just off Fifth Avenue, a short distance from Central Park, all the windows were open to admit the dazzling sunshine. Soft white curtains fluttered in the crisp breeze, and the rooms were flooded with cool, yellow light.

Phyllis Page stood in the center of one of the rooms and looked critically about her. There was no need of criticism, for it was as nearly perfect as a room could be.

The walls were hung with dainty pink and white paper. A bed of ivory white, with carved roses at the head and covered with a sheer embroidered spread, filled one corner; a tall chest of drawers stood opposite, and a dressing-table with a triple mirror was placed between the two windows.

A little to one side of the open grate was a tiny table just large enough to hold a bowl of pink roses. In all the room not a pin was out of place.

As Phyllis surveyed it all for perhaps the twentieth time that day, a look of disappointment cast a momentary shadow over her usually merry face.

"There isn't one single thing more to do," she complained. "Oh, dear, I do hope she likes it."

The suggestion of doubt made her hurry to her aunt's room on the floor below. She found Miss Carter sitting before an open fire reading.

"Auntie Mogs," she said, standing in the doorway, "suppose Janet doesn't like it? The room, I mean."

There was real concern in her voice, but in spite of it Miss Carter laughed.

"Why, Phyllis, you little goose, of course she'll like it. It's a dear room, and it will just suit her exactly. What put such a ridiculous notion into your head?"

"But, Auntie Mogs, it's so awfully different from her own room," Phyllis protested. "Perhaps she'll miss her big four-posted bed and those ducky rag rugs. I would, I think,"—she hesitated.

Miss Carter laughed again.

"But that's exactly why Janet won't," she answered. "She has grown up with all those lovely old things and she is used to them. She has never seen anything like her new room and she will love it, I am sure. Just as you loved the dear old room we had at her house, only of course Janet won't go into such ecstasies as you did," she added with a smile.

She pulled her niece down to the arm of her chair and stroked her soft golden-brown hair. But Phyllis's leaf-brown eyes were still clouded with doubt.

"I want her to love it, Auntie Mogs," she said softly. "I want her to love it, and I want her to be happy. But, oh, dear, suppose she isn't? Suppose she is homesick for Old Chester. Perhaps she'll just hate the city. If she does—oh, Auntie Mogs, if she does, I think I shall die."

This time Miss Carter did not smile.

"Phyllis dear," she said kindly, "do you love Janet?"

Phyllis stared in amazement. "Love her? Why, of course I do! I simply adore her. Isn't she my twin, and haven't I wanted her all my life?"

Her aunt nodded. "Then I wouldn't worry," she said kindly. "Poor little Janet has had very little real love in her life, and I think she will be very happy to be with people who do love her. You must remember, dear, that although it was wonderful for you to find Janet, it was just as wonderful for her to find you. I think it was even more wonderful perhaps, for she was very lonely and you never were. Don't worry about her not liking her room or the city. Just love her and her happiness will take care of itself."

Phyllis jumped up and kissed her aunt.

"Oh, Auntie Mogs, you always smooth things out," she exclaimed joyfully. "They ought to make you President of the United States, they really ought."

"Mercy me, don't say it out loud,"—Miss Carter laughed. "Some one might hear you and take your advice. Now, go out for a walk and come back for tea with pink cheeks, you look tired out. And no matter how much you worry and fume, Janet won't get here a minute sooner than three o'clock on Wednesday."

"And that's a whole day and a half off,"—Phyllis sighed as she left the room to get ready for her walk.

Miss Carter looked thoughtfully into the fire for many minutes after she had gone. Her advice to love Janet was sound, but in her own heart she knew that Phyllis's doubts were not without foundation.

It had been just a little over a month ago that news had come from Tom, Phyllis's older brother, that Mrs. Page had at last given in and was willing to let Janet, whom she had cared for ever since she had been a baby, see her twin sister Phyllis whom Miss Carter had brought up. Many years before Mrs. Page had insisted that the twins be separated, and because Phyllis bore her mother's name and Mrs. Page cruelly blamed her daughter-in-law for the tragic accident that had resulted in both parents' death, she had chosen to keep Janet with her. Thirteen years had passed, and neither of the girls had dreamed of the other's existence; perhaps they had dreamed, but they had never expected their dream to come true, as it had only a short month ago when Phyllis, too happy for words, had jumped off the train at Old Chester and into the arms of her twin.

It had been an exciting month as Miss Carter reviewed it, and with all her heart she wanted the happiness that both girls looked forward to for the coming winter to be assured.

"If we can only keep Janet from feeling shy and different from the other girls it will be all right," she said at last, and fell to gazing into the fire again.

Phyllis, already well on her walk in the park, was busy with the same thoughts. They were more concrete in form, but they amounted to the same thing. She knew that she could be happy with Janet and keep her from being homesick, but the thought of the other girls at school made her uneasy. They were nice girls, all of them, and they were all fond of Phyllis, and for her sake she knew they would be nice to her twin, but Phyllis was not satisfied to let the matter drop there. She wanted the girls to accept Janet on her own merit.

The roguish autumn wind was playing tricks with the dead brown leaves, swirling them about regardless of passers-by. One especially gusty little gale made Phyllis duck her head so low that she did not see where she was going. She bumped into something small unexpectedly, and an angry voice startled her out of her reverie.

"Now, I've lost it for good. Why don't you look what you're about? Nurse says it's rude to jostle."

Phyllis looked down into two very angry blue eyes which, except for a glimpse of ruddy cheeks almost hidden by a fur cap, were all that was visible of the chubby face before her.

CHAPTER II

DON

She tried hard not to smile. She loved and understood children, and one of the chief reasons that they always returned her love with interest was that she always took them seriously.

"Oh, I'm so very sorry," she apologized humbly; "perhaps I can help you find it again. What was it you lost?"

"It were a brownie, a brown leaf brownie wiv crinkly legs, and I were following it and now—"

"And now I've chased it away. Isn't that a shame." Phyllis was very serious. "But, do you know, I think it was the brownie's own fault. I felt something a minute ago, just punching and kicking at my face, and I thought perhaps it was an ordinary leaf but of course it couldn't have been."

"It were my brownie,"—the blue eyes wrinkled up at the end of an impish grin. "Did it kick hard?"

"I should say it did. Look,"—Phyllis took her hand away from her eye. It was quite red, for a bit of dust had inflamed it.

The small boy gazed at it thoughtfully.

"He hadn't ought to have hurted you," he said solemnly. "He were a bad brownie, I guess—so I'll go back to Nannie now."

"Where is Nannie?" Phyllis inquired, looking in vain for a nurse. The park, as far as she could see, was deserted.

"It doesn't matter," he said quite calmly. "I just remembered I'm losted." He took Phyllis's outstretched hand and trotted along beside her.

"Losed?" she inquired in astonishment.

"Yes, for quite a while, you see, Nannie talks and talks, and to-day she were talking when the brownie came, and so I ran away. Nannie doesn't know about brownies; just angels and devils."

Phyllis, in spite of herself, laughed. "But if Nannie has lost you, won't she be worried?" she asked.

The small head nodded. "But she'll find me again," he assured her. "She always does."

"What's your name?" he demanded after a minute of silence.

"Phyllis Page."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I have ever so many more names than that."

"What are they?"

"Donald Francis MacFarlan Keith," he recited glibly; "but mostly I'm called Don."

"That's a very nice name," Phyllis agreed absently. She was still looking for the lost Nannie.

"And I live," Don continued proudly, "at number theventeen East Theventy-theventh Street." The s's were almost too much for him but he struggled manfully.

"Why, that's very near where I live!" Phyllis exclaimed, relief in her voice. "I'll take you home, if we don't find Nannie."

Don decided that that might be a good idea when, after a short hunt, the missing Nannie was not discovered.

He talked every step of the way home, about brownies, policemen, dogs and fire engines, and Phyllis joined in the discussion whole heartedly and agreed with him that a mounted policeman was indeed superior to a banker on Wall Street.

"For," Don explained, "that's what Nannie says my Daddy is, but I think policemen is nicer."

When they reached the house that Don pointed out as his, they hurried up the steps, but before

Phyllis could press the button the door opened and a boy about her own age stood on the threshold.

"I beg your pardon—" Phyllis began, but Don interrupted.

"Hello, Chuck," he said seriously. "This girl bringed me home because I got losted. She's only got two names but she's very nice; she knows all about brownies—"

"Don!"—the elder boy spoke so sharply that Phyllis was startled.

"Thank you very much," he continued, looking at her. "My small cousin is always getting lost, I hope he hasn't bothered you."

"Not a bit," Phyllis laughed. "We've had a fine time. I'm sorry if you have been worried."

"Oh, I haven't," the boy replied, "but I think his nurse has the whole police force out looking for him. I knew he'd show up."

"Good-by, Don." Phyllis held out her hand, and Don put his little one in it.

"Don't get lost again, will you!"

"It depends," Don replied gravely. "I can't promise. Anyway I'll look for you every time I go to the park, and I'll ask the brownies about you, 'cause I like you, oh, heaps better than Chuck. He doesn't know anything about brownies."

Phyllis looked at the boy still standing in the doorway. He was blushing.

"How silly of him," she said to Don. "We do anyway, don't we?"

"Course," Don replied, and he insisted in spite of his cousin's threats to watch and wave until Phyllis was out of sight.

Phyllis, hidden by the corner, paused to laugh.

"That wasn't a very polite thing to say," she admitted. "I wonder what made me think of it. He looked quite nice too. I wonder who he is?"

Don for the moment was forgotten.

As Phyllis hurried home, many were the thoughts that kept her company, for the brisk wind had blown all her doubts away and only the joy of Janet's arrival remained.

People passing her saw a slender girl of thirteen with a delicate oval face and well-shaped features framed in a wealth of gold brown hair. Her eyes were soft and limpid, and they held an expression of dreaminess in their depths.

This afternoon, however, they sparkled and seemed to challenge the whole world to find a happier mortal.

She walked along, her step light as a fairy's, her skirts still blowing at the whim of the breezes.

"I think I will stop and see some of the girls," she said to herself, but she changed her mind the next minute and went home instead. It was like Phyllis to make up her mind one minute and change it the next.

She found the house deserted on her return, and she had to go down to the basement to get in.

"Where's everybody?" she demanded of Lucy, the fat good-natured cook.

"Out, my dear," Lucy told her. "Your aunt is out calling, and Annie has gone to the grocery for me."

"What did you forget to-night?" Phyllis teased, as she swung herself up on the kitchen table.

"Now, Miss Phyllis, I couldn't help it this time, for how did I know that the can of mustard, standing there on the shelf as big as you please, was empty?"

It was chronic with Lucy to forget things, and it was usually Phyllis that went after them.

"Never mind, Lucy; it's hard luck. I don't see myself why those everlasting cans don't tell you when they are empty; it would save my steps, I know that."

"Cans speak! Go way with you," Lucy replied in a gust of laughter.

Phyllis swung down off the table.

"After two more days there'll be another me to go out and buy what you forget to order," she said as she ran up the back stairs.

Lucy watched her and then shook her head at the row of shining pans on the wall opposite.

"That, my dear, will never be," she said solemnly. "Look like you she may and lucky she is to be so blest, but be like you, I beg to differ. The dear Lord only made the one. Glory be," she added piously.

Phyllis, upstairs, was trying to think of something, no matter how small, to do to improve Janet's room.

CHAPTER III

FRIENDS

"Well, dear?" Auntie Mogs looked up from her paper the next morning at breakfast to greet her niece. Phyllis kissed her and sat down quietly at her place.

"Only one more morning to wait," she said happily, "and then—"

"And then the Page twins will have breakfast together for the rest of their lives, I hope," Auntie Mogs finished for her. "Or until one or the other of you get married."

"Married! Oh, what a perfectly silly idea!" Phyllis laughed. "I'm never going to get married, and I don't believe Janet wants to either."

Miss Carter did not contradict, but she picked up her newspaper to hide the amused smile that played on her firm red lips.

Phyllis looked around the dining-room and hummed contentedly. It was a charming room, and the fire blazing in the grate added to the warmth and coziness.

"No,"—Phyllis returned to the subject under discussion—"I'll never marry, but that doesn't mean I don't like boys. I do. I adore them. They are such fun and much more sensible than most girls, but I wouldn't admit that to any one but you, Auntie Mogs, because, nice as they are, they are fearfully conceited and that would keep me from ever being silly about them."

"I hope that's not the only reason," Auntie Mogs laughed. "Boys are—but there goes the telephone. Will you answer it, please, dear? Annie is busy."

Phyllis jumped up from the table and hurried to the hall.

"Suppose it's Tommy saying they're coming to-day!" she exclaimed. But a minute later her aunt heard her voice drop to its natural tone as she said:

"Oh, hello, Muriel; this is Phyllis—"

"Why, how nice of you; of course I'll be in."

"Yes, isn't it too exciting for words!"

"Oh, I think we'll both be there on Monday."

"Oh, wonderful; then I'll see you this afternoon, 'by 'till then."

"It was Muriel," she explained as she returned to the dining-room. "She and some of the girls from school are coming over this afternoon. They want to talk over some class plans and they want my advice. We have class officers this year, you know. Muriel says I've missed an awful lot. It's almost a month now since school started but it can't be helped."

"Oh, dear, I wonder what class Janet will be in. I hope it won't be too awfully low." She paused, and her pretty brows puckered into a tiny frown.

"I don't think I'd worry if I were you," her aunt said softly. "Janet may never have been to a school but she is very bright, and I don't think it will be very long before she will be even with you."

"Oh, but, Auntie Mogs," Phyllis exclaimed, "you didn't think I meant she was stupid. Of course she's bright, only she probably hasn't had the same kind of lessons that I have. Anyway, we will soon know, and even if she goes into the very baby class it won't make any difference to me. Only you see it might to some of the others," she added reluctantly.

"That won't bother Janet." Miss Carter smiled at the memory of her independent little niece who, for all her quiet ways, was thoroughly able to take care of herself.

"The only thing that worries me," she added, smiling, "is whether or not Janet will like the girls."

Phyllis looked at her in astonishment.

"But of course she will," she exclaimed. "They are all, or nearly all, awfully nice and—why, Auntie Mogs, she's sure to like them."

Miss Carter smiled as she left the table. She had given Phyllis a new idea and she did not mean to dwell upon it.

"Hurry and finish your breakfast, dear," she directed. "I want you to go down town and finish your shopping with me. When Janet comes I don't want to think of anything but her clothes. There will be lots to do if she is to start school on Monday."

"Of course," Phyllis agreed, drinking her very hot cocoa so fast that it burned her throat. "Won't it be fun, taking Janet to all the shops and having luncheon down town. I know she'll adore it."

The morning passed quickly, as mornings always do when they are spent in shopping, and Phyllis was barely home in time to receive her friends at three o'clock.

Muriel Grey arrived first. She was a short plump girl of fourteen, with lots of fluffy yellow hair and big china-blue eyes.

"Oh, Phyllis, I'm so glad to see you. We miss you terribly at school. It isn't a bit nice without you!" she exclaimed as she kissed Phyllis.

"Well, I'll be back Monday," Phyllis replied. "I've missed you too. Sit down and tell me all the news—oh, wait a minute. Here comes Eleanor, and Rosamond is with her."

The two girls who were just coming up the steps were both dressed in dark blue and their long braids hung down their backs and were both tied with bright green ribbons to match their green tams. They were not sisters, but they had been friends for so long that it was a joke at school to say that they were beginning to look like each other.

Phyllis was very fond of them both for they were great fun, and their endless ideas were always a source of wonder to their class.

"Hello, Phyllis, here we are," Rosamond greeted. "Couldn't get here a minute sooner."

"Old Ducky Lucky requested us to remain after class as usual," Eleanor explained.

It all sounded so natural to Phyllis's ear that she giggled delightedly. It was fun seeing the girls again, and she realized for the first time that she had missed them unconsciously during the past month.

"Funny old Ducky Lucky," she laughed. "Is she just as fussy as ever?"

"Well, if you want to call it fussy, she is," Rosamond groaned. "I can think of a better word, only I won't."

Ducky Lucky was the disrespectful nickname for Miss Baxter, the mathematics teacher at Miss Harding's school.

"Sally's coming later," Eleanor said, as they all entered the living room. "She said to tell you not to dare say anything about your twin until she got here. She doesn't want to miss a word. Of course we're all fearfully excited, but to hear Sally talk you would think that she was the one that had made the discovery."

"That's just like Sally,"—Phyllis laughed. "I'm crazy to see her. I've only talked to her over the phone since I got back, and you all know it's no fun talking to Sally unless you can watch her eyes."

"Good old Sally,"—Eleanor smiled at the memory of a host of funny sayings and doings, and then she looked suddenly grave. "Do you know she is talking about going to boarding school second term?" she inquired.

"Sally! Why, we could never in the world get along without her," Phyllis and Rosamond protested.

"Oh, I don't know,"—Muriel spoke for the first time. "I think we could. Sally's nice and all that, but she is such a tomboy."

The girls turned in surprise to look at her.

"Of course she is; she wouldn't be Sally if she were any different," Phyllis said, and the two girls nodded in solemn agreement, and then Sally herself arrived.

She came into the room like a whirl of merry autumn leaves. Her hair, never very orderly at best, was tousled by the wind, and her cheeks glowed. She had deep blue eyes that flashed and sparkled behind long black lashes, her hair was black as a raven's wing, and she had a single bewitching dimple in her left cheek. When she spoke people generally thought of rippling brooks and deep ringing chimes.

"Sally Ladd, you love," Phyllis greeted her enthusiastically. "I thought I was never going to see you. You wretch, why haven't you been over before?"

"Never mind about me," Sally protested, kissing her warmly. "I want to hear all about Janet. Gracious sakes, it's thrilling enough to get a new baby sister but to find a grown-up twin! Well, I do think some people have all the luck. Tell us all about her. Is she pretty?"

Phyllis laughed. She was a little embarrassed.

"She's my twin, you know," she confessed, "and so—"

"And so you haven't gumption enough to say that she's a beauty." Sally settled the question with her usual straightforwardness.

"Is she like you, Phyl?" Eleanor demanded.

"Not a bit," Phyllis denied. "She's a thousand times nicer. She is so quiet when there are people around that it looks as though she were bashful, but she really isn't a bit. She just never says anything unless it's worth saying, and I wish you could see her look at me when I babble on."

The girls laughed, and Muriel asked:

"What school has she been to? One up there in the country, I suppose."

Phyllis bit her lip. What was the matter with Muriel? She was being disagreeable and not at all like the good-natured rollypoly chum of past years.

"Janet has never been to school," she said quietly, "she has always had a tutor."

"Oh, Aunt Jane's poll parrot! That means she will know twice as much as any of us," Sally cried.

Aunt Jane's poll parrot was a mythical bird of wisdom that Sally always appealed to in moments of excitement. Phyllis laughed at hearing the familiar exclamation again.

"Oh, Sally, that does sound natural, I really feel that I am back at school and that Old Chester and Janet are all a dream!" she exclaimed.

"Well, thank goodness they're not. Look here, Phyl. Do you know, I think I'm a lot more excited about your twin than you are. In the first place she is just the sort of girl we need at school," Sally spoke seriously. "We have been the same lot of girls for, well three years now, with only an occasional new one to jog us up, and I think Janet will be a blessing. She'll be different, and that's what we need."

"I hope she is in our class," Eleanor added.

"Well, of course I do too," Muriel said slowly, "but I don't see anything the matter with us as we are, except that I do feel that it is time we were acting a little older and not so like tomboys." She looked meaningfully at Sally. "We have officers this year, and, as Miss Harding says, we will have added responsibilities, and I think we ought to try and be more dignified."

Sally looked quickly from Phyllis to Eleanor and Rosamond. All three looked surprised and a little angry. Sally laughed contentedly.

"Hear that poll? we are to be more dignified! Bless us. Muriel, but you are a scream," she teased.

"I don't see why it's funny to want to be more grown up and serious." Muriel's feelings were hurt, and she looked angrily at Sally.

"If we acted any differently we'd be affected," Eleanor announced with conviction, "and I for one don't think that would be much of an improvement."

"Surely we can hold our place in school without putting our hair up on top of our heads,"—Phyllis laughed good naturedly, "but I think I know what Muriel means," she added loyally.

"No, you don't, Phyl." Rosamond had kept quiet up until now but her eyes had danced mischievously. "You none of you know, but I'll tell you,"—she paused dramatically.

"Muriel has a beau." she announced. The girls all laughed, but she went on quite seriously. "He takes her home from school and he carries her books, so of course she has to grow up. Why, even the seniors watch her from the study window in silent jealousy."

Phyllis looked at Muriel. There was no denying the change now. She sighed.

"If you are going to talk like children, I'm going home." Muriel rose with what she hoped was becoming dignity, and in silence the girls watched her put on her hat and coat. Phyllis followed her to the door.

"Muriel, don't be silly," she pleaded. "We've been such chums, I can't bear to see you so changed." But Muriel refused to be comforted.

"It isn't my fault if you can't keep up with me," she said coldly, and Phyllis was too angry to answer.

She walked upstairs slowly. "I've lost Muriel," she said wistfully, but a sudden thought made her

run up the rest of the way, two steps at a time.

"Girls, do you realize that this time to-morrow Janet will actually be here?" she exclaimed joyfully.

"Aunt Jane's poll parrot, so she will!" said Sally.

CHAPTER IV

JANET ARRIVES

Phyllis opened her eyes on Wednesday morning, and frowned as she heard the rain beating down on the tin roof below her window.

"It has no business to rain to-day of all days," she said crossly; "but, after all, it doesn't matter, for, rain or shine, Janet is coming."

She looked through the open door into the room adjoining hers and smiled. From her bed she could see the dainty white dressing table and the soft-colored print of Raphael's Madonna hanging in its gold frame beside it. Her own room, as her eyes traveled back to it, was shabby in comparison, but that only made her smile the more.

"It's just too heavenly to be true," she whispered dreamily. "How silly I've been to worry whether she will like it or not. Of course she will, and oh, joy of joys, she will be here in less than, let me see, eight hours." She jumped out of bed and in a few minutes she was singing in her bath.

"Phyllis, Phyllis, if you don't stop acting like a crazy person I don't know what I shall do," Miss Carter sighed later in the morning as Phyllis, growing more and more excited as the minutes passed, flew upstairs and down, upsetting everything in her effort to keep busy.

"I know, Aunt Mogs, but I can't help it. I shall probably die before the train gets in," Phyllis confessed as she sat down at last and tried to concentrate on a book. But the print danced before her eyes, and in not more than a minute she was up again.

"I knew I'd forgotten something!" she exclaimed.

"What is it now?" her aunt inquired, smiling gently.

"Flowers. The ones I bought day before yesterday are all wilted. Oh, I know you told me they would be, but don't say, 'I told you so,' please."

"No, I won't. I'm almost glad they have wilted; they will give you something to do. Hurry out and get some more, and be sure they are buds this time."

Phyllis hurried to the nearest florist and then took as long as she possibly could to select the roses. When she reached home she was disgusted to find that she had been gone only twenty minutes. But the morning passed somehow, and although Phyllis insisted upon a ridiculously early start in case the traffic should delay them, they were only a quarter of an hour ahead of train time.

The huge station was crowded with people, and Phyllis looked at them doubtfully.

"Auntie Mogs, if Janet ever got lost in this mob we would never find her in all this world," she said nervously.

"It might be a difficult task," Miss Carter agreed calmly, "but Tom is with her, and it would be very hard to lose Tom even here."

"Oh, I was forgetting all about Tom." Phyllis laughed with relief. "It would be hard to hide his six feet, wouldn't it? Oh, dear, that sounds as though he were a centipede, but you know what I mean."

"I do sometimes, my darling,"—Miss Carter laughed into Phyllis's eyes—"but sometimes, I must admit, you race too far ahead of me. Do try and quiet down before Janet comes."

"Oh, but she loves me just the way I am," Phyllis announced airily, "and so does Tommy. Look now, it's only ten minutes."

She kept her eyes fastened to the blackboard until the announcer called the number of the track and wrote it down in his slow deliberate hand. From that minute to the time when the first porter came up the stairs and through the gate seemed an eternity, but at last Tom's head and shoulders appeared above the crowd.

"Here they are, Janet," he called, but even that was not necessary, for the twins had found each other, in spite of bobbing hats and sharp-pointed umbrellas, and were in each other's arms. Phyllis, as

usual, was doing all the talking, and Janet, a little confused, accepted it as a fitting ending to the amazing dream that had begun that morning when she watched the Old Chester station fade into the distance.

After a description of Phyllis, it is useless to give one of Janet, for except for the difference in the expression of their eyes the girls were the image of each other. Even the difference in their dress did not disguise the startling resemblance, and people turned to stare and then to smile as Phyllis's infectious laughter reached them.

"Wait here and I'll find a taxi," Tom directed, as they reached the open rotunda that led to the street.

In a minute they were all comfortably seated in a cab and had joined the procession of slow-moving vehicles that were trying to gain the avenue.

"To think you are really here," Phyllis sighed, as though the greatest event of her life were over.

"I'm not a bit sure that I am,"—Janet laughed. "I've been begging Tommy to pinch me all the way down in the train. I thought surely I would wake up any minute and hear Martha say, 'It's time to get up, child.'"

"I didn't do it though, because I thought the other people in the train might not understand," Tom said with amusement.

"Where is your dog?" Miss Carter asked suddenly, and Janet's face fell.

"Grandmother decided I mustn't bring Boru," she answered with a little catch in her voice.

Her aunt took her hand impulsively and squeezed it. "But, my dear, that is absolutely absurd. You will be miserable without him, especially when everything is new to you. I will write up to Mrs. Page tonight and ask her to have some one send him down by express as soon as possible."

Miss Carter was a gentle little lady, but when she made up her mind to a thing that thing was as good as accomplished.

"Oh, Auntie Mogs, that's awfully sweet of you," Janet said gratefully. "I know I'll miss him awfully."

"I never heard of such a thing," Phyllis protested. "We never dreamed you'd come without him. Why, I sent Sir Galahad to the hospital to have him out of the way until Boru got used to his new house."

"Oh, but you shouldn't have done that," Janet protested. "Poor kitty, he'll feel terribly abused."

"Well, he had a little cold and it really was the best place for him, and of course I can go and see him any time. The hospital is only around the corner. Tommy, what are you laughing at?"

"You two girls talk about your dog and cat just as if they were children. Are you going to make household pets of all my livestock when you come to the ranch next summer?"

"Of course," Phyllis and Janet answered, laughing.

"Now, don't bother Janet," Miss Carter interrupted before Phyllis could say anything more; "she is busy looking at the city, and I know she would rather do that than listen to you. We are on Fifth Avenue now, dear, and that lovely building on your right is Tiffany's."

Janet looked out of first one window and then the other. It was all very new and exciting to her. She had been to Boston several times, but Boston, beautiful city that it is, is not New York.

"It's awfully full, isn't it?" she said at last, and Tom laughed heartily.

"Don't you like it?" Phyllis asked in dismay.

"Oh, of course I do, but somehow I wish it would stand still for just a minute and give me a chance to look at it."

"I'm afraid it will never do that, my dear," Miss Carter laughed. "But you won't find it noisy where we are, and I know you will love the park."

"Do look," Phyllis pointed towards the west. "It's clearing, I knew it would and here's the park."

Central Park is a refreshing sight to see after the noise and confusion of the streets, and to Janet's eyes the soft green of the grass and the great trees, resplendent in their autumn dress, was comforting indeed. The sun was just visible between two sullen gray clouds, but it only peeked out for a minute and then as though it were depressed by what it saw, it hurried to bed.

"I don't blame it," Phyllis said, as she watched the last gleam of red fade into the clouds.

Janet nodded in perfect understanding. It was not the last time that, without the aid of words, the Page twins were to understand and share each other's thoughts.

The taxi drew up at the house at last, and Annie hurried to the side walk to help with bags. She was a servant that Miss Carter had had for many years and she was greatly excited over Janet's arrival.

Phyllis dashed up the stairs, pulling Janet behind her, and instead of waiting even for a minute in the living-room she hurried her up the second flight of stairs and threw open the door of her room.

"Ooooooh!" Janet stood perfectly still and looked and looked. To Phyllis it seemed as though she were never going to speak, then at last she said, "Oh!" again and sank down on the soft bed.

"Like it?" Phyllis tried to make her voice sound cool, but she did not succeed in keeping the eagerness out of it.

"It's fairyland!" Janet exclaimed. "Oh, Phyllis, I never dreamed anything could be half so beautiful."

Phyllis gave a great sigh of relief. "Thank goodness for that," she said, laughing, "and now come and see the rest of the house."

Janet followed from one charming room to another, but she was speechless until she came to the library—a big brown room, filled with books, low comfy chairs and shaded lamps.

"Phyllis, it's just too wonderful to be true!" she exclaimed.

"Well, it's not the Enchanted Kingdom,"—Phyllis laughed—"but we hope it will be a substitute."

For the rest of the day Janet tried to say some of the things that seemed to be bursting her heart. It was not as easy for her to enthuse as it was for Phyllis, but her eyes shone in the firelight as she sat beside Tommy on the sofa and listened to her aunt make plans for the coming week.

Phyllis need have had no fears, for there was not a moment spared in regret for the four-poster bed. How could there be, when such a pink and white nest awaited her? She undressed that night still in a half dream.

"Janet, have you gone to sleep yet?" Phyllis's voice called through the dark, long after the house had quieted down for the night.

Janet sat up and laughed joyously.

"No," she whispered back, "I'm afraid to."

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL

Two big old-fashioned drawing-rooms thrown into one made the study hall at Miss Harding's school. It was not a bit like an ordinary schoolroom, for a fireplace filled one corner of it, books and pictures covered the walls, and in every window flowers nodded. Only the rows of double desks bespoke study.

On the Monday after Janet's arrival there was a suppressed current of excitement in the air. At the slightest sound from the hall every eye turned expectantly toward the door.

Phyllis was sitting in her old seat beside Muriel Grey; but the old feeling of friendship that had always existed between the two was missing, and it was to Sally Ladd that Phyllis turned for sympathy.

Sally was sitting just behind her, and she took advantage of every glance that Miss Baxter, who was on duty at the desk, cast in any other direction.

"Aunt Jane's poll parrot," she whispered excitedly, "if she doesn't come soon I shall expire." Phyllis nodded and looked again at the door.

Janet was with Miss Harding in her office upstairs. The principal was deciding the grade she had better enter, and to Phyllis the decision was all important. Although she would never have admitted it to any one, the thought of Janet in any class but her own made her miserable.

As for the rest of the girls, they were all eager and curious to see the new twin, as Sally insisted upon calling Janet. Eleanor and Rosamond had already met her. Sally had been in bed with a cold when Phyllis had called up to ask her to luncheon, and she was still waiting for her first glimpse of her.

At last the door opened and Janet came into the room. It was an entirely new Janet from the one who had arrived at the Grand Central Station a few days before; that is, to all outward appearance. She had on a dark blue serge dress with white collar and cuffs, and her hair was tied loosely in the nape of her neck with a black ribbon. The curls, that Martha had tried so hard to keep tidy, were blowing about

her face, her cheeks were pale from nervousness, and her eyes shone brighter than ever.

Miss Harding nodded to Miss Baxter, and then turned to the girls.

"I think we have all been more than usually interested in Phyllis's twin sister," she said, smiling. "I want to introduce her to you; this is Janet Page. You had better all look at her very hard for I think it is going to be almost impossible to tell her from Phyllis unless we are very careful. Perhaps I'll have to ask one of them to wear a pink string tied to her finger and the other a green."

The girls, including Janet, laughed heartily. Whispers of "she's the very image," "what a dear," and "won't it be funny," ran around the room.

"I must find you a seat, my dear," Miss Harding continued. "Let me see. It would never do to put you beside Phyllis, for we'd all be sure then that we were seeing double. I think—Sally, are you alone?" she asked.

Sally stood up. "Yes, Miss Harding," she replied so quickly that the girls laughed.

"Well, then I think Janet will sit beside you. And now you must all get back to work for there are only a few minutes left of study period. But this has been an occasion, hasn't it?" Miss Harding smiled, nodded, said a few words in an undertone to Miss Baxter, and left the room, leaving behind her a joy and charm that were always hers to give.

Janet walked down between the rows of desks to the beckoning Sally, but her eyes were looking into Phyllis's. As she passed her desk Phyllis caught her hand and whispered, "What class?"

"Yours," Janet whispered back. She did not think it necessary to add that Miss Harding had found her ready for the grade higher but that she had chosen to stay with Phyllis.

Sally almost hugged her as she took her place beside her, and under cover of supplying her with books and showing her the lessons, she managed to talk until the bell rang. There was a ten-minute recess before lessons began. The girls made the most of it and crowded around Janet's desk.

"Oh, Aunt Jane's poll parrot, was there ever such luck?" Sally demanded. "I think I hypnotized Miss Harding, I really do. I thought so hard about your sitting beside me that she simply had to let you."

"Did you want me to sit beside you?" Janet asked with genuine surprise.

"But of course I did,"—Sally was equally surprised.

"It was rank favoritism," laughed Eleanor. "I thought too, good and hard. Why I even pointed to the forlorn and empty chair beside me and it didn't do a bit of good."

"Introduce us, introduce us," several voices demanded, and Phyllis was kept busy. Even the seniors came and laughed and envied. It was quite a reception.

"What a lucky girl you are," one of them, a tall girl with copper-colored hair named Madge Cannan, exclaimed, "I've wanted a twin all my life and *I* never found one."

"Poor Madge, I'll be your twin," some one offered.

"Can't do it," Phyllis laughed. "There's only one twin in the world and I've got her."

"I'm sorry,"—Janet looked at the older girl and spoke quite seriously. "It would be very nice to have two *yous*."

Madge flushed, and the girls laughed.

"Of all the precious things to say," she exclaimed. "Phyllis, I can't speak for the rest, but as far as I am concerned your nose is completely out of joint."

Just then the bell rang, and the day's lessons began.

The next recess was at eleven-thirty, when hot chocolate and crackers were served. School did not let out until one-thirty, and Miss Harding thought the girls needed something to eat before that time.

"Now, Sally, leave Phyllis's twin alone," Rosamond insisted, as she handed Janet her cup and prepared to sit down beside her. "You've had her all day long and now it's some one else's turn."

Janet looked from one girl to the other in mystified amazement. She had never been made a fuss over except by Phyllis in all her life and she couldn't understand it. For one terrible moment she thought they were making fun of her, but a glance at their smiling faces reassured her on that point but came no nearer helping her solve their reason.



She had never been made a fuss over except by Phyllis in all her life and she couldn't understand it

"Thank you," she said quietly. It was fortunate that the girls did not expect her to do much talking and were content with her shy answers. Perhaps the interest in her brown eyes made up for her lack in that direction.

"Do you play basket ball?" Eleanor was asking.

"No." Janet shook her head.

"Well, then I'll teach you. We play this year, and you simply must love it."

"Do you like to swim?" Rosamond demanded, and again Janet shook her head.

What must these girls think of her! Why, she couldn't do anything.

"Skate?" some one else asked.

"No, I don't." Janet looked imploringly at Phyllis, but for once she was looking at some one else. Only Sally noticed the look and she gave no sign—then—

"What can you do?" It was Muriel who spoke and in spite of the angry eyes that were turned toward her she managed to smile, but it wasn't a pretty smile.

For a minute Janet's face flamed to a deep red, then as suddenly her cheeks grew very white. There was a pathetic silence. She knew that it would end soon, but before it ended she must answer or Phyllis would be ashamed of her.

"I'm afraid I can't play any games," she said slowly; "you see, I never went with girls and I never went to school."

"Did you go with boys then?" Muriel still smiled. She felt quite sure that the answer would be "no."

"Why, yes, I did," Janet confessed, "and, you see, they liked to play ball and to go sailing or canoeing,"—she thought of Peter Gibbs, and the thought of him made the color come back to her cheeks—natural color this time.

"We coasted a lot in the winter and then of course there was always fishing," she finished lamely. How could she explain the hundred and one things that went to make up her days in Old Chester?

"Oh, well, I suppose you will find it very strange here." It was a chastened Muriel that spoke.

"Now, my Aunt Jane's poll parrot, I ask you, why under the sun should she?" Sally broke the silence that followed angrily.

Eleanor laughed at Janet.

"Have you been properly introduced to Sally's Aunt Jane's poll parrot?" she asked to change the subject.

"He's a very wise bird, and we all consult him when our own reason fails,"—Rosamond took up the explanation.

"Sally consults him oftener than any of the rest of us, because you see, Sally's reason fails her oftener. Excuse my breaking into the conversation, but no one has had the manners to introduce me. My name is Daphne Hillis, but no one ever calls me anything but Taffy on account of my hair." It was a long speech, but the speaker took twice as long as was necessary to say it; her slow drawl held a hint of laughter, and her voice sounded warm and furry.

Janet looked at her and laughed without meaning to.

"How do you do," she said. "I'm awfully glad to know about the poll parrot," she added with a smile.

Phyllis, who had been talking, very much against her will, to one of the teachers, joined them and nodded to Taffy. Janet noticed that she looked surprised and pleased.

Daphne smiled lazily.

"I like your twin, Phyllis," she drawled and then left them.

"Now isn't that just like Taffy?" Sally demanded.

"Not a bit," Eleanor protested. "Taffy likes very few people."

"Well, you know what I mean," Sally insisted. "It's like her to say a thing like that and then leave."

It was not until Janet and Phyllis were alone in the living-room that Phyllis explained.

"Daphne Hillis is the most popular girl in school," she said, "but I think she has fewer friends than any other girl, and that's what makes it strange."

"But if she's so popular?" Janet queried.

"Oh, she could have dozens of friends, but she doesn't seem to want them. She's queer and different somehow; none of us understand her, but we all love her."

Janet looked out of the window and smiled softly to herself. If being different from other girls meant being like Daphne, why, being different was not so bad after all.

She didn't even bother to turn her head when Phyllis exclaimed angrily,

"I think I hate Muriel Grey."

CHAPTER VI

TOM'S LAST DAY

"Tommy, I call it just plain mean, for you to go away." Phyllis was perched on the arm of her brother's chair, and she gave him a little shake to emphasize her words.

Tom, by a deft twist of a wrist and a long reach with his other arm, laid her very gently on the floor at his feet and held her so that she could not move.

"Mustn't call your big brother names," he chided. "See what happens to little girls when they do?"

"Oh, Tommy, let me up, you wretch!" Phyllis struggled, but she was quite powerless.

"Janet, come and help me," she called. "Tom is killing me."

"What good do you think Janet can do?" Tom inquired calmly, as Janet could be heard running down the stairs.

"I don't know," Phyllis confessed, "but she will do something. Oh, Janet, save me! Look what Tommy is doing to me."

Janet stood in the doorway and laughed, then she made a dive for her brother, but instead of trying to use strength she tickled him.

"Here, stop; that's no fair," he protested, but Janet only renewed her efforts, and Phyllis, taking advantage of his helplessness, jumped up. After that it was only a matter of seconds before Tommy was on the sofa completely muffled by cushions.

"Pax, pax, I'll be good," he panted. "What do you want me to do?"

"Say you are never going home," Phyllis commanded.

"I'm never going home," Tom repeated meekly.

They let him up, and he tried to smooth his hair and straighten his tie.

"Thank goodness that's settled!" Phyllis exclaimed. "And now what do you propose doing to amuse us?"

"It's Saturday, you know," Janet reminded him.

"Auntie Mogs, I appeal to you," Tom said, as Miss Carter entered the room. "Is this fair? These two Comanche Indians hold me helpless on the sofa, extract a promise that I will never go home, and now they want me to amuse them besides."

"All day," Phyllis said.

"All day long," echoed Janet.

Miss Carter laughed. "I'm afraid I can't help you out, Tom; you brought it upon yourself, but of course you know that a promise made in self-defense is not binding."

"Isn't it, though?" Phyllis demanded, and Janet started to tickle again.

"Say it is binding," she commanded.

"Oh, anything, anything, only stop!" Tom begged. "I am at your mercy, what do you want me to do?"

"Well, we might take a walk in the park this morning," Phyllis suggested. "Janet hasn't seen my pet lion yet, and I'm crazy to show him to her."

"And we have to go to the station this afternoon to meet Boru," Janet added happily. Miss Carter, true to her promise, had written to Mrs. Page, with the result that Janet's dog was expected that day.

"And after that—" Phyllis cupped her chin in her hand and appeared to give the matter serious consideration.

"Don't you think after that you might rest awhile?" Auntie Mogs inquired.

"Saturday comes but once a year; I mean, week," Phyllis chanted, "and it's foolish to rest."

"I have an idea," Tom said suddenly; "if you promise not to tickle me in the station when I go to buy my ticket and behave yourselves generally, I will give you a surprise party. No, I won't tell you what it's to be, that's my affair, but I promise it will be something nice."

"Something to do?" Phyllis inquired.

Tom nodded.

"Will you promise?"

"Shall we?" Phyllis looked at Janet.

"Yes, let's, I love surprises," Janet agreed.

"We promise," they said together.

"Well, then, go get your things on, and we will go over and interview this lion friend of Phyllis's." Tom sighed his relief when the girls had gone.

"We'll miss you, Tom," Miss Carter said gently; "must you really go to-morrow?"

"Indeed, I must. I should have gone weeks ago," Tom replied, "but I couldn't leave those two youngsters. Tell you what it is, Auntie Mogs, it isn't every man that finds two such sisters. I wish you were all going back with me," he added wistfully.

"Dear Tom, the summer isn't very far away." Miss Carter patted his shoulder affectionately.

"Then you'll really come?"

"Of course we will. The girls are making plans already. The only thing that worries me is that Mrs. Page may want Janet with her this summer."

"Oh, I fixed all that," Tom assured her. "Grandmother knows you are coming to me, but I think she expects you all at Old Chester for Christmas."

"Oh, that would be delightful," Miss Carter said warmly. "A change would do the girls so much good. It's just the time when school gets a little monotonous and then, too, if Janet has a visit to look forward to it may keep her from growing homesick."

"Homesick! Why you haven't seen any symptoms of that, have you?" Tom demanded, sitting up straight and looking at his aunt.

Miss Carter laughed at his concern.

"Nothing very alarming," she said, "but I don't think she quite understands school yet. She doesn't seem to want to talk about it, for one thing."

"But Phyllis says the girls all like her?"

"I am sure they do, but perhaps she doesn't realize it quite yet. Girls are very strange sometimes, Tom, but I can see Phyllis is worried."

Tom had only time to nod, for the girls came back with their hats and coats on and the subject had to be dropped.

"It's a glorious day," Phyllis enthused as they entered the park and headed toward the zoo. "I wonder if Akbar will remember me."

"Oh, undoubtedly," Tom teased. "Lions are noted for their wonderful memories."

"Have you known him long?" Janet inquired mischievously.

"I have. Akbar and I have been friends for over two years, and you can laugh if you want to but he does know me," Phyllis retorted.

And indeed it almost seemed as though he did. They entered the lion house to find a number of people around the cage, for Akbar was a mighty beast, and people were apt to linger, fascinated, before him.

This morning he was lying with his huge paws over his nose, the picture of disgust.

"Oh, my beauty, isn't he a love?" Phyllis demanded, forgetting that her voice carried far in its eagerness.

The people around the cage laughed and turned to look at her, but only Tom and Janet felt embarrassed. Phyllis was gazing at Akbar.

"Come over here and talk to me," she urged. "I want you to stand up and roar."

Akbar opened one sleepy eye and then the other, lifted his splendid head and finally after a little more coaxing stood up and stretched.

"You see he does remember me," Phyllis said triumphantly. "I knew he would."

Tom and Janet looked at each other and winked solemnly.

Phyllis refused to leave until, with the aid of the keeper, who seemed to be an old friend of hers, she had made Akbar roar for a large piece of meat.

"That's the way he says please, bless his darling heart," she explained, and the keeper nodded assent.

"The little lady has a great way with him, sir," he said to Tom. "It do seem as though he knows her, for he'll get up and come to the front of his cage when he won't for another living soul, but I do be always saying that lions be rare intelligent beasts."

"My sentiments exactly," Tom agreed affably, but he hurried the girls out into the sunshine.

"I didn't want him to tell me that Phyllis ought to have been brought up as a lion tamer,"—he laughed—"and I could see that he was going to with the slightest encouragement."

Phyllis was silent most of the way home, Akbar always filled her with odd hopes, too vague to be put into words but strong enough to make her restless. He had the same effect on her that some of the statues in the museum had.

After luncheon they went down to meet the train that carried at least one very excited passenger. All the way from Old Chester Boru had done his doggish best to tell all the brakemen in the train that he was going to his mistress at last.

He very nearly ate Janet up when he spied her down the length of the baggage platform. As for Janet, she sat down on the floor and hugged him until Tom bribed her to get up by offering to buy Boru some ice cream.

It was a merry party that came back to Auntie Mogs's in a taxicab and Boru, in his excitement, insisted upon licking even the chauffeur's ear.

Janet sat with him in her lap for the rest of the happy afternoon.

Tom's surprise party was a great success. At a little after six, he told the girls to be ready to go out, and Auntie Mogs suggested that they wear their prettiest frocks.

"Of course you can do as you like," she said with a twinkle in her eye, "but I am going to wear my black lace."

"Auntie Mogs, you know what the surprise is," Phyllis accused. "Tell us, please do."

But Auntie Mogs went off to her own room, singing softly to herself.

The girls dressed as quickly as they could, and discussed the possibilities.

"I think we are going to dinner at one of those huge hotels," Janet said. "I know it will be thrilling."

"Yes, I think that's part of it too," Phyllis agreed.

"Only part?" Janet inquired.

"Hum, well, maybe that will be all." Phyllis did not wish to voice the thought that was making her smile.

"And quite enough too," Janet replied.

But dinner at a hotel was not all. A theater followed, and Janet, who had never seen a play before, was so excited and thrilled that people around her who had come expecting to be bored went home chuckling over the memory of her shining eyes.

They reached home tired and sleepy but very happy.

"It would have been a perfect day if I hadn't kept thinking that Tommy was going away to-morrow," Phyllis sighed and yawned. "Why do we always have to have some little thing to spoil perfect fun, I wonder."

"There is a reason," Janet answered dreamily. "It has something to do with roses and thorns, but I'm too sleepy to remember, only I do wish, Tommy, you wouldn't go."

"To bed with you," Tom laughed, as he kissed them both, "and happy dreams."

They were asleep in a very short time, but curiously enough they did not dream of dancing and music as they had expected, for Phyllis dreamed of Akbar and Janet of Boru.

CHAPTER VII

DAPHNE'S ADVICE

Tom left for the West the next day, and Janet and Phyllis returned from the station with Auntie Mogs. They were very quiet for the rest of the evening, for they were busy with their own thoughts.

Janet faced another week of school and she dreaded it. If she could only stay at home with Phyllis and Auntie Mogs and Boru, instead of having to face all those girls again. She had tried at first to find her place among them, but the old dread of being "different" made her shy and self-conscious; even with Daphne before her as an example of the charms of originality she had failed, failed utterly.

It was partly the girls' fault. They had made a tremendous fuss about her the first few days and then, as the novelty had worn off, they had settled back into their own ways, and Janet had not understood the change. Her shyness made her morbid, and by the end of the first week she had made up her mind that she had failed in some way, and she construed the girls' thoughtless indifference to mean dislike.

It is no wonder that she dreaded the thought of returning; it meant hard work to keep a stiff upper lip and to smile in spite of her heartache. Only one thought was clear, and that was that Phyllis must not know.

But Phyllis did know. There was something wrong, she felt sure, but she could not understand what it was. She had been delighted with the way her friends had welcomed her twin, but when Janet had seemed to refuse their offers of friendship she could only conclude that she did not like them. But Phyllis would not accept any such explanation meekly. Janet was not happy, therefore something must be done, and she decided to talk the matter over with Sally.

She chose the noon recess, when Janet remained in the study hall to finish a composition she was writing.

Sally listened gravely.

"What *shall* I do about it?" Phyllis finished dolefully.

"Well, something," Sally replied decidedly. "I don't know just what, but something's wrong, and we will have to ferret it out. She's strange, of course, and she doesn't understand us very well. I've seen her look at me as if she thought I were crazy sometimes. She acts as though she didn't like us, but I think she does really. Time's the thing, of course, but it won't do to wait until the girls begin to resent her standoffishness."

"Oh, Sally, don't," pleaded Phyllis. "Hello, Taffy," she added, as Daphne passed slowly behind her chair.

"Lo," Daphne drawled.

In another part of the room another group of girls were discussing Janet.

"She's really not a bit like Phyllis," Eleanor said with a frown. "I can't make her out."

"Neither can any one else," replied Rosamond. "She's queer."

"I've never been able to get anything but yes or no out of her," another girl complained. "I call her just plain slow."

"She's always fearfully polite," some one else objected. "I never heard her use a single slang word."

"Oh, well, Sally will cure her of that,"—Rosamond laughed.

Eleanor sighed. It was so easy to be goodnatured that she couldn't understand anybody taking the trouble to sulk.

"We must be nice to her anyway," she said decidedly. "She's Phyllis's twin, and she's in our class."

"Suppose so," the others agreed, as the bell rang.

When Sally and Phyllis returned to the study hall, Janet was still at her desk. She looked up and smiled as Phyllis spoke to her, but she went on with her work.

Sally watched her critically and sighed. She was awfully sorry for her but she was angry too. She wanted to shake her, to make her laugh or cry or do something besides just sitting there with that forced smile and her brown eyes ready to flood with tears any minute.

"I wish she would bawl and have it over with," she thought to herself.

Janet lifted the lid of her desk to put away her papers, and Sally lifted hers at the same time and bent her head so that she could speak without being seen from the desk.

"Phyllis is coming over to my house this afternoon," she whispered; "will you come too?"

"Oh, thanks, I'd like to," Janet replied eagerly.

Sally sighed with relief. So far so good. Once in her own home, with a box of candy between them, they could surely straighten everything out.

As for Janet, she had hardly accepted the invitation before she regretted it. Sally only wanted her because she knew Phyllis would not come without her, or so she argued.

"I won't be a bother to them," she declared vehemently. "*I won't.*"

So when Sally and Phyllis hurried to the study hall after being detained by Miss Baxter at the close of school, Janet was nowhere to be found.

"But she said she'd come," Sally exclaimed angrily. "Oh, she's left a note on my desk, listen—"

"Dear Sally—" (she read)

"I am sorry that I won't be able to come to your house with Phyllis this afternoon, but I have just remembered something that I must hurry home to do.

"Thank you very much for bothering to ask me.

"JANET."

"My Aunt Jane's poll parrot!" was all poor Sally could say.

"But she didn't have anything to do at home," Phyllis protested. "Oh, Sally, what is the matter with her, and what shall I do?"

"You'll come home with me first of all," Sally replied with determination; "then later in the afternoon we will go over to your house, as though nothing had happened, and perhaps we can persuade her to come out for a walk."

"All right, if you think that's best,"—Phyllis agreed to the plan, dismally. "But I warn you I won't be very good fun."

"If she would only come to her senses," Sally exclaimed.

In the meantime, Janet had hurried away from school. She did not want Phyllis to see her for, with that lump in her throat, she knew an explanation would mean tears, and Janet hated tears.

Her steps lagged before she had gone very far, and she walked on slowly, deep in an unhappy reverie, too miserable to notice the quick footsteps that were rapidly gaining on her.

"Hello, Phyllis's twin!" The soft, half-laughing drawl was unmistakable, and Janet turned quickly, to see Daphne beside her.

"Hello," she answered slowly. No need to force a smile for her; she wouldn't be deceived by it.

Daphne did not appear to notice anything amiss. She looked lazily down at the wet and muddy sidewalks and shrugged her shoulders.

"Park's better than this," she suggested. "Let's cut over to it."

They walked in silence until they gained the path that ran around the reservoir.

"Looks wintry, doesn't it?" she asked idly. They stopped and looked over the iron railing into the dull green water.

It was a somber autumn day. The sky was banked with dark gray clouds, and a high wind swept through the trees, tearing away the last leaves and whirling them to the ground.

"I suppose so," Janet replied indifferently. "I like it," she added listlessly.

"Of course, but it's silly of you," Daphne agreed with her odd little laugh. "Awfully silly."

"What do you mean?" Janet looked up at her suddenly.

"It's silly to like dreary things, even days, and it's most awfully silly to be dreary yourself. Not fair, you know, when every body's doing their best to be nice."

"But they're not," Janet said quickly. "They were the first day and then—"

Daphne turned slowly and looked at her. For once her drooping lids fully uncovered the sea green eyes that they were usually at such pains to hide. A strand of her taffy-colored hair blew across her face, and she tucked it carefully under her hat before she answered.

"So that's it, is it?" There was a hint of something besides laughter in her velvety voice. "I didn't understand; what happened?"

"I don't know," Janet answered dully; "perhaps I did something they didn't like or perhaps they just stopped bothering with me; I don't know."

"But I know,"—Daphne laughed. "You expected too much. When the girls stopped making a fuss about you, you thought they stopped liking you, so here you are going off in corners and looking sadder than a wet chicken, and you think you are doing the best you can, eh?"

"Go on," Janet said quietly.

"Ever have a pet rabbit?" Daphne inquired with mild interest.

"Yes, but what—" Janet stammered.

"Remember the first day you had him, the fuss you made about him and then how you got sort of tired of him?"

"Why, yes, I suppose—"

Daphne laughed and yawned, showing all her pretty white teeth.

"Little simpleton, you're the rabbit," she said. "The girls still like you, but they're used to you and they rather expect you to do something now. It's your turn to do tricks, like the bunny."

"And I—" Janet began.

"Oh, you sit in the corner and sulk and say, 'Yes, thank you,' and 'no, thank you,' and the girls are discouraged. Can't blame them, you know. You're Phyllis's sister, and they have a right to expect more from you." She said it all in her soft furry voice, and it was impossible to resent it. Janet watched her fasten her coat collar up closer about her neck, but she could not speak.

Daphne apparently did not expect her to.

"It's your turn now," she repeated and without another word turned and walked away.

Janet did not follow her except with her eyes. She seemed rivetted to the spot on which she stood. When Daphne was out of sight she turned once more to the reservoir, but this time she saw more than the clouds reflected in the dull water. She saw her own mistake.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHANGE IN JANET

"Hello, you two, where are you bound for?" Eleanor joined Sally and Phyllis as they were on their way to Sally's house and took them each by an arm.

"Home," Sally replied, "home to muse with wonder and sorrow over the sickening cruelty of Ducky Lucky."

"I know," Eleanor nodded sympathetically; "isn't to-morrow's math. simply terrible. I'm not going to try to do it."

"Well, I am," Sally announced emphatically. "Catch me staying in for an hour and listening to a long and weary lecture on my many sins; no thanks. If the worse comes to the worst, I will make Daddy do it for me."

"Where's Rosey-posey?" inquired Phyllis. "You're not going to walk all the way home to your house, are you?" Eleanor lived across the city on Riverside Drive.

"Walk, well, I guess not, but I had to make a start to get Rosey away from the piano. She's playing while Madge teaches some of the other seniors how to dance the latest step. I wish she'd hurry, I hate loosing my special bus." She glanced behind her and then stopped. "Here she comes now."

Rosamond joined them. She was out of breath but she was laughing.

"Oh, my hat!" she exclaimed. "Muriel will kill me yet. I met her in the cloakroom and we went out together. I thought she looked worried, but I didn't catch on until she began making excuses to get rid of me, then I looked ahead and down the street, busily tying his shoe, *HE* was waiting."

"Well, I hope you had the manners to leave at once?"—Eleanor laughed. "Or did you wait and make her miserable!"

Rosamond winked one eye mischievously.

"I behaved with perfect decorum," she replied. "I said I really must run for my bus as the conductor was a cousin of my sister-in-law's aunt and he let me ride for nothing. I said it loud too, so that He could hear, and Muriel was wild."

"Oh, Rosey, how could you, you wretch; poor Muriel!" Phyllis tried not to laugh, but gave up and joined the rest.

Rosamond turned them down one of the side streets abruptly.

"Where are you going?" Eleanor demanded. "I want to go home; I'm hungry."

"Now don't be absurd," Rosamond admonished. "You can eat any old time, but it isn't often that you can see what I am going to show you."

"Oh, now what are you up to?" Eleanor protested, but Rosamond only pointed to the corner of the

next avenue and told them to watch.

"Aunt Jane's poll parrot, Muriel!" Sally was the first to see that the girl and boy approaching them was their classmate and her friend. They would soon meet.

"I'll giggle, I know I will," Eleanor warned them. "Rosey, it's all your fault. Let's turn around."

"Never," Rosamond protested. "Just walk like little ladies and bow politely when they pass," she said with a ridiculous primness that was exactly like the art teacher at school.

They walked; there was nothing else to do; and Muriel and the boy beside her came toward them, deep in conversation. It was noticeable that Muriel was doing most of the talking.

When they were even with them, Rosamond bowed formally and in a high and very affected voice she exclaimed,

"Why, Muriel, how *do* you do?"

Sally called a careless hello, and Eleanor, too full of laughter to dare speech, only nodded. It was Phyllis that gave a little gasp of astonishment that was repeated in turn by the boy. He recovered himself and pulled off his cap in response to her quick smile.

They were hardly out of earshot before the girls turned to her.

"Phyllis Page, you've known him all the time, you wretch," Rosamond accused.

"I have not," Phyllis denied. "I was never so surprised in my life."

"What's his name?" Sally demanded, but Phyllis shook her head.

"I don't know," she protested, "honestly I don't. I have only seen him once before and then I wasn't really introduced, his first name, or rather his nickname, is Chuck, and that's all I know, except,"—she added provokingly, "that he doesn't believe in brownies." And that was all she would say on the subject, though the girls did their best to make her explain.

"Well, we have to go or Eleanor will faint from hunger," Rosamond said regretfully as they reached the avenue again and waited for the bus. "But I'll find out some more about this, if I have to ask Muriel," she added laughingly.

Sally and Phyllis hurried home. Now that the girls had left them, they forgot everything but Janet and their plans. They were late in reaching Sally's home, but they found a dainty luncheon waiting for them and Sally's mother was delighted to see Phyllis.

"But where's the twin?" she demanded. "I do want to see her so much. Sally says she is the very image of you and a darling too."

Phyllis looked uncomfortable and tried to smile. It was Sally who explained.

"She was coming, but at the last minute she had to go home. Phyl and I are going over for her a little later and, darling mother of mine, we will bring her over here to call on you *if* you promise us hot cinnamon toast and cake to go with tea."

Mrs. Ladd laughed and pinched Sally's cheek. She was a tall and strikingly handsome woman with flashing black eyes and the jolliest laugh in the world. All Sally's friends loved her almost as much as they loved Sally, and she was always in demand with Auntie Mogs to act as chaperone to the various skating and theater parties.

"You are getting very grown up," she answered now, her eyes twinkling. "Last year it was hot chocolate you wanted and the year before that ice cream and now it's tea."

"And we really hate it," Phyllis laughed. "We'd lots rather have chocolate."

"Oh, well, give us chocolate then," Sally exclaimed. "Only be sure there's plenty of toast."

"For Phyllis's twin, I suppose," Mrs. Ladd laughed. "Very well, I'll remember," she promised, as she left them to go out.

The girls ate hurriedly and then talked up in Sally's room until they thought it was time to go back.

"What shall we do if she won't come?" Sally said seriously.

"Oh, there's no fear of that," Phyllis replied hastily. "She'll come if we are there to make her and she will love your mother, I know she will. I do hope she hasn't gone out anywhere with Auntie Mogs."

"Let's hurry," Sally said, the idea making her feel the need for immediate action. "If she's out we can wait for her."

But Janet was not out. She was sitting in the library window-seat with Boru in her lap. She saw the girls coming up the street and she knocked on the window to them and waved.

"I hoped you'd bring Sally back with you," she called as they ran up the steps. "Auntie Mogs is out and Boru is too sleepy to be very good company. I almost went over to get Sir Galahad, but I thought they might know I wasn't you and refuse to give him to me."

Sally had never heard Janet say so much at one time, and she looked at her with a new interest. Perhaps she was going to be human after all and without their aid. She devoutly hoped so.

"We came back especially to get you," she replied as she patted Boru. "Mother wants you to come to tea with her and incidentally us."

"Oh, that will be bully," Janet said, and Phyllis had hard work to believe her ears.

"What are you reading?" she inquired as a book dropped from Janet's lap.

Janet picked it up and laughed.

"Elsie Dinsmore," she answered, blushing a little. "I found it behind a shelf in the corner and I have been laughing myself sick over it."

"Laughing?" Phyllis was more surprised than ever. As she remembered the Elsie Books they were more calculated to make you weep than laugh.

"Yes, Elsie was always going off into corners to cry. I've just finished the part where her father made her play a hymn on Sunday and she had to be carried fainting to her room and I don't know just why but I began to think I was like Elsie and, well, I think I'm cured," she ended in confusion.

"Oh, Janet, of all the silly notions!" Phyllis exclaimed. "Since when have you been going off into corners to weep?"

"Or fainted at hearing music on Sunday?" added Sally.

"Well, I haven't exactly," Janet admitted, "but I have done a lot of silly sulking, but honestly I didn't realize how silly I was being."

"You never sulked in your whole entire life, Janet Page," Phyllis protested warmly. "I won't have you saying such a thing."

"Of course not," Sally agreed, no less warmly; "do chuck that silly old book out of the window and come out for a walk. Bring Boru, too; mother will adore him."

Janet went upstairs, still laughing, and Sally and Phyllis were left staring at each other.

"What has come over her?" Sally inquired.

"I don't know and I don't much care," Phyllis answered happily.

Janet was humming as she put on her berry cap and pulled it over at a rakish angle. She had spent a very profitable afternoon laughing at herself. At first the laughter had been a little too grim, but before long the grimness had disappeared and only a good-natured ridicule was left. It is good to be able to laugh at yourself once in a while, but Janet was glad that the time was over.

She had made up her mind not to tell them about Daphne, that was to be her secret.

CHAPTER IX

TWINS INDEED

"Snow!" Every girl looked up as Janet spoke, and a ripple of laughter ran around the room.

"Janet, did you say that?"—Miss Baxter looked over her thick lens glasses and focused her pale blue eyes on Phyllis's twin. An expectant silence fell over the room.

"Yes, Miss Baxter,"—Janet rose to answer.

Miss Baxter tapped the desk with her long and callous forefinger.

"Phyllis, I am quite aware that you are answering, and I might add that this is not the place to practice silly jokes."

A sudden, though quickly suppressed, snort came from behind Sally's desk, and even Muriel, sitting beside Phyllis, giggled.

"Janet, will you please stand up and speak for yourself?" Miss Baxter peered a little over the desk, and her face set in hard, uncompromising lines.

A month had passed since the last chapter, and Janet had found a very particular place in the school for herself. Once on the right road it had been only a matter of a few days before the girls accepted her, and only a matter of weeks before she was one of the leading members of her class. Her quiet humor and downright frankness made her a welcome addition to the school, as Sally had prophesied.

She and Phyllis had discovered how easy it was to pass for each other, and further to confuse people they began to dress alike. Miss Gwynne, the history teacher, had made a mistake in their identity in class one day and had laughed about it later to the rest of the teachers. Only Miss Baxter refused to find the story amusing. She had called it impertinence, and then and there made up her mind that the same trick should never be played on her.

This morning her near-sightedness had confused her, but she was certain that they were trying to trick her and she would have none of it.

"But I am Janet, and I am standing up." Janet had caught some of Daphne's drawl and used it when she remembered to.

Miss Baxter smiled coldly but triumphantly.

"Very well, if you persist in being childish, then I will ask Phyllis to stand also."

Phyllis rose, and the girls waited breathlessly.

"Come to my desk, please," Miss Baxter continued.

They obeyed her, Phyllis slipping her watch with its tell-tale initials into her pocket as she walked beside Janet to the front of the room and up to the desk that was raised on a small platform.

Miss Baxter surveyed them with grim determination as she might have a knotty problem in mathematics. She would not give heed to the small voice within her that counseled care. Miss Baxter never gave heed to anything but her own faultless judgment.

"You," she said, pointing to Phyllis, "are Janet and you,"—she frowned at Janet—"you are Phyllis."

The twins did not reply. They stood before her in respectful silence.

"Now, Janet,"—not being contradicted, Miss Baxter continued with even more certainty—"you, I believe, spoke." She looked at Phyllis.

"I was the one that spoke," Janet said quietly. "I said 'snow.' It is snowing, you know."

"We are not discussing the weather." Miss Baxter tried to silence the room with the weight of her scorn but she failed.

"Very well then, Phyllis, you may report to me after school." She prided herself that the interview had been most successful.

"Where, Miss Baxter?" Phyllis inquired.

Miss Baxter gasped.

"Janet, is it necessary for you to interrupt?"

"I wasn't interrupting," Janet protested.

Miss Baxter looked from one to the other of them and realized very slowly and very painfully that she had made a mistake.

"Go back to your seats," she said scornfully. "The matter is too trivial to discuss."

The twins did not smile; they merely walked backed to their seats and went on studying.

The bell rang not many minutes later.

"My Aunt Jane's poll parrot, was there ever such a scream. My sides ache." Sally hugged Janet in the excess of her delight.

"Look out for rocks ahead," Eleanor warned. "Old Ducky Lucky doesn't like to be laughed at."

"Bless you," Phyllis protested; "we didn't laugh at her, did we, Jan?"

"Certainly not. I'd never do anything so disrespectful," Janet replied. "We merely answered when we were spoken to."

"While Ducky Lucky thought you were answering for each other,"—Sally chuckled. "Oh, why didn't

somebody give me a twin. I never realized the thrilling possibilities until now."

"I wish you'd put on your watch again, Phyl," Rosamond said. "I feel so foolish when I look at you sometimes. You're not really alike but I never can remember which is which."

Phyllis slipped her watch on, and all the girls sighed with relief.

Daphne joined the group.

"I offer my congratulations," she drawled. "Sort of a dual role you were playing. Old Ducky Lucky was more ducky lucky-ish than ever. I could hear her even from where I sit."

"Just why do you call her Ducky Lucky?" Janet inquired. "I've always wondered."

The girls turned to Sally.

"It's a long time ago," she began, "since I christened her, but it had something to do with the way she said, 'Tut, tut'; her teeth, you know, aren't always tight and the effect sounded just like ducky lucky, and so I called her that. It's years ago, and of course they fit better now, but the name still sticks."

"Oh, Sally,"—Janet was convulsed—"she did make a noise just like that to-day, only I didn't realize."

"But I did,"—Phyllis laughed—"and it was all I could do to keep from giggling."

"Thank goodness math. is the last period; perhaps she'll have time to forget," Janet said just as the bell rang.

"Don't count on it," Rosamond called over her shoulder as she went back to her desk. "Ducky Lucky never forgets."

But mathematics class was uneventful. Miss Baxter ignored the twins, much to their delight, for they did not have to answer a single question.

"Sally, you're coming home with us this afternoon, aren't you?" Janet called as the bell rang.

"Yes; can you wait a half a shake?" Sally replied. "I have to take a paper over to Miss Simmons, but I'll meet you on the steps."

"Snow!"—Phyllis laughed as she and Janet waited for her a few minutes later—"what a lot you were responsible for to-day. Jan, whatever possessed you to say that out loud?"

Janet shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know; I suppose I was just thinking out loud. I was awfully thrilled when I saw it anyway."

"Well, I may be your twin," Phyllis mused, "but I don't pretend to understand you. We did have fun with Ducky Lucky, though, didn't we?"

"Yes, but she could have gotten beautifully even with us if she had wanted to,"—Janet laughed.

"How?" Phyllis inquired, but Sally's appearance cut short the conversation before Janet had a chance to explain.

They walked home through the park, and Phyllis insisted upon going in to see Akbar. As they entered the lion house, a small body thrust itself upon her and shouted gleefully:

"I've found you at last! I knew I would. Where have you been all this awful long time? I've looked for you every single day."

It was Donald, and Phyllis was delighted to see him. She introduced him to Sally and Janet, and then waited to hear what he would say.

Donald looked at her twin and then at her.

"Vers two of you," he said gravely.



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"Vers two of you," he said gravely

"Oh, you darling!" Phyllis exclaimed. "Don't look so disturbed. We're only twins."

Donald did not reply, he was busy looking at them again.

"Do you think you could tell us apart?" Janet inquired.

He nodded solemnly.

"I fink I could," he replied, "because, you see, her eyes are like ve brownie's—all soft and queer"—he smiled engagingly at Phyllis—"but yours"—he turned to Janet—"have all kinds of funny little gold fings that make vem all shiny. But I couldn't tell you apart if you shut your eyes, I don't fink."

"Oh, Donald, you're a great boy!" Phyllis laughed.

"I think he's wonderful," Sally exclaimed, "and the most amazing part of it is, he's right, Janet has little golden flecks in the brown part of her eye and you haven't. What a way to tell you apart, but I promise not to tell."

"Well, not Ducky Lucky anyway," laughed Janet.

Donald's nurse came to look for him, and bore him off in spite of his protests.

Phyllis described her last meeting with him and confessed to Sally that it had been at his house that she had met Muriel's Chuck.

"Oh, by the way," Sally suddenly remembered, "Muriel is going to give a party. Quite an affair, I understand, and we are all going to be invited. I suppose that Mr. Chuck will be there and a lot of other boys; have you heard anything about it?"

Phyllis nodded; she and Muriel had forgotten their quarrel and were seemingly on good terms again, although Sally had taken the place in Phyllis's heart that Muriel had occupied the year before. With Janet, they made up what the rest of the girls called the jolly trio. Daphne occasionally joined them, much to Janet's delight, and many were the afternoons that they had spent together in the snuggerly, a room that the twins had fitted up to suit their particular tastes at the top of the house.

They were on their way up to it to-day when Miss Carter heard them and came out of the drawing-room.

"Late for luncheon," she chided. "You will all be very ill if you are not careful. Were you kept in?" she questioned, laughing.

"No, Auntie Mogs. Phyl just decided she had to see Akbar," Janet explained.

"Well, I don't think that was very nice to you, Sally dear," Miss Carter protested. "Do hurry and eat your luncheon. I told Annie to keep it hot for you, and, oh, by the way, there are some letters for you on the hall table." She returned to the drawing-room where she was listening to the head of a new charity who was trying to secure her promise of support.

Janet dashed to the table and came back with the letters.

"Both alike and they're from town," she said as she opened hers.

"Muriel's invitations!" Phyllis exclaimed. "And, oh, Sally, do listen—it's to be a masquerade."

"What luck, oh, oh, why haven't I got a twin!" Sally wailed.

The discussion of costumes occupied the rest of the afternoon, and they must have reached a happy conclusion for Sally went home singing, and every time Phyllis and Janet looked at each other that evening they burst out laughing.

CHAPTER X

THE SCREENED WINDOW

The telephone rang insistently, and Phyllis, stretched at ease on the sofa in the snugger, looked appealingly at Janet.

"Darling twin of my heart, if you love me go and answer that. I'm so comfy," she pleaded.

Janet got up slowly from her big chair and looked reproachfully at her sister.

"Lazy, you're not a bit more comfy than I am, but I will go just to prove that I have the sweeter disposition."

"Bless you, I never doubted it," Phyllis called after her as she ran down the steps. Then she snuggled deeper into the cushions that were piled high about her, selected a large chocolate from the box beside her and closed her eyes.

It was the day before Muriel's party, and it was snowing hard. The girls had returned wet and cold from school and decided upon spending the rest of the day indoors. Janet, as usual, had found a book to read, but Phyllis, after playing with Galahad and Boru, had insisted upon interrupting, until in sheer desperation she had given it up and they had discussed the coming masquerade.

"It was Sally," Janet announced, returning from the 'phone.

"And what did she want?" Phyllis inquired. "You know, Jan, we were awfully silly not to bring Sally home with us."

"I won't tell you what she said unless you get up and hand me those chocolates," Janet replied as she settled herself once more in the big tufted chair.

Phyllis looked at the box of candy and then at the distance between it and Janet. It was too far to reach.

"Oh, Jan, I'm so tired," she protested.

"All right." Janet opened her book and began to read.

"Was it anything important?" Phyllis inquired, with pretended indifference.

"Fearfully,"—Janet did not look up from her book as she replied.

Phyllis appeared to consider the matter.

"Tell me what kind you want and I'll throw it to you," she offered by way of compromise.

Janet only went on reading.

"Oh, well, if I must, I must!" Curiosity won, and Phyllis got up slowly, the candy box in her hand. "Only never again allude to dispositions," she finished as she gave it to Janet.

"Thank you, dear," Janet said sweetly as she rooted in the bottom of the box for a nut.

"Well?" Phyllis demanded, "what did Sally want?"

Janet finished her candy and selected another before she answered.

"Sally called up to tell me that our costumes would be ready to try on at four o'clock to-day and that she would call for us in Daphne's car."

"Oh, how nice Taffy can be when she wants to." Phyllis was now wide awake. "Did Sally say when the not-to-be-hurried Miss Pringle intended to finish our things?"

"To-morrow, not later than twelve o'clock."

"Do you think she really will have them done then?"

"I should hope so; she's had them for ages," Janet replied. "Now, Phil, do keep still and let me read in peace until the girls come, I have a corking story and I'm just in the middle of the most thrilling part."

"What is it?" Phyllis inquired.

"The White Company,' by Conan Doyle," Janet replied.

"Oh, I've read that and it is a thriller. I won't bother you any more." She turned her attentions to the candy box, and then because she was now too wide awake to dream lazily on the lounge again she went over to the window and looked out.

The snow had stopped and a cold sun was struggling through a mass of heavy clouds. She gazed below her idly. A man was on the roof of the house across the yard. The roof covered an extension that was only one story high but ran out from the house almost to the end of the yard, and brought it quite near to the roof of the kitchen of Miss Carter's house.

Phyllis watched the man with lazy interest. He was the caretaker, she knew, for the family was down South. He seemed to be fitting a heavy wire screen into one of the smaller windows immediately above the extension.

"Now, I wonder what he's doing that for?" she said aloud to herself. "Looks as though they were fixing that room for a baby."

Miss Carter came in at this minute and put an end to her curiosity.

"Oh, Auntie Mogs, Sally just called up to say that she and Daphne would come by for us in Daphne's car, and we could all go to Miss Pringle's and try on our costumes!" she exclaimed.

"Why, how very nice of Daphne,"—Miss Carter smiled. "I was worrying about your having to go out on this miserable day."

Phyllis laughed and put her arm around her aunt.

"You see there are no two ways about it!" she cried. "We should have a car of our own and then you would never have to worry about our feet."

"Oh, Phyllis, you're a great one,"—her aunt laughed. "Well, I'm afraid I must keep on worrying for we certainly can't have a car."

"Glad of it." Janet, for all her apparent interest for her book, had been listening with one ear to the conversation.

"Why, Jan,"—Phyllis looked at her in amazement—"wouldn't you like a car?"

"No, I hate them; silly smelly things—give me a horse every time."

"Old fashioned," scoffed Phyllis. "I'll take a high-powered racer every time."

Miss Carter listened and smiled her amusement.

"And you will both have to take a street car,"—she laughed. "Poor abused children! Hurry along with you, and get ready or you will keep Daphne waiting."

"There they are now!" Phyllis exclaimed, as the front door bell pealed merrily. "That's Sally's ring; I know it."

Janet threw down her book, and they went to their rooms in search of hats.

A few minutes later they were all in the comfortable limousine, speeding along uptown.

"It was awfully nice of you to stop for us, Taffy," Phyllis said as soon as the greetings were over. "This is certainly a whole lot better than walking."

"Yes, isn't it!" Daphne agreed. "I was tickled when mother said I could have it. It isn't often that I can, you know."

Sally had been looking out of the window, and suddenly she leaned forward and knocked on the glass and waved.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "There's little Donald; isn't he the cutest youngster?"

Phyllis waved too, then she looked puzzled.

"Funny," she said under her breath.

"What is?" Janet demanded.

"Oh, nothing."

Daphne looked back at Donald through the window above her head.

"Isn't that Donald Keith?" she asked, and Phyllis nodded.

"It is Donald Francis MacFarlan Keith,"—she laughed, "or so he told me with much pardonable pride. He was most sympathetic when I had to confess to only two names."

"His father's a friend of my uncle's," Daphne explained. "It's little Don's cousin, Chuck Vincent, that Muriel walks home with every day. I've played tennis with him, and he's really rather fun for a boy," she drawled.

"For a boy?" laughed Janet. "I think boys are a whole lot more fun than girls."

"I don't," Daphne replied airily. "I think they are all very stuck up. Chuck is; you'll see that tomorrow night."

"Wonder if Miss Pringle will really have our things ready for us," Sally said. "She is always so uncertain. If she doesn't, I think I will die of disappointment."

"You tell her she has to, Daphne," Janet suggested. "You can always put on such airs, and they never fail to impress."

"Do my best." Daphne accepted Janet's compliment calmly; she knew it was true. Her drawl did seem to impress people, though she could never imagine why.

The car stopped before a dilapidated, brownstone house, and the girls got out and hurried up the worn steps. Miss Pringle herself let them in. She was a tall, angular woman, with wisps of untidy hair blowing about her face, and a mouth out of which she could always produce a pin at a moment's notice.

"Oh, young ladies," she said distractedly. "Why have you come?"

"We want to try on our dominoes," Sally said, rather taken aback.

"Dominoes? Oh, yes, yes, to be sure. Step this way."

She led them into a large room, filled with the smell of the kerosene stove and strewn with patterns and pieces of silks. It was a cluttered-up place.

"Here they are!" Phyllis exclaimed, going over to the table and picking up a dress. "Aren't they ducks?"

"Don't touch, please," Miss Pringle said nervously; "they're only pinned."

She picked up one of the costumes and beckoned to Sally.

"This is yours, Miss Ladd. Slip it over your head."

The others crowded around and admired.

"Oh, Sally, it's a love!" Phyllis enthused.

Miss Pringle shook her head and sighed.

"I can't understand why you are having them all alike," she complained. "Now, if you had only consulted me I could have designed such a pretty one for each of you; but, no, you must have your own way."

"But we want them alike for a special reason," Sally explained. "It's to be a regular masquerade, you know, and we thought that four costumes just alike would confuse people,"—she stopped, discouraged by the lack of Miss Pringle's attention.

The costume was a domino made of strips of colored silks with a big hood lined with pale yellow. Each stripe ended in a point, and a tiny bell hung from each one.

The girls tried them on, one at a time, and Miss Pringle pinned and basted and lengthened and shortened. She had made costumes all her life and no play at Miss Harding's seemed complete until she had been consulted.

"What are the other girls going to wear?" Daphne asked indifferently.

"Miss Grey will have a dear little shepherdess dress, and those two that are always together, I've mislaid their names in my mind—"

Sally laughed and Phyllis said quickly,

"Rosamond Dodd and Eleanor Schuyler."

"Yes, those are the ones. Well, they are going as Jack and Jill, and, oh, dearie me, I forgot. I know I've done my best for them all, and I must say they had more faith in my judgment than you young ladies had." An audible sniff ended the sentence.

"Oh, now, Miss Pringle," Sally protested, "we have unlimited faith in you. Didn't I prove it last year by letting you make a fairy out of me when I wanted to be a witch? This is a special joke we are having, that's why we want to be all alike."

"A very poor one, if you ask me,"—another sniff. "I can understand the Miss Pages, being as how they are twins, but—"

The girls were ready to leave, and Daphne interrupted her politely, but in her most approved drawl:

"We must all have our dominoes before noon, you know," she said. "As we are all going to dress at one house and go together, please be sure they are delivered on time."

"Certainly, Miss Hillis. I think I can be depended upon to keep my promises." Miss Pringle spoke huffily, but Daphne only smiled her slowest smile and nodded graciously as they went down the steps.

Phyllis hesitated before she entered the waiting car. A man whom she recognized as the caretaker of the house just back of theirs ran up the steps and disappeared in the wake of Miss Pringle's trailing wrapper.

"Wonder how he got here so quickly," Phyllis said to herself, and then dismissed the subject, at an impatient "hurry up" from Sally.

CHAPTER XI

THE MASQUERADE

"Aunt Jane's poll parrot, what a mob!"

The four girls, each in a domino exactly like the others, stood at the door of the Greys' immense drawing-room and surveyed the scene before them. It was, of course, Sally who spoke.

Phyllis laughed softly. "If you go about saying that, Sally, it won't be hard to know who you are," she warned.

"You'll have to forget Aunt Jane and her poll parrot for to-night," a voice soft and tinkling drawled.

This time Janet laughed. "How about your drawl, Taffy?" she inquired.

"Oh, dear, this will never do," Phyllis protested. "We will all have to keep as quiet as possible and only answer 'yes' and 'no.'"

Sally's blue eyes opened wide behind her mask of black satin.

"Oh, but that won't be any fun at all!" she cried.

"We might mumble everything we want to say," suggested Janet; "and if we all do it, it will be more confusing than ever."

"Good idea, 'How do you do this evening; isn't the room beautiful?'" Daphne mumbled in a monotone.

"Oh, Taffy," Janet laughed, "even your very best friend wouldn't know you."

"Well, then let's go in and pay our respects to Muriel; she and her mother are over there by the other door," Sally suggested, and led the way.

The room through which they walked was indeed beautiful. Ivory white woodwork made a fitting frame for the pale gold brocade that hung on the walls. Ferns and great bowls of roses filled every corner, and the perfume of the flowers scented the warm air of the room. Two crystal chandeliers blazed in all the glory of their rainbow colors and reflected their brilliance in the polished floor.

Groups of girls and boys chattered and laughed and tried to guess the identity of each other. Every hero and heroine in history was represented, and they nodded and bowed to dainty Mother Goose folk.

The simplicity of the four dominoes made a strange spot of color as they walked together towards their hostesses. They were all about the same height and build, they marched in step, and their bells jingled in unison.

"How do you do," they mumbled as they shook hands.

Muriel Grey, dressed, as Miss Pringle had suggested, in the dainty pinks and blues of a Dresden shepherdess, stood beside her mother. She was not masked as her guests were, and her puzzled surprise was plain to be seen.

"Why, who can you be?" she exclaimed. "I have guessed every girl and boy so far, but I haven't the slightest idea who you are. Please say something," she begged.

"You look very pretty to-night."

"What a lot of people there are."

"We are all so glad to be here."

"Think hard and you will surely guess."

All four answers were mumbled at once and poor Muriel was more confused than ever.

"I think your costumes are delightful and it is great fun to have four unknown guests," Mrs. Grey said. "I shall be watching you all anxiously when the gong rings to unmask. Don't run away like Cinderella when you hear it, will you?" she added, smiling.

"No, indeed," a mumble assured her. "We will all come and say 'how do you do' to you then in our own voices."

Another group, this time of boys, came up, and the four hurried away.

It was not long before the guests had all assembled and the music began.

"Let's go over there and watch," Phyllis suggested, pointing to a bench under a palm in the corner. "Then we can see whom we know."

"There's John Steers, dressed as a donkey,"—Sally pointed to a tall, ungainly boy, who presented a droll aspect as he leaned up against the wall beside the musicians' platform. His thin body accentuated by the large donkey's head gave him a top-heavy expression, and the forefeet that covered his long arms hung dejectedly at his sides.

"He doesn't look as though he were having a very good time," Janet laughed. "Why doesn't he go and talk to some one?"

"Not John; he perfectly hates and despises parties, but his mother makes him go to them, and he always stands over by the musicians and mopes just as he is doing now," Phyllis explained.

"There are Eleanor and Rosamond over there talking to the two boys in armor,"—Daphne pointed.

"Of course, I'd have known them even if old Pringle had not told us their costumes,"—Sally chuckled. "Oh, do look at that boy dressed as Robin Hood; he is bow legged,"—she went off into convulsions of laughter, and as the others looked at the very fat and uncomfortable lad across the room they joined her. They had hardly time to compose their features before three boys came up to them and bowed.

One, the tallest of the lot, wore a monk's garb of rough brown and the big hood completely covered his head; his face was hidden by a ghostly white mask. The one next to him was dressed exactly like the Mother Goose pictures of Little Jack Horner and he carried a paper pie under one arm. The last of the trio was the most amusing; his face was blacked and a wig of kinky black hair stood out in dozens of tiny braids, each tied with a different colored string. He wore a red and white calico dress that was just short enough to show his big, clumsy boots. He made a very deep bow before Sally and said in a high shrill voice.

"May I have this dance, please, ma'am?"

"With pleasure,"—Sally for a wonder did not forget to mumble. She did not have the slightest idea who her partner was, but then that is the fun of a masquerade.

"And will you dance with me?" the monk asked in a very solemn tone, bowing to Janet.

Janet got up and then sat down again very suddenly; there was an awkward pause, and then she managed to say:

"But I don't know how to dance." Gone was the mumble, gone was every thought except the misery of the minute.

But the monk, instead of being disappointed, gave a mighty sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness for that," he said heartily. "I hate to dance, myself, so let's go and see if we can't find some lemonade. This hood is so hot I need something to cool me off."

Janet did not wait to be coaxed. She took the arm he offered her, and they soon disappeared into the crowd.

Little Jack Horner shifted from one foot to the other in his embarrassment at finding himself between two girls. At last he said,

"I want to dance with one of you but blest if I can tell which, you are as alike as two peas. I wish you would stop that mumbling and let me hear your voices. I bet I know you both."

Phyllis and Daphne looked at each other and laughed. Jack Horner had forgotten, in his eagerness to find out who they were, to disguise his own voice, and they both recognized him.

"No, Jerry Dodd, we won't stop mumbling; you'll just have to choose as best you can," Daphne said.

Jerry looked at her curiously; there was something familiar in that tinkly laugh.

"Then I'll choose you," he said promptly. "You know me, so I must know you, and before we have danced half way round the room I bet I can tell you your name."

"Bet you can't," Daphne teased as she got up.

Phyllis watched them whirl away and smiled to herself. Daphne was a beautiful dancer, and if Jerry had even a grain of sense he would recognize her light step, for he had danced with her many times at dancing school. She watched them circle the room once and waited for them to pass her again. As they neared her she expected to hear Daphne's familiar drawl, but instead she heard Jerry's pleading voice say,

"Ah, go on, give a fellow a chance."

The rest of the sentence was lost for a voice close beside her asked,

"Did you find the lemonade?"

She turned quickly to see a knight in shining armor. A golden wig fell to his shoulders, and a blazing cross covered the front of his tunic. He wore a small black mask that did not hide his smiling mouth. He carried a great sword with both hands.

"No, Sir Galahad, I didn't," Phyllis answered.

"Where's your monk, Friar Tuck; I thought he was with you?" Sir Galahad inquired.

"Did you?" Phyllis asked sweetly. She was not mumbling, but her voice was not at all natural and she had no fear of the knight's recognizing her for she felt quite sure she did not know him.

"But I don't understand. When I last saw you, Howard was going to take you into the library and teach you to dance and John was going with you." Sir Galahad was perplexed.

"Yet here I am." Phyllis was hugely enjoying herself. There was no doubt that he took her for Janet, and she delighted in teasing him.

"Do you mean to tell me that they went off and left you?" Two dark eyebrows that contrasted oddly with the golden wig came together in a frown just above the black mask.

"Perhaps,"—Phyllis threw a note of sorrow into her voice, and her eyes looked up into his without a hint of laughter.

"I never heard of such a thing," he said angrily, and something in the way he said it brought back a sudden memory to Phyllis and made her eyes dance. She lowered them quickly, for it was just possible that Don's cousin might prove as clever as Don.

The knight sat down beside her on the bench and rested his sword beside him.

"What's your name?" he asked presently.

"You'd never believe it if I told you," Phyllis replied.

"Well, tell me anyhow."

"I am Queen Mab,"—Phyllis dropped her voice to a whisper—"but I am masquerading as Pierrette, so you mustn't tell anybody."

"Don't be silly," was the knight's ungallant reply. "I mean, who are you really?"

"See, I told you you wouldn't believe,"—Phyllis shrugged her shoulders daintily. "I dare say you don't believe in fairies nor brownies either," she ventured, watching him out of the corner of her eye.

The words should have given the knight the hint he wanted, but he was too cross to understand it just then.

"Oh, very well," he said huffily, "if you won't tell me, you won't; but don't expect me to tell you my name either."

"I don't have to," Phyllis laughed gayly. "I know; it's Chuck."

"Well I'll be darned,"—Sir Galahad stared at her in amazement. "Then I know you?"

"I didn't say so," Phyllis teased.

He got up and stood facing her, his arms folded.

"Come and get some lemonade," he commanded. "I am going to find out who you are, never you fear, but I am going to do it in my own way."

They walked to the little alcove where a maid in cap and apron was busily serving the punch. Chuck kept his eyes fastened on his companion as if he were determined to penetrate her mask and the saucy hood that jingled as they walked. He did not look up until they were at the table and when he did it was to find the monk and the donkey with—he blinked, not his partner, for she was beside him, but surely her double.

CHAPTER XII

CHUCK GUESSES RIGHT

Janet and Phyllis looked at each other and smiled. Janet's companions were as astonished as Chuck. They looked at first one and then the other of the girls, and then Howard whistled.

"Golly," he exclaimed. It was not a word that fitted his costume but it exactly suited his confused frame of mind.

"I am seeing double or else I'm going crazy and I don't like the feeling," he protested. "Somebody pinch me."

Both John and Chuck took him at his word and complied heartily with his request. The result was a loud but quickly suppressed "ouch" and a backward lunge that almost upset the table with its precious burden of lemonade.

Chuck took Phyllis by the arm and almost shook her.

"Then you weren't you; I mean her," he said none too clearly, "but you let me think you were."

"You mean I let you think I was I. Well, I couldn't very well help it." Phyllis's tone was apologetic, but her eyes danced.

Chuck looked appealingly at Janet.

"You know what I mean," he said.

"Of course, it's perfectly plain," Janet replied consolingly. "You thought she was me while all the time she was she and me was me,"—the hodge-podge of pronouns and their ungrammatical use was too much for poor Chuck. He buried his head in his hands, the picture of despair.

Phyllis took the opportunity of exchanging a nod and a sly wink with Janet that she apparently understood, for without a second's hesitation she slipped out of her place and Phyllis took it.

"Well, anyhow you can dance,"—Chuck lifted his head and looked at Janet. Howard and John promptly doubled over in a fit of laughter.

"Oh, but I'm so sorry I can't," Janet said demurely.

Chuck looked at Phyllis. "Then neither of you dance, I see," he said slowly.

"Why, I never said I couldn't," Phyllis protested, and Howard, who was trying to recover his first fit of laughter by drinking a cup of punch, choked and had to be severely thumped on the back by John.

Chuck looked angry and puzzled for a minute and then he acknowledged his defeat and laughed

good naturedly.

"One of you dances," he said with conviction. "Will she please do me the honor of dancing this one step with me?" He looked at them both, not at all sure which one would reply.

"I'd love to," Phyllis said, laughing.

He took her in his arms and away they whirled. Chuck, unlike most boys of his age, liked to dance, and Phyllis was as light as the fairy she claimed to be, so for a few minutes they did not speak, for they were contented to glide over the waxed floor to the inspiring music.

"I should say you could dance," Chuck said at last. "If your voice was not entirely different I would say that you were Daphne Hillis."

"Would you?"—Phyllis did her best to imitate Daphne's drawl, and she succeeded so well that Chuck came to a full stop in the very middle of the floor and stared at her.

"Are you Daphne?" he demanded.

Phyllis gave a little laugh and lowered her eyes, but she neither admitted nor denied.

Chuck started to dance again without saying another word, and presently Phyllis stole a quick glance up at him. She found him staring at her with a new look in his eyes.

"You are not Daphne," he said with relief. "Taffy has green eyes and yours are brown, red brown like autumn leaves." Phyllis gave a little start, for the words were so like little Don's.

"I'm glad you are not Taffy," Chuck went on. "I might have known you weren't."

"Why?" Phyllis could not help asking.

"Oh, because Taffy and I are on the outs, and she wouldn't dance with me for anything," he replied indifferently.

"She might," was all Phyllis would say, her brain already busy with a plan.

"Too bad your twin doesn't dance," was Chuck's next remark, and for a minute Phyllis lost step and almost stumbled. He had used the word without thinking, never realizing how near the truth he was.

"But do look," he exclaimed a second later, "she does; there she goes with Jerry Dodd, and she dances beautifully too. Whatever made her say she couldn't?"

Phyllis was speechless with mirth, but she managed to nod to Daphne as she sailed by, still with Jerry.

The dance ended, it was the fifth of the evening, and the four girls had all promised to leave their partners and return to the dressing-room to compare notes when it was over.

Phyllis found the others all there waiting for her, for it had been difficult to find an excuse to satisfy Chuck. He made her promise to meet him at the bench for the seventh dance before he would leave her to keep his next dance with Muriel.

"Oh, oh, oh, was there ever such a lark!" Sally exclaimed. "I have danced with five different boys and not one of them guessed who I was, and yet I know them all and have danced with them scores of times."

"Have you been dancing with Jerry all evening?" Phyllis asked Daphne, as Janet regaled Sally with a description of the scene by the punch bowl.

"What else can I do?" Daphne groaned. "He says he won't let me go until he finds out who I am, and I simply won't tell him. I saw you dancing with Chuck. How do you like him?"

"Oh, ever so much," Phyllis replied, and then she laughed harder than ever.

Daphne demanded an explanation, and when Phyllis gave it, together with her plan, she heartily agreed.

"Then it's settled that we all meet at the bench just as the lights go out before the gong rings to unmask," Sally said, as they started back downstairs. The rest nodded, and at the door of the ballroom they separated, each to her waiting partner, rather to a waiting partner.

Sally joined Howard and John in the library, to continue Janet's dancing lessons, and Janet hurried to the punch bowl to find a jolly King Cole who had Sally's promise to sit out the dance with him and let him guess who she was.

Chuck, after leaving Muriel rather unceremoniously, rushed to the bench beneath the palms, and Daphne greeted him with a smile of welcome. Phyllis was claimed at once on her appearance by the persistent Jerry, and they danced off, as Jerry firmly believed, taking up the threads of their conversation exactly where he and Daphne had left off.

The room was so large that it was surprisingly easy to keep out of one another's way, and not one of the four boys realized that there were more than two girls wearing the same kind of costume.

The dance ended, and the girls lost themselves in the crowd, to appear in person for their next dance, the boys none the wiser. Only John, with his donkey's head very much awry, noticed a change as he watched Howard Garth painstakingly teaching Sally the rest of the steps to the fox trot. Janet had not thought of telling Sally that she was being very nice to John; she hardly realized it herself; so Sally ignored him as girls always ignored John, and he noticed it. It took Janet several minutes to make him forget his grievance when she came back at the ninth dance to have one more lesson.

The tenth dance had hardly begun before the music slowed noticeably, and the lights gradually grew dim, the room blurred, and the couples came to a standstill as darkness descended over them. Four figures hurried their protesting partners towards the bench under the palm. They were all there by the time the gong sounded.

Suddenly the lights blazed on again, and four very surprised boys stared in bewilderment at the four girls before them.

"Oh, now I know I'm crazy!" Howard exclaimed. "So don't bother to pinch me," he added, as Chuck and John lifted their arms.

Jerry Dodd looked reproachfully at Daphne and wagged his head.

"It was you all the time," he said, "but how could a feller be expected to know when you talked the fool way you did."

"But, Jerry, are you sure you were dancing all the time with me?" Daphne's drawl sounded pleasantly on all ears.

"That I am," Jerry replied, with so much certainty that Phyllis and Daphne shrieked with laughter.

Grant Weeks, in spite of the dignity that his King Cole suit gave him, looked very limp as he sat down on the bench. All he seemed to be able to say was,

"Sally Ladd—you—you—" The rest was lost in groans.

Up until now Chuck had not spoken. He had stood looking at all the girls in turn, and particularly at Phyllis and Janet.

"What I want to know is, when did I dance with which?" he demanded so seriously that the rest laughed with delight.

"And who takes who to supper?" inquired Grant. "Sally, I may not have danced with you, nor sat out in the conservatory and argued with you, but I am going to take you in to supper, so come along."

"I don't know whether I ought to go with a boy that doesn't know whether he knows me or not," Sally laughed, "but I will just this once."

Howard turned to Janet.

"Did I or didn't I teach you to dance?" he demanded.

"You did,"—Janet laughed. "That is, part of the time. Come on, John, we'll all go down together. I'm awfully hungry."

"I knew it," John said to himself, and he smiled even through his donkey's mask.

Phyllis and Daphne were left, and Chuck and Jerry looked at them uneasily.

"What are we going to do about it?" Jerry demanded.

"Suit yourself,"—Chuck laughed. "I am going to take—" and here he paused, for he suddenly remembered that he had never been introduced to Phyllis and did not even know her name.

"Daphne, introduce us," he begged.

"But we've met already," Phyllis protested. "Have you forgotten?"

"Oh, I don't mean that silly Queen Mab introduction," Chuck said.

"Neither do I," Phyllis confused him still further by replying.

Jerry took Daphne's arm and hurried her off.

"Let's let them settle it themselves," he said over his shoulder.

Chuck looked at Phyllis and smiled.

"Please," he said coaxingly. But Phyllis shook her head.

"Not unless you promise to believe in Don's brownies," she answered, and as she spoke she pulled off her hood.

Chuck looked at her and gasped.

"Of course," he exclaimed, "you're the girl that brought Don home, and I saw you one day when I was with Muriel and she told me you were one of the Page twins and—" he stopped, and Phyllis guessed that the rest of Muriel's remarks had not been any too sweet.

"Well, take a good look at me," she teased, "for once I leave you, you will never be able to tell me from Janet."

"Oh, won't I?" Chuck replied. "I bet I will, and I'll prove it after supper."

His chance came a little later. Both girls stood before him, their hoods thrown back and their eyes laughing up at him.

"It's easy," Chuck laughed, holding out his hand to Phyllis, "you are Don's girl," he said.

"Oh, Don told you the secret," Sally protested.

"He did not," Chuck denied.

"Close your eyes then and turn around," Janet directed. She and Phyllis changed places, and when Sally called "ready," Chuck turned to find them still before him but with their eyes tight shut.

"Easy again," he said, and took Phyllis by the hand.

The little group looked at each other in astonishment, for they had all been baffled, and Daphne said,

"Tell us how you did it?"

"No, that's my secret," Chuck replied firmly; "mine and Don's, and I'll never tell."

And he kept his word, for not until many years later did the Page twins learn the difference that he saw between them every time he looked at them.

CHAPTER XIII

A BLUE MONDAY

"Phyl, do come away from that window; you've been staring out into the dark ever since dinner." Janet spoke from the depth of her favorite chair where, as usual, she was ensconced with a book and Boru. Tonight Sir Galahad was cuddled down on her shoulder as well, for his own mistress was restless company. Boru eyed the interloper with open disapproval. There was a truce of sorts between the two animals; a truce not in any way to be confused with a peace. Boru's bared teeth and Sir Galahad's arched back were constant signs that a state of war existed between them.

"What under the sun are you looking at?" Janet went on impatiently. "You give me the fidgets."

"Oh, read your book," Phyllis said without turning. "I'm only star gazing."

"Read? How under the sun can I, with Galahad and Boru making faces at each other under my very nose. Come and take your cat, or I will dump him on the floor; he's making Boru miserably jealous."

Phyllis sighed and turned reluctantly from the window.

"Poor old kittens, didn't his Aunt Jan love him? Well, it was too bad! Come to his own mistress." She picked up the cat and held him in her arms. Galahad purred contentedly and rubbed his silky ear against her soft cheek.

Unconsciously Phyllis returned to the window. There was a light in the window of the house across the yard. It was the same window where only a few days ago the caretaker had fitted the wire screen with so much care. To-night the shade was down, but a shadow passed and repassed, looming large and mysterious behind it.

"What under the sun is he doing in that room?" Phyllis pondered, encouraging the mysterious reasons that fitted through her head and enlarging upon them.

A prodigious sigh from Janet interrupted the most thrilling story of all, and she gave up and returned to her place on the sofa.

"Do you realize that just forty-eight hours ago we were having the time of our lives?" Janet demanded.

"It seems years ago to me," Phyllis replied. "What fun it was! I don't think I ever had a better time at any party I ever went to."

"Well, I never went to any other party,"—Janet laughed—"unless you'd call the church fair at Old Chester a party, and I don't. I call it a nightmare." She made a wry face as memories assailed her.

"How about the tea party we gave at grandmother's?" Phyllis inquired. "We had fun at that, wearing each other's dresses, do you remember?"

"Of course, but I wouldn't call it a party,"—Janet frowned, trying to think of a better word. "I think it was an experience," she said at last.

Phyllis laughed. "What makes you say that?" she asked.

"Well, if you had heard the things those girls said about *me* to *me*, thinking I was you, why, you'd understand," Janet said, and she smiled a little wistfully.

"Jan," Phyllis asked suddenly, "tell me something honestly and truly. Do you ever miss Old Chester?"

Janet thought for a minute and then shook her head.

"No, I honestly don't," she said slowly. "And I can't make myself, somehow."

"Do you try?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"But why?"

"Because I think I ought to. It seems so thankless of me to go whole days without even remembering there is such a place."

Phyllis jumped up from the couch, tumbling Galahad to the floor and threw her arms around her.

"Oh, you darling!" she exclaimed. "I could hug you to death for saying that. You're such a queer dick that sometimes I get scared to death and think surely you are pining for the country, and then I want to die of misery. You're so quiet and queer sometimes."

Janet return her twin's hug with interest.

"You want me to be like you," she laughed, "and I never will be. I suppose I've been quiet so long that it is a habit. I just can't help thinking long thoughts, I always have, you see, but, oh, Phyl, they're all happy thoughts these days," [Transcriber's note: line missing from book.]

"And you don't miss a single person, ever?" Phyllis persisted.

Janet hesitated; she wanted to be quite honest.

"Well," she said at last, "I do miss Peter once in a while; that is, I wish he were here to talk things over with, and sometimes when I read something I like awfully much I sort of wish I could tell him about it," she finished lamely.

Phyllis nodded in perfect understanding. She knew that Peter Gibbs held the same place in Janet's thoughts that her girl friends held in hers.

"I wish I had seen him," she mused. "It's so much more fun to talk about a person you know than to have to imagine all about them. Whatever possessed him to run away just before I came? I think it was downright mean of him, and some day I'm going to tell him so."

"Tell him Christmas vacation,"—Janet laughed. "He is going to be with Mrs. Todd at the Enchanted Kingdom, and so we'll probably see him."

"And so we will probably see him,"—mimicked Phyllis. "I guess there won't be much doubt about that,"—she yawned, and as if in answer to her thoughts the clock struck nine.

"Let's go to bed; school to-morrow," she said sleepily. "Thank goodness Christmas is not so very far away. I'm going to lie in bed just as late as ever I want to, in Old Chester."

Janet smiled to herself. She pictured Martha's shocked surprise at the very idea of staying in bed just for the fun of it, but she did not disillusionize Phyllis.

Monday morning is always a restless time at school, for the girls are all too busy living over the events of the week end to settle down to lessons, and this particular Monday, coming as it did just after

Muriel's party, made it even harder than ever.

The four girls, Phyllis, Janet, Daphne and Sally, were the center of attraction, for the rest had only heard in part the story of their exchange of partners and they wanted it all.

"I heard that Jerry Dodd was sick in bed all yesterday," Rosamond teased. "He laughed so hard that he broke something in his side."

"You mean he ate so much," drawled Daphne. "I told him if he insisted upon eating the sixth chicken pattie he would be sorry, and now I hope he is."

The girls were all sitting on desks as near as they could get to Sally and Janet.

"Dancing school begins next week," Eleanor announced. "Who's going this year?"

"You and Janet are, aren't you?" Rosamond asked Phyllis.

"I haven't asked Auntie Mogs yet, but I suppose we are," Phyllis replied. "How about you, Daphne?"

"Oh, yes, might as well." Daphne knew all there was to know about dancing, but she did not consider that any reason for stopping.

"We're going of course," Eleanor said, "and, Sally, of course you'll come."

But Sally shook her head. She had been unusually quiet, but none of the girls had noticed it. Now they all looked at her in surprise.

"Oh, but, Sally, why?" Rosamond demanded.

"What's all this?" Madge Cannon stopped to join the group on her way to senior row. "Sally not going to dancing school? Preposterous! It won't be any fun without her. What's the trouble?"

"Wouldn't be worth while," Sally said shortly.

"Worth while! Sally Ladd, what are you talking about?" Phyllis demanded. Something in the expression of Sally's eyes made her realize that she was not joking.

"I mean I won't be here after Christmas," Sally said in a dull level tone, and she stared straight before her as she spoke.

"Won't be here?"—the girls gazed at her in stupefied astonishment.

"You don't really mean that you are going to boarding school?" Eleanor demanded. "You said something about it at the beginning of school but no one believed you."

"Well, it's true," Sally said dismally. "Mother had a letter this morning from the head of the school and it's all arranged."

"Oh, Sally—" the girls were speechless, each tried to picture the loss of Sally, first to herself, and then to the school; then they looked at Phyllis and Janet and then at Daphne, and realized that their sorrow could not be compared to theirs. One by one they slipped away, and the four girls were left alone.

"Oh, Aunt Jane's poll parrot, do say something," Sally said at last. There were tears in her voice, and the girls were quick to notice them.

"Oh, Sally, why didn't you tell us?" Phyllis asked.

"Didn't get a chance," Sally replied; "and anyway I couldn't somehow."

Janet put her hand over her friend's and squeezed it. There was nothing to say.

"It's—it's all wrong,"—there was more feeling in Daphne's voice than her usual drawl permitted.

The bell fell on their silence a minute later.

It was not until the study hour was almost over that Phyllis realized that Muriel had not come. Sally's news had completely swamped all other thoughts. She put up the lid of her desk and under its cover slipped a note back to Janet. She read it and passed it to Sally, who shook her head and looked puzzled.

"Hope she isn't sick," she whispered.

Muriel did not arrive until study hour was over, and the girls were chatting in the ten-minute interval.

"Hello!" Phyllis greeted her as she slipped into her seat. One look at her face made her add:

"Why, what is the matter?"

Muriel's eyes were red and swollen, and she looked as though she had been crying for hours. Phyllis did not show as much concern as she might have, for it was a well-known fact that Muriel cried very easily.

At Phyllis's question, she buried her head in her arms and started to sob.

"Something terrible has happened," she managed to say. "I'm so nervous I simply can't stop crying. I've been interviewed by policemen and detectives all morning and I am frightened to death."

Phyllis put her arm around her consolingly.

"But what has happened, dear? Tell us," she begged.

"Oh, it's too terrible for words!" Muriel was certainly prolonging the agony.

"What is?" Sally demanded sharply.

"Chuck's little cousin has been kidnapped!" It was out, and Muriel looked up long enough to judge the effect on her hearers and then fell to sobbing again.

Phyllis felt something in her throat contract.

"Little Don?" she asked.

"Yes, and, oh, dear, just because I'd seen him in the park yesterday I had to answer all kinds of questions, and I'm all nervous and tired out."

The girls looked at the crumpled heap in disgust. It was like the Muriel of this year to insist on being the central figure.

They went back to their desks in thoughtful silence.

Phyllis sat beside Muriel, quite unconscious of her tears; her hands were clenched, and her eyes saw nothing but Don's impish little face.

CHAPTER XIV

MISS PRINGLE

Chuck was waiting at the corner of the street when school closed that afternoon, but it was not for Muriel that he watched. He wanted to talk to Phyllis. He was desperately unhappy and he had to talk to some one. Boys, even his best friends, were not sympathetic enough. Muriel would be sure to blub; Chuck had seen her that morning. Daphne would drawl and that would drive him crazy, so it was for Phyllis that he waited, sure of her ready sympathy, for she had loved Don.

Phyllis came down the steps with Janet and Sally and Daphne, but as soon as she saw him she left the girls and hurried towards him.

"Oh, Chuck, Muriel has told us about Don, and I want you to know how terribly we all feel," she said sincerely. "Have you had any news?"

"Only a letter for my uncle, telling him to go to some old house way up in Bronxville and to bring a lot of money with him," Chuck replied. "The police tell him not to go, but I think he will; you see the letter says if he doesn't come that they will hurt Don."

"Oh, how dreadful, how detestable!" Phyllis exclaimed. "How could any one be so wicked, and to Don above all people!" Chuck looked at her quickly. He expected to see tears in her eyes, but instead he saw anger—flashing burning anger.

"When does the letter tell him to be at the house?" she asked abruptly.

"A week from to-day."

"Why not sooner, I wonder."

"Because they figure that the longer Uncle Don has to wait the readier he'll be to give them what they want. As if he cares how much money it is as long as he can get Don back again!" Chuck looked down the street and tried to keep his eyes clear from the tears that had threatened to flood them all morning. He too was seeing little Don's chubby face.

"My mother is with Uncle Don now," he went on after a minute's pause, "but there isn't much she can do or say. She's almost as heartbroken as he is. It—it's pretty tough on the little chap," he ended

with a queer choke.

As they turned the corner, the girls joined them, and added their sympathy. But Chuck was in no mood to answer their questions, so with an abrupt "s'long" he turned at the next street and left them.

"Let's go up to the snugery," Janet suggested. "I don't feel up to much to-day."

"Neither do I," Sally said. "I can't think of anything but Don, poor little mite. I hope they are kind to him."

"Oh, Sally, for pity's sake stop!" Phyllis spoke so sharply that the girls turned to look at her: her eyes were still flashing but her lip trembled.

"I can't bear it," she added more softly.

"Sorry," Sally said penitently, and they walked in silence until they reached the house.

"Auntie Mogs, we're all very unhappy," Janet began as they stopped to greet Miss Carter in the hall. "Little Donald Keith has been kidnapped. Muriel Grey cried all through school, and Sally is not coming back after Christmas."

It speaks well for Miss Carter's understanding of her two nieces that she did not have to ask for a more concise statement but accepted Janet's explanation in its entirety.

"How very sad," she said at once. "Poor Mr. Keith must be almost frantic, and Mrs. Vincent too. I wish there was something I could do, though I know them so slightly. Sally dear, your mother told me this morning that you were not going back to school after the holidays and I am so very sorry. The girls will be desolate without you. How do you do, Daphne. I am very glad you came home with the girls. I like to see you four together. Go into the dining-room and have some luncheon right away," she directed. "Perhaps that will make you feel better. What are you going to do this afternoon?"

"Nothing special," Janet replied.

"Then I will ask a favor of you all,"—she followed them to the dining-room and took her place at the head of the table.

"We'll grant it before we hear it,"—Daphne's drawl sounded very soft and musical.

"Of course," Sally agreed.

"What is it, Auntie Mogs?" Janet inquired.

Miss Carter smiled delightedly.

"That's very sweet of you, but wait until you hear what it is I want you to do. This afternoon my class from the settlement is coming here for tea after I have taken them to the Art Museum. There are ten of them; all girls about your own age. I intended to give them chocolate and cake, as it is so cold to-day, and Annie was going to serve it, but this morning a telegram came saying her sister is very ill, so Annie is leaving on the three o'clock train for Buffalo and that leaves only Lucy. Will you do the waiting and serving for me?"

"Why, of course, we'd love to," they all answered together.

"I can make delicious hot chocolate," Sally announced, "so I might stay in the kitchen and help Lucy."

"And have first whack at the cakes; I think not," Daphne replied firmly.

"Now, my Aunt Jane's poll parrot, was ever any one so misunderstood?" Sally turned to Miss Carter for sympathy.

"Never, my dear, I am sure Daphne's suspicions are unjust." Auntie Mogs laughed. "But I must hurry away or I will be late and that's one thing my children can't forgive. Poor darlings, they have so few outings that they hate to waste a minute of their precious time."

"Why don't you take them to the zoo?" Phyllis spoke for the first time, her voice sounded very tired but she smiled. "They'd like it a heap better than the museum."

"No, dear, I think you're wrong. They are all very anxious to see the pictures," Auntie Mogs replied, "but perhaps we'll stop in for a minute to see your beautiful Akbar on our way home."

She left them and hurried off, and again an unhappy silence fell upon them as they finished their luncheon.

"Let's go up to the snugery," Janet suggested; "we don't have to help Lucy for hours yet."

They climbed the stairs, followed by Boru and Galahad, and finally settled themselves comfortably in the little room.

"Let's do our math," Sally suggested. "It's awfully hard. Taffy, you can help us."

They pulled out the table and were soon at work. Phyllis tried to keep her mind on the problems before her, but her eyes wandered to the window where she could see that the shade across the yard was still pulled down. She welcomed Annie's interruption a few minutes later.

"Please, miss," she said, "Lucy finds that there is no chocolate in the house, so will you please telephone for some and tell them to bring it over right away."

"No, I'll go for it instead, Annie." Phyllis jumped up, glad of an excuse to be alone.

"Thank you, miss." Anne went downstairs, to assure Lucy that the chocolate would surely be there on time.

"Too bad," Janet said, looking up from her paper. "We'll all go with you, Phyl."

"Don't bother. The math is coming along so well with Taffy's help, keep on with it. I won't be a second, and I don't mind going alone a bit. I'll take Boru with me; he looks as though he wanted a run. How about it, old fellow?"

Boru wagged his tail, looked at Janet, and then followed Phyllis, barking lustily.

Once in the air with the stiff chill breeze in her face and Boru frisking beside her, she threw off some of the depression that was making the day horrible. The grocery was only a couple of blocks away, and she soon had her package and was on her way home.

As she turned the corner she found herself face to face with Miss Pringle. She was carrying a heavy suit case.

"Why, what are you doing in this neighborhood?" she asked, smiling.

Miss Pringle stopped, started forward and stopped again.

"Why—er—er—I—how do you do?" she stammered, so plainly ill at ease that Phyllis looked at her in amazement.

"We had a wonderful time at our masquerade," she said in an attempt to make conversation.

"Yes, yes, to be sure, dear me, good-by, young lady—I—" She was indeed flustered, and Phyllis could hardly repress a smile, for Miss Pringle's hat was well over one ear, and the dotted veil that should have covered her face was whipping itself into ribbons off the back of her head.

"But you haven't told me what you are doing down here?" Phyllis insisted.

Miss Pringle looked really troubled.

"I can't, indeed I can't, young lady," she almost cried. "I must go—I must indeed." She hurried on, keeping to the inside of the street and gazing about her furtively.

"Now, what under the sun is old Pringle up to?" Phyllis mused. "I never saw her so flustered. Well, come on, old man, let's take a little walk before we go in. They'll never miss us, and you needn't tell Galahad."

Boru looked up and cocked one ear rakishly, as though he thoroughly enjoyed the joke.

"Here, sir." Ten minutes later Phyllis gave the command, and Boru stopped running so suddenly that he almost tripped on his nose.

Phyllis slipped her hand under his collar and pulled him behind the high stoop that they were just passing. She had seen Miss Pringle coming towards them almost a block away, and she had no desire for another conversation with her. She watched her approach, wondering where she was going, and hoping that she would enter some house before she reached their hidingplace.

Miss Pringle was still walking close to the houses and seemed to be in a terrible hurry. Her hat bobbed more than ever, and the short coat she wore bulged out in the wind, making her indeed a comical figure.

When she reached a house that was boarded up, she paused and looked quickly behind her. It looked as though she were alone on the street. Phyllis watched her, interested in spite of herself, and saw her bob down and disappear into an area way.

"Of course," she said to Boru, as she loosed him from her hold, "I might have known where she was going. The Blaines' caretaker must be a relation of hers. I saw him at her house that day. She must be going to stay with him. But why under the sun was she so mysterious about it, I wonder? And why doesn't she stay in the basement instead of occupying Miss Amy's dressing-room, and why the screen?"

Still very much puzzled, she walked home. The immediate preparations for the tea party occupied her for the remainder of the afternoon.

CHAPTER XV

A WHITE MITTEN

Days passed, and still no news of little Don. Chuck now made it a habit to wait for Phyllis and walk home with her and Janet.

Each day the greeting was the same.

"Any news?" and always Chuck shook his head and answered, "Not yet."

Friday morning Janet woke up with a sore throat and a headache, and Miss Carter kept her home. Phyllis went to school as usual, and in the afternoon Chuck met her.

"The week's almost up," he said after the usual question had been asked and answered, "and Uncle Don is determined to go on Monday with the money. He's had a letter since the first, you know, telling him to double the sum."

"Will they have Don there at the house waiting for him?" Phyllis inquired.

"No, indeed. There's not a word about that. The detectives say that they will probably try to take the money by force; perhaps knock Uncle Don senseless. They don't want him to go, but they have to admit that they haven't a single clew."

"Oh, Chuck, isn't it hateful not to be able to do a single thing to help?" Phyllis's voice rang with real emotion.

"You bet," Chuck agreed. "I lie awake at night thinking all kinds of things and planning what I'd do if I ever caught those brutes, but that doesn't do much good. I wish Uncle Don would let me go with him on Monday. I'd take a gun along and do a little holding up on my own hook."

"But that would only make things worse; they'd be sure to do something awful to Don then," Phyllis reasoned.

"Suppose so," Chuck was forced to admit. "I don't suppose I'll see you to-morrow, will I?" he added.

"Why not?" Phyllis inquired. "Come over to the house in the afternoon and we can go for a walk."

Chuck looked at her gratefully. "Thanks, guess I will; I'll be over about two." He lifted his cap as they reached the steps of the house and turned to go. "Tell Janet I'm sorry she is sick," he called back, and Phyllis nodded as Annie opened the door.

She found Janet up and dressed, but playing the invalid up in the snuggerly.

"Any news?" she called, as she heard Phyllis's step on the stairs.

"Not yet, and the week's almost up," Phyllis replied sadly.

"Did you walk home with Chuck?"

"Yes, and he said he was very sorry you were sick and he sent you his love."

"Thanks, but what are they going to do?"

Phyllis gave a little shudder.

"Don't use that awful word '*they*,'" she said. "It always means the kidnappers to me, and somehow or other every time I hear it I seem to see bandits with gold ear-rings and red handkerchiefs tied round their heads, and they are always doing something horrible to little Don."

"I know," Janet agreed sympathetically, "only I don't think of *they* as that kind of bandit. I wish I did. It wouldn't be half so hard to find them and have a real old fight, but these creatures that have stolen Don are men and they look just like everybody else."

"Except inside," Phyllis added.

"Of course, but their insides don't help. We can't see anything but their everyday outside looks," Janet reminded her.

Phyllis was thoughtful for a little, then she said slowly, "I'm sure I don't know why I should feel so terribly about it; worse than the rest of you, I mean, but somehow I do. Don was such a darling that day that I met him in the park, and I've sort of loved him ever since, and now to think that he's shut up

somewhere and can't get out, and that perhaps he's being badly treated and starved. Oh, Jan, I just can't bear it, and if I feel like this just imagine his poor father!"

"But surely they—the detectives—will find him,"—Janet tried to console; "and anyhow Monday something is bound to happen."

"Yes, and worrying won't help, and it's unkind to you, poor darling,"—Phyllis smiled with determination. "How is the throat, and the head by this time?"

"Oh, loads better. I feel perfectly well; but it's such fun being an invalid. I told Annie to bring luncheon up here. Auntie Mogs is out and I waited for you."

"Angel, you must be starved to death, but here comes Annie now. I can hear her venerable boots creaking up the stairs."

Annie appeared with a tray, and Phyllis busied herself putting the table where Janet could reach it comfortably.

"Filet of sole and that nice sauce that Lucy knows I love; how nice." She sat down opposite Janet, and for the time being gave herself up to cheering her.

"Sally and Daphne are coming over to-morrow morning. They both sent their love and everybody was so, so sorry you were sick. I had to answer questions all morning. Even old Ducky Lucky said she hoped you'd be better, though I really think she has grave doubts as to whether I was not masquerading as you."

Janet laughed.

"I never thought I could miss school so much," she said, "but it has seemed ages since you left. Auntie Mogs has been an angel; she read to me all morning and only went out because I simply made her."

The afternoon wore on slowly. Phyllis did not go out, but insisted on reading aloud to Janet.

In the middle of the afternoon the room grew stuffy, and she went to open the window. Of chance she looked down on the roof below her and just across the yard. Something white caught her eye.



Something white caught her eye

"Jan, come here a second," she said breathlessly, and Janet hurried to her side.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Look down there," Phyllis pointed. "What do you see?"

Janet looked. "Why, it seems to be a white mitten," she said.

Phyllis faced her squarely, her breath was coming in short little gasps. For a second Janet did not understand, then the bond of understanding that so closely bound them, as twins, together made her see what was going on in Phyllis's mind.

"Don?" she asked quietly.

Phyllis nodded and stared harder at the tiny mitten, and her thoughts raced. For Janet's benefit she voiced them.

"The wire screen, first, then Don talking to the caretaker."

"When?" Janet interrupted.

"The day we went in Taffy's car up to Miss Pringle's. Then I saw him. As we left he went in. Then last Monday, remember, I told you I saw Miss Pringle go in that house?"

"Yes, you described her hat and the funny way she acted."

"And now there's a baby's mitten under the window. Of course it doesn't prove anything but—" Phyllis broke off abruptly and went out of the room. When she returned she had a pair of field glasses with her and she looked at the roof through them.

"There's a blue band on the edge of it," she said, handing the glasses to Janet. "Look, and don't leave the window until I get back," she directed.

She hurried to the telephone and got the Vincents' house on the wire and asked to speak to Chuck. His voice answered her after a little wait.

"Chuck, this is Phyllis Page speaking," she said. "I don't want to give you any false hopes, but something queer has happened. I've found a little white mitten, and I think it belongs to Don. No, don't ask questions. I haven't time to answer them. Just find out from Don's nurse what his mittens were like and then come straight over here, and be sure not to say anything to your mother or your uncle, for I may be all wrong."

She hung up the receiver before Chuck could reply and hurried back to the snugery. Janet was still looking out of the window as though she feared the mitten might fly away if she took her eyes from it.

They waited until the door bell announced Chuck's arrival. Phyllis flew down the stairs to meet him.

"Here," he said, by way of greeting and he handed her a white mitten.

Phyllis took it eagerly; it had a blue border, and it was handmade after a pattern of long ago.

"Nannie always makes them," Chuck explained. "Where's the one you found?"

"Come up here and I'll show you."

Janet gave the glasses to Chuck as soon as he entered the snugery and Phyllis pointed to the roof below and using as few words as she possibly could she explained about the caretaker and Miss Pringle.

"I've got to get that mitten," Chuck announced. "Is there a window below this to your roof?"

"Yes, from the butler's pantry," Phyllis told him. "You could crawl along the fence to that roof easily. It's only a little way."

"Then I'll do it now," Chuck decided.

"Oh, but you mustn't," Phyllis protested. "If any one saw you from one of the windows they'd know what you were doing and then all sorts of awful things might happen."

Chuck reluctantly agreed, and they all thought hard for the next few minutes.

"I think I have it," Phyllis said at last. "There are only two people in the house that we know of, the caretaker and Miss Pringle. Now if some one rang the bell when the caretaker was out, Miss Pringle would have to come to the door. That would leave the coast clear for you."

"Go on," Chuck prompted.

"There's nothing else," Phyllis answered. "We will just have to wait until the caretaker goes out."

Chuck groaned at the thought of time wasted.

"When's that likely to be?" he demanded.

"About sunset. He takes care of some of the furnaces in the neighborhood, so he'll be gone for quite

a while," Phyllis told him.

"I'll go and watch at the corner," Chuck decided.

"What are you going to do if you find the mitten is Don's?" the practical Janet asked, and Phyllis and Chuck looked at each other.

"Notify the police," Chuck said at last, but Janet shook her head.

"It might be too late. Miss Pringle's sure to be suspicious if Phyllis rings the bell and then has nothing to say, and she may take Don away." She spoke as though the mitten had already been identified.

"I'll tell you," said Phyllis. "Chuck, you watch at the corner, and when you see the caretaker go you come back and go over the roof. I'll ring the bell then and I'll talk my head off to Miss Pringle. If the mitten is Don's, you climb up to the window. We've a ladder in the cellar."

"And I can take it across the yard and help you haul it up," Janet announced. "It's not a bit heavy."

"Go on," Chuck said again.

"You go into the room and get Don and—" Phyllis paused; the window seemed at a dizzy height now that she thought of it as a descent for Don.

"I'll take him downstairs and straight out the front door," Chuck exclaimed. "I'd like to see a dozen Miss Pringles stop me."

Phyllis looked at him and decided that it would indeed take more than the weak flutterings of the old costume-maker to stop him.

He hurried down the stairs, and they heard the door slam behind him.

CHAPTER XVI

DON!

"We'd better get the ladder," Janet suggested.

They went down into the cellar and found it close by the door. It was only a matter of minutes before they had it waiting in readiness in the yard. Luckily Annie and Lucy were too busy preparing supper to notice them.

They were back in the house just in time to meet Chuck.

"He's gone," he announced, "and there was another man with him, and I heard him say he was due down town by five o'clock."

"Are you sure he was the caretaker?" Phyllis inquired, and Chuck gave a satisfactory description.

"Then I'm off," she said as she hurried into her coat. "Give me time to get there before you start."

She hurried to the house on the next street and rang the bell violently, and waited; then she rang it again, three short rings.

"Perhaps I can make her think it's a telegram," she thought, and her scheme was rewarded, for after a little wait she heard some one scuffling downstairs. The door creaked as the bolt was drawn back, and then it opened a crack.

"What do you want?" Miss Pringle's voice quavered as she asked. Phyllis put her foot in the crack as she had seen villains do in the movies.

"Why, I just came around to see you for a minute, Miss Pringle," she said sweetly. "I saw you come in here the other day, so I knew where to find you and so to-day when the girls were wondering what had become of you I told them I knew and they asked me if I would come and see you and ask you if you would make the costumes for our Christmas play. It's to be a queer sort of play, and we want very original costumes, and, of course, you are the only person in the world that can advise us." Poor Phyllis was forced to pause for breath, but Miss Pringle had only time to whisper a flurried, "Oh, no young lady," before she was off again.

"The play is all about India and the heroine—Daphne Hillis is to take the part—is a little slave, but of course she turns out to be the queen in the end, and Madge Cannon is to be the prince, and the important parts will be filled by the seniors and juniors. Just a few of our class are to be in it, but I'm

one of them and so is my twin. We look so alike that we are to be pages, you know, and,—” a sound on the stairs made her heart stand still but she went bravely on—”I never told you what a lark we had at our masquerade, did I? It was really a perfect circus, everybody mixed us up,—Miss Pringle attempted to say something, and Phyllis interpreted it her own way.

”But of course you're more interested in the play, as you say. Well there have to be ever so many costumes. Daphne alone has three, one when she is the slave and another for the queen, and the third when the king condemns her to be beheaded. It's so sad, you know. He says 'Off with her head' and then Daphne lays her beautiful head on the block and the executioner lifts his terrible sword and—” she stopped.

Daphne's fair head was saved by the timely arrival of Chuck, carrying the sleeping Don.

Miss Pringle gave a scream of terror and tried to shut the door, but Phyllis's foot made that impossible.

”Out of my way,” Chuck commanded in a voice so strong that, coming as it did on top of Phyllis's description of swords and executioners, poor Miss Pringle lost all the little presence of mind she had. She fell back limply, and Chuck gained the street.

Phyllis took her foot out of the door and closed it gently on the limp figure.

”Give him to me,” she begged, as she caught up with Chuck.

”He's too heavy, but look at him all you want to; it's really Don, Phyllis, and you found him.” Tears were running down Chuck's face, but he didn't even know it.

Phyllis took one of the little hands that hung limply across his shoulder and kissed it gently.

At the corner they found Janet, and a big burly policeman who was just hanging up the receiver of a police 'phone attached to the telegraph pole.

”So you've found the little man, glory be!” he exclaimed. ”It will be a pill for the force to swallow, but they deserve it! To think I have passed that house every day and never suspected. Well, I'll be after making up for lost time now by watching it like a cat until his nibs comes home and then off he'll go!”

”And the woman?” Phyllis inquired.

”Sure, she'll go with him to keep him company,—the policeman grinned at what he really considered fine wit, tightened his belt importantly and grasping his night stick more firmly he walked down the street and stopped in a business like way before Miss Pringle's door.

The girls escorted Chuck back to the house. Auntie Mogs had returned during their absence and met them at the door.

”Children, where have you been? I have been so worried—” She stopped abruptly, as her eye fell on Chuck and his precious armful.

”Not little Don?” she asked excitedly.

”Yes, Auntie Mogs, we've found him.” Phyllis's explanation tumbled out in hysterical phrases, the other two adding their own version, and in the midst of it Don woke up.

”I want to go home,” he said sleepily and then, seeing Chuck, he opened his blue eyes wide in wonder.

”Give him to me,” commanded Auntie Mogg, and she hugged him tight in her arms as she comforted and petted him.

Chuck, almost too excited for speech, called up his mother on the 'phone.

”Come straight over to Miss Carter's and bring Uncle Don with you,” he said excitedly. ”We have news for you, wonderful news.”

He left the 'phone, grinning.

”I guess Mother had her hat on before she hung up the receiver,—he laughed. ”She didn't even wait to say good-by.”

”No wonder,” Auntie Mogs said, her lips brushing Don's gold hair.

”I want my daddy,” Don announced. ”I want to tell him lots of fings about that bad mans and that silly old woman who said she was my nurse. I told her she was not any such fing 'cause Nannie's my nurse, isn't she?”

”Of course she is, darling,” Miss Carter assured him.

Don looked about him and smiled suddenly at Phyllis.

"You're my girl," he said, dimpling, "and that's your twin."

Phyllis was on her knees beside him in a minute, and he rumbled her hair contentedly until Annie ushered in Mrs. Vincent and Mr. Keith, all out of breath.

"Chuck, what is it?" Mrs. Vincent asked eagerly.

For answer Miss Carter put Don into her arms.

The next few minutes were taken up by repeated explanations, while Don, held tight by his father's big hand, helped out by many illuminating bits of information about "ve bad mans and the silly woman."

"And I have you to thank, my dear." Mr. Keith held out his hand to Janet as they rose to go.

Chuck laughed, "Wrong guess, Uncle. This is the one," and he pointed to Phyllis.

Mr. Keith laughed, and took Phyllis's hand and gave it a mighty squeeze.

"Some day I will thank you for what you have done for me," he said huskily, "all of you. You have made me the happiest man in the world."

Mrs. Vincent kissed both the girls, and there was a glint of tears in her soft gray eyes as she shook hands with Miss Carter.

Chuck was the only one who was quite master of himself. He nodded, as befitted a hero, to them all, until he came to Phyllis.

"S'long," he said, taking her hand. "I'll see you to-morrow at two."

"So will I," Don's baby voice called from the depth of his father's shoulder; "and every day after that as long as I ever live," he added stoutly.

CHAPTER XVII

CHRISTMAS VACATION

After Don's discovery, things settled down into their normal course, and the days followed one another in a monotonous row. Weeks passed, and with the first really cold snap came the Christmas holidays.

Miss Carter and the two girls started on a Friday afternoon for Old Chester. There was only one cloud on their happy day and that had been the last good-bys to Sally, who, with Daphne, had come down to the station to see them off.

"I simply refuse to think of school without her," Phyllis said, as the train pulled out of the tunnel and roared through the northern end of the city.

"Not only school," sighed Janet, "but afternoons and Sundays. No more skating parties at the rink, no more walks in the park, and no more Saturday evenings at the movies, with Sally to make us laugh at the wrong places."

"Oh, come, children, it's not as bad as that," Miss Carter protested. "Sally will be home for the Easter holidays, and June isn't so very far away."

"But we are going to Tom's in June," Phyllis reminded her.

"And when we come back Sally will be going back to that hateful old school again," Janet added tragically.

"Oh, dear, dear, dear," laughed Auntie Mogs; "it's a very black world, isn't it? I wonder, if I told you a secret, if you would cheer up and see the sun shining once more?"

"What is it?"—the girls leaned forward eagerly; they had caught the note of mystery in their aunt's voice.

"Well," said Auntie Mogs very solemnly, "it's only the beginning of a secret, so you mustn't take it too seriously; but, just for fun, suppose that next year Sally didn't go back to school alone; suppose the Page twins went with her."

"Auntie Mogs!" Phyllis and Janet exclaimed so loudly that several people in the parlor car turned to look at them, and one old gentleman winked above his open paper.

"I only said suppose," Auntie Mogs reminded them, and she picked up her paper with the most casual air in the world and began to read.

It is not difficult to imagine what the topic of conversation was during the rest of the trip. In fact, they were still talking about it as they drew in to the station.

"I hope I see somebody I know!" Janet exclaimed, as they followed the porter with their bags; "but I don't suppose I will. It's exciting, just the same; I feel as if I were dreaming," and she sighed happily.

Dreaming or not, it is certain that she was totally unprepared for the sight that awaited her on the little platform. All Old Chester seemed to be waiting to welcome her, and she stood looking at them in a daze.

The Blake girls and their mother were almost under her feet as she stepped from the train, and Martha was just behind them. Harry Waters's grin of welcome seemed a thing apart from his freckled face as he took the bags away from the porter, his mother directing him fussily the while. And off, a little to one side, stood Mrs. Todd, tall and mannish as ever, but smiling her heartfelt welcome.

There was a hub-bub of greetings that lasted for several minutes, then Mrs. Todd took command of affairs in her usual masterly way.

"Come along, Moggie, and call those children or we'll never get home. My carriage is waiting just around the corner; the horses don't like the train, sensible beasts, so Peter had to hold them. I suppose he's died of impatience by now though," she added, smiling.

"Go with Mrs. Todd, dearie," Martha directed as she had always done. "I am going home with Tim and the trunks, and I'll be there before you."

"All right," Janet agreed, smiling. It did seem good to hear her old nurse's orders again. "Come on, Phyl," she called.

Phyllis nodded good-by to the Blake girls and joined her.

"If Sally were here she would call on Aunt Jane's poll parrot to witness the mob,"—she laughed. "Aren't you proud, Jan?"

"Not a bit. Why should I be? They came to welcome you just as much as they did me."

They joined their aunt and Mrs. Todd and walked to the back of the station, where Harry, with Peter's aid, was stowing away the bags.

Janet could hardly believe her eyes, for it was a changed Peter indeed. Gone were the faded blue overalls and the torn straw hat; a well-fitting overcoat and a cap took their place, but they did not succeed in hiding the mop of hair or the merry blue eyes.

"Hello, fairy princess," he greeted and then stopped, confused, as both girls smiled up at him.

"Well, which are you?" he demanded, and Janet held her breath. Would he, or wouldn't he know her?

A clear, jolly laugh reassured her.

"You had me guessing for a minute, but now I know." He took Janet's hand and wrung it. "It's great to see you again," he said, still smiling.

Janet introduced Phyllis and Miss Carter, and they all got into the carriage.

"Come and see us to-morrow, Harry," Janet called, as they drove off.

"Morning, you betcha," Harry answered, waving his hat.

"Child, don't make too many plans," Mrs. Todd warned. "Peter and I have filled up as much of your time as we dared."

"And we dared an awful lot," Peter added, laughing. "Fact is, I don't think we left you more than a few minutes a day."

"Oh, tell us what we have to do?" Janet begged.

"One thing at a time," Peter replied gravely. "In case you forget, to-morrow, if your Royal Highness so pleases, you are to take lunch with us and inspect your domain. You will find many changes, but I think you will approve of them all."

"Not the Enchanted Kingdom?" Janet protested.

"No, that is almost exactly as you left it," Peter assured her.

"Oh, Jan, I can see the house," Phyllis called, as they left the tiny village behind them, and Janet's heart beat so fast as she recognized the two big chimneys that looked, in the twilight, as though they

were swinging the widow's walk between them, that she thought she would surely suffocate.

Peter drew up to the old carriage block with a flourish, and they all jumped out. Martha was standing in the doorway to welcome them again. They said good night to Mrs. Todd and Peter, and promised to be ready when the carriage called for them the next day.

Janet walked up the garden path holding tight to Phyllis's hand, as though she feared to wake up. Everything in the house was exactly as she had left it. The old grandfather clock ticked out its steady song, and the polished table reflected the shining candlesticks as of old.

Janet looked at her grandmother's door half fearfully.

"Go upstairs and take off your wraps," Martha was saying, "and then come down. Your grandmother wants to see you before dinner."

Janet still held Phyllis's hand, as a few minutes later she knocked at that closed door.

Mrs. Page propped herself up on her elbow and surveyed her two granddaughters; her small bright eyes seemed more restless than ever. They roved all over the room.

"Well, what have you got to say?" she demanded in the old querulous tone.

"How are you, Grandmother?" Janet spoke first, and she laid her hand timidly on the withered one that lay on the white counterpane.

"Hello, Grandmother; it's awfully nice to see you again. How are you?" Phyllis, undaunted as always, leaned and kissed the withered cheek.

Mrs. Page laughed, a hard cackling laugh.

"You're as alike as two peas," she said, "but there's a mighty difference. Janet, you haven't changed much," she added.

"Oh, but I have," Janet insisted, forgetting her self-consciousness for the moment.

"Well, you don't show it," her grandmother snapped, and before Janet could stop she heard herself saying, "Yes, Grandmother," in the patient, respectful voice she had always used.

"How do you like us dressed alike?" Phyllis inquired cheerfully.

"Your hair's mussy," Mrs. Page replied shortly. "Why don't you braid it?"

"Oh, but it's so much more becoming this way," laughed Phyllis.

"Fiddlesticks!" The word seemed to terminate the interview, for after it was uttered Mrs. Page turned over, her face to the wall.

"Good night, Grandmother," Janet said softly, but Phyllis lingered long enough to ask,

"Are you quite comfy, dear? Sha'n't I push this pillow so?" she won a grudging "good night" for her pains.

After supper the girls went up to the widow's walk. It was a cold, clear night, myriad stars winked down at them from the ice-blue sky, below them the water lapped the beach incessantly, and the foam sparkled in the starshine.

The girls watched it in silence for a minute, and then Phyllis said,

"Tell me something, Jan; does New York seem like a dream now that you're back or does Old Chester?"

"Old Chester does," Janet replied after a little; "it all seems as though my life here was a million years ago, instead of three short months. I wonder why?"

"Because you're happier in New York, my angel child," Phyllis declared happily. "And now let's go down again. I love your widow's walk, but I am frozen to death."

They went down together and found Auntie Mogs sitting before the fire in the living-room, roasting chestnuts, while Martha stood in the doorway and offered suggestions and gossip.

It was late before they went to bed, but when Janet finally fell asleep she was still holding Phyllis's hand in her firm grasp.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

"If the ice didn't choke up the inlet I would row you over to your kingdom, Princess," Peter said the next morning, as Janet took her place beside him in the carriage. "It would seem ever so much more like old times, wouldn't it?"

Janet nodded and laughed.

"Indeed it would. I wonder where my old row-boat is. I left it on the beach."

"And I found it there, very much the worse for wear, and in sad need of a home," Peter continued for her. "So I towed it over to our landing, and now it is high and dry on the rafters in the barn, along with my canoe."

"Oh, Peter, do you remember the day you taught me to paddle?" Janet asked, laughing.

"I certainly do. I wasn't perfectly sure that we would ever get home again; that storm came up so suddenly."

"But we did, just in time to be arrested." They both laughed so hard at the memory of that never-to-be-forgotten day that Phyllis, in the back seat with Auntie Mogs, called,

"What are you two roaring over?"

"Oh, something funny that happened last summer," Janet replied.

"Haven't you ever told your sister about it?" Peter inquired, and Janet shook her head.

"Then I'll tell you, Phyllis," Peter promised; "but I'll wait until we are on the scene of action."

"There are a lot of things I want to ask you,"—Phyllis laughed, "and a lot of places I want to see. Jan's no good at telling stories, she leaves out all the most interesting part."

"Well, you shall have a true and minute description from me, never fear," Peter told her.

"Let me drive," Janet begged a minute later, and Peter changed places with her, and for the rest of the drive he talked to Phyllis and Auntie Mogs, for Janet was too taken up with the spirited team to have any time for conversation.

The Enchanted Kingdom presented a strangely orderly view. The road was trim and the gravel raked smoothly. The barns and outhouses were painted white, and they looked surprisingly clean against the gray sky. The house itself had lost all its rakish and forlorn look, though it retained, in spite of paint, its inviting air of mystery.

Gone were the dilapidated boards that had barred the windows, and white curtains fluttered in their stead. Green box-trees guarded each side of the white door, whose brass knocker shone in proof of the care lavished upon it.

"Well, what does the Princess think about it?" Peter demanded, delighted at Janet's look of surprise.

"I'd never have recognized it," she confessed. "What a lot you have done to it!"

"Come and see the inside. That's the best of all," Peter told her.

Mrs. Todd welcomed them from the doorway, and the tour of inspection began at once, for Janet would not hear of taking off her hat and coat until she had seen everything.

"All right; we'll leave the kingdom till the last," Peter said, as he followed Mrs. Todd from room to room.

Beautiful old furniture stood where Janet remembered the sheeted ghosts that had frightened her so many times. Gay chintz curtains vied with the copper and brass to liven the rooms that had always been shrouded in darkness. Upstairs the bedrooms were a happy combination of rag rugs and wonderful big beds, some of them so high that steps were necessary.

Peter had a den adjoining his room, and it was filled with his pet books and pictures. He exhibited it with pride, and Janet saw him slip his arm around Mrs. Todd and give her a hug when he thought no one was looking.

At last only the Enchanted Kingdom remained, and when Janet entered it she found herself alone. Perhaps it was just as well—the sight of the old rows of books, the table and the window-seat where she had spent so many happy hours sent tears to her eyes, and she had to blink hard to keep them from falling.

She sat on the floor, scorning the comfy chairs, and pulled out book after book; each one was in its

same place, and she patted them all as though they were alive.

After a long time Peter came in to find her. Mrs. Todd had sent him to tell her that luncheon was ready, but when he found her sitting on the floor, he forgot his message and dropped down beside her.

They were both very late for luncheon.

So many things filled the days that followed that a whole volume would be required to chronicle them. Janet and Phyllis liked the day before Christmas best of all.

Things began early in the morning.

"Get up, lazy bones!" Janet shook Phyllis, deaf to her protests. "You can't lie in bed this morning," she admonished.

Phyllis sat up and opened two sleepy eyes and yawned, then, memory asserting itself, she jumped out of bed with one spring.

"Of course I can't," she cried. "We have to go and get the Christmas tree. I was forgetting."

"Look out of the window," Janet directed.

Phyllis looked. The ground was covered with snow, and the world, as far as she could see anyway, was decked in its Yuletide white.

They hurried with their dressing and, much to Martha's concern, with their breakfasts as well.

"Here they come!" Phyllis cried, "and, oh, Jan, they are in a sleigh. I can hear the bells."

"Oh, I hoped the snow would be deep enough!" Janet exclaimed; "and it must be. Three cheers for old Jack Frost!"

They answered Peter's whistle by appearing at the door, and he and Jack Belding jumped down from the sleigh to greet them. Jack Belding was a school friend of Peter's. He had come to Old Chester several days before. He was a tall, lanky youth with nondescript hair and eyes, but a sense of humor that would have assured him a welcome in any company.

Phyllis and Janet had liked him at once, much to Peter's relief and his own secret satisfaction. He always addressed them as, "You, Janet, or you, Phyllis," and then shut his eyes until the right one came, for he could not tell the one from the other.

"Was there ever such a day?" Phyllis demanded as she jumped on to the big sleigh with Peter's help.

"Never in all this world," he replied seriously.

They started off at a smart gait, stopping at the rectory for Alice and Mildred Blake and at the Waters' for Harry. Then away they went along an old back road that wound up into the hills.

When they stopped they were all glad to get out and stretch. The girls walked up and down to get warm, and the boys made short work of chopping down a tall bushy Christmas tree.

The ride back was exciting, for they had to hold the slippery tree on the sleigh and stay on themselves. As Janet was driving at top speed this was not easy, but they reached the little church at last and carried the tree triumphantly into the Sunday-school room.

Then they flocked into the rectory for luncheon. Janet and Peter dropped behind.

"What does it make you think of?" Peter asked, laughing.

"Don't," Janet pleaded; "it's still too awful to remember. If I thought to-night was going to be anything like *that* night I would go straight home and go to bed."

"Don't you worry. It won't, Princess," Peter replied protectingly.

After luncheon the fun began. They all set to and trimmed the tree, Phyllis, by common consent, was master of ceremonies, and they all hurried to do her bidding.

"Jack, if you eat *all* the popcorn strings I don't see what we shall have left for the tree," she complained once.

"Sorry," Jack apologized, "but that's one failing I have; in fact, I might add that it is the only one, without fear of boasting. Put me near a string of popcorn and I just naturally find myself eating it, and the funny thing is I don't like it unless it is strung." He spoke with such gravity that the rest shouted with laughter.

"Very well," said Phyllis, "we will put you beyond temptation's way. Go out and bring me back a whole lot of boughs. I want them for the chancel."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"Very well, but if I am frozen I hope you have the grace to be ashamed of your heartlessness."

"Oh, I promise I'll be terribly ashamed," Phyllis called after him, as he walked dejectedly from the room.

When the tree was finished, and the church had been decked with boughs and holly, they all went home for a well-merited rest. The crown-event of the day was still before them.

A party at the Enchanted Kingdom to which all the countryside had been bidden.

And it was a party indeed!

Nothing could have been so totally different from Muriel's masquerade, yet it rivaled it in fun. Phyllis and Janet wore dresses exactly alike, and had the joy of playing their old tricks on a new company.

They danced and played games until twelve o'clock, and then Peter and Jack took them home in the sleigh.

On Christmas Day they went again to Mrs. Todd's and found all their gifts piled up under their little tree. Auntie Mogs had sent over even the New York presents and the ones from Tom.

One little box for Phyllis was the greatest surprise of all. It contained a very beautiful bracelet set with a single large sapphire, and tied to it was a card which read—

"Merry Christmas to my girl, from Don"

"The darling," Phyllis said happily as she clasped it over her arm; "what a wonderful gift!"

"Indeed it is, my dear," Auntie Mogs agreed, "but"—she added with a smile, "I think you deserve it."

Jack looked at it gleefully. "Ha, ha!" he exclaimed, "now I can tell them apart!"

He spoke with pride, but his fall was not far off, for before many minutes had passed Phyllis had slipped the bracelet to Janet, and his confusion was worse than ever.

CHAPTER XIX

PHYLLIS'S "MATH" PAPER

Examination week had come. Every face in the big study hall gave ample proof to the fact. Bowed heads and narrowed eyes pored over open text-books, and a strained and unnatural silence hung over the room.

Even in the ten-minute recess only whispers could be heard, and most of the heads kept on over their books.

"Sally's Aunt Jane's poll parrot," Phyllis whispered. "I haven't a chance in a thousand of passing math. I wouldn't mind so much if I didn't know that Ducky Lucky will be delighted. How do you feel, Jan?"

"Scared to death," Janet admitted. "My hands are frozen, and my tongue is sticking to the roof of my mouth."

"Oh, I wish you'd keep still," Muriel fretted. "I'm trying to study."

"What's the use?" Rosamond asked. "You can't learn things at the last minute, so why try?"

Muriel put her fingers in her ears and bowed again over her book.

The bell rang, and every girl gave a deep sigh. It was partly relief and partly dread.

Miss Baxter entered the room, her arms full of papers.

"She's having the time of her life," Phyllis said crossly. "I bet she flunks every one of us."

The papers were distributed to the various classes, and Miss Baxter took her place on the platform. A heavy silence descended upon the room, only broken by the scratching of many pen points. Miss Baxter insisted in having her papers written in ink and written neatly; the combination was not always easy to achieve.

Phyllis, who had moved her seat half way across the room, surveyed the questions before her in dismay. There did not appear to be one out of the ten that she could do. She buried her head in her hands and waited for an inspiration. None came, and she looked over at Janet.

"She looks as though she positively liked it," she said to herself. "Well, I suppose I might as well do something."

She settled to work and scratched away for two long hours. She knew she was making mistakes, but she went ahead, determined to have a filled and neatly written paper if nothing else.

She had finished long before Janet, but she waited until she saw her folding her paper before she signed her name to her own. They followed each other to the desk, Miss Baxter not at all sure which was which.

"Well?" Phyllis demanded as they met in the hall.

"Well, what?" Janet inquired.

"Did you flunk?"

"I don't believe so; it was easy."

"Easy!"

"I thought so, anyway. I answered them all, and they seemed to work out right."

"Hum."

"What's the trouble?"

"Oh, nothing, only I flunked."

"How do you know?"

"Because I just wrote numbers."

"Oh, well, cheer up. Maybe they were the right numbers." Janet was determined to be cheerful. She had found the examination much easier than she had expected and she felt reasonably sure that she had passed.

"I don't much care; we've the rest of the day to ourselves anyway; let's go home." Phyllis made the suggestion light heartedly enough, for lessons never worried her for very long and mathematics least of all.

They walked home through the park and met Don. He was chasing brownies as usual, and poor Nannie was finding it difficult to keep up with him. She never let him out of her sight for even an instant, and every man that passed was a possible kidnapper in her old eyes.

Don greeted the girls with joy.

"I were chasing a brownie!" he exclaimed, "but he got away from me."

He took Phyllis by the hand and led her towards the lake. Janet sat down on the bench beside his nurse.

"Why does Don always say were, instead of was?" she inquired.

"Deed, miss, that's his father's fault," Nannie replied. "One day Master Don said 'they was going' and his father picked him up on his lap and he said to him, said he, 'Don, never say was, say were.' The poor lamb was so startled that he never forgot, and I can't make him change for the life of me."

"Don't try," Janet laughed; "it's awfully cunning to hear him say were! I hope he never changes."

Phyllis came back, a brown leaf in her hand, and Don tugging at her skirts.

"Here we are, Nannie, all safe and sound, and we caught the brownie." She gave the leaf to Don, and she and Janet went on their way.

"Let's stop and see Akbar," Phyllis suggested.

"I knew you'd say that," Janet laughed. "What makes you so fond of that animal."

"Oh, I don't know; he always makes me want to do something with my hands."

"Paint?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Mold, perhaps?" Janet asked the question idly, but Phyllis spun around and stopped as she heard it.

"That's it!" she cried excitedly. "I want to mold him. I never realized it until this minute. Come on, let's hurry home. There's some putty in the cellar and I'm going to try."

Janet, used to her twin's sudden whims, followed in amused silence.

When they reached home they found a letter from Sally awaiting them.

"Oh, read it quick!" Phyllis exclaimed. "No, wait a minute. Let's go up to the snugery and get comfy." She went off to find some putty and joined Janet a few minutes later.

"Now read," she said, as she cuddled down into the corner of the couch.

Janet opened the letter and began,

"Dearest of Twins (she read):

"I am in the infirmary, pretending to have a cold but don't waste time worrying about me for it's all a fake to get a chance to breathe, which is something that I find you are not supposed to do at Hilltop (isn't that a precious name for a school? I like it better every time I think of it), except when you sleep.

"I know you both think me a heartless wretch for not having written oftener, but honestly I haven't time. It is go, go, go, from morning till night. I used to think we kept pretty busy but we were tortoises compared to the rate here. Up every morning at seven, lessons begin at nine, lunch is at twelve-thirty; more lessons until two, and then the rest of the day is yours. No study hours unless you are reported by some teacher for not being prepared, then the wrath of the gods descends upon your head and you are packed off to Assembly Hall and made to work for two hours a day for a whole week. You may better believe that we study to keep our blessed privilege.

"The girls have a joke on me, and they tease all the time. I said Aunt Jane's poll parrot just once. That was enough! They pretend now that there is such a bird and that I keep him hidden in my room. They ask after his health morning, noon and night, and ask me quite seriously to consult him. Even the teachers do it. I nearly died in history class when Miss Jenks, a love and nothing but a girl, just out of college, asked me the date of the Battle of Hastings, I couldn't remember and she looked at me so impishly and said, 'Better ask Aunt Jane's poll parrot.' Imagine Ducky Lucky doing such a thing.

"I haven't told you one thing that I wanted to and this letter is all one grand jumble, but I'll try to do better next time.

"You simply must come next year; must, must, must. I've written Mother to persuade your aunt, and she has promised to try.

"Write soon and forgive blots. One of the girls is reading over my shoulder and she says to blame the blots on Aunt Jane's poll parrot, and to be sure and come next year.

"Oceans of love,

"SALLY."

Janet folded up the letter and laughed softly.

"Sounds wonderful, doesn't it?"

Phyllis stop trying to produce Akbar's image in putty long enough to reply.

"I should say it does. No study hours! What bliss! Auntie Mogs simply has to let us go!" she exclaimed. "And what is better still, no Ducky Lucky! I wish I knew if our papers were corrected or not."

She would have been more than surprised had she known what was going on at that very moment.

Miss Baxter was busy correcting papers. She finished Janet's and marked it with a big red B; then the fates stepped in. Miss Baxter was called to the telephone. When she returned to her desk the paper next for correction happened to be Phyllis's. Miss Baxter saw the name and frowned; she always frowned when she thought of the twins.

"Funny," she said to herself. "I thought I corrected this paper. So I did and I decided to give it a B. The telephone confused me."

With her usual precision she marked a B on the right-hand corner of the paper and pushed it from her.

Phyllis gazed at it the next morning in joyful surprise. Had she been any one but Phyllis she would have at least glanced at her mistakes, but being Phyllis, she accepted her good luck with joy and threw the paper into the waste-paper basket. Not seeing Miss Baxter's mistake, she could not draw her attention to it.

So the Page twins tricked Miss Baxter once again, and the joke was no less amusing because of their ignorance.

CHAPTER XX

THE FAREWELL PARTY

Spring made an early appearance in New York and decked itself more charmingly than ever. The trees showed tiny green buds, and the grass freshened under the warm showers, almost as you looked.

Jonquils and crocuses appeared to welcome the fat robins that returned to their nests, and all Nature hummed and fluttered in its eager preparations.

Janet and Phyllis were busy planning a farewell party, as they sat in the sunshine in the park one Sunday morning.

"If we could only think of something different to do," Phyllis wailed. "I am so tired of dances and skating parties and afternoon teas. We've been going to them all winter."

"I know," Janet agreed, "but what else is there to do?"

"Nothing, I suppose," Phyllis replied. "So which shall it be?"

"I don't know,"—Janet refused to decide. "Let's ask Auntie Mogs."

"No, let's make up our own minds," Phyllis insisted. "If we were only at Old Chester we could have a picnic."

"But there'd be no one to go to it but Harry Waters and the Blakes," Janet reminded her.

"That's right, I forgot Peter and Jack are at school; but anyhow a picnic would be fun."

"Where could you have one around here?" Janet demanded, practical as ever.

Phyllis looked at her disapprovingly.

"Jan, you're a wet blanket!" she exclaimed.

"I'm not. I'm only trying to be sensible."

"Well, stop; it's too gorgeous a day to be anything but happy, so don't let's bother about that stupid party any more."

"What party was ever stupid, may I ask?" a voice inquired from above them, and they looked up to see Mr. Keith.

They made room for him on the bench, and he sat down between them.

"Tell me about the stupid party," he invited.

"It isn't one really," Janet explained; "it's just going to be."

"We're going to give it," Phyllis continued, "and it's going to be stupid because we can't think of anything to do that hasn't been done a million times before."

Mr. Keith's eyes twinkled, but he answered very gravely:

"I see."

"A picnic would be wonderful this weather, but there's no place to have a picnic in the city," Phyllis went on dejectedly.

"Quite so," Mr. Keith agreed; "let's all think for two minutes and then see who has an idea."

They thought, and at the end of the two minutes he said,

"Any ideas?"

"Not a one."

"Worse than ever."

Mr. Keith smiled and stood up.

"Then I have a suggestion to make," he said. "When is this party to be?"

"A week from yesterday," Phyllis told him.

"Then don't make any plans until you hear from me. I will think hard all day, and to-morrow sometime I will call you up, and now I must go and find Don. I promised to watch him sail his boat." He lifted his silk hat and walked away, humming a little tune.

"I like him, ever so much," Janet said as she watched him.

"I adore him!" Phyllis exclaimed. "He's a perfect darling, but then he's Don's father, so he'd have to be."

The promised 'phone message did not come until Monday evening after dinner. The girls made up their minds that he had forgotten all about them, and had started new plans.

Phyllis answered the 'phone.

"Am I speaking to the Page twins!" a voice asked.

"Part of them," Phyllis laughed.

"Well, I have a message for them both. They are to be ready to go on a picnic Saturday morning at ten o'clock."

"Oh, but—" gasped Phyllis.

"And in the meantime they are not to worry about their guests. They have all been invited and they have all accepted," the voice went on, "and they are not to worry about food either, for the luncheon has all been attended to." The voice stopped.

"Is that you, Mr. Keith?" Phyllis demanded, but a laughing "good night" was her only answer.

She flew back to the snuggery to tell Janet the news, and they both went down to the library to tell Auntie Mogs. She did not look as surprised as she might have been expected to, but they were too excited to notice that.

"What do you suppose he means?" Phyllis demanded. "Where can we be going?"

"Auntie Mogs, do say something," Janet begged.

"Wait and see,"—Miss Carter laughed, and they had to be content with that.

Saturday dawned clear and warm; the sun beamed and spread his rays to the farthest corner of the sky. It looked as though some one had ordered a day for a picnic, and Dame Nature had done her best to satisfy them.

At ten o'clock the girls heard loud tootings, and Janet, who was putting on her hat, hurried to the window.

"Oh, Phyl, do look; three automobiles full of every girl and boy you ever knew."

They rushed downstairs, and Mr. Keith met them at the door.

"All ready?" he inquired. "Come along, Miss Carter; we will lead the way."

The girls were too excited to answer. They followed their aunt to the waiting cars, where a babble of greetings met them. Mr. Keith helped Miss Carter into the first one, and the girls into the second.

"Go ahead," he called to the chauffeurs, and jumped in after them.

Phyllis could see that Mrs. Vincent was in the last car. She smiled and waved to her.

Daphne and Chuck and Jerry and Howard were in their car, and they squeezed up to make room for Janet and Phyllis. Mr. Keith sat in the front beside the driver.

A buzz of questions and speculations rose from every car, but no one seemed to have the least idea where they were going.

They picked their way carefully through the city streets, but once in the country they flew along. Towns whizzed by, and at last they slowed up for Poughkeepsie, crossed the river on the ferry, and

snorted up the hill on the other side.

As they reached the top of a hill and began the descent everybody said "Ooooooh," for beneath them and on every side was a veritable fairyland of apple blossoms.

They stopped at an old farmhouse, and all jumped out to find the picnic spread out for them under the apple trees. Chicken, salads, tarts and every kind of fruit covered the white cloth, and the air had whipped their appetites into being. They needed no second invitation but threw themselves on to the ground and did justice to the tempting repast.

After luncheon they wandered about under the trees until it was time to go home.

As each guest passed Mrs. Vincent before they got into the motors, she gave them each a box. They opened them in surprise, that turned quickly to exclamations of delight as they gazed at the contents.

Tiny gold butterflies and enameled wings for the girls and stick pins with bumble bees in black and gold for the boys. On the back of each pin was the date and Janet's and Phyllis's initials.

The girls were so excited watching their guests' delight that they forgot to open their own boxes until Daphne reminded them of them.

"I know yours will be different," she said.

They opened them to find butterflies, like the rest, but twice as large. On the back was inscribed, "In memory of the stupid party."

"Oh, Mr. Keith, how are we ever going to thank you!" Janet exclaimed.

"It has been the most beautiful stupid party that ever was," Phyllis added. "Oh, please, please, believe that we are truly grateful."

"Nonsense," laughed Mr. Keith. "You forget I am still heavily in your debt, and to-day has only added to that indebtedness, for I can honestly say I never enjoyed a picnic as much as this in all my life."

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

Auntie Mogs looked up from her mail at the breakfast table and smiled at Phyllis and Janet as they took their places, one on either side of her.

"Here is something that may interest you," and she held out two letters.

Phyllis took one and Janet the other.

"It's from Tommy; do listen,"—Phyllis almost knocked over the cream pitcher in her excitement.

"Dear family"—(she read)

"I am expecting you on the fourteenth of this month and may the date hurry up and get here. I will meet you at the station, prepared for your luggage and live stock. Don't get lost on the way, please, as this West is rather large and I might have difficulty in finding you.

"The conductor will see that you change at the junction and don't forget that you get out at Quantos.

"My ranch is so clean that it doesn't know itself, and some of my cowboys are laying in a stock of new collars in honor of your arrival. But none of them can compare with the pleasure that I get out of every minute of the day when I think that you will soon be with me.

"Your affectionate nephew and brother,

"TOM."

Janet held up her envelope and shook it. Tickets, yards long it seemed, fell out on to the table cloth.

"We are really going," they said together, and they looked straight into each other's eyes across the

table.

Perhaps they saw the joys of the coming summer, mirrored in their brown depths. Who knows?

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PHYLLIS: A TWIN ***

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