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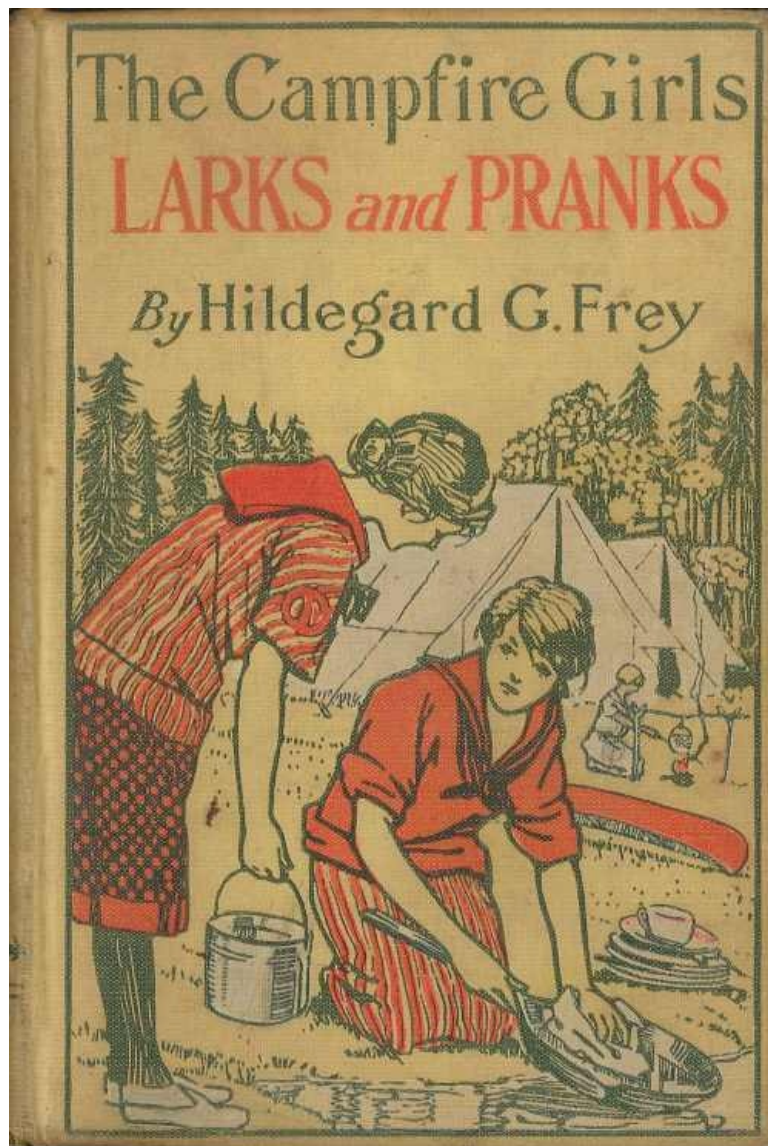
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS' LARKS AND PRANKS; OR, THE HOUSE OF THE OPEN DOOR ***



The Camp Fire Girls'

Larks and Pranks

OR

The House of the Open Door

By **HILDEGARD G. FREY**

AUTHOR OF
The Camp Fire Girls Series



A. L. BURT COMPANY
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THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Camp Fire Girls Endorsed by the
Officials of the Camp Fire Girls Organization

By **HILDEGARD G. FREY**

The Camp Fire Girls in the Maine
Woods

or, The Winnebago's Go Camping

The Camp Fire Girls at School

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The Camp Fire Girls' Larks and
Pranks

or, The House of the Open Door

The Camp Fire Girls on Ellen's Isle

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The Camp Fire Girls on the Open
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or, Over The Top With the
Winnebago's

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or, The Christmas Adventures at
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Keewaydin
or, Down Paddles

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THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS' LARKS AND PRANKS



SHE WAS NUMB FROM THE COLD AND VERY NEARLY
ASLEEP WHEN THE CAPTAIN FOUND HER.

The Camp-Fire Girls' Larks and Pranks. [Page 178.](#)

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THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS' LARKS AND PRANKS

CHAPTER I THE HOUSE OF THE OPEN DOOR

It was the crisp chill of an early October evening; in the still air the dead leaves came rustling down with a soft sound like whispers, while the crickets chirped a cheery welcome

from the waiting earth. Over the treetops a big yellow hunter's moon was rising; its comical face grinning good-naturedly. It looked down on the dark outlines of a large barn standing in the shadow of a tall tree and the grin widened perceptibly. Evidently something was happening on earth.

A dark form stole softly up the long drive leading to the barn and paused before the door. Through the silence there rose the whistling wail of the whippoorwill, repeated three times, and ending abruptly in the squall of a catbird. From within the blackness of the barn came an echo of the whippoorwill's call, followed by a much more cheerful note—the carol of the bluebird. Then a clear voice called from inside, "Who goes there?"

"A friend," came the reply.

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"Stand and give the countersign," commanded the voice inside.

"Other Council Fires were here before," responded the newcomer.

"Advance and give the Inner Password," said the invisible sentinel.

The figure passed through the dark entrance and came to a halt just inside, crying, "Kolah Olowan!"

"Mount!" commanded the voice above, and the stranger lost no time in obeying the invitation. Scrambling up the ladder fastened to the wall which did duty as a staircase, she thrust aside the curtain at the top and stepped out into the lighted upper chamber.

Anyone seeing that dark and deserted looking building from the outside would never guess how bright and cheerful was that upper room within. A wood fire roared in a cobblestone fireplace, its gleam lighting up walls hung with leather skins and gay Indian blankets and festooned with sprays of bittersweet. Several more Indian blankets were spread out on the floor in lieu of rugs, while from the rafters were suspended woven baskets and pieces of pottery. Ranged around the sides of the chamber, where the sloping roof met the floor, were four beds, all different, and only one indicating that the dwellers in that secret lodge were civilized persons. The first was a neat cot bed with blankets tucked in smoothly all around, and a dust cover folded up at the foot; the second was an "Indian bed" made of pine branches, dried ferns and sweet grasses, piled several feet high and ingeniously confined by woven reeds and pliant twigs. The scent of the sweet grasses, mingled with the aromatic odor of the pine, filled the room with a dreamy fragrance that seemed like a charm to lure down the Sleep Manitou. The third was a pile of bearskins and the fourth was another kind of Indian bed, made of smooth round willow rods tied together with ropes and laid across two poles fastened into the wall.

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No windows were visible, as these had been covered with skins. Except for the camp bed, the wide hearthstone and one other detail it might have been the lodge of some Indian Chief of olden time. That other detail was a green felt pennant stretched across the chimney above the

stone shelf of the fireplace, bearing in clean-cut English letters the word WINNEBAGO. Most of our readers have probably guessed the truth before this—the Indian lodge we have been describing is the meeting place of the Winnebago Camp Fire Girls and the solitary visitor who uttered the plaintive cry of the whippoorwill with its grotesque ending in a cat call is none other than our old friend, Sahwah the Sunfish.

“O Nyoda, such larks!” cried Sahwah, skipping across the room and bestowing a hasty embrace on the sentinel guarding the fire, whom the reader has doubtless suspected of being Miss Kent, the Guardian of the Winnebago group.

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Nyoda laughingly shook herself free and smoothed out the Ceremonial dress she held in her hand, which had become sadly crumpled during the process of Sahwah’s bear hug. “What mischief are you into this time?” she asked fondly, smiling down into Sahwah’s dancing eyes.

Sahwah went into a gale of giggles before she could explain. “You know Gladys was going to drive all of us girls down in the Glow-worm tonight,” she said, controlling her laughter with an effort, “and she telephoned Hinpoha while I was there to dinner that she was over at Mrs. Varden’s, the dressmaker’s, having a fit, and the Glow-worm was standing out in front of the house, so we should gather up the other girls and get into the car and wait for her to come out, to save her the time of going around after the girls, for her fit threatened to be a lengthy one. So Hinpoha started out after Medmangi and Nakwisi and I went back home after these apples, which I’d forgotten to take along to Hinpoha’s. When I got to the corner of the street along came Gladys in the Glow-worm and said she had an errand to do for her mother in a hurry and we had better come straight out here without her and she would come later. I hurried over to Mrs. Varden’s house to tell the girls, but when I got nearly there I saw a black car standing out in front and Hinpoha and Nakwisi and Medmangi sitting in it as cool as cucumbers, thinking they were in the Glow-worm. I recognized the car as belonging to that horribly bashful son of Mrs. Varden’s, and I couldn’t resist the temptation to let the girls sit in it until he came out. So I stole back up the street, keeping in the shadow of the trees so the girls wouldn’t see me, and came out here. Oh, won’t there be a situation though, when ‘Dolly’ Varden comes out and finds his nice bachelor car full of bold, bad girls!”

The picture was too much for Sahwah, and she rolled on the bed shrieking with laughter, in which Nyoda joined heartily. “I wonder how long it will be before they come,” said Sahwah, rising from the bed and wiping her eyes. “What shall we do to pass away the time?”

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“If I were you,” advised Nyoda, “I would spend it searching a nice safe retreat to which you can fly when they come and find out you didn’t tell them.”

Hardly had she spoken the words when there floated up from below the familiar cry of the whippoorwill, followed successively by the long, eerie laugh of the loon, the blithe whistle of the

quail and the song of the robin. "There they are!" exclaimed Sahwah in mock terror. "Where shall I hide? Oh, I have it, I'll get inside of that pile of bearskins and listen while they tell their tale of woe to you and then I'll hop out and laugh at them." Quick as a flash she jumped into the bearskin bed and pulled the skins over her so that she was entirely concealed.

With a great deal of chattering and giggling the three arrivals were mounting the ladder. "Keep on going, Hinpoha!" exclaimed Nakwisi, "you're stepping on my hand."

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"Keep on going yourself," retorted Hinpoha, "you haven't a pie in your hand." Just at that moment her foot slipped and she clutched wildly at the ladder for support.

"There goes the pie!" shrieked someone, as it described a circle in the air and landed with a thud. Hinpoha wrung her hands in grief, for her mouth was already watering for that crisp pastry.

Medmangi walked over to view the remains. "It isn't hurt a mite," she said calmly, picking it up and dusting it off. "Fortunately it landed right side up in the tin."

"O Nyoda," cried Hinpoha, beaming once more now that the feast of pie was assured, "we had the most fun getting here! Gladys told us the Glow-worm was standing out in front of the Varden's house and we should get in and wait for her, and we saw a car and got in. Pretty soon out came young Mr. Varden, got into the front seat without looking to the right or left and drove off. We thought of course he was driving Gladys' car away and we all three shrieked at him at once. He pretty nearly dropped dead when he heard us, and stopped the car so suddenly we all flew out of the seat. But he was perfectly grand about it when we found out our mistake. He told us Gladys had gone home fifteen minutes before, but he would be perfectly delighted to drive us where we wanted to go. And so he brought us out," she finished with a dramatic flourish, and sat down heavily on top of the bearskin bed where Sahwah lay hidden. Immediately there was an upheaval and a grotesque animal sprang from the bed, an animal which had the skin of a bear and two red stockinged legs which capered wildly about while their owner shrieked piercingly, "She sat on my breathing apparatus and I won't be able to talk for a week!"

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"You *are* talking, you goose," said Hinpoha, calmly seating herself again after poking the bed to see if it were further inhabited.

"You missed it, Sahwah, by going home," she continued. "Too bad you weren't along to share the fun."

Sahwah's expression was funny to behold when she learned how the joke had turned out, for it was not on the girls after all, but on herself, for she had walked all the way to the lodge by herself. She looked rather silly as she caught Nyoda's eye, but while Nyoda twinkled mischievously at her Sahwah knew that she would never give her away. But of course when Gladys arrived a few minutes later and heard the story, Sahwah's part in it came out and she had

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to stand the gibes of the others because her joke had turned round on herself, until Nyoda called the beginning of the Ceremonial and peace was restored.

One name has been dropped from the Count Book of the Winnebagos since last we heard the roll called, and to another there is no reply, although it is always called. Early in the fall Chapa the Chipmunk moved to a distant city, and so for the first time the close circle of the Winnebagos was broken. Then shortly afterward Migwan went away to college and her departure caused a fresh bereavement. Though Migwan had been of such a very quiet nature, her influence had been widely felt, and the girls missed her more and more as the days went on. Hinpoha, especially, was almost inconsolable, for she and Migwan had always stood a little closer together than the rest of the girls. This was the first Ceremonial Meeting without the two and it seemed very strange indeed to omit Chapa's name from the roll, and when Migwan's name was called and was followed by silence, Hinpoha sniffed audibly and wiped her eyes.

"Sister, this is a very solemn occasion," said Sahwah the irrepressible, in such a forced tone of sorrow that it was impossible not to laugh at her.

"That's right," said Nyoda. "It won't do for us to pull long faces. We have vowed to 'be happy' you know. Think how much worse off Chapa is alone in a strange city. Come, be cheerful and tell what kind deeds you have seen done today. You begin, Sahwah."

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Sahwah took hold of her toes with her hands and tilted back and forth on the floor as she spoke. "Sally Jones did me a great service yesterday in composition class. You know Sally Jones—the one they call the Blunderbuss. Well, you know what a pig I am when it comes to writing composition. I never wrote one yet that I didn't get a blot on. Last week when I handed mine in Miss Snively said that if there was a blot on my paper this week she would mark me zero for the month. So yesterday when we had to write one in class I took the utmost care and got it all done spotlessly and was just signing my name when Anna Green behind me tried to pick a thread off my collar and laid her fishy cold hand against my neck. I jumped and wriggled and the result was a beautiful blot on my composition. There wasn't time to copy it over because it was almost the end of the hour, so I resigned myself to a nice fat cipher on my report card this month. Then Miss Snively sent Sally around to collect the papers and when she came to my desk she leaned across it in such an awkward way that she upset my inkwell all over my composition and my one small blot was completely hidden by the deluge. Miss Snively graciously requested me to do it over in rest hour, which I did, and handed it in in perfect shape. Upsetting that inkwell was the kindest thing anybody ever did for me."

There was a moment of laughter at Sahwah's tale of kindness and then quiet fell on the group again. "Tell us a story, Nyoda," begged Hinpoha, breaking the silence, "we're getting low in our minds again."

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"Yes, do," begged the others.

Nyoda sat silent a moment staring thoughtfully into the fire. Her hands were clasped around her knees and the light shone on the diamond ring which now encircled the fourth finger of her left hand—the only thing which made the girls realize that their amazing adventures of the first week in September had been a reality and not a dream.

“In a village in eastern Hungary,” began Nyoda, “there lived a girl about your age. Her father was a very wealthy man, and lived on a great estate. Veronica—that was the girl’s name—was the only child, and had everything that her heart desired. The thing she loved to do the best was ride horse-back and she had a beautiful horse for her very own. She showed great talent on the violin and had the best masters. Veronica grew to be seventeen as happy as a girl could be, with an indulgent father and a beautiful, sweet mother. Then a dreadful thing happened. War was declared in the country and the village where they lived was taken by the enemy. Her father was killed, their home was burned and her mother died. Veronica, with the rest of the people in the village, ran away toward the mountains when the village burned. But Veronica became separated from her friends and fell, and could not get up again, for her leg was broken. She lay there a long time, and gave herself up for lost, when she heard a whinny beside her and there was her pet horse, who had been following her all the way. She managed to swing herself up on his back and he galloped away to the safety of the mountains. They found their way across the border into another country where some kind people took care of the orphan girl. The faithful horse fell after he had brought her to safety and hurt himself so badly that he had to be shot. The people who took care of Veronica sent her across the ocean to her aunt and uncle. So, sad and lonesome, she came to this country to be an American.”

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Here Nyoda paused for breath, and Hinpoha burst out quickly, “Oh, how I wish this had happened in our time and that poor lonely girl had come to this city and we had met her and made her happy. Wouldn’t we be kind to her, though, if we had a chance?”

Nyoda proceeded quietly. “All this *has* happened in your time, and this lonesome girl *has* come to our city, and you are going to have a chance to be kind to her often.”

“Nyoda!” shrieked all the girls at once. “You mean she lives in our city, and you actually know her?” “Where does she live?” “When will we see her?” “What is her whole name?” “How old did you say she was?”

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“Have mercy!” exclaimed Nyoda, putting her hands over her ears. “I can only answer ten questions at once. Veronica’s uncle is Mr. Lehar, the conductor of the Temple Theatre orchestra. I live next door to them, you know, and am well acquainted with Mrs. Lehar. She told me about Veronica some time ago and last week she went to New York to get her. I immediately asked her to allow her niece to join the Winnebago group, if you girls were willing to take her, that she might not be lonely here. Will you take her in, girls?”

“We certainly will!” cried Gladys and Hinpoha in

a breath, and Sahwah sprang to her feet exclaiming vehemently, "Well, I guess so!"

"When is she coming?" they wanted to know next.

"I'll bring her to the next meeting," promised Nyoda, "and I want you girls to—"

What it was she wanted them to do they never found out, for just at that minute there was a terrific thump on the floor below followed by the hurried clatter of heavy footsteps, then the scraping of feet on the ladder, a great waving and billowing of the curtain at the top and then it was wrenched aside, and into the Council Chamber there burst the fattest boy they had ever seen. His great cheeks hung down over his collar; his eyes were nearly buried. His face was purple from violent exertion and he sat limply against the bearskin bed, panting heavily. The girls stared open-mouthed at the intruder. Before they had recovered sufficiently from their astonishment to utter a single word, the barn below was filled with the noise of many footsteps and the shouting of many voices, and the next minute the sacred Council Chamber of the Winnebagos was filled to overflowing with boys.

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At the sight of the lighted chamber and the girls in Indian costumes the intruders stopped and stared in speechless surprise. Then with one accord seven hats were snatched from as many heads and seven voices exclaimed as one, "Beg pardon, we didn't know anyone was here."

It was so funny to hear them all saying the same thing at once that the Winnebagos could not help laughing aloud. The confusion of the boys was so painful that the girls actually felt sorry for them.

"There are only *seven* of you," said Sahwah, as usual breaking the silence first. "I thought at first there were *hundreds*."

Here one of the boys found his voice to speak. He was a tall boy with curly brown hair and nice eyes, and his face was suffused with blushes of embarrassment. "Sorry to disturb you girls," he said soberly, but with a twinkle in his eye. "We were chasing *him*"—and he pointed to the fat boy still puffing away for dear life on the floor—"and we couldn't see any light from the outside and we didn't know anybody was up here and when Slim ran in we just followed him. We'll go right away again, and let you go on with your meeting."

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Nyoda looked from one face to the other—nice refined boys they were, she decided, and it would do no hurt to show them courtesy. "You needn't be in such a great hurry to go," she said cordially. "You may at least stay until you have recovered your breath." And she looked quizzically at the fat boy leaning against the bearskins who did not seem ever to be going to breathe again.

He tried to show his appreciation of her hospitality by getting up and making a bow, which threw him into such an advanced stage of breathlessness that he sank down again directly and had to be fanned. This caused another general laugh and the boys and girls rubbed elbows so closely trying to revive him that all

feeling of embarrassment vanished and it suddenly seemed as if they were old friends, in spite of the fact that none of them knew the others' names. Nyoda came to herself with a start.

"Excuse us, boys," she said, "for not introducing ourselves. I am Miss Kent, Guardian of the Winnebago Camp Fire Girls, and these are the Winnebagos," and she named them in order. "We were having a rather doleful time when you arrived. You broke up the spell of gloom and we are deeply grateful."

The tall boy spoke again, this time smiling broadly. "We're the ones who ought to apologize for not introducing ourselves," he said in a pleasant voice, "since we have caused so much disturbance. We're the Sandwich Club," he continued, including all the boys in a sweeping gesture of his hand. "We go to Carnegie Mechanic. That's Slim over there," he said, pointing to the fat one, while all the girls laughed. "His real name's Lewis Carlton, but it's so long since anyone has called him that that he's forgotten what it is himself. We chase him all over the country to reduce him, but sometimes he gives us the slip and hides and it takes us so long to find him that in the meantime he gains more than he lost while we were chasing him."

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The girls fairly shouted at this and Slim doubled up a cushion-like fist and declared in a choking voice that if the fellows didn't leave him in peace he'd sit down on them some day and that would be the end of them. The tall boy who was doing the introducing smiled sweetly at Slim and went on with the introductions.

"This one," he said, indicating an extremely thin, hungry-looking, gaunt-featured lad with sombre brown eyes and a grave mouth, "is Bill Pitt. 'Bottomless Pitt,' we call him, because it's impossible to fill him up. You girls have heard of the Sheep Eaters?" he asked suddenly, looking from one to the other.

"Yes," chorused the Winnebagos, not wishing to appear ignorant, but not sure whether the Sheep Eaters were beasts of prey or persons overfond of mutton.

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"Well," continued the spokesman, pointing to the "Bottomless Pitt," "he's a Pie Eater, he is. He eats 'em whole."

Hinpoha's glance strayed nervously to the shelf where the apple pie stood awaiting the end of the Ceremonial Meeting. The tall boy's eyes followed here and his teeth showed in a wide smile, as he seemed to read her thoughts. Hinpoha blushed fiery red and dropped her eyes. But he looked away again immediately and did not increase her embarrassment.

"This," he said, drawing forward a spidery little fellow with red hair and freckles all over his face, "is Munson K. McKee, called for short, Monkey, and those," indicating the other three, "are Dan Porter, Peter Jenkins and Harry Raymond. We seven boys have always gone together, so we decided to form a club, and we all like sandwiches so well that we named ourselves the Sandwich Club. There, now you know all about us."

"But you haven't told us *your* name," said the Winnebagos, who were beginning to like the spokesman very much, and were anxiously waiting to hear him introduce himself.

"Haven't I?" he asked. "That's right, I haven't. My name," he said solemnly, but with that suggestion of a twinkle in his eye again, "is Cicero St. John—and the fellows *don't* call me Cissy for short." Here the corners of his mouth twitched as at some humorous memory.

"You bet they don't call him Cissy!" put in the Bottomless Pitt.

Hinpoha's eyes met Gladys' in comical dismay. How could anyone in their right senses name a boy—an American boy—Cicero! The St. John part sounded very fine, but that awful Cicero!

"How do you keep them from calling you—Cissy?" ventured Sahwah.

"He licked the tar out of them!" spoke up the Monkey. "And he dumped one fellow overboard out in the lake when he tried it. Everybody calls him 'Cap' now, because he's captain of the football team."

"Indeed," murmured the Winnebagos, looking at Cicero St. John with fresh interest and great respect, for all the world loves a football player.

And then the boys wanted to know all about the Winnebagos, and thought their symbolic names and "queer duds" even funnier than the girls had considered theirs. But they all voiced their unqualified approval of the Camp Fire Girls when they heard that the Ceremonial Meeting was to be topped off with a feast of apple pie, doughnuts and cider, and did not need to be asked more than once to stay, and share the feast.

"Say, this is a peach of a meeting place," said the Captain with his mouth full. "How did you happen to get it, and whoever thought of putting a fireplace upstairs in a barn?"

"We got it as the result of a sort of wager," explained Hinpoha. "Gladys' father promised that if we could go on an automobile trip all by ourselves without once telegraphing to him for aid he would build us a Lodge to hold our meetings in, and we did and so he did."

"So *they* did, and *he* did, and the bears did," quoted Nyoda teasingly.

Hinpoha laughed and went on. "He owned this empty barn out here in the field and he turned it over to us. But we just had to have a fireplace or it wouldn't have been a regular Camp Fire Lodge, so he built this splendid chimney. We have named the Lodge 'The House of the Open Door,' or the 'Open Door Lodge,' to signify hospitality. Mr. Evans wanted to build a fine stairway, too, but we wouldn't have it. It's lots more fun to climb the ladder."

"Why don't you use the ground floor?" asked Slim, who could never see the sense of exerting one's self needlessly.

"It's much cosier up here," replied Hinpoha. "We have these adorable peaks and gables to hang things on. Besides, we wanted to leave the big

floor downstairs clear for dancing.”

“Dancing? Do you dance?” cried the boys, pricking up their ears.

“We surely do,” replied the girls. “Would you like to come down and try?”

Down the ladder they went in a hurry, Slim being pushed from above and pulled from below, and landing on the floor in his usual breathless state. A few lanterns were hung around the walls and the big door opened wide to let in the bright rays of the full moon and the place was nearly as light as day. Nyoda played her banjo and the twelve pairs of feet shuffled merrily to the lively strains. As there were only five girls, Slim and Peter Jenkins were left without partners and consoled themselves by dancing together. Peter came just to Slim’s shoulder and weighed ninety-five pounds against Slim’s two hundred and thirty, and the result was so ludicrous that the rest could hardly dance for laughing. It was like a monkey dancing with an elephant. Slim took mincing little steps and looked down at his partner with a simpering, languishing expression, while Peter strained heroically to encircle his fair one’s waist with his arm. Rocking back and forth in exaggerated rhythm, Slim tripped over a board and fell with a great crash, pinning his gallant partner under him. The rest flew to the rescue and propped Peter up against the wall, fanning him vigorously.

“He’ll recover,” pronounced the Captain, after a thorough going over of his bones, “but he’ll never be the same again.”

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“All is over between us,” said Slim, wringing his hands in mock despair. “Miss Kent, won’t *you* dance with me?”

“It’s time we were going home,” said Nyoda calmly. “Come, girls.”

“Go home!” echoed the Captain. “I thought you lived here.”

“But how about all the beds upstairs?” asked the Captain.

“Oh,” explained Nyoda, “we all constructed different kinds of beds to win honors, and left them there in case we might want to stay some time.”

“It’s a pretty fine clubhouse, I’ll say,” remarked the Bottomless Pitt in a tone of envy. “I wish we Sandwiches had one like it. We have no place to call our own.”

Hinpoha’s thoughts leaped to the Fire Song, the words of which hung beside the fireplace up above:

*“Whose house is bare and dark and cold,
Whose house is cold,
This is his own.”*

She spoke impulsively. “Oh, Nyoda, couldn’t we let them use the ground floor to hold their meeting in?”

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A cheer burst from the seven boys’ lips. “Hooray! May we, Miss Kent?”

Nyoda was silent and looked at the boys with a troubled expression, and her glance as it rested on Hinpoha held a reproof. There was an awkward silence. Then the Captain spoke up.

"I understand what you mean, Miss Kent," he said simply and straightforwardly. "You don't know anything about us and of course you wouldn't want to share your club house with us on such short acquaintance. We wouldn't think much of you if you did. It was all right of course for you to ask us to stay and dance with the girls this one evening when you were here with us, but that doesn't mean that you're willing to adopt us. But we like you girls first rate, and want to know you better if you will let us. You can go to any of the teachers at Carnegie Mechanic and find out all you want to know about us. Pitt's father is Math teacher there and my father is Dr. Cicero St. John. It was simply great of you to offer to let us come here and hold our meetings, and if you'll still keep the offer open after you have investigated us to your satisfaction we'll be mighty grateful and will promise not to bother you upstairs."

The boy's face was so open and manly that it was impossible not to believe in him then and there. Nyoda smiled into his earnest face. "All right, Captain," she said, "we'll agree to put you on probation, and if you stand the test we'll consider the matter of sharing the Open Door Lodge."

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The Captain smiled back at her and held out his hand. "You're a peach and I like you," he said emphatically, and the two were sworn friends from that moment on.

CHAPTER II

VERONICA

At four o'clock one afternoon some few days later Hinpoha and Sahwah, breathless from hurrying, ran up the steps of the house where Nyoda lived and rang the bell. The other Winnebagos were already assembled when they entered, and Nyoda was not there.

"Where's Nyoda?" demanded Sahwah.

"Sh, she's gone over to get—*her*," answered Gladys, smoothing out the folds of her pretty new pleated dress with one hand and tucking in a stray lock with the other.

"What did you say 'sh' for?" demanded Sahwah curiously. "There's no one sleeping, is there?"

"I don't know why I said it," answered Gladys, rumpling up the hair she had just tidied, "I'm so excited about meeting Veronica that I don't know what I'm doing. I just can't sit still." And she jumped up from her chair and began to pace nervously up and down the room.

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"Doesn't it remind you of the time we stood on the dock at Loon Lake and waited for Gladys to make her first appearance?" said Hinpoha to Sahwah. "Don't you remember how we wondered what she would be like and you and Migwah nearly fought over whose affinity she was going to be?"

"Did you really, girls?" said Gladys, pausing in her walk. "And was I as nice as you hoped I'd be?"

Footsteps on the porch saved Hinpotha from having to reply and Gladys hurried to her chair and seated herself properly. A moment later Nyoda entered the room with a young girl beside her whom she led into the center of the group.

"Girls," she said, with one hand on the stranger's shoulder, "this is our new member, Veronica Lehar."

All eyes centered on the newcomer. She was a small, slender girl with short curly black hair, olive complexion, bright red lips and a straight, finely modeled nose. She wore a dark red velvet dress which suited her complexion wonderfully, and fell in soft folds about her lithe form. She was as straight as an arrow and as graceful as a deer. From the crown of her finely poised head to her little fur-topped boots she was an aristocrat. The simple Winnebagos were abashed before her. Never had they met such a high-born little lady. There was an air about her which they could never acquire if they lived a hundred years. They felt like peasants in the presence of a queen. But they forgot her aristocratic air when they looked into her eyes. Large and dark and velvety as a pansy, but so sad it almost broke your heart to look into them. All the sympathy which the girls had worked up for her since hearing her story came back in a rush and they surrounded her with cordial greetings and expressions of welcome. Veronica held her violin, which she had brought over with her, under one arm while she shook hands politely with all the girls. She answered all their pretty speeches in a friendly manner, but she never once smiled, and her eyes had a look as if her thoughts were not there in the room at all, but back in the far country across the ocean. Although she had an accent she spoke a beautiful English, in fact, she used far better language than the majority of American schoolgirls, and more than once the girls felt embarrassed when they had forgotten themselves so far as to utter a slang phrase.

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Conversation soon languished, for Veronica did not seem inclined to talk, so Nyoda started the girls singing camp songs to amuse her, and led the talk around to the Winnebagos' doings which she was now to take part in. Of course the new lodge was the main topic of conversation with the Winnebagos and they waxed so enthusiastic over its splendors that Veronica exclaimed with some show of warmth, "Oh, I must see it soon!" Then she added, "Tell me what I must do to become a Camp Fire Girl like yourselves."

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"You must have a symbolic name," answered Gladys eagerly, anxious to be the one to explain things to Veronica, "and a Ceremonial dress, and learn the songs, and know the Camp Fire Girls' Desire, and the Winnebago passwords and oh, lots of delightful things."

"What are they, the Winnebago passwords, and what are they for?" asked Veronica.

"Well," answered Gladys, "you know what a password is, don't you? Well, we have passwords to admit us into the Lodge on Ceremonial night. But before I tell you about the passwords I must

tell you about the signal calls, for they come first in order. You see, the general signal of the Winnebagos is the call of the whippoorwill, like this"—and she illustrated her words with a clear call. "You repeat that three times and at the end of it you must give your own individual bird call. We all have different ones. Mine is the robin, like this. Nyoda's is the bluebird; Hinpoha's the loon; Medmangi's is the owl; Nakwisi's the meadowlark and Sahwah's the catbird."

"Whatever made you take such a hideous screech for your call, Sahwah?" interrupted Hinpoha. "There are lots of nicer bird calls than that of the catbird."

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"I don't care, I wanted the catbird," returned Sahwah. "It suits my individuality, as my dear friend, Miss Snively, would say. I am the 'cat that walks by himself and all places are alike to me!'"

"Be a catbird as much as you like," said Gladys pacifically, "as long as you don't eat us poor bird-birds. But to go back to the passwords. You see, Nyoda is Guardian of the Fire, and she always goes up to the Lodge room first on Ceremonial night. If any of us get there ahead of her we have to stay out until she comes. Then we announce our coming by giving the call of the whippoorwill and she knows one of the Winnebagos is below; and she knows which one it is by the individual bird call. So she calls out 'Who goes there?' and we answer 'A friend.' When she says, 'Stand and give the countersign,' we have to say, 'Other Council Fires were here before.'"

"What does that mean, 'Other Council Fires were here before?'" asked Veronica.

The girls looked at one another. "What does it mean?" asked Gladys.

"I don't know," said Sahwah.

"I don't know," said Hinpoha.

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"You insisted on our having it, Sahwah," said Gladys. "Why did you choose it if you didn't know what it meant?"

"Oh," explained Sahwah lightly, "I saw it written over the door of one of the historical buildings at the Exposition, and it sounded as if it might mean something grand, so I chose it. You girls were all delighted with it, so that's proof it's a good catch-word."

"It is a good countersign," said Nyoda, "although I confess I can't tell wherein the charm lies."

"Well, to proceed," said Gladys, "after you have given the countersign you will be asked to give the Inner Pass Word, and then you must say 'Kolah Olowan.' That means 'Song Friend.' You know we pride ourselves on being a singing group, that is, we have a great many songs that we sing together, and I think our dearest friends are those we sing with. So we Winnebagos call each other 'Song Friends,' or friends bound together by the power of our familiar songs. That's why we chose bird notes for our personal symbols. The birds are the original Song Friends. What bird are you going to choose for your own, Veronica?"

Veronica's sad eyes stared thoughtfully into the fire for a moment. Then they filled with a smouldering light. "I shall be the gull that flies over the sea," she said in a low voice, "because some day I am going to fly over the sea to my dear home."

"We were all nearly ready to cry when she said that," wrote Gladys to Migwan, "only Nyoda popped up then and asked Hinpoha and Sahwah to sing 'The Owl and the Pussycat,' and they climbed on the sofa for the beautiful pea-green boat—you know what a beautiful pea-green it is—and for a small guitar Nyoda gave Sahwah a little pasteboard fiddle that produced three notes when you turned a crank, and the whole thing was so ridiculous that we laughed until our sides ached."

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After the Owl and the Pussycat had sung themselves over the back of the sofa and down on the floor with a thump Nyoda made tea in her new electric teapot and passed platefuls of thin sandwiches, and Sahwah upset her cup into her lap demonstrating how perfectly she could balance it on her knee and had to stand before the fire to dry her skirt.

"You brought your violin along; won't you play for us?" asked Nyoda of Veronica when the excitement over Sahwah's mishap had subsided.

In graceful compliance with Nyoda's request, and without waiting to be urged, Veronica took her violin from its case, settled it under her chin with a movement that was a caress, and drew the bow across the strings. With the first note teacups and sandwiches were forgotten and the girls sat in a spellbound circle, while Sahwah stopped mopping her skirt with her handkerchief and the wet spot dried and scorched unheeded. Such a witching melody as rose from the strings—now light as a fairy dancing on a bubble, now hurrying like the brook over its pebbles, now sighing like the wind in a rose tree, now slow and stately like the curtseying of a grande dame in the movements of a court dance. When it came to an end the girls sat breathless, too dazed to applaud.

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"Play some more!" begged Gladys in a whisper. It seemed like a desecration to talk.

Veronica played on, now fast, now slow, now sad and now gay, and finally whirled into a wild gypsy dance that set the blood tingling in her hearers' veins as the swift measures followed on each other's heels, until they could see in their mind's eye the leaping figures of the dancers in their bright costumes. Faster, faster, flashed the bow on the magic strings and Veronica's whole soul was in her eyes as she played the familiar strains of her homeland. Her lips parted in a flashing smile and one foot tapped the carpet in time to the music.

Suddenly a string snapped with a discordant crash. Veronica came to herself with a start. The light left her eyes and she stood staring into the fire with a sad, bitter expression.

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CHAPTER III

AN UNINVITED GUEST

Rain fell in torrents on the roof of the hospitable House of the Open Door, and the wind howled dismally around its friendly gables. Inside the "lofty loft" of the Winnebagos the fire shone brightly on the hearth and the rafters rang with merriment. Sahwah had a new hobby, and was riding it to death. This was a Hawaiian guitar, known as a "ukelele," from which she was producing a series of hair-raising noises.

"Sounds like a cat in its last agony," remarked Hinpoha.

"Well, that just suits me," replied Sahwah, undisturbed, drawing a long shivering wail from the strings. "I am the cat that walks by himself —"

"And all racket is alike to you," finished Hinpoha. "Who's getting supper tonight, Nyoda? I'm nearly starving."

"I appointed Gladys and Veronica," answered Nyoda. "The combination of blonde and brunette ought to produce something pretty good."

Gladys promptly laid down the bit of leather in which she was cutting a pattern and moved toward the "kitchen end" of the Lodge. "Come on, Veronica," she said, "let's make a carload of scones for these hungry wolves."

Veronica looked up at her without moving. On her face was an expression of surprise; almost amazement. "What, *I* cook?" she asked scornfully. "That is for servants to do!"

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Then it was the Winnebagos' turn to look amazed. Sahwah dropped her instrument on the floor with a clatter, and the rest sat silent, not knowing what to say to Veronica. Nyoda bridged over the embarrassing situation as best she could. "I'll be cook tonight," she said quietly. As she moved about helping Gladys she thought and thought how this new problem must be met. "It's the fault of her training," she told herself, "and she really isn't a snob at heart. She'll be all right when she has been with the girls awhile and watched them. It won't do to insist on her doing the things she considers beneath her. She must be made to want to do them first. But we'll make a real Winnebago of her in time!" And her eyes strayed thoughtfully over to the corner of the hearth where Veronica sat, a little apart from the rest, her brooding eyes on the fire, her sensitive lip twisting into involuntary shivers of disgust when Sahwah produced a particularly ear-splitting yowl.

"Hear and attend and listen, everybody," said Nyoda when the buttered scones had been reduced to crumbs. "I have been doing some important research work lately and am now ready to present the result of my investigations."

"What are you talking about?" asked Hinpoha curiously.

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"Two weeks ago tonight," continued Nyoda, "our meeting was broken up by a band of young braves bearing the appetizing title of 'The Sandwich Club,' who implored us to let them come and play with us in our Lodge and be lodgers—kindly overlook the pun; it was quite

unintentional—providing we weighed them in the balance and found them not wanting.”

“Is there any scale on which ‘Slim’ would be found wanting?” giggled Sahwah,

“I have spent the last two weeks obtaining information,” resumed Nyoda, “which I am happy to report is of a highly satisfactory nature. So, all things considered, and in spite of the informality of the request, I humbly recommend that the aforesaid braves be allowed to lodge in the bottom half of our Lodge at any and all times they may so desire. I might add that I have already obtained the consent of our Bountiful Benefactor, Gladys’ papa. All in favor of letting in the Sandwich Club say ‘Aye.’”

There was a perfect shout of “Ayes,” followed by a ringing cheer.

“When are they going to take possession?” Sahwah wanted to know.

“I’m to tell them tomorrow what your decision was,” replied Nyoda. “It being Saturday, I suppose they will be down in a body to fix up according to their own ideas.”

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“What will the interior of a Sandwich Club look like, I wonder?” said Gladys.

“Hark, what was that noise?” asked Nyoda abruptly. The girls listened intently. From the lower floor of the barn there came a thumping noise, followed by a subdued crash.

“Somebody’s in the barn,” said Hinpoha in a frightened whisper.

The sound came again, thump, thump, and a noise as of a box being shoved aside. “It’s a burglar!” said Sahwah, and Nakwisi gave a frightened squeak which Sahwah stifled with a sofa cushion.

“There’s nothing in here to steal,” said Nyoda. “Perhaps it’s a tramp.” Again came the noise from below. Leaving the curtain drawn over the opening, Nyoda went to the top of the ladder and called down, “Who’s there?” There was no answer but another thump. “We have a gun,” said Nyoda coolly, taking Sahwah’s little rifle down from the wall, “and if you put one foot on the ladder I’ll shoot.” Still no answer.

“I’m going down to investigate,” said Nyoda. “This is growing uncanny.”

“Don’t go down,” begged the girls, clinging to her, “something dreadful will happen to you.”

“If you go I’m going with you,” declared Sahwah when Nyoda appeared determined to rush into the jaws of danger. Nyoda threw aside the curtain and flashed her bug light on the floor below. Nothing was visible within the radius of the light, but over in the far corner where the old horse stall was something was moving and thumping about and a sound like a groan came from the darkness.

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“Somebody’s hurt,” said Nyoda, hastening down the ladder. “Bring a lantern with you, Sahwah.”

Together they moved toward the corner while the girls above crowded around the opening and

watched in breathless suspense. The light revealed a small donkey lying on the floor of the stall. He was kicking out with his hind feet against the partition wall and it was this sound that had frightened the girls above. At Sahwah's shout the others came hurrying down to behold the find. The donkey made no effort to rise and looked at the faces around him with an imploring look in his eyes as if to say, "Help me, I'm in trouble."

"What's the matter, old chap?" asked Nyoda, kneeling down beside him. The donkey answered with a distressed bray that was more like a groan and pawed the air with his front feet, which seemed to be fastened together in some manner. Nyoda turned the lantern around so the light fell directly on him and then they saw what the matter was. A length of barbed wire had become tangled around his front legs, binding them together, and his frantic efforts to get it off had resulted in its becoming deeply imbedded in the flesh, lacerating it badly. The girls shuddered when they saw it and drew back.

"This won't do, girls," said Nyoda firmly; "we've got to get that wire off the poor animal's leg. Medmangi, have you the nerve to do it? I'm afraid I can't."

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"His hind legs would have to be tied together first, so he can't kick," said Medmangi. The girls looked at each other and all drew back. All but Veronica. She came forward quietly and took the rope which the others were afraid to use and skilfully slipped a noose over the tiny heels and fastened them down to a ring in the floor.

"I have done it before, when a horse was sick," she explained in response to the girls' expressions of amazement at the neat performance. The girls' liking for her, which had suffered a sudden chill at the cooking episode, warmed again, and they were inclined to overlook that now that she had stepped so neatly into the breach when they were helpless.

Then Medmangi, the Medicine Man Girl who was going to be a doctor, and had no horror of surgery, bent calmly to her task while the others held the lantern for her. Quickly and skilfully she worked, removing the cruel points as gently as possible. Then she washed the wounds with an antiseptic solution from the First Aid Cabinet upstairs and bound them up with clean bandages. Then Veronica took the rope from the donkey's hind legs and he struggled to his feet, plainly delighted to find his front legs in working order again in spite of the pain. He looked at the girls with a dog-like devotion in his intelligent eyes and when Medmangi patted him soothingly he laid his head on her shoulder affectionately. "My first lover—a donkey!" she said laughingly.

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"Poor little mule," said Hinpoha, stroking him from the other side. "He knew the right place to come to all right. 'Whose house is bare and dark and cold, whose house is cold, this is his own,'" she quoted dramatically. "We certainly have succeeded in creating the right atmosphere of hospitality if even a lonely donkey can feel it and come straight to our 'Open Portals!'"

"Now that he has come," said Nyoda, rather puzzled, "the question is what to do with him. If he goes wandering off again he'll have those

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bandages off in no time—he probably will anyhow—and his legs will get so sore he will have to be shot. He undoubtedly belongs to somebody—very likely some children’s pet—and I think we had better keep him right here in the barn until we find the owner. The boys will have to postpone their taking possession in favor of the other donkey if his presence interferes with their activities.” Here the “other donkey” leaned against the wall in such a pathetic attitude, as if his weight were too much for his sore legs, that if they had had any intentions of turning him out into the rain they would have speedily relented.

“It’s a good thing this old stall is still here,” said Gladys. “There isn’t any straw, but there is a box of excelsior and we can spread that out and cover it with a blanket and make him a soft bed. We can give him water tonight and bring food in the morning.”

“And I’ll telephone the Sandwiches about him,” said Nyoda, “so if they are coming over tomorrow they won’t turn him out.”

But that telephone message was unnecessary, for at that moment a number of dark figures appeared in the doorway and after a moment of hesitation, entered.

“Why, here are the Sandwiches,” exclaimed Nyoda cordially, advancing with extended hand. “We were just talking about you. Speaking of angels—you know the rest.”

“We were just going by,” said the Captain (it was likely that they were “just going by” that out of the way place in the rain!) “and saw your light now you’ve left the windows uncovered, and thought we’d just step in and inquire our fate. We just couldn’t wait until tomorrow,” he finished in a boyish outburst. “Is it going to be the Open Door for us?”

“Bless you, yes,” said Nyoda, smiling reassuringly at this manly lad who was already her favorite, “there wasn’t a dissenting vote in the jury box. We——” but the remainder of her sentence was drowned in an ear-splitting cheer that was decidedly less musical than the Winnebago cheers, but none the less hearty.

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“Pedigrees satisfactory, and all that?” inquired the Captain.

“Perfect,” answered Nyoda with twinkling eyes. “I’ve dug up more facts about you than you know yourselves. So,” she added demurely, “if you’re still minded to ‘know us better,’ as you flatteringly remarked on the occasion of our first meeting, why, we’re perfectly willing to be known.

“But you can’t take immediate possession of your club room because we’ve rented it temporarily to another don—another fellow,” she said mischievously, turning the light of the lantern away from the stall where the donkey was. The boys’ eager faces fell a trifle.

“Of course,” they answered politely, “that’s your privilege.”

“He’s a very nice chap,” pursued Nyoda, with a warning glance at the girls behind her, who were stuffing their handkerchiefs into their

mouths in an effort not to laugh.

"Yes," assented the boys without enthusiasm.

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"Is it anyone we know?" asked the Captain politely, trying to make conversation after a moment of silence.

"Maybe you do know him," answered Nyoda. "He's here tonight. Would you like to meet him?"

She led the way to the stall and turned the light on the donkey. There was a moment of surprised silence, followed by a perfect explosion of laughter. "Where'd you get the donkey with the trousers on?" squeaked Slim in his high thin voice. In the dim light of the lantern the bandages on the donkey's front legs looked like a pair of trousers. Then the girls, after their laugh was out, explained about the visitor who had come to them from out of the vast, and the Sandwiches declared that they did not in the least mind sharing their club room with a needy donkey, and offered to relieve the girls of the entire care of him, besides trying to find the owner.

They were as good as their word about taking care of him, but the weeks slipped by and no amount of advertising produced anything in the shape of an owner.

"We'll have to adopt him," the Winnebagos decided. "A Camp Fire Donkey sounds thrilling to me," said Sahwah. "Think of all the fun we'll have with him. As long as the boys don't mind, we can keep him right here in the stall."

"What shall we name him?" asked Gladys.

"Call him 'Wohelo,'" advised Hinpoha. "It was the spirit of Wohelo that led him to us. From now on he'll be a symbolic donkey."

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"But where do we come in on this?" inquired the Captain. "We take care of him and he lives in our house."

"That's right," said Hinpoha. "Then let's call him 'Sandwich-Wohelo,' contracted to 'Sandhelo.'" And "Sandhelo" he was until the end of the chapter. His sore legs became very stiff until they were healed and he hobbled painfully when he walked at all, which was very seldom. But the scratches healed at last and the day came when Medmangi took off the bandages for good, and led him around the barn for exercise.

Then an amazing thing happened. Sahwah was upstairs in the Lodge, amusing herself with a mouth organ she had just discovered in the depths of her bed. But she had no sooner blown half a dozen notes when Sandhelo jerked up his head, pulling the bridle out of Medmangi's hands, and rose up on his hind legs. Then he walked on his hind legs over to a box, climbed up on it and sat there with his feet in the air, like a dog sitting up. Medmangi screamed and brought the Winnebagos flying from all directions, to behold the marvel in open-mouthed astonishment.

"He's a trick mule!" shouted Sahwah, tumbling down the ladder in her excitement and never stopping to pick herself up. "Now I know where he came from. He was with that dog and pony

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show that was in town a few weeks ago. He must have strayed from the show and got left behind. Hats off to the newest member of the Winnebago group! We certainly do have a way of attracting all the best talent in town to our ranks!"

CHAPTER IV

A SANDEBAGO CIRCUS

Just how it started nobody ever knew—it may have been Sandhelo's turning out to be a trick mule, or it may have been because Slim was fat and would make such a beautiful clown, besides being fine for a sideshow—but before they knew it the Winnebagos and the Sandwich Club were hard at work getting up a circus. The Sandwiches had taken possession of their half of the Open Door Lodge and had converted it into a gymnasium. They had built it on purpose to reduce Slim, they carefully explained to their friends, and regularly put him through a course of exercises strenuous enough to reduce a hippopotamus to an antelope in three weeks, but at the end of that time he had gained just five pounds, so the Sandwiches declared their efforts to be love's labor lost and left him in peace.

Sandhelo was becoming a well-known and conspicuous figure in the streets. Hitched to an old pony cart of Gladys', with bells jingling around his neck and ribbons flying from his harness, he never failed to attract a crowd of children. He had all the vagaries of the artistic temperament, some of which caused his drivers no little inconvenience. For one thing, he would not go at all unless he heard music, and it was no small accomplishment to drive with one hand and play a mouth organ with the other if you happened to be alone in the cart. And then, if he happened to pass anything unusual in the street he had a way of sitting back on his haunches and holding up his front feet and looking at them. As he invariably sat down unexpectedly, the cart would go on and bump into him and the shock would throw the driver from her seat, besides making a great mess of the harness. Several times he had done this in the middle of a busy crossing and held up traffic in both directions, while motormen fumed and policemen threatened, and Sahwah (it usually was Sahwah, because she drove him more than the others) played her sweetest on the mouth organ in an effort to make him go on. Nothing would make him move until his curiosity was satisfied and then he would dash off like an arrow from the bow for half a block, after which he would slow down and look over his shoulder to see how his driver was getting on. There was always such a look of anxious solicitude in his eye on these occasions that it was impossible to be angry with him and he continued to exercise his temperament without reproof.

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After half a dozen of these free shows Sahwah declared that such an ability to draw a crowd was worth money, and they had better give a real show and charge admissions.

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The big space in front of the Open Door Lodge was an ideal place for the ring. Seating arrangements for the audience gave them some

anxiety at first.

"We ought to have a grand stand," said the Captain, who had been chosen Ringmaster.

"Well, we can't build one," said the Bottomless Pit. "The audience will have to stand through the performance, and that'll be a grand stand, all right."

"Innovation in circuses," said Nyoda. "Have the audience stand and the circus sit down. Like the picture of the bride standing while the groom sprawls at ease in the photographer's gilt chair."

"I think I can get a lot of chairs from a man who rents them out," said the Captain. "He lets people have them for nothing if it's a charitable enterprise."

"Do you call a circus a charitable enterprise?" asked Nyoda.

"Well, ours will be," said the Captain. "We're doing it to make money so we can buy the new apparatus for the gym, which will surely make Slim thin, and that surely is charity."

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Upstairs in the Lodge the six Winnebagos were all seated on the bearskin bed having a lively argument as to who should drive Slim in the Chair-iot Race. The Chair-iot Race was a grand inspiration of Sahwah's, who was keen on features in the circus line. Once, on a rummage, through Gladys' attic, they had found six horsehair covered chairs furnished with excellent china castors, which caused the chairs to roll with enchanting speed. Sahwah now thought of the chairs and conceived the brilliant idea of harnessing a Sandwich to each one, seat a Winnebago in the chair, and race six abreast down the long cement walk from the barn to the road. The idea was hailed with delight until the Winnebagos began comparing the merits of the prospective steeds, and nobody wanted to be the one to drive Slim and go lumbering along like an ice-wagon in the rear of the others.

"It's too bad the Captain had to be Ringmaster and can't take part in the show," sighed Hinpoha. "Then there'd be enough without Slim."

"We wouldn't dare leave him out, anyway," said Gladys. "It would hurt his feelings. So we'll just have to draw lots for him, and whoever gets him will have to make the best of it, that's all." So they drew slips of paper from a hat and Hinpoha drew Slim, just as she had feared right along. Sahwah drew the Monkey, which suited her down to the ground, for he was a famous sprinter, and she lost no time getting the girls to ask the boys whose names they had drawn in that secret ballot upstairs to be their steeds in the race. Slim's face lighted up with such a delighted smile when Hinpoha apparently chose him for her own that her heart smote her when she thought how this choice had been thrust upon her. Slim was already beginning to learn the bitter truth that nobody loves a fat man. Nyoda and the Captain plotted the circus parade and it was a triumph of ingenuity. The advance bills which they scattered broadcast among their friends announced that the parade would embrace "Five ferocious animals from the Other Side of Nowhere, these animals being

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respectively THE CAMELK, THE CRABBIT, THE ALLIGATORTOISE, THE KANGAROOSTER, and THE SALMONKEY.

Other numbers on the program were as follows:

IVAN AWFULITCH, world's greatest magician; royal entertainer to the King of Spain. Was banished to Siberia; escaped and swam to America; has now opened up a complete line of magic. One day only.

MR. SKYGACK, FROM MARS, in a special song feature entitled the Mars-y-lays.

LA ZINGARA, the bareback rider.

SANDHELO, the famous trick mule. As intelligent as two men and a school teacher. [48]

MR. AVOIRDUPOIS SLIM, fattest man on earth. Will sit on a toothpick.

MR. E. LASTIC, Inja rubber man.

ARCHIBALD DIMPLES the better baby.

CHAIR-IOT RACE. Feat never attempted before on any stage.

MONKEY, THE AERIAL GYMNAST, in the sensational dupe-the-dupes.

TWENTY OTHER GREAT FEATURES

ALL CHILDREN WILL GET A FREE RIDE ON SANDELHO,
THE FAMOUS TRICK MULE, AFTER
THE PERFORMANCE

Bottomless Pitt owned a little hand-printing press and printed wonderful tickets to be sold at five cents apiece, which Gladys declared were worth the money as souvenirs, with the circus thrown in extra.

"What are you making, a circus tent?" asked Gladys, dropping into the Lodge, where Nyoda sat stitching together great lengths of red and white striped material.

"No; only a clown suit for Slim," laughed Nyoda. "Gracious, how much it does take!"

"It reminds me of the riddle: 'If it takes thirty yards of cloth to make a shirtwaist for an elephant, etc.,'" said Gladys. "Poor Slim! You would have died to see him practice his clown stunt with Sandhelo. You know the boys built him a tiny red cart with two big wheels, and when he sat down in it, it tilted way over backward and the shafts stuck up in the air and pulled poor little Sandhelo right up off his feet, and there he dangled, pawing for dear life. But, whatever are you making, Hinpoha?" she finished, examining the thing which Hinpoha was working on and which resembled nothing in the universe. [49]

"This is Peter's costume," answered Hinpoha; "he's the hind leg of the Kangarooster, you know. By the way, Nyoda, has a Kangarooster one hump or two?"

"None at all," answered Nyoda hastily. "The humps are on the 'Cam' part of the Camelk. That reminds me, have we something to stuff the

humps with?"

"Take excelsior," advised Gladys. "Dear me, who's screeching like that downstairs?"

They all crowded down the ladder at the sound of a lusty yell from below and found Sahwah hanging head downward from a heavy hook in the wall. She had improved a moment's leisure to climb up to the top of the window with a spray of bittersweet to see how it would look, and in descending had caught her skirt on the hook and lost her footing. The skirt tore through until the stout serge hem was reached and that offered successful resistance, and Sahwah hung, as Nyoda remarked, like a lamb on the spit.

"I got an idea hanging upside down," were the first words she gasped as they restored her to the perpendicular and revived her with peanuts.

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"It's the only way you ever would get an idea," said Hinpoha.

"Is that so?" returned Sahwah, with spirit "Who thought up the Chair-iot Race, I'd like to know?"

"Stop bickering and tell us your idea," said Nyoda.

"Why, it's this," said Sahwah. "Sell hot cocoa with marshmallows in it after the show. Everybody'll be cold sitting around. We can make almost as much money that way as with the circus."

"A lake of hot cocoa with an island of marshmallows in it is my dream of heaven," said Hinpoha, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Sahwah, you're a genius. I yield the palm to you without a struggle. You have a 'head in your mind,' as absent-minded old Fuzzytop used to say. There's nothing in the whole world that'll separate a nickel from its owner like a cup of hot cocoa with a marshmallow floating in it on a cold day."

"Another innovation," said Nyoda. "We'll have that instead of circus lemonade. See to getting the supplies, will you, Sahwah dear? I have so many details to look after now that I simply cannot be responsible for another thing, or my head will burst and out will come everything that's safely packed in now. Come in, Captain. What's on your mind?"

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"Slim," said the Captain, with a look of comical despair, as he sat down among the girls. "I'm afraid he won't do for a Better Baby. He's smashed three perambulators and a high chair and we can't get any more. And the biggest size white dress we could buy in the store won't go half-way around him."

Nyoda knitted her brows. "We simply have to have a Better Baby," she affirmed. "It's one of the best features. We'll drape cheesecloth around him for a dress and he can play on a quilt on the floor—I mean the ground—instead of being taken for a ride by his nurse in a perambulator."

"Poor Slim!" said Hinpoha. "How many more things are going to be wished on him? I'm afraid his 'gall will be divided into three parts,' too!"

"That would have been a very clever thing for

you to say," remarked the Captain, "if it had been original, but it wasn't. They spring that over at our school, too. Slim isn't doing any more than the rest of us at that. Only he's so conspicuous that everything he does seems like a lot more than it really is."

"How are the tickets going?" asked Sahwah.

"We've sold over a hundred," announced the Captain with pride. "We're famous people, we are."

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"Speak for yourself," said Sahwah. "It isn't we who are the attraction, though—it's Sandhelo. I rode him through the streets and sold nearly fifty tickets to the children that followed us. They're all attracted by the promise of a free ride after the show."

"It'll probably take all evening to give them the ride, and we'll never get to that jubilation spread we're going to have after the show, but we have to make our word good," said Nyoda.

"Put them on four at once and we'll get done somehow," said Sahwah.

Hinpoha laid down her sewing and stretched her arms above her head. "I never knew circuses were such a pile of work," she sighed.

"'Wohelo means work,
So dig like a Turk,'"

chanted Sahwah.

"I move we all go to the 'movies' tonight and see 'If I Were King,'" continued Hinpoha.

"Can't," said Nyoda briefly, checking up on her fingers the things she still had to do. "I still have to evolve a tail for the Salmonkey and a frontispiece for the Camelk, make four banners, rehearse the living statuary, make a bonnet for the Better Baby, teach the Crabbit how to hop and crawl at the same time and make a costume for the bareback rider."

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"I'd come and help you," said Sahwah, "but we're going to have a test in Latin tomorrow and I have to cram tonight. I'll just have time to practice with the band."

"A test in time saves nine," murmured Hinpoha. "What are the Sandwiches doing now?"

"Erecting the flying trapeze," answered Sahwah, looking out of the window. "Captain is hanging by his eyebrow to the top of a pole and Bottomless Pitt is standing below, waiting to catch him when he falls."

The Captain caught her eye, as she leaned over the sill and shouted:

"All right below,
O Wohelo,
Now *please* go mix some pancake dough!"

"All right," called Sahwah cheerily. "You'll soon smell something doughing!"

Nyoda and Gladys went home on an errand, and Hinpoha, worn out with her arduous labors with the needle, stretched out on the bearskin bed and fell sound asleep in the warmth of the fire.

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Sahwah pattered about collecting the ingredients for flapjacks to make a treat for the boys, who had worked like Trojans ever since school was out. The wood in the fireplace had burned down to lovely glowing embers, and she laid the toaster on top of them to act as a rest for the frying-pan. The Captain, tying ropes into the branches of the big tree just outside of the window, looked in and admired the scene. Hinpoha, with her marvellous red curls falling around her face in the light of the fire, looked like a sleeping princess in a fairy tale, and Sahwah, holding her dish of batter in one hand and skilfully putting grease into the pan with the other, was a cheery little housewife indeed. Through the half-open window he could hear her singing "A Warrior Bold."

A moment he looked in, filled with whole-souled admiration for these many-sided girls who were his new friends, and then without warning something happened inside. The panful of sizzling fat suddenly burst into a sheet of flame that left the confines of the fireplace and seemed to leap all around Sahwah. A burning spark shot out and fell into a pile of cheesecloth lying on the floor at the far side of the room, and it blazed up instantly, the flames enveloping the sleeping Hinpoha. It took less than a moment for the Captain to spring down from the tree, run into the barn and up the ladder. But it was too late for him to do anything. In the twinkling of an eye Sahwah had seized the burning cheesecloth and flung it into the fireplace, thrown a bearskin rug over Hinpoha and now stood calmly pouring sand from a bucket on top of the burning fat in the pan. And all the while she was doing it she had never stopped singing! The Captain stood still in his amazement and listened idly to the words:

"So what care I, though death be nigh?
I'll live for love or die——"

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A hoarse sound made her turn around and she saw the Captain standing beside her with face pale as ashes. The dreadful sight he had seen from the tree when the room seemed filled with flame was still in his mind.

"How did you manage to keep so cool and do everything so quickly?" he asked in amazement.

Sahwah laughed at his expression of astonishment. "That's not the first fire I've put out," she said calmly. "We always keep both water and sand on hand whenever we have an open fire, to prevent serious accidents. Having the cheesecloth go up at the same time rather complicated matters, but I got it into the fireplace without any trouble. I don't know what made the fat in the pan take fire; it's never done that before up here. But don't worry; I'll get your flapjacks made, all right."

The Captain looked at her with more admiration than ever. "Most girls would have been in a faint by that time, and have had to be doused with smelling salts," he told the Sandwiches later, "instead of coolly promising you your flapjacks anyway and apologizing for the delay!"

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"Your hands are burned!" he exclaimed in concern, as he saw Sahwah looking ruefully at her blackened fingers. "Let me do something for them."

"Nothing serious," said Sahwah, turning them down so he could not see the blistered palms.

"They are, too!" persisted the Captain. "Have you any oil handy?"

"In the First Aid box over there," said Sahwah. "It's in that bottle labeled A BURNED CHILD DREADS THE FIRE."

The Captain returned with cotton and gauze and the oil and proceeded to bandage the scorched hands that had been so quick to avert disaster.

"Won't Hinpoha be furious when she wakes up and finds her costume that she worked so hard on all burned up?" she said, as he wound the bandages under her direction. "I hated to throw it into the fire, but it had to be done."

"She'd better not be furious," returned the Captain. "She's got you to thank that she didn't burn up herself. She had a close call that time, and if you hadn't snatched that burning rag off her and covered her with a rug I'd hate to think what would have happened. I tell you it's great to be able to do the right thing at the right time. A lot of people talk about what they would do in an emergency, but very few of them ever do it."

"Well," returned Sahwah coolly, holding up her hands and inspecting the bandages with a critical eye, "there is an emergency before us right now. Suppose you stop talking and get busy and fry those pancakes for the boys. They're dying of starvation outside."

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The Captain started, blushed and looked at her keenly to see if she were making fun of him, and then fell to work without a word finishing Sahwah's interrupted labor.

CHAPTER V

THE ARRIVAL OF KATHERINE

Preparations were completed and the day for the presentation of the greatest show on earth had arrived. It was crisply cool, but clear and sunshiny, as the last Saturday in beloved October should be; and not too cold to sit still and witness an out-of-doors performance. Tickets had sold with such gratifying readiness that a second edition had been necessary, and the Committee on Seating Arrangements was nearly in despair over providing enough seats.

"It's no use," declared Bottomless Pitt, "we've done the best we could and half of them will still have to stand. It'll be a case of 'first come, first served.'"

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Sahwah and Hinpoha, their arms filled with bundles of "props," which they had spent the morning in collecting, sank wearily down at a table in the "Neapolitan" soda dispensary and ordered their favorite sundaes. "Now, are you perfectly sure we have everything?" asked Hinpoha, between spoonfuls.

"There's the Better Baby's rattle," recounted Sahwah, identifying her parcels by feeling of them, "the Magician's natural hair a foot long, the china eggs he finds in the lady's handbag,

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the bareback rider's spangles, and—O Hinpoha!" she cried in dismay, dropping her spoon on the tile floor with a great clatter, "we forgot the red, white and blue cockade for Sandhelo. I'll have to go back to Nelson's and get it. Dear me, it's eleven o'clock now and we still have to go out home and dress. And the marshmallows have to be bought yet; that's another thing I promised Nyoda I'd see about. Won't you please get them, Hinpoha, while I run up to Nelson's? There's a dear. Get them at Raymond's—theirs are the freshest; and then you had better go right on home without waiting for me. It will take me a little longer, but I'll hurry as fast as I can. And please tell Nyoda that I didn't forget the marshmallows this time; I just turned the responsibility over to you." And Sahwah gathered up her bundles and retraced her steps toward the big up-town store, while Hinpoha took her way to Raymond's. Five pounds of marshmallows make a pretty big box, and Hinpoha had several other parcels to carry. She had them all laid out on the counter with an eye to tying some of them together to facilitate transportation when a voice suddenly called out: "Dorothy! Dorothy Bradford!" She turned and saw Miss Parker, one of the teachers at Washington High, at the other end of the counter. "Come and meet my cousin," said Miss Parker, and brought forward a young girl she had with her. "This is Katherine Adams," said Miss Parker. "Katherine, I would like you to meet one of my pupils, Dorothy Bradford."

Hinpoha acknowledged the introduction cordially, but it was all she could do to suppress a smile at Katherine's appearance. She was an extremely tall, lanky girl, narrow chested and stoop shouldered, with scanty straw-colored hair drawn into a tight knot at the back of her neck, and pale, near-sighted eyes peering through glasses. She wore a long drab-colored coat, cut as severely plain as a man's, and a narrow-brimmed felt sailor hat. She wore no gloves and her hands were large and bony. Her shoes—Hinpoha looked twice in her astonishment to make sure—yes, there was no mistake, the shoes she had on were not mates! One was a cloth-top button and the other a heavy laced walking boot. Miss Parker followed Hinpoha's surprised glance and looked distressed. But Katherine was not at all disconcerted when she discovered the discrepancy in her footgear.

"That's what you get for interrupting me in the middle of my dressing," she said coolly. "Now, I've forgotten which pair I intended to wear." She had an odd, husky voice, that made everything she said sound funny.

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Miss Parker seemed rather anxious that her cousin should make a good impression on Hinpoha. Katherine was from Spencer, Arkansas, she explained, and had gone as far in school as she could out there and had now come east to stay with her cousin and take the last year in high school. Hinpoha promised to introduce her around to the girls in the class, with her eyes on the clock all the while and her mind on the performance she should be helping to prepare that minute instead of standing there talking.

"Won't you come to our circus this afternoon?" she said politely, fishing among the small

“props” in her handbag. “Here’s a ticket. It’s going to be in the big field at the corner of May and ——th streets. Come into the barn if you come and I’ll introduce you to some of my friends.”

Miss Parker and her caricature of a cousin finally departed, and Hinpoha hastily gathered up her bundles. Something about the package of marshmallows struck her as unfamiliar, and she examined it in consternation. It certainly was not her package, though like it in shape. Somebody had taken hers by mistake. She looked around the store and was just in time to see her box being carried out the front door under the arm of a woman. Hinpoha gathered her packages into her arms hit and miss and rushed after her. But impeded as she was she got stuck in the revolving door and was delayed a full minute before she escaped to the sidewalk. She was just in time to see the object of her pursuit board a car at the corner. Before Hinpoha could reach the corner the car had started. Hinpoha stamped her foot with vexation, mostly directed toward Miss Parker and her freak cousin for taking her attention away from her belongings. Then she considered. The car the woman had boarded must make a loop and come out a block below and it would be possible to catch it there. Hinpoha puffed along the sidewalk at a great rate, worming her way through the Saturday noon crowds and colliding with people right and left. She reached the corner just as the car did and made a mad dash over the pavement, dodging in among wagons and automobiles at dire peril of life and limb. She scrambled aboard and landed sprawling on the back platform, while her bundles scattered over the floor in every direction. Breathless and embarrassed, she gathered them up and entered the car just in time to see the lady carrying her box of marshmallows get out of the front door. Hinpoha made a wild dash for the rear exit, but the door was closed and the car already in motion. She rang the bell frantically, at the same time following the woman with her eyes to see in which direction she went. The car finally released her two blocks up street, and then began the mad chase back again. Poor Hinpoha was never built for speed; her breath gave out and she developed an agonizing pain in her side. Her bundles weighed her down and her hat flopped into her eyes. Chugging along thus she ran smartly into someone and again her packages covered the sidewalk.

“Oh, excuse me!” she gasped, struggling to get her hat back on her head. “I couldn’t see where I was going. *Why, Captain—*” For it was none other than he with whom she had collided.

“Pretty well loaded down, aren’t you?” said the Captain, stooping to pick up the litter on the sidewalk.

“Never mind them,” said Hinpoha hastily, “go after *her*.”

“Go after *her*?” repeated the Captain in a tone of bewilderment.

Hinpoha pointed speechlessly up the street and then with a mighty effort regained a speck of her breath and panted “Lady—blue coat—plush collar—our marshmallows—left this—Raymond’s—go get them,” and, shoving the stranger’s

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package into his hands, she indicated with waving arms that he was to pursue the lady in question and regain the club's property. The Captain started off obediently, though her explanation was not yet clear in his mind, but the truth flashed over him when he presently overtook a lady that fitted the description just turning into the door of Raymond's store with a large package under her arm, and he soon made his errand known and recovered the marshmallows. She was just in the act of returning them to Raymond's, having discovered her mistake.

Hinpoha was out in front when the Captain emerged from the store, and she surrendered her bundles to him gratefully, saying with a breathless sigh, "Boys *are* useful to have around once in a while, after all."

"Only once in a while?" asked the Captain.

"Well, maybe twice in a while, then," said Hinpoha graciously.

Hinpoha arrived on the scene of action so late that there was no time to press her for explanations; she was summarily hustled out of her street clothes and into her orchestra costume. The audience was arriving in crowds and the Sandwiches, who were detailed as ticket takers, had much to do to keep legions of small boys from climbing the fence and seeing the show without the formality of buying a ticket.

The Grand Parade, "including every single member of the entire show," was scheduled to start promptly at two. The parade was necessarily held in sections, as all hands were needed for each section. The clock in a neighboring steeple had not finished chiming the hour when there was an unearthly blare of trumpets and crashing of drums, and the band issued from the entrance of the Open Door Lodge. Nyoda led the band and made a stunning drum major in a fur hat a foot high, made out of a muff. The members of the band were dressed as Spanish troubadours in costumes of blinding scarlet, with their instruments hung around their neck by ribbons. They marched around the ring at a lively pace, playing the music of a popular football song, which made the audience cheer wildly, for it was largely composed of students from the two great rival schools, Washington High and Carnegie Mechanic. In the wake of the troubadours stumbled an enormously fat clown in a suit half red and half white, blowing up a rubber bladder, which emitted a plaintive squawk. Loud applause greeted every move the clown made and when he accidentally stumbled into a hole and measured his length on the ground the small boys shrieked in ecstasy.

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The band made a stately and melodious exit in the House of the Open Door and once inside broke ranks in haste to prepare for the second section of the parade—the procession of the animals. This was a much more complicated matter than the band had been, but it had been so well rehearsed that the crowd, who were being amused by the antics of the clown, had not time to grow impatient before they were ready. Shrieks of delight went up at the appearance of the five ferocious animals from Nowhere—THE CAMELK, THE CRABBIT, THE ALLIGATORTOISE, THE

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KANGAROOSTER and THE SALMONKEY, and they had to go around the ring five times before being allowed to retire. The parade being such an unqualified success, it is needless to say that the circus proper went even better. The actors had all worked themselves up into the right mood for it.

The magician gave more entertainment than he had counted on, for the mice, which he had concealed in his pocket ready to produce from under the folded handkerchief, bit him before their turn in the show came, and the beholders were startled to see the magician suddenly spring into the air, uttering a wild yell and, thrusting his hand into his hip pocket, throw the cause of the disturbance half-way across the ring. The Fattest Man on Earth, who was Slim, with the addition of several pillows fore and aft, mounted the small stage and laboriously sat on a toothpick, breaking down the stage in the process; and the Inja Rubber Man did such amazing contortions that the audience began to hold their breath for fear he would never come untangled again.

When it happened to be her turn to go out in one of the numbers Hinpoha looked the audience over to see if Katherine Adams had come in response to her invitation, but she did not see her. But, while looking for Katherine, her eye was caught by a strange figure, the like of which she had never seen before. She was a woman, old and bent, and dressed in such old-fashioned clothes that she looked like a caricature out of a funny page. She had on a tight green basque, which flared out below the waist in a ripple and a very full red skirt, held out in a ridiculous curve by that atrocity of bygone days known as a "bustle." She was climbing stiffly up and down among the spectators trying to sell papers which she was crying in a shrill voice. As she went up and down among the benches she held up her skirt in her hand, disclosing purple stockings and enormous flapping slippers. Wherever she went she was followed by a ripple of laughter; the audience seemed to be getting as much fun out of her as they were out of the show. Hinpoha told Nyoda about it when she was in the barn again and Nyoda asked all the players not to do anything to drive her away, as she was no doubt trying to make an honest living by selling papers wherever there was a crowd, and she was adding an unexpected touch to the circus to amuse the audience.

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The bareback rider proved a real sensation. Up to that time the numbers had merely been in the nature of stunts—clever and original and highly diverting, and yet something which any group of young people could produce. But here was something different. Veronica was so dark that in her costume she looked like a real gypsy, and as she was not yet well known she was not recognized. She came in riding a beautiful black horse that belonged to Mr. Evans, and, after galloping around the ring several times and making him rear up on his hind legs until the audience thought she must slide off, she set him to leaping obstacles, keeping her seat all the while with amazing ease. There was a touch of realism in her act, too, which made the audience tingle for a while. In their eagerness to see the horse and the daring rider the children down in the front row had pressed forward until they

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were fairly under the ropes. Without warning a little girl lost her balance and fell out into the ring, rolling right into the path of the galloping horse. An exclamation of horror went up from the crowd, and many covered their eyes with their hands. The others, gazing as if fascinated, saw the horse in obedience to a quick command leap into the air with all four feet and come down several feet beyond the little form on the ground. Shouts rose up from every side and cheers for the skilful horsewoman who had been able to avert a tragedy when it was too late to turn aside. But Veronica sat unmoved, a graceful statue on the beautiful horse, looking out over the audience with brooding eyes that saw them not.

Of course the *piece de resistance* of the whole show was the trick mule, Sandhelo. He had been the most widely advertised feature and had been the means of selling the most tickets. The small boys came lured by the promise of a free ride after the show and could hardly wait for that time to come. His appearance in the ring was hailed with tumultuous applause. Led by the clown, who played the mouth organ constantly to assure his continuous locomotion, he did his tricks over and over again, lying down as if dead when Slim played "John Brown's Body," and springing to his feet with a lively bray when he played "Yankee Doodle"; and sitting up on the table and waving his fore feet at the audience while he tossed a lump of sugar on his nose.

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Then the clown tried to ride him and fell off, first on one side and then the other, and after several vain attempts offered a quarter to anyone in the audience who would come out and ride him around the ring. As the players along knew that Sandhelo would only go to music, they anticipated no little fun from this business. Sandhelo was perfectly safe to ride—he was as gentle as a kitten—but his refusal to stir when commanded made him appear a very balky mule indeed, and there was no response to Slim's invitation for somebody to come out and ride him. Even the small boys, who were eager to ride him, preferred to wait until the show was over before making the trial.

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"Don't all come at once," appealed Slim in derision. "One at a time, please. Who'll ride the famous trick mule, Sandhelo, around the ring and win the handsome prize of twenty-five cents, a whole quarter of a dollar?" Still no volunteers. Sandhelo yawned and looked bored to death. Slim stretched out his hands to the audience imploringly.

Suddenly there was a commotion at one end of the seats and down from the top of the picnic tables, where the raised seats were, there climbed the little old woman who had gone around selling papers. "I'll ride him for twenty-five cents," she cackled in her high shrill voice. And she hobbled across the ring to where Sandhelo stood. The players were ready to hug themselves with joy. Here was a real circus-y touch they had not counted on.

"Aren't you afraid she'll get hurt?" whispered Hinpoha to Nyoda.

"No danger," returned Nyoda. "Sandhelo won't go a step without the mouth organ."

The little old woman, her back bent almost double, shuffled over and grasped Sandhelo, not by the bridle, but by the cockade on his head. Then she suddenly straightened up and a gasp of astonishment went around the circle. She was taller than the tallest of them. Without assistance from anyone she climbed on Sandhelo's back and sat with her face toward his tail. The audience, suspecting that it was a "put-up job," and this was another stunt, roared its appreciation, but the players looked at each other in utter bewilderment. Who was this strange character?

Sandhelo was a very small donkey, standing no higher than a Shetland pony, and when the old lady was seated on his back her feet dragged on the ground. Calmly crossing them underneath his body, she gave his tail a smart jerk, accompanied by the shrill command, "Giddap!" Sandhelo, mortified to death at the undignified position of his rider, had but one idea in his mind—to escape from the gibing crowd and hide his head in his stable. Around the ring he flew as fast as his tiny legs would carry him, the old woman sticking to him like a burr, her bonnet strings flying in the wind, her big slippers flapping against his sides, and her shrill voice urging him on to greater speed. The act brought down the house and a whole row of folding camp chairs collapsed under the strain of the applause.

Beside himself with rage and shame, Sandhelo bolted into the barn and carried his strange rider into the midst of the company of players. Sliding off his back, she looked around the ring of curious faces before her with little twinkling gray eyes. Then she held out her hand suggestively. "Where's the quarter I git fer ridin' the mule?" she asked. Something in her voice awakened a memory in Hinpoha's mind. In a twinkling she was carried back to the incident at Raymond's that noon when Miss Parker stopped to present her cousin from the west. Surely there never were two such voices! At the same time Hinpoha noticed that the old woman's gray hair was sliding back on her head, and a long wisp of yellowish hair was hanging out underneath. She stared at the curious figure in growing wonder, and the woman stared back at her with a knowing grin that became wider every moment. Then with a quick movement the old woman snatched off a gray wig, mopped a damp handkerchief over her face, produced a pair of glasses from some pocket in the wide skirt, and stood before them the same awkward, ungainly creature that Hinpoha had met that noon. It was Katherine Adams, Miss Parker's cousin.

Such a babel there was when Hinpoha recognized the strange comedian and presented her to the others! The waiting audience was completely forgotten as they listened fascinated while Katherine explained how she had come "by special invitation" to the circus and had decided that people who had "pep" enough to get up a circus were worth knowing, and the best way to get acquainted with the players was to be in the show herself. So she had joined the company without the formality of being asked.

"You're appointed assistant clown for the remainder of the circus," said Nyoda.

"And you're invited to the spread upstairs afterwards," said Hinpoha.

"It's time for the Chair-iot Race," said the Captain warningly, and the players returned to their duties with a guilty start. The new comedian proved such a diversion and put the regular clown up to so many tricks that he would never have thought of by himself, that the audience refused to go home when the big show was over, and called for encore after encore.

"Let's get her to sell cocoa," suggested Gladys; "they'll buy from her when they wouldn't from us."

So Katherine, who up until a few hours ago had never heard of the Winnebagos and Sandwiches, did more for them in the way of dispensing cups of cocoa at five cents a cup than they were able to do for themselves. She made such inimitably droll speeches in her efforts to advertise her wares that the audience crowded around her just to hear her talk, and bought and bought until the huge kettles were empty and the paper box till was full. The small boys crowded around the Ringmaster, demanding their ride on the trick mule, and, tearing himself away from the fascinating orator, he betook himself to the barn, followed by the whole string of would-be riders. But when he arrived there the stall was empty and Sandhelo was nowhere to be found. Loud chorus of disappointment from the small boys. The Captain turned their interest in Sandhelo to account by enlisting them in the search for him, but it was vain. Nowhere could they find a trace of him. His shame at the indignity heaped upon him that afternoon had been too great. Finding his stall left open in the excitement he had escaped and wandered off while the attention of everyone was riveted on the antics of the new comedian, and hid his head among new scenes and faces. The small boys finally gave up and went home, partly consoled by the assurance that if Sandhelo ever turned up again the promised ride would still be theirs, and the players, rather exhausted, but exulting over the success of the performance, gathered in the Winnebago room of the Open Door Lodge for the jollification spread.

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Katherine Adams was the lioness of the evening. Begged for a speech, she obligingly mounted the table and held a discourse that left her hearers limp with merriment. What she said was sidesplitting enough, but her gestures, her expression and her voice were beyond description. She spoke in a lazy southern drawl, mixed up with a nasal twang, and the peculiarly veiled, husky quality of her voice gave it a sound the like of which was never heard before. She still wore the big flapping slippers and had much ado to keep them on when she climbed on the table with the mincing air of a young miss making an elocution lesson. She planted her feet carefully, heels together and toes apart, taking several minutes in the operation, and then surveyed them with a silly smirk of satisfaction that was convulsing. When her discourse became a little heated the feet suddenly flew around and toed in until both heels and toes were in a straight line. At the ripple of laughter which this called forth she looked down at her feet with a sad, pained expression and carefully set them right again. A few moments later she

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again waxed eloquent and again the feet turned, seemingly of themselves, and this time her toes pointed outward until toes and heels were all one straight line. The shrieks of delight made her look down again, with that same puzzled, pained expression, and again she set them right in an affected manner.

When the speech was over the boys and girls begged her to do it again, and kept her speechifying until she declared she had no voice left to whisper. "You know I have to be very careful of my voice," she said in a tone of confiding simplicity. "It's so sweet that I'm afraid of cracking it all the time."

Katherine was too good to be true. "Just like a character out of a book," the delighted Winnebagos whispered to one another. Before the evening was over they had unanimously decided to urge—not merely invite, mind you, but urge—her to become a Winnebago. Katherine was delighted with the idea and accepted the invitation with another convulsing speech. It seemed incredible to the girls that they had met her just that afternoon. It seemed as if they had known her always. She fitted into their group like a thumb on a hand. She was plied with slumgullion and every other delicacy, and her health was drunk in numerous cups of cocoa. The continual flow of banter which the Winnebagos usually kept up among themselves was hushed, and everyone was willing to put the soft pedal on her own speech if only Katherine would talk some more. She told fascinating things about her life on a big stock farm out in Arkansas.

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"Are there any Indians around there?" asked Veronica, whose ideas of the American Far West were rather hazy and romantic.

"Indians!" said Katherine. "I should say there were! They're something terrible. Why, you don't dare hang your clothes on the line, because the Indians will shoot them full of arrows! And then," she continued, as she saw Veronica's eyes becoming saucerlike, "there are all kind of wild animals out there, too. We can't keep milk standing around in the pantry because the wildcats come in and drink it up, and the bears shed their hair all over the carpet! Why, one day I came in from the yard and there was a rattlesnake curled up on the piano stool!"

The Winnebagos and the Sandwiches doubled up with merriment at her awful "yarns," but Veronica believed every word of it.

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"O Katherine, you awful thing, I'm in love with you," cried Hinpoha, in rather mixed metaphor, and drew her down on the bearskin bed beside her. "Goodness, Veronica, don't look so excited. All the Indians there are in this country now are on reservations, and they're entirely peaceable. You mustn't believe a word she says."

The jollification supper ended in a hilarious Virginia Reel, which hardly anyone could dance for laughing at Katherine's big slippers, as she shuffled up and down the line.

"What a day this has been," sighed Hinpoha to Gladys, with whom she was spending the night, as she sank down on the bed with all her clothes on. "We've made enough money to equip the

Sandwiches' gym be-yoo-tifully; we've made Veronica famous as a horsewoman; we've lost our trick mule and gained a new member for the Winnebagos. In the classic words of our gallant Captain, I think that's 'going some.'"

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CHAPTER VI

A MORAL OBLIGATION

Katherine's entry into High School life was a complete success—one of those rare, astonishing successes that happen about once in a decade. The regular members of the class, who have been together since the beginning, will by constant effort have attained a fair measure of popularity by the fourth year, when suddenly a personality will appear out of the vast and seize and hold the center of the stage. Katherine's spectacular exploit at the Sandebago Circus was heralded far and wide, and when she entered school the following Monday morning she found herself already famous. Everywhere she was pointed out as "the girl who had ridden the donkey," "the girl with the funny voice," "the girl who made the screaming speeches." Teachers agreed unanimously that she was the most erratically brilliant student they had ever had in their classes—when she could remember to turn her work in. Her compositions were read out in class and brought down the house. When she rose to recite you could hear a pin drop. It was an open secret that the two English teachers had drawn lots to see who would get her, and not a few pupils suddenly discovered conflicts in their recitations and got themselves changed into the class where Katherine was.

Her absent-mindedness soon became proverbial. Odd shoes—gloves of two different colors—hat on hind side before, or somebody else's hat altogether—these were everyday occurrences. Her friends told with chuckles how she had climbed one flight of stairs too many on her way to Math class and walked into a Freshman English class, her mind busy working out the solution of a problem in geometry. When some other Katherine was called upon to recite she rose solemnly and, going to the board, gave a masterly demonstration of a knotty theorem in solid geometry, and then marched out with the class, serenely unconscious of her mistake, oblivious to the laughter of the class and the amusement of the teacher, who let her go on without interruption to see how far she would go. Her bewilderment when asked by the regular geometry teacher to explain why she had cut class that morning was comical.

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Possessing neither beauty, style, pretty clothes, nor all the dozen other things that make the ordinary girl popular, her very unusualness gave her a distinction, and inside of two weeks she was the best-known girl in the whole school. To be counted as one of her friends was an honor, and to be able to say, "Katherine told me this," or, "Katherine did this up at our house," was to incite the envy of less favored ones. The Uranians, the most exclusive and select girl's society in the school, voted her in as a member because they must have all the prominent girls, although they generally scorned both worth and brains, if clothed in poor garments, and great

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was their chagrin to find that their disdained rivals, the clever and democratic Dramatic Club, had held a special meeting and taken her in the afternoon before. Urania had not noticed that Katherine had been wearing the Dramatic Club pin a whole day because she had stuck it over a hole in her stocking which she did not have time to mend.

How the Winnebagos exulted because Hinpoha had been polite enough to invite her to the circus and she had consequently landed in their bosom the first thing! No other group of girls would ever know her as intimately as they would. The Camp Fire idea appealed to her from the start. The Open Door Lodge was a paradise for her. The ladder stairs were a constant source of delight.

"One would think you had never climbed a ladder before," said Hinpoha, watching curiously as Katherine climbed up and down and up again just for the fun of the thing. Katherine draped her feet around a rung to support herself and sat on the top bar.

"I never did," she said simply.

"Never climbed a ladder!" said Hinpoha incredulously. "Why, where did you live?"

"In Arkansas," answered Katherine significantly. "Do you know," she went on, "that until I came east I had never seen a flight of stairs? *I had never seen a flight of stairs!*" she repeated, as Hinpoha and the other girls in the Lodge gasped unbelievably. "We lived in a one-story house, the floor level with the ground, so you just walked in from the outside without going up steps. The house was in the middle of a big farm, as level and flat as this floor. I rode ten miles to school and that was built just like our house. Oh, of course I knew there were such things as stairs, because I had seen them in pictures, but until I came here I had never seen any."

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"But didn't you see any when you went traveling?" asked Hinpoha, still incredulous.

"Never went traveling," returned Katherine. "It took considerable hustling to stay right where we were. One year the locusts ate up everything, down to the clothes on the line, and we couldn't get enough feed to fatten the stock; the next year there were prairie fires that licked the earth as clean as a plate; one year the cattle all died of disease, and so on. It wasn't until this year that we came out ahead enough to send me here to school."

And when the girls heard what a hard time she had had they adored her more than ever because she could be so funny when she had had so little to be funny about.

Another thing that charmed her beyond measure was the color of the autumn leaves. The Winnebagos could hardly pull her past a tree. "There was only one tree in sight on our farm," she would tell them, "and that wasn't green like the trees are in the east; it was just a dusty, greenish gray. And the leaves didn't turn colors in the fall; they just withered up and dropped off. Oh-h-h, look at that one over there—isn't it just too gorgeous for words?"

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When we said that both teachers and pupils regarded Katherine as too good to be true, we should have made one exception. That exception was Miss Snively, the Senior Oratory teacher. Most of the teachers were liked by some scholars and disliked by some, according to disposition or circumstance; but all pupils agreed heartily that they did not like Miss Snively. She was neither old nor bad looking; in fact, she was rather handsome when you saw her for the first time, but she was so bitingly sarcastic that her classes stood in fear and trembling of being singled out for some poisoned shaft. Sarcasm and ridicule are the most deadly weapons to use against boys and girls of the high school age. They are not old enough to know how to come back, and can only nurse the smart and writhe impotently. And of all classes to have a sarcastic teacher, Senior Oratory is the worst. It is bad enough to stand up and make a speech with appropriate gestures before a sympathetic teacher who corrects diplomatically and never, never laughs, but to have one who eyes you coldly all the while and then gets up and does it the way you did, only ten times worse—more buckets of tears had been shed over Senior Oratory than all other subjects put together.

When Katherine entered the class Miss Snively took immediate exception to her voice. Miss Snively's particular hobby was Woman's Voice. Hers was high and artificially sweet—it fairly oozed syrup—and she did her level best to make her girl pupils imitate it. So when Katherine began reading in her husky nasal drawl, Miss Snively promptly read the piece after her, imitating her voice as best she could, and then looked around the room for the laughter of the pupils which would complete Katherine's mortification. But nobody laughed. They all sympathized with Katherine. They had been in her shoes themselves. The blood mounted to Katherine's temples when she realized that Miss Snively was deliberately making fun of her, and a hurt look came into her eyes. She was sensitive about her voice, even if she did get endless fun out of it. When Miss Snively handed her the book again and bade her in sarcastic tones to read further for the edification of the class, Katherine sat silent. To her horror she found there was a lump in her throat and she would most likely break down utterly if she tried to say a word. She did not mean to be stubborn—she was only waiting for control of her voice, for she was too proud to let Miss Snively see how badly she felt. So she sat silent, miserably twisting her handkerchief in her hands.

"Go back to your session room," said Miss Snively sharply, who boasted of her summary measures with her scholars. So Katherine left the room in disgrace. From that time on there was a marked antagonism between those two. Miss Snively lost no chance to make Katherine ridiculous in class, and, while Katherine had too much respect for teachers to openly defy her, she "took off" her affected manners to delighted audiences outside of class, and Miss Snively knew it and was powerless to stop it. But, outside of her skirmishes with Miss Snively, Katherine's progress through school was a triumphal march.

In every school, and Washington High was no

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exception, there will be found various elements—some good and some bad. Color rushes, which had given an annual vent to the mysterious feeling of hostility which always exists between junior and senior classes, had been abolished. But the feeling still existed, and manifested itself in various skirmishes. The year before, when the juniors gave their annual dance, the seniors carried away the refreshments. On the night of the senior dance the lights refused to work, and, of course, the juniors were at the bottom of the mystery. The principal, thinking rightly that pranks of this kind reflected little credit on his school, wrathfully declared that if any of the seniors attempted to spoil the juniors' party this year there would be trouble. But there were certain lawless spirits in the senior class who still thought pranks of that nature funny, and it was not long before plans were hatching as merrily as before. It was all very vague, what was going to be done and who was going to do it, but it was in the air, and everybody who was up on school affairs knew there was a storm brewing.

The first definite news came to the Winnebagos through Katherine. "I've been asked to a select party," she announced one night up in the Open Door Lodge, spreading her bony hands out before the blazing log on the hearth. "It's something like the Boston Tea Party," she went on.

"Must be going to be quite an affair," said Gladys, who was stirring fudge over the fire. "May we inquire where?"

"Oh, girls," said Katherine, with a serious face, "do you know what's in the wind? The Seniors are to put a lot of live mice through the windows in the middle of the Junior dance."

"The Seniors?" exclaimed Hinpoha and Gladys in one breath. "What Seniors?"

"Oh, Charlie Hughes and Eddie Myers and that bunch. You know the half dozen that go around together and call themselves the Clan? Well, those. They were mixed up in the business last year." Although Katherine was a newcomer in the school she was already well versed in its history.

"How did you find it out?" asked Hinpoha.

"Cora Burton told me." Cora was one of Katherine's devoted admirers and tried hard to be chummy with her, although Katherine did not care for her in the least. "Cora's a particular friend of Charlie Hughes, and she and some other girls are going along to see the fun. But she couldn't keep it secret and told me today and asked if I wanted to go along."

"Oh, Katherine, you're not going?" said Sahwah anxiously.

The disgusted expression on Katherine's face was answer enough.

"Hadn't we better tell some of the teachers?" asked Gladys, pausing in her stirring. "I wish Nyoda were here." Miss Kent had been called out of town on account of the death of an aunt and would be away until after the party.

"We ought to, I think," said Hinpoha.

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Katherine stood up beside the fireplace, and resting one elbow on the shelf humped her shoulders in her favorite attitude and began to speak. "Girls," she said, "this Junior-Senior business is going to be an awful mess, and the result will be that somebody will be expelled or not permitted to graduate. Students are going to take sides in the affair and there will be no end of hard feelings. I for one don't care to play the rôle of informer. So far we Winnebagos have kept entirely out of anything of this kind and wish we could get along without having any connection with this."

"But the teachers would never tell who told them," said Hinpoha.

"The teachers wouldn't," answered Katherine, "but Cora Burton would. And then maybe someone would say that I had been in the thing to start with and then grew afraid and told on the others. You know how those stories grow. Stay out of it altogether, say I, and avoid publicity."

"But don't you think it's our duty to try and stop such horrid pranks?" asked Hinpoha doubtfully.

"I certainly do," said Katherine, "and if we were the only ones who suspected anything it would be different. But all the teachers know that something is going to happen and they will be on the lookout. And the Juniors know it also, and they will be on their guard. I doubt very much if those mice ever get into the room, even if we keep silent."

And the Winnebagos, remembering Hinpoha's sad experience the year before, decided that it was perhaps better after all to keep out of the affair altogether.

"I thought you'd see it my way after you'd considered all sides," said Katherine, reaching out her long fingers and taking three pieces of fudge off the plate where it was cooling, "but that isn't what I wanted to talk about tonight. It's Cora Burton that bothers me. She isn't a bad sort of girl, and I can't see why she should want to get mixed up in that sort of thing, especially when there's bound to be trouble later. If she were to be seen with those boys Friday night it would go hard with her. I suppose she thinks she's right in the swim being connected with a prank, because she isn't very popular otherwise. The other girls that are in it aren't ladylike and it's not much use getting after them, but Cora's different, somehow. I wish something could be done about it." And she crunched a piece of fudge between her teeth with violence.

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"We might get up a show that night and each one bring a friend, and you could invite Cora," suggested Sahwah. "Counter attraction, you know."

The suggestion was voted a good one and promptly acted upon. But Cora declined Katherine's cordial invitation. "What's to be done now?" asked Katherine of the hastily called meeting of the Winnebagos. "Our counter attraction didn't work."

"Girls," said Gladys solemnly, "I believe it's our

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duty to keep Cora away from that business somehow. If we were smart enough we'd find a way. I don't believe we ought to let the matter drop and say if she wants to get into trouble let her do it, it's none of our affair. It *is* our affair, because we're pledged to Give Service, and it would be doing Cora a great service to keep her out of this. If she's weak and we're strong we must hold her out of water. You remember what Dr. Harper said at the lecture about saving people from themselves. Well, I think we ought to save Cora from herself."

The phrase, "Save Cora from herself," sounded very fine to the ears of the Winnebagos, and they decided that Cora must be saved from herself at all costs. But how?

"I think I can manage it," said Katherine, who had been buried deep in thought all the while the last discussion was going on. "It'll be quite an undertaking, but the end justifies the means."

"Tell us," begged the girls.

"Why, it's this," said Katherine. "I shall tell Cora that I've changed my mind and want to go with her Friday night and will meet her on the corner of her street at eight o'clock. When I've met her I'll tell her that I left my purse up here and ask her to come along till I get it. You know she doesn't live very far from here. Once up here we'll keep her safely all evening. Oh, I know that holding people against their will isn't one of the rules of polite society, but in her case I think we're justified. She'll thank us for it before very long. And we'll try to make it pleasant for her. We'll give the show just as we intended and have a spread and her captivity won't seem long."

As there seemed no other way out of the difficulty, Katherine's plan was accepted.

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"It's working fine," she confided to the Winnebagos the next day. "Cora was tickled to pieces because I wanted to go with her. She agreed to meet me on the corner, as I suggested, and we're both going to wear green veils so we won't be recognized so easily. Hoop la!" and she did a double shuffle with her toes turned in down the aisle of the empty class room where the girls had gathered.

On Friday night the Winnebagos met early in the House of the Open Door. Mrs. Evans, Gladys' mother, was acting as leader tonight in the absence of Nyoda. She had been let into the secret about Cora and under the circumstances thought that their action was right. Cora lived with an old uncle, who was stone deaf and didn't care a rap what she did, so there was no use talking to her folks about it. Several girl friends of the Winnebagos were present, all having raptures over the decorations of the Lodge, and watching with interest the waving curtain in the corner, behind which Sahwah was making herself up as a Topsy for their entertainment later on. Gladys was making sandwiches in another corner and lamenting because the bread knife was broken half off, and was accusing Sahwah of prying bricks apart with it, when stealthy footsteps sounded on the walk below, together with the noise of the door being pushed back quietly. Gladys heard it and started nervously. She was beginning to feel rather embarrassed at the thought of meeting Cora

Burton, and wondered just how it would come out, anyway. She wished it were safely over.

Katherine and her prisoner seemed a long time in reaching the foot of the ladder. Did Cora suspect something, perhaps, and was refusing to mount? Gladys strained her ears to listen and thought she heard a smothered giggle from below, but she could not be sure. The next minute the lights flashed below and the patent signal knock of the Sandwiches sounded on the wall.

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"Here come the boys!" cried Hinpoha, hastening to answer the signal with a series of mystic thumps on the wall with the poker.

Then the Captain's voice sounded at the foot of the ladder. "How many of you are up there?"

"Five," answered Hinpoha, "and three guests."

"Is Miss Kent there?"

"No."

"What are you doing?"

"We're going to have a show. Want to come up?"

"Well, maybe, later," answered the Captain. "Won't you come down a minute? We've got something to show you." And again Gladys thought she heard a smothered giggle from below stairs.

The girls trooped down the ladder, Sahwah running out with her face blackened and her hair in tiny pigtailed, to see what the excitement was about. All seven of the Sandwiches stood there with sparkling eyes and prenatually solemn faces. On the floor stood a good-sized box.

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"What's in the box?" asked Sahwah.

"Oh, nothing," answered the Captain, trying to speak indifferently.

"There is too, something," said Sahwah, looking critically at the express tags fastened to it. "Oh, I know what is is," she cried, suddenly jumping up and clapping her hands in glee. "Your uncle in Boston has sent you the electric motor he promised you!"

The Captain tried to look indifferent and failed utterly. His lips would twitch into a smile in spite of all he could do.

"Do open it and let us see it," said Hinpoha, and all the girls crowded closely around.

"You may have the honor, Miss Brewster," said the Captain, bowing formally to Sahwah. The nails had been drawn and all Sahwah had to do was lift off the cover of the box, which she did with a great flourish. The next moment the girls sprang back in dismay and scattered wildly. The box was full of live mice, which jumped out and ran in all directions. Screaming at the tops of their voices the girls fled toward the ladder and crowded up as fast as they could go. Sahwah jumped for the swinging rings, which hung from the ceiling of the barn, and dangled safely in mid-air, making horrible faces at the Captain, at which he laughed uproariously. Sahwah and the

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Captain were always playing tricks on each other and this time she had to admit that he had scored heavily. So the Captain jeered and Sahwah vowed vengeance and the other Sandwiches stood around and laughed until their sides ached, for Sahwah, with blackened face and Topsy braids, hanging in the rings and sputtering, was the funniest sight imaginable.

"Joke's over now, boys," said the Captain, when the mice had run around the barn for several minutes. "We've had enough of a good thing. Let's catch them and put them back into the box."

The girls above sat around the ladder opening and watched the proceedings.

"Wherever did you get so many mice, boys?" asked Mrs. Evans.

"We found them," said the Captain, "all boxed up, just like this, They were right out in the middle of that field over there. We were on the way over here and saw the box and looked in. When we saw what it was we thought we could play a joke on the girls. So we brought them along. Looks as though someone had fixed them that way for a joke. Probably were going to send them by express. They were in an express box, although it was not nailed shut."

The girls began to look at one another significantly. The same thought came into all their minds at once. Were not these the mice that were to attend the Junior party?

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"The joke is on the Seniors, after all," said Hinpoha.

"What do you mean?" asked the boys. "The joke is on the Seniors?"

"Shall we tell them?" asked Hinpoha.

"I don't see any harm now," said Gladys. "The scheme has collapsed like a pricked balloon."

And they told the Sandwiches what they knew about the plot of the Senior boys to interrupt the Junior party.

"Wasn't such a bad idea to try to play a joke on you girls after all, was it?" said the Captain. "Because if we hadn't done it we wouldn't have nipped their little scheme in the bud. We'll play lots more jokes on them, won't we, Slim? Don't you girls think you ought to invite us up to supper to celebrate?"

"Not until the last mouse is back in the box," said Gladys firmly.

The boys worked hard to catch them again and the girls sat above and cheered their efforts, and in the middle of it in came Katherine and her companion, swathed in green veils. There was such an uproar in the barn that Cora never noticed that Katherine locked the door and put the key in her pocket. Cora gave a great start at the sight of the mice, which was not all from fright, and the girls could not help enjoying the situation. What must be her thoughts by this time? But Cora, obeying the natural impulse of women at the sight of mice, fled up the ladder with Katherine. If she thought it odd that the barn was full of girls and boys when she had

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gained the impression that it was empty and dark, she made no sign, but stood still with her veil over her face. With all those horrible creatures running around the floor downstairs she made no move to escape.

“Won’t you take off your things?” asked Katherine, beginning gently to break the news to Cora that she was to stay for the evening. Without demur Cora unfastened her coat and slid it off and then took off her hat and veil. The girls stood as if turned to stone. The person who stood before them was not Cora Burton. It was Miss Snively. *It was Miss Snively!*

She looked around her with a sneering smile and a snapping light in her eyes. “You may think it was a master stroke on your part to lure me here and lock me in so I could not join the conspirators and thus find out who they were,” she said with biting emphasis. “But you shall pay dearly for this, my young friends. I know who you all are—you needn’t try to hide behinds the others, Gladys Evans—and the information I shall be able to give Mr. Jackson tonight is what he has been trying to find out for a long time. Katherine Adams, you are the ringleader of this affair, as we might have expected. I know all about the plan to put the mice into the dance hall, and while the boys downstairs who are getting them ready are not the ones I should have expected to be doing it, it is just like you to get strange boys to do it for you, hoping to get away unsuspected. But it didn’t work, I am happy to say. You are very clever, Miss Adams, but not clever enough. I overheard you asking Cora Burton to meet you on the corner this evening. I took the liberty of being there first. I thought I had deceived you perfectly, not knowing that you were bringing me right into the mouse’s nest, so to speak.”

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She paused for breath and looked around her with an expression of relish at the consternation visible on the faces before her. For Katherine was staring at her with startled, unbelieving eyes; Gladys was clutching her mother’s arm in a frightened manner; Hinpoha had sunk weakly down on the bearskin bed, and Sahwah stood with her mouth open and the perspiration running down her face in black streaks, and the others were dumb with astonishment. The boys, not knowing just what was going on, but guessing that something was the matter, stood by the ladder opening, silently taking in the scene. The girls looked helplessly into each other’s eyes. Somebody must speak and explain. They all looked at Katherine.

“But we aren’t mixed up in the House Party at all, Miss Snively,” she said earnestly. “We heard about it, and I found out that Cora Burton was going to be in it and I tried to make her stay home and she refused, so we girls decided we would take action to take her out of it by luring her up here and keeping her until the thing was over. That’s why I asked Cora to meet me on the corner, and I really thought you were Cora all the while. You imitated her squeaky voice to perfection.”

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As Katherine was telling her perfectly truthful story she had a dreadful feeling that it didn’t sound plausible at all. Under Miss Snively’s cold eye nothing seemed real.

"Likely story!" said Miss Snively sneeringly. "And how does it happen that if you wanted to bring Cora out of temptation you should take her to the place where the mice were being boxed up ready to be taken to the party?" All the girls looked so disconcerted. Those dreadful mice did complicate matters so! They would have given anything if Nyoda had been there then.

The Captain was beginning to take in the situation. He came forward frankly. "It's our fault about the mice," he said, looking Miss Snively straight in the eye. "We found them in a field near here all boxed up and thought it would be a good joke on the girls to bring them over here and let them out. We don't know anything about your squabbles at Washington High, except what little the girls here have told us; we're all from Carnegie Mechanic. And we know the girls didn't have a hand in it, because they were giving a show here to-night."

His story was backed up by all the other boys, and then Mrs. Evans got in a word and declared that Katherine was telling the whole truth about Cora, and Miss Snively was forced, however ungraciously, to admit that she had been mistaken in her suspicions.

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"If she'd been a man I'd have made her eat her words," declared Slim wrathfully, after Miss Snively had departed from the scene.

Mrs. Evans and Gladys, with perfect courtesy, offered to drive her home in their car, and for the present oil was poured on the troubled waters.

Katherine sat hunched gloomily before the fire and held-forth to the Winnebagos. "I don't know whether the joke's on her or on us," she said pessimistically; "but one thing I'm sure of, and that is, that never, never, as long as I live, will I ever again try to save a girl from herself."

And the Winnebagos wearily agreed with her.

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CHAPTER VII

AN ADVENTURE IN PHILANTHROPY

Katherine became officially a member of the Winnebago Camp Fire Group at the first Ceremonial after the circus, with the Fire Name of Iagoonah, the Story Maker. The name itself was an accident and the manner of its bestowing is cherished in the chronicles of the Winnebagos as one of the group's best jokes. Just about the time Katherine was to be installed as a Winnebago, word was received that the Chief Guardian of the city was going to be present at the meeting and would take charge of the Ceremonial. Katherine had chosen the name, "Prairie Dandelion," because she came from the plains, and because her hair was so fly-away. During the supper which preceded the Ceremonial meeting Katherine made such funny speeches and told such outrageous yarns about her life in the West that Nyoda said jestingly: "Your name ought to be Iagoo, the Marvellous Story Teller." And the others began calling her Iagoo in fun. The Chief Guardian heard them calling her Iagoo and supposed that was the

Camp Fire name she wished to take. So, when she was receiving Katherine into the ranks, she said: "Your name is Iagoo, isn't it?"

Katherine, sobered and almost voiceless from the solemnity of the occasion, mumbled half-inarticulately, "Iagoo? Nah!"

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And before anyone knew what had happened she had been officially installed as *Iagoonah*! The joke was so good that the name stuck, and Katherine was known to the Winnebago Circle as Iagoonah to the end of the chapter, although they did consent to change the interpretation to Story Maker instead of Story Teller as being more dignified and not so suggestive.

Katherine was one of the most enthusiastic Camp Fire Girls that ever lived, and her inspirations led the girls into more activities and adventures than they had ever dreamed of before. It was Katherine who started the Philanthropic Idea. They had been talking about the different things Camp Fire Girls could do together for the good of the community.

"Girls," said Katherine, standing in her favorite attitude beside the fireplace, with her toes turned in and her elbow on the shelf, "I don't believe we're doing all we ought. We're having a royal good time among ourselves and learning no end of things to our own advantage, but what are we doing for others? Nothing, that I can see."

"We gave a Thanksgiving basket to Katie, the laundress," said Hinpoha, "and we collected a barrel of clothes for the Shimky's when their house burned down, and we gave a benefit performance to pay little Jane Goldman's expenses in the hospital, and we send toys and scrapbooks to the Sunshine Nursery every Christmas."

"And I earned three dollars and gave it to the Red Cross," said Sahwah. "Don't you call that doing something for other people? We haven't meant to be selfish, I'm sure. By the way, Katherine, your elbow's in the fudge."

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Katherine shoved the dish away absently and returned to her subject. "Yes," she admitted, "the Winnebagos have done a great deal that way, but it's all been *giving* something. We haven't *done* anything. It's easy enough to pack a basket and hand it to someone, and collect a lot of old clothes from people who are anxious to get rid of them anyway, or pay the bill for somebody else to do something. But I think we ought to do something ourselves—give up our own time and put our own touch into it."

"What do you mean we should do?" asked Gladys, hunting through the dish for a piece of fudge that had not been demolished by Katherine's elbow.

"Well, there's the Foreign Settlement," said Katherine. "I'm sure we could find something to do there. It's a grand and noble thing to show the foreigners how to live better." And she launched into such an eloquent plea in behalf of the poor overburdened washerwomen who had to neglect their babies while they went to work that the girls wiped their eyes and declared it was a cruel world and things weren't fairly

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divided, and surely they must do what they could to lighten the burdens of their sisters in the Settlement.

"What will we do, and when will we do it?" asked Hinpoha, all on fire to get the noble work started.

"Tomorrow's Saturday," answered Katherine. "We ought to go out into the Settlement and see what's to be done. We'll make a survey, sort of, and then we'll step in and see where we're needed most."

Nyoda, appealed to for advice, told them to go ahead. She liked the idea of their trying to find out for themselves what needed a helping hand. She could not go with them to the Settlement on Saturday morning, but it was all right for them to go by themselves in daylight.

So, full of a generous desire to help somebody else, the Winnebagos followed Katherine's lead toward the Settlement the next day. The Settlement, as it was called, embraced some three or four square miles of land adjacent to several large factories. In it dwelt some few thousand Slovaks, Poles and Bohemians, packed like sardines in narrow quarters. The Settlement had its own churches, stores, schools, theaters, dance halls and amusement gardens, and looked more like an old world city than a section of a great American Metropolis, with its queer houses and signs in every language but English. The girls wandered up and down the narrow dirty streets, filled with chickens and children, and tried to decide what they should do first. They met the village baker, carrying a washbasket full of enormous round loaves of rye bread without a sign of a wrapping. He was going from house to house, delivering the loaves, and if no one came to the door he laid the loaf on the doorstep and went on.

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Before one house, which had a small front yard, between twenty and twenty-five men were lounging on the steps, on the two benches and against the fence. "What do you suppose all those men are doing in front of that house?" whispered Hinpoha curiously.

Just then a woman came from the house carrying in her hand a huge iron frying-pan full of pancakes. She passed it around and each man took a pancake in his hand and ate it where he stood.

"They're having their dinner!" exclaimed Gladys. "It's just a little past noon. That's one way of disposing of the dishwashing problem. I'll store up that idea for use the next time it's my turn to cook supper at a meeting. What a large family that woman has, though. I wonder if they are all her husbands?"

"Gracious no," said Katherine. "These people aren't poly—poly—you know what I mean, even if they are foreigners. Those men are boarders. Every family has some. Let's go into that big house over there and ask if there are any babies the mothers would like to leave with us while they go washing."

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They picked their way across the muddy road toward a large building which opened right on to the sidewalk. The hall door stood open and they

went in. There were more than a dozen doors leading from the hall on the first floor. "Gracious, what a number of people live here!" said Gladys, putting her arm through Katherine's.

While they stood there, trying to make up their minds at which door to knock, one was opened and a barefooted woman came out, carrying a pan of dishwater, which she threw out on the sidewalk. At the same time another door opened and out came another woman, who stopped short when she saw the first one, and began to talk in a harsh foreign tongue. The second woman replied angrily and the girls could see that they were quarreling. Before long they were shaking fists in front of each other's noses and shouting at the tops of their voices. Doors everywhere flew open and the hall was soon filled with excited women who took sides with one or the other and shook fists at each other while the girls huddled under the stairway, expecting to be set upon and beaten. The quarrel was waxing more violent, when the girls spied a door at the end of a hallway which had been opened to let in some of the shouting women. As quickly and as quietly as they could they darted down this passageway and out of the door which brought them into the back yard of the place. Terrified, they fled up the street and stood on the corner, discouraged and irresolute. Hinpoha was for going home right away. But Katherine talked her out of it.

"Let's go up to the Neighborhood Mission on the hill and ask them for something to do," suggested Katherine, when the rest inquired what they should do next. So they turned their footsteps toward the white building at the end of the street.

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"If you really want to do something," said the mission worker to whom they explained their errand, "come down here next Saturday morning and help take care of the children that are left with us. Two of the nurses will be away and we will be short-handed."

The Winnebagos were charmed with the idea. "Oh, may we each take one home for the day?" begged Katherine, "if we promise to bring them back all right?"

Permission was granted for the next Saturday and Katherine was jubilant over the good beginning of their work. "I thought it best that we each take one home and take care of it by ourselves," she explained. "We'll have such fun telling experiences and comparing notes afterward."

Promptly at nine o'clock the next Saturday morning the four Winnebagos, Katherine, Gladys, Hinpoha and Sahwah, presented themselves at the Neighborhood Mission and drove away ten minutes later in Gladys' automobile, each with a youngster in tow.

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At eight that night there was a lively experience meeting in the House of the Open Door. "Oh, girls, you never saw such a dirty baby as the one I had," cried Gladys, with a little shiver of disgust at the remembrance.

"It couldn't have been any worse than the one I had," broke in Hinpoha.

"But I gave him a bath," said Gladys, with a satisfied air, "and put all new clothes on him, and he was as sweet as a rose when I took him home."

"Mine beat them all," said Katherine, when she was able to get in a word edgewise. "He had a little fur tail of some kind tied around his neck on a string. I suppose it was meant for a 'pacifier,' for he was sucking it all the while."

"Why, mine had one of those on, too," said Gladys.

"So did mine," said Hinpoha.

"There must have been a million germs on it," continued Katherine. "I took it off and burned it up."

"So did I," said Gladys.

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"So did I," echoed Hinpoha.

After all things were talked over the Winnebagos decided that they had done pretty good work that day in cleaning up the dirty babies and unanimously voted to take them again the next Saturday.

When they arrived at the Neighborhood Mission the next Saturday morning they were met on the walk by half a dozen excited women with handkerchiefs on their heads, who formed a circle around them, shouting in a foreign tongue and making fierce gestures.

"What is the matter? What are they saying?" gasped Hinpoha in terror to Katherine, struggling to pull away from the hand that was clutching her coat lapel.

"I don't know," answered Katherine, completely at sea and vainly trying to understand the gibberish that was being uttered by the brown-skinned woman dancing up and down before her.

A startled group of workers ran from the Mission to see what the trouble was, and, forcing themselves through the circle, drew the frightened girls inside the fence of the Mission. Then from the group of women outside there arose a voice in broken English, demanding angrily: "Where is the charm that hung on the neck of my Stefan? The charm to keep away the fever and the sore eyes? I give you my boy to watch, you steal away the charm. Give it back! Give it back!" Here the angry shouting and gesticulating began again and threatening hands were waved over the fence.

"What does she mean?" asked Hinpoha. "What charm?"

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"We didn't steal any charms," said Katherine indignantly. "We didn't take a thing off the babies except some dirty old rabbits' tails that were full of germs. We burned them up, and a good thing it was, too."

Here the angry shouts of the women gave way to wails of despair. "They burned the rabbits' tails!" groaned one woman, who could talk English, lifting her hands heavenward, "the rabbits' tails that the Wonder Woman tied about their necks on Easter Sunday! Now Stefan will

get the fever and the sore eyes and the teeth will not come through!" And she beat her breast in despair. Then her anger blazed forth again and she fell to berating the girls in her own language, and the other women fell in with her until there was a perfect hubbub. The workers at the Mission hustled the girls inside the building and the women finally departed, shaking fists at the Mission and raging at all the dwellers.

"It was nothing but a dirty old rabbit's tail," declared Hinpoha tearfully, as the shaken Winnebagos hastened homeward. "I hate foreigners! I guess we'll never try to do anything for them again."

"Oh, yes, we will," answered Katherine optimistically; "we'll learn not to make mistakes in time."

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"Look at that donkey over there," said Sahwah. "Doesn't he remind you of Sandhelo?"

"Poor old Sandhelo," mourned Hinpoha. "I wonder what became of him? We certainly had fun with him, even if he never would go unless he heard music."

"Seems to be characteristic of the donkey tribe not to want to go," observed Katherine. "That one over there is balking, too. Doesn't the fellow that's trying to drive him look like a pirate, though? I wouldn't go for him either, if I were a donkey."

"O look!" cried Sahwah in amazement, and they all stopped still.

A small boy was coming down the street blowing lustily on a wheezy horn, and as soon as the donkey heard it he wheeled around, facing the music, pricked up his ears, uttered a squeal of rapture and rose up on his hind legs, almost upsetting the queer little cart to which he was harnessed.

"Katherine! I do believe it *is* Sandhelo," cried Sahwah, excitedly gripping Katherine's arm.

The man sprang from the cart and seizing the donkey by the bit brought him down to earth with a rough pull that almost jerked his head off, shouting abuse at him in a foreign tongue. The little boy, frightened at the uproar, ran away, taking his music with him. The man got into the cart again and tried to drive away. The donkey refused to move. The man began to beat him unmercifully.

"Oh, girls, we must do something to stop him!" cried Hinpoha, hopping up and down in distress.

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"Here, you, stop that!" shouted Katherine, running forward and waving her muff at him threateningly. "I'll have the law on you!" The man either did not understand, or did not care, for he paid not the slightest heed to her words. "Stop it, stop it, I say!" she commanded, stamping her foot angrily and wildly wishing she were a man, that she might beat this bully even as he was beating the poor little beast.

The man looked at her and grinned derisively. "Who says so?" he growled.

"I say so!" said a voice behind Katherine, and she turned to see the Captain standing beside

her. "You stop beating that donkey or I'll punch your head." He put his fingers to his lips and uttered a long shrill whistle which the girls recognized as the call of the Sandwiches, and the next minute the other boys came running up the side street, Bottomless Pitt, Monkey, Dan, Peter and Harry, with Slim trailing along in the rear, puffing violently in his efforts to keep up with the rest. They surrounded the cart threateningly and the man sulkily left off beating the donkey.

Sahwah went forward and stroked the little animal's head and then she uttered a triumphant cry.

"It *is* Sandhelo!" she exclaimed. "Here's part of his red, white and blue cockade still sticking in his hair."

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"That's our donkey," cried all the girls and boys, pressing close around. "Where did you get him?"

"He is not," declared the man angrily. "I raise him myself since he was young."

"That is not true," said Sahwah shrewdly. "If you had had him very long you would know how to make him go. It seems to me that this is the first time you've ever tried to drive him."

"He is mine, he is mine," declared the man. "I know how to make him go. He always go for me."

"Then make him go," said Sahwah coolly.

The man tried to urge the donkey forward, but in vain.

"Now, *we'll* show you how to make him go," said Sahwah. "Where's that boy with the horn?" She ran up the street a distance and found the boy seated on a doorstep and bribed him with a few pennies to let her take the horn. Then, walking along ahead of Sandhelo she played a half dozen lively notes, such as had sent him flying round the circus ring. No sooner had she started than he started at a great rate. When she stopped he stopped.

"It's Sandhelo without mistake," they all cried, and the last doubt vanished when he came up alongside of Sahwah and laid his head on her shoulder the way he always had done.

"He belongs to us," said the Captain, looking the man in the eye, "and you'll have to give him up."

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The man shifted his gaze. "I give him to you for five dollar," he muttered. "I pay so much for him."

"Not much," said the Captain. "Nobody sold you a donkey for five dollars and you can't get that much out of us. Now you either give him to us or we'll report it to the police." The man protested loudly, but he was evidently thinking all the while that a donkey that only went when he heard music was not such a good bargain after all, even if he did get it by the simple and inexpensive method of finding it in his dooryard and tying it up. So, after growling some more that they were robbing him, he suffered Sandhelo to be unharnessed from the cart and led away in triumph in the wake of the horn.

"Well, our charitable enterprise didn't turn out so badly, after all," said Katherine, when Sandhelo was once more established in his cozy stall in the House of the Open Door. "If it hadn't been for that fuss about the babies we wouldn't have been on the street in time to see Sandhelo. And if we hadn't wanted to help those people there wouldn't have been any fuss. It does really seem that virtue is its own reward and one good turn deserves another. Let's do it some more."

And as usual the others agreed with her.

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CHAPTER VIII

A SELECT SLEEPING PARTY

"Gracious, Katherine, what is the matter with your fingers?" asked Gladys curiously, as Katherine came into the room with all five fingers on her right hand tied up.

"Oh," replied Katherine cheerfully, "I burned one, cut one, pounded one with a hammer and slammed the door on one, and that left only one good one, so I tied that up, too, for safe-keeping and only take it out when I want to use it. It's a good thing I don't need my hand to sing carols with, or I would be out of the running. Are we all here?"

"All but Veronica," answered Nyoda, "and Sahwah—and Sahwah will be here presently. By the way, where is Veronica?"

"She's over at the theater where her uncle is orchestra director," answered Gladys. "She goes over there almost every Saturday afternoon. I believe she plays sometimes when one of the regular violinists is absent."

Veronica, it must be confessed, was a great puzzle to the Winnebagos. Try as they might, they could never get her to enter into their work and fun with any degree of vim. She always sat aloof, her brooding eyes staring off into space. Not that they loved her any the less—they were too genuinely sorry for her—but they never seemed to be able to break down the barrier between them and her. They constantly stood abashed before her aristocratic airs. When the friends went together to get ice cream Veronica had a way of flinging a dollar bill down on the table and bidding the waitress keep the change that made the others feel cheap somehow, although they knew it was useless extravagance. When a poor woman came to the door one day, just as she was going out, and asked if she had any old clothes to give away she promptly took off her expensive furs and gave them to her.

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The girls were mightily impressed by this act until Nyoda talked it over with them and made them see that the gift was entirely inappropriate. So while they admired her to distraction and each one secretly hoped that Veronica would single her out as a special friend, they had to admit that as yet they had not made much headway.

"If Sahwah doesn't come in five minutes, we'll have to start without her," said Hinpoha, walking impatiently to the window. "Carol

practice begins at two and it's half-past one now."

Just then the telephone rang. "It's Sahwah," reported Hinpoha, upon answering, "and she says she's got a real charity case for us to look into—some old woman—and she's down at Sahwah's house now and we should all come down. She says it's the saddest thing she ever heard. What shall we do, girls, shall we go?"

"Of course," said Katherine promptly.

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"What about carol practice?" asked Gladys. "Won't it make us dreadfully late?"

"We'll just have to be late, then," said Katherine, jabbing her hatpins in swiftly. "Come on."

Sahwah met them at the door with an unusually solemn countenance. "You're a load of bricks to come, girls," she said, "but I knew you would. Come right upstairs. In here," she said, pausing before the door of her room. "Maybe you'd better go in one at a time. You go first, Hinpoha."

Hinpoha, feeling queer, passed in. The next minute those outside heard a great shout. "Migwan! My Migwan! When did you come? We thought you weren't coming for two whole days yet. Sahwah, you wretch, how could you get us so worked up?"

The others burst in and smothered Migwan in embraces while Katherine stood looking on curiously, until Gladys remembered her manners. "This is our Katherine," she said, drawing her forward, "that we have all written you about. Make a speech, Katherine, to show her how you do it!"

And Katherine obligingly complied and Migwan laughed extravagantly and was soon sitting on the bed beside her with her arm locked in hers, and talking to her as if she had known her all her life instead of only five minutes. That was the effect Katherine had on everybody.

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Then they dragged Migwan out to the House of the Open Door and introduced her to the Sandwiches, who were playing basket ball in their half of the barn. The Sandwiches began to plan a Christmas barn dance in her honor on the spot, and nobody thought of carol practice again until it was too late to go. Migwan had to explain how she got through with her work at college two days earlier than she had expected and came home to surprise them. She went to see Sahwah first and Sahwah worked the little stratagem which brought them all down to her house in such a hurry. Each one insisted upon Migwan's going home with her to spend the night, but she could not be enticed away from her own home. "I guess you'd want to stay at home, too, if you hadn't seen your mother for three months." But she promised to attend a select sleeping party some night up in the House of the Open Door, which Sahwah had just "germed."

"There's a loose shingle on the roof and the snow comes in a little," said Hinpoha regretfully. "It really ought to be fixed."

"Never mind the shingle," cried the others.

"When did the Winnebagos ever balk at a snowflake or two on their beds?"

The barn dance was a grand success in spite of the fact that Slim fell down the ladder in his excitement and sprained all the portions of his anatomy that he needed most for dancing, besides demolishing a frosted cake in the tumble.

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"Too bad you can't dance," said the Captain sympathetically, when Slim's ankles had been strapped with plaster and he had been comfortably settled on a pile of bearskins brought down from the bed upstairs. "But you don't need to waste your time. You can be musician and play the banjo while the rest of us dance."

"But I can't play the banjo," objected Slim.

"Play anyway," commanded the Captain. "Here, I'll teach you a couple of tunes that you can play with one finger that we can do most of the dances to." So Slim learned to play the banjo under pressure and picked banefully away while the rest whirled about on the floor. Sometimes he got his tunes or his time so badly mixed that it was impossible to dance and then the Captain would make him sing and beat time with a hatchet on the floor. Finally Nyoda took pity on him and took over the banjo, producing such lively strains and keeping the dancers going at such a mad pace that they sank down breathless one by one, and a series of loud thumps from Sandhelo's stall told them that he was also capering to the music and nearly battering his stall down in the process.

The boys went home reluctantly at eleven o'clock and the girls climbed the ladder to the joys of the "select sleeping party." This was the first time any of them had stayed all night in the House of the Open Door. "Covers were laid for nine," as Katherine wrote in the Count Book. Nyoda had her camp bed, Sahwah had her pile of bearskins, Gladys her Indian Bed and Nakwisi her willow bed. Migwan was invited to share them all and chose the bearskins. Katherine had brought a couch hammock, which she declared surpassed them all in comfort. The rest of the girls played John Kempo for the privilege of sleeping with Nyoda, and Veronica got it, and the other two spread their blankets on mattresses on the floor. The fireplace was filled with glowing hard coals, which would keep all night, and the Lodge was as warm as toast, so the snowflakes which drifted in through the hole in the roof were never noticed. Of course they talked half the night, for there was so much to tell Migwan and so much she had to tell them it seemed they never would get it all told. But finally the conversation was punctuated by steadily lengthening yawns, and then trailed off into silence.

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Nyoda was awakened by the touch of a cold hand on her face. "What is it?" she asked, sitting up.

"It's I—Migwan," said the figure standing beside her. "Do you know where Sahwah is?"

"Isn't she in bed with you?" asked Nyoda, still in a low tone of voice, so as not to disturb the other girls.

"No, she isn't," whispered Migwan. "I woke up a minute ago and felt around for her and she wasn't there. I called and asked where she was and there was no answer."

Nyoda got up and lit a candle, and looked carefully around the room. All the other girls were sound asleep in their beds; Sahwah's clothes lay on a chair, but there was no sign of Sahwah. "She can't be under the bed," said Migwan, "because this bed has no 'under.'"

Nyoda went to the top of the ladder and called: "Sahwah, are you down there?" No answer. All was dark and silent below. When it was evident that Sahwah was not in the barn, Nyoda roused all the sleepers unceremoniously.

"What's the matter? What's happened?" they all cried sleepily. There was a great uproar when Sahwah's disappearance became known. "Where could she have gone without her clothes?" they all asked.

"Do you think she was dragged from her bed, Nyoda?" asked Hinpoha anxiously, filled with the wildest fears.

"No, I don't," answered Nyoda promptly, suddenly remembering certain facts in Sahwah's history. "I think she's walking in her sleep again. She always does when she gets excited. She's probably gotten out of the barn and is wandering around somewhere and we must find her and bring her in without delay. This is altogether too cold a night to be promenading without a coat on." She had dressed herself fully while she was talking and the others followed suit with all speed.

The barn door was carefully closed, but the big inside bolt was unfastened and they knew by that that Sahwah was outside somewhere. The wind had swept the snow off the drive and there was not a footprint to be seen. They spent some time looking all around the barn and up on the roof and then concluded that she must have gone down the drive, because, if she had gone anywhere else, there would be footprints. The snow in the road had been so packed down by passing vehicles that a person walking would leave no trace.

"Where can she be?" exclaimed Nyoda anxiously after a fruitless search of some ten minutes.

"Do you think she could have climbed a tree?" asked Hinpoha.

"And be roosting on a branch?" asked Katherine, and they all had to laugh in spite of their concern.

"Well, you never can tell what Sahwah will do next," returned Hinpoha, "especially in her sleep. You haven't known her as long as we have. Once in camp she climbed to the top of the diving tower and jumped off. So I guess climbing a tree wouldn't be impossible for her."

"Hark, girls," said Nyoda, bending her head in a listening attitude. "Don't you hear music?" The others listened, but could hear nothing. "When that breath of wind came in this direction I thought I heard it," said Nyoda. "There it is, again." This time they all heard it, faint and far,

a soft strain of music, but what kind of music or whence it came they could not make out.

"It came with the wind," said Nyoda, "so we must walk against the wind and see if we can find it." Heading into the wind they walked up the road. They shivered as they walked and the snow crunched under their feet. The very moonlight seemed cold as it touched them and the stars glistened like splintered icicles. Verily, it was a cold night to be sleepwalking. The music began to sound more clearly now, and at a turn in the road they stopped still in amazement at the sight before their eyes. There in the road just ahead of them ambled Sandhelo, and by his side walked Sahwah, dressed in her troubadour costume, the red cloak flying out in the breeze. She held her mouth organ to her lips, and the drawing of her breath in and out of it was producing the strains of music which the girls had followed. As they suspected, she was sound asleep. They hurried forward to waken Sahwah, and she turned around and faced them. Her eyes were wide open in the moonlight. A moment she looked at them and then turned suddenly and swung herself onto Sandhelo's back. At her touch on his bridle Sandhelo started and then began running down the road as fast as he could. Sahwah woke up, gave one shriek of fright, and then mechanically dug her knees into his sides and hung on. Sandhelo did not have his regular harness on, only his bridle, and she was riding bareback in this strange adventure. The girls pursued as fast as they could, shouting at the top of their voices, but of course they were soon left behind. Far ahead of them in the moonlit road they saw Sandhelo stop suddenly and slide his rider over his head into a snowdrift and then sit down on his haunches beside her like a dog. Sahwah had emerged from her drift and was shaking the snow off when the others came up. "What's the matter?" she asked in a bewildered tone. "How did I get out here?"

"Home first, explanations afterward," said Nyoda, wrapping her in the bear rug she had brought with her. And they made Sahwah run every step of the way back to the Lodge, and swallow quarts of hot lemonade before they would tell her a single thing.

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Migwan insisted on tying Sahwah's foot to the post of Nyoda's bed for the rest of the night to insure her being there in the morning. They had just gotten quieted down when the ropes of Katherine's hammock broke and down she came with a resounding crash.

Morning found them heavy-eyed and full of yawns, but to all inquirers they stoutly maintained that the select sleeping party had been the best ever.

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CHAPTER IX

THE CANDLE IN THE WINDOW

"What's all this about singing carols?" asked Migwan. "Everywhere I go the talk is all of carols, carols, carols. And the air is full of 'God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen,' and similar melodies."

"It's the Music Club League," explained Gladys. "They have revived the old custom of going through the streets on Christmas Eve with lanterns and singing carols, and are training the boys and girls all over the city to sing them. People who are interested in the work of the Music Club League and wish to give a gift of money for its support will put a candle in their windows and we will stop outside and sing carols for them. Isn't it a pretty idea?"

"Beautiful," said Migwan. "I wish I might have attended the rehearsals so I could go around with you."

"We'll teach you the carols," said Gladys eagerly, "and I'll explain to Miss Jones and I know she'll let you be in our group. We've been given one of the best districts in the city—Garfield Avenue, from the Cathedral to the Park, where all the rich people live—and we expect to bring in more money than any other group. There was great rivalry among the groups for that district, and Miss Jones tested and tested us to see which sang the best. I nearly passed away from surprise when she decided in favor of our group. Oh, won't it be glorious, though, stopping before all those fine houses?" and Gladys and Hinpoha, unable to keep still any longer, got up and began to dance.

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"That isn't the best part of it, though," said Sahwah. "All the carolers are invited to the Music League's clubhouse after the singing is over for an oyster supper and a frolic. And the troupe of midgets that are playing in the Mansfield Theater this week are coming and will give a real Punch and Judy show. Hurrah for the Music Club League! Hurrah for carols! Hurrah for Christmas!"

"I smell something burning," said Gladys, sniffing the air suspiciously.

"It's probably something that has been spilled on the stove," said Katherine serenely. They were all up at Katherine's house.

"Here are the carols we are going to sing," said Gladys, pulling Migwan toward the piano. "We might as well begin at once."

"Do you really think Miss Jones will let me do it?" asked Migwan rather doubtfully.

"I'm sure she will," said Gladys, "if we all—Katherine, there *is* something burning; it smells like cloth." And she rushed off unceremoniously to investigate. The kitchen was full of smoke when she reached it, proceeding from the ironing board, where Katherine had left the electric iron standing without being turned off.

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"You ought to have a leather medal, Katherine," scolded Hinpoha, switching off the current and setting the smoking board outside the back door, while Katherine stood idly by with such a look of pained surprise on her face that the others went into gales of laughter.

"I can't get used to these self-starting, big city flat-irons, nohow," she drawled mildly in self-defense. "Back where I come from the irons cool off when you leave them by themselves; here they start heatin' up." Katherine always left off her g's when she spoke earnestly.

"Katherine, you're hopeless," said Hinpoha with a sigh, and then she added affectionately, "that's why we love you so."

"There's Slim outside with his big bob-sled," said Sahwah, looking out of the window. "He promised to take us all coasting down College Hill this afternoon. Come on." And they trooped out.

Nyoda took a few round trips on the bob with the girls, and then, having other things to do, walked home by herself through the early winter twilight. A few blocks from her home she saw Veronica walking along just ahead of her. By her side walked a young man whom Nyoda recognized as Alex Tobin, one of the violins in the Temple Theater Orchestra. He was talking animatedly and earnestly to her, his white teeth showing often in a smile beneath his small black moustache. Veronica was listening eagerly with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. As Nyoda drew near she heard Veronica say: "Oh, a chance to study with him would be the greatest happiness of my life, but uncle would never allow it. Never!"

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And Alex Tobin answered: "Does it have to depend upon your uncle's permission? You have money in your own right, have you not?"

And then Veronica noticed that Nyoda was behind her and turned and spoke and Alex Tobin took his departure down the cross street. Nyoda looked after him thoughtfully. She was not fond of Alex Tobin, although she knew him only very slightly. He was a young Pole, and quite handsome, but there was something about his eyes that made a keen observer dislike him.

"I was at the rehearsal of the Symphony Orchestra this afternoon," said Veronica, with more animation than Nyoda had ever seen her display. "You know uncle plays this year and he lets me go along and listen, that I may benefit from the director's criticisms."

"Does Mr. Tobin play in the Symphony Orchestra, too?" asked Nyoda idly.

"Yes," answered Veronica. "He's a wonderful player; and so kind to me. He takes such an interest in my playing. He says I will play at concerts in time."

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"I don't doubt it in the least," said Nyoda heartily. "But you mustn't study music to the exclusion of everything else. You are growing quite thin. You must stay out of doors more and romp with the girls. You are missing all the coasting and skating. 'Hold on to Health,' you know."

"Yes, of course," murmured Veronica absently, and fell silent, as if she were day-dreaming.

"The Midgets are going to give Punch and Judy dolls to the carol singers as souvenirs of the occasion," announced Sahwah, as the Winnebagos assembled before starting out for the singing on Christmas Eve. "Won't they be jolly to put up in our rooms?"

"And did you know that Jeffry, the famous bird imitator, was going to be there and give some of

his wonderful bird calls?" asked Gladys. "Migwan, you're in luck, being home this week to take in all the good things."

"The frolic afterwards is going to be as much fun as the carol singing," said Hinpoha. "I wouldn't miss it for anything. And the group that brings in the most money is going to get a prize," she added, "and have its picture in the Sunday paper. Oh, I do hope we'll get the most! We must sing our very best."

"Oh, what a glorious night!" they all cried, as they passed out into the sparkling snow.

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"Oh, but I'm glad I'm a carol singer," said Katherine, and slipped and sat down on her lantern in her enthusiasm.

"Have you time to walk over to Division Street with me before we go to Mrs. Salisbury's?" asked Gladys, as they went down the street. Mrs. Salisbury was the lady who had gathered together the band of carolers to which the Winnebagos belonged, and they were all to meet at her house.

"It's early yet," said Hinpoha, "we ought to have time. Come on."

So they all went with Gladys to deliver a Christmas parcel to a poor family whom Gladys' mother had taken under her wing. Along the big avenues through which they walked candles were already glimmering in windows in friendly invitation to the coming singers. But there were no candles in the windows on Division Street. The houses were all poor little one-story ones, with never a wreath or a bit of decoration anywhere to show that it was Christmas. The very lamp-posts burned dimly with a discouraged air. The girls delivered their bundle and hastened back up the dark street.

"Let's stop a minute and sing the songs through once more so Migwan will be sure of them," suggested Hinpoha. "We wanted to before we left the house, you know, and then we forgot it."

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So they stood still before a bleak, empty looking house, and sang through all the songs they were to sing with the group that night on Garfield Avenue.

* * * * *

In a bare little room in the shabbiest house on Division Street a young girl lay in bed day after day, staring wistfully through the flawed window pane at the dingy row of houses opposite. She suffered from hip disease and could not walk, and a frail little mother cleaned offices to support them both. Living was cruelly high and there was no thought of spending anything for Christmas. Martha dreaded its coming, for she could remember other days when Christmas had been very different. Besides, Martha was very lonely. She and her mother were strangers in town, having come only six months before, and in all that time not a soul had come to see them. And because Martha felt so lonely and so left out of the busy, happy world, the treatment for which she had come to the city was doing her no good, and she was not improving at all. And her mother saw the trouble and sorrowed, but did not know how to mend the matter. Martha read

in books about the good times girls had together and longed with all her soul to be part of such frolics, until it seemed that she could not bear her loneliness any longer.

Her mother often brought home newspapers from the offices and in them Martha read about the groups of boys and girls who were going through the streets on Christmas Eve singing carols before the houses where the candles shone in the windows.

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"How I wish I could hear those carols sung!" she sighed enviously. "How wonderful it must be to be rich and live in a fine house and put a candle in the window to make the singers stop outside! And I must always stay in the darkness, and miss all the fun! Oh, Mother, it isn't fair!"

The sad-eyed little mother cast about in her mind for some way to amuse her lonely daughter this dreary Christmas Eve. "Let us pretend that we are rich and great," she said soothingly, "and play that we are putting a lighted candle in our window and listening to the fine songs of the singers below and giving them large sums of money for their good cause."

"What good would it do to play it?" asked Martha. "We would have to imagine it all. We haven't even a candle!"

"Let's play it, anyway," coaxed her mother. "What color candle shall we use tonight?"

"A red one, with gold designs on it, and a cut glass candlestick," said Martha, playing the game to please her mother.

So they pretended to set a shining glass candlestick holding a red and gold candle on the window sill. "Now we must wait awhile in our elegant parlor for the singers to come," said her mother, playing the game with spirit.

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Then a wonderful thing happened. There was a sound of footsteps in the creaking snow outside, footsteps that came to a halt beneath the window, and then the air was filled with joyous, ringing melody:

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you may dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Savior
Was born this happy day!"

Martha and her mother looked at each other with faces suddenly grown pale, and listened with unbelieving ears. The song changed as the singers swung into the measures of a new carol. Surely these were human voices and not a band of fairies! The mother crept silently to the window and looked out.

* * * * *

When the last note of the songs had died away the door of the dark house opened and a woman came out on the steps. "Thank you a thousand times for the singing," she said. "Won't you come in where my daughter can see you? She won't believe you are real. She is so sick and lonesome. Please do."

The Winnebagos started in surprise and looked at each other somewhat doubtfully. They had not been aware that they were singing to an

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audience. It was getting near the time when they should be meeting the rest of the group. But this was Christmas Eve and here was a girl sick and lonesome——

“Let’s go in for a minute,” said Gladys and Hinpoha together. They went in, singing as they went, and swinging their little lighted lanterns.

Martha’s mother lit the one pale little gas flame, for they had been sitting in the dark before, and by its light the girls saw the shabby room and the wan girl lying on the bed. So amazed was Martha at the sudden appearance of the carolers out of the night that she forgot to be shy, and before she knew it she had told them all about the Christmas Eve game she and her mother had been playing and how they had set the imaginary candle in the window. And all of the six months’ loneliness was in that little tale, and the girls as they listened became afflicted with a queer weakness of the eyes that made them turn their faces away from the light. Over on the lighted avenue the twinkling candles beckoned in the gleaming windows of the most beautiful homes in the city; still farther on the revellers at the singers’ party stretched out gay hands to them; but over it all each one seemed to see the words of the Fire Law written in letters made of Christmas stars:

——“Whose house is bare and dark and cold——”

Mysterious communications and hand signs flew back and forth between the Winnebagos. Like magic Gladys and Hinpoha slid out of the door and like magic they returned a few minutes later, loaded down with bundles. As the enchanted forests rise in the fairy tales, so the room was swiftly transformed and began to blossom in green and red. Garlands and wreaths hung from the head and the foot of the bed, and from the gas-jet. Riotous little bells swung from the doorways; sprigs of holly and gorgeous poinsettias framed the cheap pictures; bright candles in cheerful red shades burned on the table.

Other bundles when opened revealed the “makings” of the grandest spread the Winnebagos had ever had. The Lonesome House was turned into the Home of Joyous Spirits. Gladys poked up the fire and made her most tempting Shrimp Wiggle; Sahwah made the best pan of fudge she had ever made; Katherine made cocoa, and the rest spread sandwiches with delicious “Wohelo Special” chicken salad, and cut up cake and dished ice cream. Then there followed such a joyous feast as Martha had never conceived in her rosiest dreams. Healths were drunk in cocoa, side-splitting toasts proposed by the witty toastmistress, Migwan, and songs sung that made the roof ring. Gladys did her prettiest dances; Sahwah and Hinpoha did their famous stunt of the goat that ate the two red shirts right off the line, and Katherine gave her very funniest speech—the one about Wimmen’s Rights—three times; once voluntarily and twice more by special request. Martha laughed until she could laugh no more, and applauded every number enthusiastically, her usually pale cheeks glowing red with excitement and her eyes shining like stars. It was late when they left her, promising to come again soon, and slipping into her hands various packages

containing gifts of things every girl loves, which Gladys had hastily bought when she had slipped out to get the supplies. Among them was a beautifully intricate puzzle which would keep her interested for months to come.

Thus it was that the candle which was never lit guided the feet of the Song Friends to the Dark House, and gave into their tending yet another fire. Reports of the gay party at the Music League Club House came to the Winnebagos from all sides, and loud expressions of regret that they had missed it. And the group they were to have sung with brought in by far the most money, carrying off the prize and getting its picture in the Sunday paper—and the Winnebagos were not in it.

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But over on Division Street a wonderful new look had come into the face of a sad-eyed girl—a look of happiness and ambition, and the Winnebagos, having seen that look, were content.

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CHAPTER X

A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT

January closed with its immemorial thaw and February drew near in a mist of speculation as to whether it would come in like a lion or a lamb. But whatever may have been the state of the weather outside when the new month arrived, the Winnebago barometer registered a tempest in a teapot. It was Katherine who was responsible for that particular barometric activity. That is, it was she who attached the fuse to the bomb and set the match to it. All the bomb did was blow up.

The Winnebagos were all over at Katherine's one Friday afternoon after school, painting a buffalo robe that was to hang on the wall in the Open Door Lodge and cover an unsightly board. Veronica was in one of her rare cheerful moods and played gay tunes on her violin while the other girls worked. She was gradually thawing toward the girls, although she was still very conservative in her friendships. She was most friendly toward Gladys and Hinpoha, the two girls who came from the best family. She was not particularly drawn to merry, tomboyish Sahwah, because she was not musical, although they got along. Thus also it was with Medmangi and Nakwisi. But from the first Katherine Adams had seemed to rub her the wrong way. Big, clumsy, awkward Katherine, uncultured and hopelessly plebeian! She always managed to step on Veronica's dainty shoes or sit on her cherished violin or spill cocoa on her dress. And her flyaway appearance constantly jarred on Veronica's artistic nature. And that ridiculous, unmusical voice!

Looking only at these defects, Veronica failed to appreciate the wonderful magnetism of Katherine's personality and the unflinching good nature which made her a boon companion any hour out of the twenty-four whatever the weather might be. Not being American-born, Veronica believed firmly in class distinctions, and to her Katherine was a peasant and thus an inferior.

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However, to the others it seemed that the strangeness between them and Veronica was wearing away, and this afternoon they felt closer to her than they ever had before. She even asked, actually *asked*, to be shown how to make "slumgullion"—she who a few months before had scornfully maintained that cooking was for servants and not for ladies. "She's getting there!" whispered Gladys to Hinpoha, with a delighted squeeze. Spirits ran high and before long everybody felt they must dance or burst.

"It's too bad we haven't Nyoda's old banjo over here," said Sahwah. "Then some of the rest of us could play and Veronica could dance."

"I'll go over and get it," said Katherine obligingly. So she went over to Nyoda's house and got the banjo, and it was on this errand that her feet became entangled in the fuse that led to the bomb. On the doorstep of the house next to Nyoda's, the house where Veronica dwelt, there sat a snowy white poodle, fresh from a bath and rivalling in purity a field of virgin snow. This was Fifi, Veronica's French poodle, who had come to her as a Christmas gift, and whose pedigree was considerably longer than he was. Fifi did not share his young mistress's ideas as to the unfitness of the peasantry for association with the high born, and took a decided fancy to Katherine at first sight. Just how much he was influenced by half a sugar cookie, which she held out to him over the fence, it is impossible to say, but when Katherine turned out of Nyoda's yard and went up the street, Fifi was at her heels and refused to be shooed home.

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"Well, come along, then, if you want to," she said good-naturedly. "I suppose you're lonesome with all your folks gone and want some improvin' company, like us. A great hostess I'd be, if I turned down a dog that wanted to come to my At Home Day."

The January thaw was still in progress, although it was the first of February, and the streets were lakes of slush and mud. Katherine did not mind mud in the least and stepped cheerfully into the puddles. Fifi did likewise. By the time they arrived at the house the comparison of the field of virgin snow no longer held good. Even Katherine hesitated about admitting him.

Veronica shrieked when she saw him and did not share his delight at the unexpected meeting. "Oh-oh-oh!" she exclaimed in dismay. "He is to go to the Dog Show tonight. Katie spent all morning washing and combing him. How did he ever get out? She must have left the door open. And then you had to coax him over here, and now look at him!" After a hasty glance the rest decided they would rather not look at him.

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"Well," said Katherine, much taken aback, but still mistress of the situation, "I'll just give him a nice bath and carry him home and everything will be all right. Go on dancing, girls, there's the banjo; Fifi and I will entertain ourselves in the basement."

She set the squirming lump of mud into one of the wash tubs and let warm water run over him from a faucet for a few minutes to remove the clods. Then she set to work in earnest. She hesitated for some time about what kind of soap to use and finally decided that dog's hair was the

same as camel's hair; camel's hair was wool; and therefore, according to the most familiar problem in the whole geometry, Fifi was all wool and needed Wool Soap. Now the mud through which Fifi and Katherine had come was the yellow clayey kind that sticketh closer than a brother, and Wool Soap was not designed especially to dissolve it. After three scrubbings and rinsings Fifi was still a muddy, yellowish gray, and there was no hope that he would dry into a field of virgin white as a yellow popcorn kernel bursts into snowy blossom.

Katherine was discouraged. Then she suddenly remembered something. "Clothes always come out yellow if you wash them in just soap," she said triumphantly to herself. "It's the bluing that makes them white. Fifi needs bluing!"

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But a thorough search of the laundry room failed to reveal any bluing. "Shucks!" exclaimed Katherine in vexation. "We're out of it. I heard Aunt Anna mention it this morning. And the stores are closed this afternoon. What will I do? I don't dare produce Fifi unless he's all white and nice." Then it was that Katherine's mighty genius set to work. A less resourceful person would have been at a standstill when confronted with such a difficulty; a genius makes a way when there is none. In one respect Katherine was an equal of the gods—what she wished and did not have she created. She wished bluing; she must have it; so she calmly set about making it. Katherine took chemistry and knew that iodine, applied to starch, will turn it blue. There was iodine in the house and there was starch. The pucker vanished from her brow. A far-sighted person would have foreseen other results from the mixture beside the chemical action of the iodine on the starch. But Katherine was not a far-sighted person. She was a genius. It is said that geniuses, entirely absorbed in one idea, often forget the most commonplace fact altogether. Thus it was that Katherine, filled with the idea that starch turns blue when mixed with iodine, forgot the original purpose for which starch was invented. And Katherine had used flat-iron starch, the kind that gets stiff without boiling. It turned blue—a beautiful bright purple blue—and she immersed Fifi again and again. Katherine had to admit that he looked dreadfully blue when he emerged from the final dip, but serene in the belief that he would dry pure white like the clothes did, she rolled him up in a piece of carpet and set him in a wash basket beside the furnace to dry. Then she went upstairs and joined the dancers, announcing with a sigh of relief that Fifi was clean once more and could come up as soon as he was dry.

Having been told that Fifi was clean, they naturally looked for a white dog, and it was not their fault that they did not recognize the creature that slunk into their midst in the middle of the revels. As an Animal from Nowhere he would have taken the prize over the head of the famous Salmonkey. His hair was pasted flat to his sides in long, stringy waves, giving him a queer, corrugated effect. His head was a dirty, yellowish white, for, in keeping his eyes out of the blue bath, Katherine had held his whole head out; and the rest of him was a bright purplish blue. With his excited red tongue hanging out in front he looked like a dilapidated remnant of the American flag. The girls shrieked

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and fled before him. Katherine sank weakly down on the couch and viewed him in consternation.

"Whatever did you do to him?" wailed Veronica, when informed that this was actually Fifi and not some freak animal from the Zoo.

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"I wanted to blue him to make him nice and silvery white," explained Katherine ruefully, "and there wasn't any bluing, so I made some with iodine and starch. I thought he would come out all nice and fluffy, but instead of that he got—all—stiff!"

The Winnebagos burst out into a wild peal of laughter that made the windows rattle. They were simply helpless, and laughed until they sank limply on each other's shoulders. The simplicity of Katherine's inspirations was nothing short of sublime.

Gaining a measure of control over themselves, they became aware that Veronica was standing before them with eyes flashing lightning, in such a passion as they had never seen any girl display. Holding her translated pet in her arms, she stamped her foot and almost hissed at Katherine: "Don't you ever come near me again, you—you great big kangaroo from out of the west!"

"And the rest of you are just as bad," she cried, blazing at them collectively. "You think it's funny. I wish I had never met you, and from this day I am no more a Camp Fire Girl! I am through with you!" And before they could collect their wits to reply she had rushed out of the house like a whirlwind.

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Completely sobered by the result of her act, Katherine called herself one name after another and proposed the most extravagant things in the nature of penance. She and Nyoda talked it over a long time, and Nyoda made her see how a habit of doing things without thinking of the consequences led to more trouble than deliberately planned evil did, and she promised faithfully that this was the last rash act she would ever perform.

"Now that Veronica has had time to think it over and see the funny side, and realize that Fifi is not hurt, I think you may go over and present your sincere apologies and make your peace with Veronica," said Nyoda. And Katherine, humble as the dust, set forth.

But Veronica would have none of her peace offerings. She received her apology coldly, and declared she would never come back into the ranks of the Winnebagos. Then did Katherine go to Nyoda and offer to resign from the group if that would bring Veronica back. "She has a better right to be in it than I," she said. "She was in it first."

But Nyoda would not consent to that at all. "The whole thing isn't worth such heroic measures," she declared. "I'll talk to Veronica myself."

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And she did, with no better results than Katherine. Veronica would not be appeased, even now that Fifi was white once more, and had suffered no evil effects from his bluing. Veronica declared that Katherine was low class, and not

fit for her to associate with. And she wouldn't forgive the others for laughing. So Nyoda had to go back and report her failure to the other girls. And sadly they realized that their hope of making Veronica into a Winnebago had evaporated.

CHAPTER XI

A WINTER HIKE

A long cherished wish of the Winnebagos came true that winter, for they all got snowshoes for Christmas. So did the Sandwiches. They brought them down to the Open Door Lodge to show to the girls. "See what we've got," said the Captain, with a slightly superior air as becomes the owner of a pair of snowshoes in the presence of a mere girl.

"Wait until you see ours," returned the girls merrily, producing their "slush walkers," as Katherine had dubbed them.

"You didn't all get them, did you?" asked the Sandwiches, in comical surprise. It was hard for them to realize that the Winnebagos were as adept at outdoor sports as they were.

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"We surely did," answered Sahwah. "What good would it do us for some to have them and some not? We always travel together."

The Captain had Hinpoha's in his hand and was examining them critically. "You girls haven't the right kind of harness on your snowshoes," he said, with the air of an expert. "Straps like yours, that buckle over the toes and around the heel are 'tenderfoot' harness. They don't give enough to your motions and you are likely to freeze your feet. See our bindings. They are made of lamp wicking and calfskin thongs. By putting your foot on the shoe so that your toes come just under the bridle and binding it fast with the wick, making a half-hitch on each side and tying a knot at the back of your shoe you can make a fastening that will hold tightly as long as you want it too, but will permit you to free your foot with a single twist in an emergency."

"Did you learn all that down at Tech?" asked Hinpoha, with just a touch of sarcasm. It seemed to her that the Captain was trying to show off his knowledge.

"He won't admit that we know as much as they do about some things," she was saying to herself. "They couldn't get ahead of us by getting snowshoes, so now they must claim that theirs are right and ours are wrong. Ours are more expensive, that's the whole trouble."

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"My uncle told me about it," said the Captain earnestly. "He's been up north and he knows all about snowshoes. Wait a minute, and I'll show you what I mean." He bound his snowshoes on his feet in the approved fashion, and then, by stepping on one shoe with the other foot, skilfully wriggled his toe free without injuring the binding. "You couldn't do that if it were buckled," he said simply, turning to Nyoda for approval.

"You're right," said Nyoda. "We never thought of that side of it before. Don't you think, girls, we'd better change ours?" They all agreed, all except Hinpoha. For some odd reason she still fancied that the Captain was crowing over her, and she was determined to show him that his opinion meant nothing to her.

"I like the straps much better," she declared. "And the buckles look so pretty flashing in the sunlight. Much prettier than your old lamp wicks. They'll be dirty in no time." And they could not induce her to change the bindings.

Followed days of learning how to run on snowshoes. It was not so very difficult, after all, not nearly so hard as the skiing Sahwah had tried the winter before. There were tumbles, of course, when they struck unexpected snags, but the snow was soft and no one was hurt. Hinpoha was glad she didn't change her smart buckle binding for the wicking-thong affair of the others, because hers looked much nicer, and there was no occasion for getting out of them suddenly. The first day everybody returned home full of enthusiasm for the new sport. Sahwah in particular was so anxious for the morrow to come when she could be at it again, that she could hardly go to sleep. But when she woke up in the morning she felt a strange disinclination to get up. Her limbs ached so fiercely that she could hardly stand. Her muscles were so cramped and sore that she was ready to shriek with the pain. She limped stiffly into the class room half an hour late, to see Gladys going in just ahead of her, traveling with a sidewise motion like a crab, and stumbling as though her feet were made of wood. Poor Hinpoha never appeared in school at all that day. "What's the matter with us?" they groaned, dropping into Nyoda's class room at lunch hour. "We're ruined for life." Nyoda could not conceal a smile of amusement. "I knew you'd get it," she said, with gentle raillery. "That's why I advised you not to stay out more than fifteen minutes the first day. But you were bound to stick to it all afternoon."

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"What did you know we'd get?" they asked in tones of concern. "Are we lamed for life?"

"Hardly as bad as that," laughed Nyoda. "I have good hopes of your ultimate recovery. You have what the French call 'mal de racquette'—the snowshoe sickness. You use a different set of muscles when snowshoeing than you do ordinarily, and these muscles become very stiff and sore. All you need is a little limbering oil. Little Sisters of the Snow, you are learning by experience!"

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It was fully a week before either the Winnebagos or Sandwiches went snowshoeing again, although they made excellent excuses. Neither group would admit to the other that they had become stiff, and would not limp for worlds when in the sight of the others, although it nearly killed them to walk naturally. Nevertheless, they understood each other perfectly.

In February came a three days' snow storm that covered the earth with a blanket several feet thick, and a slight thaw followed by a zero snap produced an excellent crust. The Winnebagos were having a solemn ceremonial meeting in the Open Door Lodge when without warning there

was a sound of scrambling up the ladder and the Captain burst in among them.

"Oh, I say," he shouted, and then stopped suddenly as he became aware that the girls were engaged in singing some kind of a motion song. "Excuse me," he stammered in confusion, "I didn't know you were having a pow-wow. I heard you singing up here and thought you were just having a good time."

"What news can you be bringing that made you burst in on us in such a fashion?" said Nyoda sternly, but with a twinkle in her eye. "Speak sir, the queen commands."

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The Captain seemed ready to burst with his message and fired his words like bullets from an automatic pistol. "My Uncle Theodore's here, you know, the one I said had been up north, and he knows a dandy place in the country where there are some log cabins and he wants us all to go down there on our snowshoes for a winter hike and stay three days over the Washington's Birthday holiday. Oh, please, can you girls come?"

"But—" began Nyoda.

"Oh, I forgot," went on the Captain, "my aunt's here, too, and she's just as good on snowshoes as Uncle Theodore is, and she's going along, too, and will see that you girls don't take cold or anything. Please say you'll come."

There never was such sport as a winter hike. The preliminaries were arranged with much reassuring of parents and relatives; buying of all-wool clothing and blankets; selecting of cooking utensils and what the boys elegantly referred to as "grub." "Uncle Theodore" was a real woodsman, who had spent most of his life in lumber camps; bluff, hale and hearty; a man to whom you would be perfectly willing to entrust your life after the first meeting. "Aunt Clara" was a little round dumpling of a woman, who radiated smiles like sunshine, and declared the Winnebagos were the handiest girls she had ever seen. It was their skilful way of packing supplies that called forth this praise.

Food and blankets were sent down by automobile a day ahead, so that the hikers would have to carry nothing but their cameras and notebooks. The morning of Washington's Birthday found them all assembled on the station platform, for they were to go by cars to a certain town down state and from there to strike across the open country on their snowshoes.

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"What are you going to do with the torpedo?" shouted the Captain, as Slim appeared carrying a strange looking package.

Slim smiled mysteriously. "Shoot rabbits," he replied evasively.

"It isn't a torpedo," said quick-witted Sahwah, after one look at the package. "It's a thermos bottle."

A chorus of derision went up. "Better Baby has to have his bottle!" "Oh, Slim! Are you afraid you'll starve before we get our dinner?" "What's in it, Slim, let's see!"

Slim turned fiery red and shot a dark look at Sahwah.

"It's hot chocolate, I know," continued his red-cheeked tormentor. "Slim has to have a dose every hour or he feels faint." Sahwah had long ago discovered Slim's pet weakness.

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"Where's Katherine?" said somebody suddenly.

"Why, isn't she here?" said Nyoda, counting over the group. "I thought I saw her here."

"She hasn't come yet," declared Hinpoha and Gladys.

"Oh, I hope she hasn't had an absent-minded fit and forgotten this is Washington's Birthday," said Sahwah, clasping her hands in distress.

Uncle Teddy pulled out his watch. "It's too late to go and look for her," he said, "just five minutes until train time."

Consternation reigned in the group. The Captain gallantly offered to miss the train and hunt her up, but the others would not hear of it. Hasty telephoning to her house brought the news that Katherine had left half an hour ago for the station.

"Then she'll be here," said Nyoda, eyeing the clock nervously. "If she doesn't make it she'll have to miss it, that's all." There were times when she would have liked to shake Katherine for her unbusiness-like ways.

But eight twenty-five came and no Katherine. The long train pulled in and Uncle Teddy swung them all aboard, and with a great cheering and waving of snowshoes they were off. Other passengers looked with interest at the lively group that occupied one whole end of the car, singing, laughing, shouting nonsense at one another.

"Time for the Better Baby to have his bottle!" said the Bottomless Pitt, gaining possession of the thermos bottle. He unscrewed the lid and held it to Slim's lips, making him drink willy-nilly. It was hot chocolate, as Sahwah had guessed. Slim choked and sputtered and had to be patted on the back.

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"Do behave, children," said Nyoda, as the fun threatened to block the aisle, "that magazine man can't get through."

The man stood in the midst of the scufflers, patiently trying to cry his wares above the din.

"Buy a maggzine," he chanted. "All the latest maggzines!"

"Good ones for the ladies,
Bad ones for the gents;
All the latest maggzines
For fifteen cents!"

Amused, they stopped talking to listen to his ridiculous singsong.

"Buy a maggzine, lady?" he said, holding one out to Nyoda. On the last sentence his voice cracked in three directions and leaped up the scale a full octave, so the word "lady" was uttered in a high falsetto squeak.

"Katherine!" exclaimed Nyoda, seizing the magazine seller by the arm in amazement.

"At yer service, mum," replied that worthy, with a low bow.

Then, amid the hubbub that ensued she calmly proceeded to remove the fuzzy little black mustache that had adorned her upper lip, took off the fur cap that had covered her hair and threw back the long ulster that covered her from neck to heels, and stood smiling wickedly at them.

"Katherine, you awful, awful, wonderful, wonderful girl, how did you manage to do it?" gasped Gladys, breathless with astonishment.

"And when did you get on the train?" cried Hinpoha in the same breath. "You didn't get on with us."

"I got into the wrong street car this morning," replied Katherine, producing her glasses from her sweater pocket and polishing them on the end of her muffler, "and got carried east instead of west. When I found it out there wasn't time to come back to the Union Station, so I went on out to the Lakeside Station and go on the train there. I had planned to be waiting for you on the step when we got into the Union, but on the way out I met a magazine seller and had an inspiration. I bribed him to let me take his cap and books and coat for ten minutes. The mustache I had with me. I thought it might be useful in case I should be called up to perform a 'stunt' at Lonesome Creek. The rest you already know, as they say in the novels." She tossed the borrowed plumage into an empty seat and settled herself beside Slim.

"By the way," she said quizzically, looking at the boys, "what was it I heard you declaring a while ago, that no girl could masquerade as a boy and really fool a boy?"

"Pooh, you didn't really fool us," said Slim.

"Oh, no, I didn't," jeered Katherine.

"Well, we'd have found you out before long," said the Captain.

"Maybe you would and maybe you wouldn't," said Katherine. "The only thing I noticed you doing was looking with envy at my little mustache."

The Captain blushed furiously and the rest shouted with laughter.

"Anyway, Nyoda knew me first," she continued, "and that shows that girls are smarter than boys. I can just see us being fooled by one of you dressed as a girl."

"I bet I could do it," said the Captain.

"Maybe *you* could, Cicero," said Hinpoha sweetly. Relations between her and the Captain were somewhat strained these days, but how it began or what it was all about, no one could tell.

The Captain turned angrily at the taunting use of his name. He knew it was meant to imply that he was "Cissy" enough to pass off for a girl. "So you think I'm a Cissy, do you?" he said hotly. If

Hinpoha had been a boy there would have been a scuffle right there, but as it was he was helpless.

"Tell them how you trailed the fox up in Ontario, father," interrupted Aunt Clara hastily, and Uncle Teddy began a thrilling tale of adventure in the backwoods that held them spellbound until they reached their station.

"Now for the long white trail!" cried Uncle Teddy cheerily, when all snowshoes were adjusted to their owners' satisfaction. "Nine o'clock and all's well! Catertown and dinner at twelve o'clock, ten miles due south as the crow flies! Here, Captain, you be the first pathfinder. Here is a map of the way we are to take. You may be leader until you get us off the track, and then we'll let one of the girls try her hand. Forward, march!"

Whole new worlds lie before the hiker on snowshoes. All the ugliness in Nature is concealed by the soft white mantle of snow, like a scratched and stained old table covered with a spotless cloth, and everything is glistening and wonderful and beautiful. The snowshoes are seven league boots in very truth. On them you go right over stumps and fences and hummocks and stones and little hollows. You do not need to keep to the road or to the beaten track. Dame Frost, like Sir Walter Raleigh, has spread her mantle over the unpleasant places and over it you may pass in safety.

"Where are we now?" asked the Bottomless Pitt.

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"Casey's Woods," replied the Captain, referring to his map.

"Oh," cried Sahwah, "don't you remember how we wanted to come here to a picnic once in the summer, but we couldn't go into the woods at all, because the mosquitoes were just terrible? Why didn't we ever think of holding a picnic in the winter? There are no ants to crawl into your shoes and no spiders to get into your cocoa."

"And no poison ivy," said Gladys. "Why, winter is the very best time to hold a picnic!"

And they made up a hiking song to the tune of "Marching Through Georgia," and sang it until the woods echoed:

"Hurrah, hurrah, said the possum to the 'coon,
Hurrah, hurrah, what makes you come so
soon?
We started in the morning, and we'll get there
before noon,
As we go hiking on our snowshoes!"

"Doesn't Aunt Clara look just like a Teddy Bear in that brown fur coat?" whispered Gladys to Sahwah. Aunt Clara was nearly as broad as she was long, and, wrapped in furs as she was, seemed rounder yet.

"Halt!" cried Uncle Teddy, as the company came out on the edge of a deep ravine. "Oh, I say, Captain, what's this? It doesn't seem to me I included this in my order."

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Much confused, the Captain spread his road map on a log and set the compass on it, trying to find out where he had gone wrong. "Shucks," he said

disgustedly, after a moment's study. "We should have gone at right angles to that hundred-foot pine tree instead of in a line with it. Everybody back up—I mean, right about face. Shucks!" And he handed the map and the compass to Sahwah with as good grace as he could and took the end of the line, as became an officer who had been reduced to the ranks.

Sahwah led them back to the pine tree and in the right direction from it, as indicated on the map, and they soon came to the bridge which spanned the gorge a mile below the spot where the Captain had reached it. Detour and all they reached Catertown at twelve o'clock, where their ravenous appetites worked fearful havoc with the good dinner set before them. Uncle Teddy insisted upon having Slim's thermos bottle filled with milk, to guard against his getting faint on the way, although Slim blushed and protested. Ten more miles to make in the afternoon. But to these practised hikers the distance before and behind them seemed nothing wonderful and they declared the going was so good on snowshoes that they could keep on forever. Sahwah followed the map accurately, and brought them out at the right crossroads at the end of five miles, where she relinquished her office as pathfinder to Bottomless Pitt, who was next in line. It had been decided en route that five miles should be the length of any leader's service.

"Honorable discharge," said Uncle Teddy, patting Sahwah on the head. "I'll wager there aren't many girls who could have done that."

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"All of us could," answered Sahwah, eager to sing the praises of the group as a whole.

The Captain said nothing. He felt that he had disgraced the Sandwiches by letting a girl get ahead of him. It did not help him any to note that Hinpoha was looking at him and evidently thinking the same thing. The Captain was very sore at heart. He liked and admired Hinpoha more than any of the other Winnebagos, and they had always been the best of friends until suddenly, for some reason which he could not explain, she had turned against him. And she had done the one thing to him that he could never forgive. She had called him "Cicero." All was over between them. Winter hikes weren't such a lot of fun after all, he told himself.

"Hi, look at the rabbit," shouted Pitt, pointing out an inquisitive bunny that sat upon his haunches under a tree, "to see the parade go by."

"Don't hurt him, don't hurt him," cried Sahwah, dancing up and down and trying to focus her camera on him.

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"Who's hurting him?" said the Captain. "We haven't anything to hurt him with, unless Slim steps on him." Sahwah clicked her camera and at the click Br'er Bunny vanished into space.

"Let's see what kind of tracks he made," said Sahwah, and they all willingly detoured a trifle to examine the footprints in the snow.

"There are some others beside his," said Bottomless Pitt. "What kind of an animal is that, Uncle Teddy?"

Uncle Teddy examined the tracks and nodded his head with a satisfied air. "You boys ought to know those tracks," he said provokingly. "What kind of scouts are you, anyway? Here, Captain, quit your scowling like a thundercloud and tell us what animal has been taking a walk. I certainly have taught you enough about woodcraft to know that."

The Captain looked at the tracks closely. "I think it's a 'coon," he said finally.

"Think so!" scoffed Uncle Teddy. "Don't you know so? Pitt, what do you say?"

"Looks like a 'coon to me," answered Pitt.

"And what do you say, Redbird?" asked Uncle Teddy, pulling Sahwah's hair.

"There's where you boys have us beaten," said Sahwah frankly. "We never have had a chance to learn animal tracks."

"I'm sure it's a 'coon," said the Captain, his spirits rising with the chance to crow over the girls.

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"All right, if you're sure of it, we'll follow the trail awhile and see where he is," said Uncle Teddy. "But you always want to be sure of what you see, after you've learned it once. A good woodsman always fixes a thing in his mind so he'll know it the next time he sees it."

"I'm sure it's a 'coon," repeated the Captain. "May we follow the trail awhile?" Eagerly they trotted along beside the footprints in the snow, impatient to have a sight of the animal. This was a new sport to the Winnebagos and they were greatly excited about it. The Captain had forgotten his low spirits and was in the lead now.

"I say, the fellow that spies him first ought to be pathfinder for the rest of the way," he said.

"What does a 'coon look like?" panted Sahwah, trying to keep up with him.

"He has a short, thick, striped tail," said the Captain, "and a— Oh, goodness gracious! Oh, Methuselah's great grandmother!" For just then the wind began to blow strongly from the direction in which they were going, carrying with it an unmistakable odor. With one accord they took to their heels.

"O Uncle Teddy," said the Captain, furious at himself, "you knew what it was all the while! Why didn't you tell us?"

"Well," said Uncle Teddy dryly, "you were so blooming sure it was a 'coon that I couldn't contradict you very well without being impolite. 'There's nothing like being dead sure,' I says to myself. And I knew you would never be satisfied until you had found out for yourself."

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The Captain, permanently abashed, retired to the rear of the line and ventured no more opinions about anything they saw, and took not the slightest interest when Hinpoha discovered a rare little moosewood maple and identified it by its beautiful green bark.

"Last lap!" shouted Pitt, consulting the map for

the hundred and fortieth time. "Turn east by the twin oaks and approach the camp from the rear! Company, forward march!"

"There are the cabins now," cried the Monkey, throwing his cap into the air. "Maybe I won't sit down and hold my feet up, though!"

"Maybe you won't jump around and get some firewood, though!" remarked Uncle Teddy. "End of the hike, messmates," he shouted, executing a droll dance on his snowshoes and waving his long arms like windmills. "All together, now, three cheers and a tiger for the end of the hike!" And they gave them with a will.

The place where they were to spend that night and the next was an abandoned sugar camp. It had once been a fine grove of trees, but so many had been killed by the boring worms that it was no longer profitable. Two cabins remained standing and were used on and off by hunters during the season.

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"Oh-h-h, ours is a real log cabin," cried Sahwah, dancing around in ecstasy when quarters had been assigned. "It's lots nicer than the old board shack the boys are going to have. I'll feel just like Abraham Lincoln to-night, only so much more elegant, because Abraham Lincoln had to split his own rails, and we can sit at ease and let the boys tote our wood for us."

"But—where are the beds?" cried Hinpoha, in perplexity, as they went inside.

"Why, *those*," said Aunt Clara, pointing to some bin-like things ranged in a double tier along one wall. "Those are our bunks."

"Bunks!" echoed the girls in rather a dismayed tone. "We didn't think we'd have to sleep in bunks. We expected camp beds, at least."

"They're quite comfortable," said Aunt Clara reassuringly, "when they're filled with clean straw. Our blankets are in that big box and we'd better get our beds made the first thing, so we can roll into them as soon as we get tired." She hustled around, smoothing out the straw in the bunks with a practised hand and showing the girls how to fold their blankets to the best advantage. "Be sure you have just as much under you as over you," she advised them again and again. "Camping in winter is a very different proposition from sleeping out in summer."

Now that the girls had gotten used to the idea of the bunks, they began to think it was a jolly good lark to sleep in them. "If bunks it must be, bunks it is," said Katherine, in a lugubrious tone that sent them all into gales of laughter, "but I never thought I'd live to see the day!"

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"Me for the upper berth," said Sahwah, standing on a table to accomplish the spreading of her blankets. It was not long before they were all singing:

"Oh, we're bunking tonight on the side of the
wall,
Give us a ladder, please,
We've slept in many beds, both hard and soft,
But never in bunks like these!"

"Bunking tonight,

Bunking tonight,
Bunking on the side of the wall!"

And they raised such a din with the chorus that the boys came streaming over to see what the fun was about and to inquire casually if supper wasn't nearly ready.

"Goodness, no," answered Nyoda; "we've just got our beds made. Go overpower Slim, if you are hungry, and take his bottle away from him. By the way, which cabin is to be honored by the smell of the cooking?"

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"The log cabin is the largest," said Uncle Teddy, "and it has both the fireplace and the little stove. The other is just a sleeping cabin. I guess the honor is yours. All aboard for the dining car! Where's that canned soup? Bring in the wood, boys, and make a cooking fire in the stove. You know what a cooking fire is, I suppose. Everybody get to work. Too many cooks can't spoil this broth."

They flew around, getting in each other's way dreadfully, but under Uncle Teddy's and Aunt Clara's able management they did contrive to accomplish the things they were trying to do, and in less than no time the supper was steaming on the table.

"Maybe I won't do anything to that soup and that creamed fish!" sighed Slim, his face beaming at the sight of the banquet spread before him.

"Maybe it won't do anything to him!" said Katherine in an aside to Sahwah. "I got a whole teaspoonful of Hinpoha's old talcum powder in the cream sauce before I discovered it wasn't flour, and then it was too late to take it out again."

"Never mind," Sahwah giggled back, "it's so hot you can't taste it, and it won't last long enough to get cold. Your secret is safe in our stomachs!"

The paper plates made a grand glare in the fireplace after supper was over and in its light Katherine and Slim gave a Punch and Judy show until Slim showed symptoms of bursting from want of breath, whereupon the play came to an end and it was discovered that Bottomless Pitt had fallen asleep in a corner.

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"Hide his shoes!" suggested the Monkey, and promptly took them off and tied them by strings to a tack in the ceiling.

"Let's enchant him altogether," said the gifted Katherine, and fastened the little mustache to his lip. Then they stuck his head full of paper curls and powdered his face with flour. The effect when he woke up was all they had hoped for. They had set a small wall mirror on the floor beside him, so he got the full benefit of his altered appearance on his first glance around. Uttering a startled yell, he sprang to his feet, looking wildly around. Brought to himself by the laughter on all sides, he shook his fist fiercely at Slim and the Captain, declaring that he would make the fellow who did that eat soap. As Katherine was the "fellow" in question this only increased the merriment at his expense. Slim leaned against the wall so helpless from laughter that he didn't even resist when Pitt climbed on

his shoulders to haul down his shoes, but went on chuckling violently until he sagged to one side and down came both boys in a heap, shoes, tack and all.

"I wish you boys would go home," said Katherine primly. "You're altogether too rough for us little girls to play with. I think it's horrid and nasty to play tricks on people when they're asleep." From her gently shocked and disapproving expression you never would have guessed that she was the one who had started it all.

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"Come on home, fellows, we're invited out," said Uncle Teddy, with a pretended injured air. "It's time we little gentlemen were in the hay—I mean the straw. Come on, Pitt, never mind looking for the tack; Mother will find it when she gets up in her stocking feet to see if she locked the door!" With which shot he retired in haste through the doorway and over to the other cabin, and just in time, for Aunt Clara sent a snowball flying after him that fell short by a bare inch.

Then she closed and barred the door, fixed the fire with hardwood which would last the rest of the night, plastered adhesive strips over the various blisters which the Winnebago feet had acquired on the long march, and tucked them all in warmly with a motherly pat and a goodnight kiss. After a twenty-mile walk in the open air a hard plank would be a comfortable resting place, and the straw filled and blanket padded bunks were far from the hard plank class. For the first time in the history of Winnebago sleeping parties there was strictly "nothing doing" after they were tucked in. Most of them fell asleep during the process of tucking.

Thus it was that when the first thump came at the door nobody stirred. A second thump followed like a blow from a battering ram. Aunt Clara sat up.

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"Who's there?" she called. No answer save a series of blows and thumps that threatened to break the door down. The rest were awake by this time, trembling in their beds.

"Theodore, is that you?" shrieked Aunt Clara above the noise. "What do you want?" Again came a shower of blows, as if somebody were trying to force their way in with an axe. This time the bars gave way and the door swung inward. There was a loud bellowing, roaring sound, which seemed to their startled ears like a deep-throated whistle, and into the cabin there walked a cow. The girls shrieked and disappeared under the bed-clothes, for to their excited fancy she looked like a wild animal.

"Shoo, get out!" shouted Aunt Clara, throwing her slipper with neat aim into the cow's face. Bossy looked reproachfully at her and walked farther into the cabin, standing close beside the row of bunks.

Katherine raised her head from the blanket to see what was going on and looked right into the open mouth of the creature as it stood over her. "Murder! It's going to eat me up!" she shrieked, diving under the covers with a prolonged howl.

By this time Aunt Clara had found the whistle with which she always summoned her husband

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when she needed him and blew a long, shrill blast. A few minutes later Uncle Teddy appeared at the door, with a string of startled boys running out of their cabin behind him, and at a word of command from him, accompanied by several emphatic pokes and proddings, Mrs. Bossy meekly turned and walked out through the doorway, which was considerably the worse for her entrance. She had probably strayed from the nearest farmhouse and was suffering from the intense cold. Attracted by the light streaming from the little window of the cabin she had come to find shelter, and when nobody answered her first gentle knocks with her horns, she had taken matters into her own hands and become housebreaker. She was stabled in a lean-to shelter for the rest of the night and made comfortable with straw and a blanket.

"Isn't it funny how all the suffering critters come to our hospitable door for shelter?" said Katherine at the breakfast table. "Just like Sandhelo. He came of his own accord, also."

"They must know that we keep the Fire Law," answered Hinpoha. "'Whose house is bare and dark and cold, whose house is cold, this is his own!'"

"Isn't it strange that she came to our door, and not to the boys'," said Gladys. "They had a light shining, too, but her footprints show that she came past their door to stop at ours."

"That's because she was a lady," replied Uncle Teddy, helping himself to his fifth slice of fried bacon, "and no lady would come bustling into a gentleman's apartment like that. Hurry up and get your chores done, you housekeepers and wood-gatherers, and let's go out and make a snow man."

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"Let's make a totem-pole," suggested Katherine, when they were all out playing in the snow. "It's lots more epic than making a snow man."

"You mean a 'snowtem pole,'" observed Uncle Teddy.

So they set to work and made a marvellous totem-pole, higher than the cabin, with figures carved into its sides such as were never on land or sea. Then Uncle Teddy and the boys, who had done less carving on their sections and consequently were finished first, set up a barber pole on the other side of the doorway, containing the stripes with a crimson of their own concocting, which was a secret, but which involved several trips to the kitchen and the food supply box. All this time the Captain had never spoken one word to Hinpoha. Whenever he would have relented under the spell of the jolly larks they were having, something whispered to him, "She called me Cicero! I won't stand that from anyone!"

"Who's ripe for a trifling sprint of five miles this afternoon?" asked Uncle Teddy at the dinner table, taking three scones at once from the plate.

"I! I! I!" cried a chorus of voices, and a dozen hands waved frantically above the table.

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"Have you any special place in mind?" asked Aunt Clara, pretending not to see Uncle Teddy

stealing yet another buttered scone from her plate.

"Well," said Uncle Teddy, "I happen to know that there's a real sugar camp in action somewhere about here, and I think five miles covers it, there and back. It might not be the worst idea in the world to look in and see how they are getting on. I dare say most of these folks here have never seen maple syrup outside of a can."

A sigh of delight ran around the table. "Hurry up, everybody, and put everything you have left into your mouths, so I can collect the plates," said Sahwah, impatient to start at once.

But when the time came to start Hinpoha had developed such a dizzy headache that going along was out of the question. "It's nothing serious," she stoutly maintained, in reply to anxious inquiries. "Too much noise, that's all. We might call it 'Mal de racket'!" She would not hear of any of them staying at home with her, however, although Aunt Clara and Nyoda both insisted. "Go on, all of you," she begged, pressing her hand to her throbbing temples. "It would make it so much worse if I thought I had kept you away from the fun. All I want is to lie down quietly. I'll be perfectly all right here. If I feel better soon I'll follow your tracks and either catch up with you or meet you there and come back home with you. Please go." And so insistent was she that they went without her.

"Be sure you lock the door carefully," called Aunt Clara.

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"And be sure you put out a sign, NO COWS ADMITTED," said Sahwah. And laughing they set out, leaving her tucked in her bunk. With the cessation of the noise that had almost lifted the roof of the cabin during the dinner hour, the headache gradually disappeared, and in an hour Hinpoha was herself again. Swiftly buckling on her snowshoes she ran out into the stinging air, which seemed like a cool hand laid on her forehead.

She found the trail of the others easily, for the crust was slightly dented in by every step. The way led through a thick strip of woods. Hinpoha noticed that there were many tracks of animals here and wished with all her heart that she knew what they were. "It would be such a grand thing to say to the folks at home, 'I followed the trail of a 'coon,' and be sure it was a 'coon,'" she said to herself, and then laughed aloud at the ridiculous mistake of the Captain. Then she stood still in delight, for just before her a dark, furry body was slipping along over the snow. "I believe that really is one," she said to herself joyfully. "I can't catch him, of course, but maybe he'll run up a tree—people always talk about 'coons being treed—and then I can see what he looks like." And she sped after the little animal, who took alarm at her first step and disappeared between the trunks of the trees.

Hinpoha looked for him for a while and then realized it was a hopeless search and with a sigh turned to resume her own way through the woods. Then she stopped in dismay. The broad trail she had been following so easily had vanished from the earth! The only marks on the white ground were those of her own snowshoes. "Of course," she said, coming to herself with a

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shake, "I got off the trail when I followed that 'coon. I'll follow my own tracks back." But her own tracks led her round and round in a circle, in and out among the tree trunks, and did not end up in what she sought. It took her some minutes to realize that she was actually lost in the woods. Then, of course, the first thing she did was to go into a panic, and run wildly back and forth. "Come, this will never do," she told herself severely, standing still. "I must stop and think before I do anything else. Let me see, what was it Migwan did the time she was lost up in the Maine woods? She sat down on the ground and wrote poetry, and waited until we came and found her! I can't write poetry, that's out of the question, and I can't sit on the ground, either, it's too cold. I'll have to stand up and wait." But that proved a dreary amusement. It was getting bitterly cold, and a strong wind whistled through the bare branches till it made her flesh creep. To make things worse, an early twilight was setting in and the light was rapidly fading. To keep from taking cold she walked up and down bravely among the trees, growing more terrified every minute. She tried to sing, to call, to shout, to make her voice carry across the snow, but it was lost in the moaning of the wind. Her feet grew numb with the cold and she stamped them vigorously to start up the blood. The crust broke through, and down she went through several feet of snow to her waist. She braced herself with her hands and tried to draw her feet out, but they went through also and she floundered with her face in the icy snowflakes. Then with a growing sense of horror she realized what had happened. The ends of her snowshoes had become firmly wedged under the roots of a tree, and she was unable to pull them out. And her feet, tightly bound to the snowshoes by the pretty straps and buckles, were trapped. She struggled furiously, and only sank deeper in the snow.

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As the "syrup party," as they called themselves, were just ready to cool off the bit of boiled sap that had been given them to taste, the Captain suddenly sprang to his feet and smote his forehead. "Daggers and dirks!" he exclaimed, "I left my sweater hanging right in front of the fire when we came away—you remember it got all wet in the snowball fight this morning—and I bet it's scorched to cinders by this time. Do you folks mind if I go back to the cabin in a hurry? I got that sweater for Christmas and I hate to lose it so soon. I'm all right, uncle, I can find the way, even if it is getting dark. Don't hurry yourselves. Give my share of the syrup to Slim. He's getting thin." And adjusting his snowshoes with a skilled "jiffy twist," he was off down the trail.

Now the Captain, although he had been mistaken about the tracks the day before, was nevertheless an observant lad, and when he came to the place where Hinpoha had left the trail, he noticed the marks going off in another direction and stood still and looked at them. He knew that they most likely belonged to Hinpoha, and he knew also that she had not arrived at the sugar camp and he had not met her on the trail coming home, so, putting two and two together, he decided that she must be in the woods somewhere. A mean little instinct whispered to him to go on his way and let her be wherever she was, and get a good fright until the rest

found her; then his better nature rose to the top and he decided to hunt her up and show her the trail to meet the others.

"Glory, she certainly did mess up the trail some," he said to himself, as he followed the marks which wandered up and down and doubled back on themselves and crisscrossed everywhere. It was slow going, for the darkness was hiding the footprints and he had to bend down to the ground to see them clearly. He almost stepped on her at last when he did find her. She was numb from the cold and very nearly asleep and he thought she was dead. The imprisoned snowshoes held her down and he could not pull her out of the snow at first. Finally he suspected what had happened and dug down in and loosened the buckles. It took a good deal of working after she was freed to get life back into the numb feet and ankles, but it was accomplished at last and Hinpoha was ready to walk home.

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Then a moment of embarrassment fell between them. Hinpoha flushed and looked uncomfortable. "I'm sorry I called you Cicero," she said, with a sneeze between every word. "You aren't a Cissy at all. You're a hero!" And then for no reason at all, except that the afternoon's strenuous adventure had unstrung her nerves, she burst into tears.

"Here," said the Captain, entirely light-hearted again, and holding up the little bucket he had carried away from the sugar camp, "cry into the pail. Evaporate the water. Save the salt. It's worth money."

And Hinpoha giggled foolishly and dried her tears and raced back to the cabin as fast as she could go, to stave off pneumonia on her arrival with hot blankets and steaming drinks.

"He *is* a hero," she murmured dreamily to Gladys, who hovered around her like an anxious grandmother, after the others were satisfied that she was all right, and had set to work getting supper; "he never once said, 'I told you so!'"

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CHAPTER XII

HINPOHA'S ROMANCE

An indistinct murmur floated down from the Winnebago room of the Open Door Lodge, punctuated by little squeals and exclamations. The firelight shown on four tense faces, and four pairs of eyes were riveted on the two figures in the center of the group who were engaged in a very singular occupation. Balanced between two stiffly outstretched and quivering right forefingers hung a key, and suspended from it by a string was a black-covered book, supposed to be set apart from all secular uses. In a breathless undertone Hinpoha—for she was the owner of one of the aforesaid fingers—was chanting a passage of scripture designed for a widely different application. A strained hush was followed by another outbreak of exclamations. "Look, it's turning! It began to turn the minute she said, 'Turn, my beloved.' What letter did it turn on, 'Poha?"

"D," replied Hinpoha, in a solemn whisper.

"D," repeated the chorus, "what does that stand for?"

"Daniel," supplied Sahwah promptly.

"His name's going to be Daniel," chanted the chorus. "Now try for the last name."

Again the mystic rite was performed. At "I" the Bible trembled with a premonitory movement. "It's turning!" whispered the chorus in an awed tone. "No, it isn't either; it's still again." After that one tremor the soothsaying volume remained bafflingly motionless through the recitation of the mysteries which accompanied the letter J. K likewise began uneventfully. But no sooner had Hinpoha uttered the fateful words, "Turn, my beloved," when with a suddenness that scared them half out of their wits the key turned sharply in the supporting fingers, twisted itself free and fell to the floor with an emphatic bang.

"It's K," cried Hinpoha, covering her face with her hands. "What names begin with K?"

"King," said Gladys.

"Knight," suggested Katherine.

"All the noble names," said Nakwisi dreamily.

"Mrs. Daniel King," said Sahwah experimentally, whereupon Hinpoha hid her face in the bearskin rug.

"You try it, Katherine," said Gladys. "I'll hold the key with you."

"Oh, I'm afraid to try it," said Katherine, hanging back and looking uncomfortable. "It's no use, anyway; nobody'd have me for a gift."

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"It always tells the truth," said the blushing Hinpoha. "You know Miss Vining, Clara Morrison's old maid aunt? Well, Clara persuaded her to try it and it wouldn't turn for her at all, and they went through the alphabet three times in succession."

With a skeptical expression Katherine suffered herself to be placed on the box covered with an old piece of tapestry displaying a threadbare figure of the three fates, which was the seat of those engaged in the mysteries. "My beloved is mine, and I am his," she recited jerkily, keeping her eyes glued to the key. "He feedeth upon a row of lilies——"

"It's 'He feedeth upon the lilies,' just 'the lilies'; the 'row' part comes later," interrupted Gladys in a sharp whisper.

"He feedeth upon the lilies, just the lilies, the row part——" repeated Katherine dutifully.

"No, no; it's all wrong," said Gladys impatiently. "Begin again."

"My beloved is mine——"

"Katherine! Oh-h-h-h Katherine! Are you up there?" the voice of Slim suddenly called from below.

The girls all started guiltily and fell into

confusion. "Sh! Hide the Bible, quick!" cried Hinpoha in a sibilant whisper, darting forward and snatching it from Katherine's hand and concealing it under the bear rug.

"What are you girls doing up there?" came from below.

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"Oh, nothing," floated down the illuminating reply from above.

If Nyoda had not been so completely engrossed in her private affairs just at this time she would have noticed the subtle undercurrent which seemed to have caught hold of the toes of the entire feminine half of the senior class at Washington High. It was not the Winnebagos only. In fact, they had caught it from the others. Every class has its epidemic, be it tonsillitis, friendship link bracelets or Knox hats. This year it was fortune telling. Where the mystic rite described above originated nobody could exactly tell, but in less than a week every girl in the class had been initiated into the secret, and was busy discovering what her future initials were to be. The performance was always carried on behind locked doors or in places otherwise secure from adult eyes, and was often interrupted right at the most exciting point by approaching footsteps, but questions as to how the innocent maids had been improving the shining hour invariably brought out the reply, "Oh, we weren't doing *anything*—much." Missing keys and books of family worship led to embarrassing questions once in a while, but somehow the situation was always bridged over and parents and teachers never really did find out what the fascinating something was that drew their young friends off into groups by themselves from which they emerged to day dream instead of getting their lessons and to make mysterious references to certain initials.

The book and key oracle reigned supreme for several weeks and then gave place to the horoscope. For ten cents in stamps a certain seer dwelling in a remote town in Oregon offered to "cast" the principal events, past, present and future, in the lives of all young lady correspondents. It was not long before intimate heads were bent over scraps of paper comparing horoscopes. Hinpoha's was acknowledged by all to be the gem of the collection.

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"You have a brilliant future before you," it read. "You will have a romantic love affair and will marry your first lover. He is a great scholar who will afterwards become president. You will meet him when you are very young." Then followed a dozen lines more of brilliant prophecy. The special friends of Hinpoha, who had been allowed to peep at her fortune, Gladys, Sahwah, Katherine, Nakwisi and Medmangi, and one or two others, who had fore-gathered ostensibly to rehearse a school song, sat back and regarded their fortunate friend with awe. None of their fortunes had contained anything so dazzling.

"You're going to be the President's wife!" murmured Sahwah. "You won't forget us, will you?"

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"Never!" declared Hinpoha magnanimously, stealing a sly glance into the mirror.

"I hope you won't be ashamed of me when I'm

married and come calling at the White House," said Katherine, rather dolefully. "All I drew was a farmer."

"I only got an automobile manufacturer," echoed Gladys.

"That's what comes of having red hair," said Sahwah enviously. "Her fortune said he would be drawn to her by her beautiful tresses."

When Hinpoha was preparing for bed that night she stood fully an hour before the mirror and regarded her shining curls. Up until now she had never paid much attention to them except when the boys called her redhead and pretended to light matches on her head, and then she wished with all her heart, like the little girl in the song, that she had been "born a blonde." Now for the first time her hair appeared beautiful to her. She arranged the curls this way and that, piling them on her head and letting them fall over her white shoulders. And all night she dreamed of standing up in a carriage and bowing graciously to cheering multitudes and clasping in her arms the forms of her girlhood friends who were among the crowd.

The horoscopes had their day and gave way to something still more exciting, something so secret that at first it could not be mentioned in words, but was only alluded to by mysterious references.

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"Marjorie King went," said Gladys to Hinpoha, "and she won't tell a thing she found out, but she says it was the grandest thing."

"I don't believe it's worth fifty cents," said Sahwah skeptically. "Anyhow, I haven't that much to spend."

"You don't ever dare tell anybody, they say, not a soul," reported Gladys later. "If you do, the nice things won't happen and the bad ones surely will."

"She's the Seventh Daughter of a Seventh Daughter," observed Hinpoha in an awe-stricken tone. "Did you ever hear of anything so wonderful?"

"Are *you*?" asked Sahwah anxiously, of Hinpoha.

This last question was entirely unrelated to the preceding statement concerning the Seventh Daughter of a Seventh Daughter. It was part of the cryptic jargon employed in the discussion of a momentous question.

"I don't know," answered Hinpoha uncertainly. "Would you?"

"Oh, do," begged Gladys, "and then if you find out something nice we'll go in after you. Oh, I forgot, you can't tell us anything."

"Would your mother mind if you did?" asked Hinpoha, hesitating on the brink.

"She really wouldn't mind, but she'd think it awfully silly," answered Gladys, "so I don't believe I'll tell her."

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"You might find out the whole name," said Sahwah, looking at Hinpoha.

"And just when it's going to happen," finished Gladys.

Hinpoha suddenly made up her mind. "I believe I will," she said, looking at Sahwah.

Where Hinpoha's thoughts were the next day in school nobody knew, but they were certainly not on her lessons. She failed signally in every class.

"And what were the initials of the great poet, Longfellow?" cooed Miss Snively, in her honeydrip voice.

The word "initials" penetrated Hinpoha's wandering mind. "D. K.," she murmured dreamily.

"Indeed?" purred Miss Snively. "Can it be that I have been misinformed?" But today sarcasm was lost on Hinpoha.

After school was out a select group, half of which seemed to be hanging back and being coaxed on by the other half, walked ten blocks to an unfamiliar car line and transferred to a cross-town line. There was a much more direct route to their destination, but that laid them open to the risk of meeting friends and relatives who might casually inquire whither they were bound. Just wherein lay the crime in what they were doing, no one could have told, nor why it should be kept such a dark secret, but singly and collectively they would have died rather than reveal the nature of the latest epidemic.

By devious ways they reached the end of their journey and stood irresolute on the sidewalk before a house which bore a plate on the door announcing that that same roof sheltered the object of their desire.

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"Shall we all go in together?" whispered Gladys. There was no need of whispering, for no one was within earshot, but with one accord they lowered their voices. They went up the steps and held another consultation. "You ring the bell," said Gladys.

"No, you ring it," said Hinpoha. Thus encouraged, Hinpoha pushed the button, the door swung inward and they passed through. An hour later they stood on the corner again, waiting for the car to take them home.

"Did she say anything about—about—?" inquired Gladys.

Hinpoha clapped her hand over her mouth and made inarticulate sounds beneath it, but her eyes were sparkling, as they never sparkled before.

"Excuse me," gasped Gladys; "I forgot you mustn't tell."

"Can't you give us a hint?" begged Sahwah, who had gone along for moral support.

Hinpoha shook her head and retained her finger on her lips to stop any leaks.

"Well, it couldn't have been any nicer than mine," said Gladys, with an air of satisfaction. "Mine was just splendid. Maybe yours wasn't—favorable?" she added, stricken with a sudden doubt as to the superiority of Hinpoha's future.

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"It was, too!" declared Hinpoha. "If you took all the nice things out of ten fortunes it wouldn't be as nice as mine!"

Gladys looked unconvinced. "Well, we'll wait a year or two until they begin to come true, and then we'll see which had the nicer," she remarked.

Hinpoha laughed outright. "I don't have to wait a year or two before mine comes true," she announced triumphantly. "It's coming true in the very near future. I'm going to meet a light-haired young man and he's going to admire my hair and fall in love with me, so there! Is yours any nicer than that?"

"Oh, you told," cried Sahwah. "Now it won't come true."

Hinpoha stopped in dismay. "Well, Gladys made me," she wailed. "If she hadn't said hers was better—" The car came along then and a truce was patched up. Such a delicate subject could not be discussed openly in the street-car, even to quarrel about it.

But if Hinpoha spent a bad night mourning because she had broken the spell of her good fortune, the next day sent all doubts flying to the winds. The week before the bald-headed teacher of the literature class had occasioned a bad break in the routine of the course by inconsiderately dying of pneumonia in the middle of the term. For several days thereafter the grief of the class was tempered by the fact that there were no recitations. But on the day after Gladys and Hinpoha, with Sahwah and Katherine as chaperones, had visited the Seventh Daughter of a Seventh Daughter, an announcement appeared on the session room blackboard to the effect that literature recitations would be resumed that morning. As they filed into the literature class room they were greeted by the sight of the new teacher standing beside the desk.

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"Boys and girls," said the principal, who was doing the honors, "this is Mr. David Knoblock, who will have charge of this class in the future." And he hurried out.

"David Knoblock!" whispered the wit of the class to his neighbor. "Knoblock, No Block, see?" And a titter ran through the class.

"David Knoblock!" said Katherine to herself. "He looks as though his name might be Percy Pimpernell."

"David Knoblock!" repeated Hinpoha to herself, and sat mute before the workings of fate. David Knoblock. D. K. The Car of Destiny had stopped before her door and from it had alighted the fair-haired stranger!

Standing before the class in the glory of his yellow hair, pale, sprouting mustache, blue eyes and pink cheeks, Mr. Knoblock seemed to them a composite of Adonis, Paris and Apollo Belvidere, whose mythical charms had been impressed upon them by the late lamented instructor.

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"What has the class been reading, Miss—ah—Miss Katherine?" he inquired, consulting the

class roll.

"Tennyson, Mr. Knoblock," answered Katherine briefly.

"*Professor* Knoblock, if you please," he corrected gently. "Ah, yes; Tennyson." And turning the pages of his book with a manicured finger, he found the place and began to read aloud, glancing up at one or another of his girl pupils from time to time. More and more often that glance rested on Hinpoha, for with the sun shining through the window on her hair she was the most vivid spot of color in the room. Finally he did not take his eyes away at all, and, looking her straight in the face, he read in sentimental tones:

"Queen of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen, lily and rose, in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun."

In the blaze of that glance Hinpoha's romantic heart melted like a lump of wax. The room swam in a rose-colored mist. The great thing that she had read about in books had happened to her; she was in love! It was not long before the whole school knew about the affair. Whenever there was a sentimental passage in the book Professor Knoblock looked at Hinpoha and at her alone. He often detained her a moment after class to inquire if that last paragraph had been entirely clear to her; he thought she had looked not quite satisfied with his explanation. As he roomed in the next street to her home he generally met her on the corner in the morning and walked to school with her. Certain sour-dispositioned damsels in the class, who had made eyes at the new Lochinvar in vain, made sneering remarks about a girl who had so few boy friends in the class that she had to ogle a teacher; others sighed enviously when they looked at her woman's crown of glory and realized their handicap; the Winnebagos regarded the whole thing as the workings of fate, pure and simple, for was it not even as the Seventh Daughter of a Seventh Daughter had predicted?

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As for Hinpoha herself, she was too transported to care what anyone else thought about it. She was surrounded by a rarified atmosphere and the voices of earth troubled her not. Just now she sat blushing deeply and crushing in her hand a note which had appeared mysteriously between the pages of her *Selections from the Standard English Poets*. It was written in Mr. Knoblock's slanting backhand, and read:

"MY DEAR MISS BRADFORD:

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"Never have I seen such glorious hair as yours. I cannot take my eyes from it while you are in the room, and it haunts me by night. May I ask a great favor of you—that you grant me one lock, one small lock, as a keepsake? I fear you will be too modest to make this gift in person, and all I ask is that you slip it into the dictionary on my desk."

The signature was a long ornamental K, with a running vine entwined about its upright stroke.

Hinpoha scarcely raised her eyes above the level of her book during the whole recitation. She sat nervously toying with a long perfect curl that hung down over her shoulder. Toward the close of the recitation period she came out of her abstraction and touched the boy in front of her on the shoulder. "Lend me your penknife," she whispered in answer to his look of inquiry. The Senior Literature Class occupied the last hour of the day, and as Mr. Knoblock had no session room, the passing of the class left the room empty. On this day Mr. Knoblock left the room with the class on the stroke of the bell, and the boys and girls, trooping out in a hurry to get home, did not notice that Hinpoha loitered. She glanced around nervously, satisfied herself that she was unobserved and then darted toward the dictionary on Mr. Knoblock's desk. Going out of the door a minute later she ran violently into Katherine, who had carried out her inkwell instead of her English book, and was coming back to replace it. Katherine looked at her curiously.

"Excuse me," said Hinpoha in a flustered tone, "I really didn't see you. I was thinking about something."

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Hinpoha looked at Mr. Knoblock with an air of expectancy when she entered the room the next morning, looking for some sign of gratitude for the lock of hair, but he said, "Good morning, Miss Bradford," in his usual tone and made no further remarks. But before the hour was over he took occasion to borrow her book for a moment, and directly after he returned it a note fell from its pages into her lap. With starry eyes she unfolded it and read:

"O Morning Star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven true,
Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on
me."

The lines were from "Gareth and Lynette." The universe turned into song. It was getting altogether too much for Hinpoha to hold and that afternoon before the fire in the Open Door Lodge she revealed the progress of her romance to the other Winnebagos.

"Did you really give him a lock of your hair?" asked Gladys.

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Hinpoha nodded. "Just a tiny curl. It doesn't show much at all where I cut it out."

"Collecting locks of hair doesn't mean so terribly much," said Katherine dryly. "I read about a boy once who begged a lock of hair from every girl he met and then had his sister embroider a sofa cushion with them. And another one used them for paint brushes."

"Oh, but this is—different," said Hinpoha with lofty pity. It had just dawned on her that Katherine was jealous. The same miracle that had dropped the scales from her eyes and revealed to her the fact that she was beautiful had also made her realize that Katherine was hopelessly plain.

"And then the verse he wrote afterward," said Gladys, hastening to uphold Hinpoha. "That proves he is in earnest. And, anyway, it must be true. Didn't all the fortunes say he was fair and

his initials were D. K., and he was a great scholar, and would be president, and he would fall in love with Hinpoha's hair?" And Katherine had to admit that whatsoever was written in the stars was written.

It mattered little to any of them, Hinpoha least of all, that Professor Knoblock had thus far said nothing openly upon the subject to Hinpoha.

"Isn't his bashfulness adorable?" cooed Gladys. "He's too shy to express himself face to face with her; he puts all his—his passion into writing."

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"Won't those notes be lovely to read over together when you're old?" said Sahwah, also stricken with a sentimental fit. But at the mere mention of such a thing Hinpoha fled with burning cheeks.

"Hello, Red," said a cheerful voice in her ear, as she went dreaming down the street one day. "Where have you been keeping yourself for the last few weeks? You haven't been down in the gym once."

"Hello, Captain," she said sweetly. (How young he was, she was thinking. How hopelessly kiddish beside the manly form of Professor Knoblock!)

"Say, you must have your tin ear on today," remarked the Captain jovially. "I had to call you three times before you answered."

"I was thinking," said Hinpoha, and blushed.

"Must have been an awful hard think," remarked the Captain, stooping to throw a stone at a cat. (He's nothing but a kid, thought Hinpoha for the second time.)

It was on this occasion that the Captain, happily believing all was well between himself and Hinpoha, invited her to go to the Senior dance at Washington High with him.

"I'm awfully sorry, Captain," she said kindly, "but I'm going with—someone else."

"Who?" asked the Captain blankly. The "bid" for that party had cost the Captain just a dollar and a half, as he was not a member of the class, and he had made the investment for the sake of going with Hinpoha and no one else. So he repeated in a startled tone, "Who?"

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"Oh, someone," answered Hinpoha tantalizingly, and with that he had to be content. To herself she was saying, "How foolish it would be to promise to go with the Captain and then not be able to accept when—when *he* asks me." For word had gone round the school that all the faculty were going to honor the Senior Dance with their presence, and whom else would Professor Knoblock ask but herself?

But of all things to happen just at this time, the very next day Hinpoha came down with the mumps, or rather the mump, for only one side of her throat was affected. The first half she had had in childhood.

"That horrid mump stayed away on purpose before," she wailed, "and waited all these years to jump out on me just at this time. And my new

party dress is too sweet for anything, and my gilt slippers—oh-oh-oh-oh was there ever such a disappointment?” Gladys and Sahwah and Katherine, who had all had theirs “on both sides” and were therefore allowed to call, were consumed with sympathy, and were loud in their efforts to console the stricken mumpsee.

“Has *he* come to see you?” ventured Gladys.

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Hinpoha shook her head, which was a somewhat painful process.

“Of course he can’t come,” said Sahwah, “he probably hasn’t had them.”

Katherine’s expression seemed to say that a really brave knight wouldn’t hesitate to expose himself to any danger for the sake of seeing his lady, seeing which Hinpoha croaked hoarsely, “They probably wouldn’t let him come,” the “they” in this case presumably referring to the school authorities.

“I saw him down in Forester’s this noon when I was ordering the flowers for mother’s birthday,” said Gladys, and they all sighed.

Just then the doorbell rang and Gladys, who was sent to answer it, returned with a long box in her hand addressed to “Miss Dorothy Bradford.”

“From Foresters,” said Sahwah breathlessly.

“Flowers!” said Gladys. “Hurry and open them.”

The box disclosed a dozen, long-stemmed pink roses. “Oh! Ah!” echoed the four in unison.

“From—him?” asked Gladys.

“There’s no card in the box,” said Hinpoha, vainly searching.

“They must be from him,” said Gladys decidedly. “Wasn’t he in Forester’s this morning? And it seemed to me I heard him asking for pink roses.”

Hinpoha put the flowers in a tall vase and regarded them with rapture. They were the first flowers ever sent to her by a man. In them she found comfort for having to miss the dance.

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“Was he there?” she inquired falteringly of Gladys, the day after the party.

Gladys answered in the affirmative. “Did—did any of you dance with him?” Hinpoha wanted to know further.

Gladys shook her head. “I saw him dancing once or twice with Miss Snively,” she said. “I don’t believe he stayed very long. He disappeared before it was half over.”

Hinpoha was satisfied. He had not enjoyed himself without her. “Wasn’t it noble of him to dance with Miss Snively?” she said enthusiastically. “No one else would, I’m sure.”

At Commencement time the year before an old Washington High graduate, who had attained fame and fortune since his school days, presented the school with funds to build a swimming pool. Work had progressed during the year and now the pool was completed and about

to be dedicated. An elaborate pageant was being prepared for the occasion. Mermaids and water nymphs were to gambol about in the green, glassy depths and lie on the painted coral reefs; Neptune was to rise from the deep with his trident; a garland bedecked barge was to bear a queen and her attendants; and then after the pageant there were to be swimming races, an exhibition of diving and then a stunt contest.

The Winnebagos, being experienced swimmers, were very much in the show. Sahwah had invented a brand new and difficult dive, which she had christened Mammy Moon; Hinpoha had learned the amazing trick of sitting down in the water and clasping her hands around her knees; Gladys could swim the entire length of the pool with the leg stroke only, holding a parasol over her head with her hands, thus giving the impression that she was taking a stroll on a sunshiny day. Katherine, alas, could not swim. The largest body of water she had seen at home had been the cistern, and most of the time it was low tide in that. But this did not prevent her from thinking up new and ludicrous stunts for the others to do. It was she who invented the "Kite-tail" stunt, which was one of the signal successes on the night of the pageant. In this one of the senior boys, who was a very powerful swimmer, swam ahead with a rope tied around his waist, to which another performer clung. Behind this second one four or five more boys were strung out like the tail of a kite, each one holding on to the heels of the one ahead, and all towed by the first swimmer.

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The great night arrived and the building which housed the pool was crowded to the doors. The Senior girls and boys had spent hours decorating the hall with festoons of greens and potted palms and ferns, so that it looked like the depths of a forest in the center of which the pool glittered like a magic spring. Cries of admiration rose from the audience all around. Hinpoha, who in the first part of the performance was a mermaid, with water lilies plaited in her shining hair, saw only one face in the crowd, and that was Professor Knoblock, as he leaned over the polished brass rail and looked at her, and looked, and looked, and looked. Only that day Hinpoha, filled with the spirit of romance, had slipped a note into the dictionary on his desk, at the beginning of the letter "L," the place where she had put the lock of hair, thanking Professor Knoblock for the flowers. An hour later, in sudden terror that he would not find it there and someone else would, she had gone to remove it. But it had vanished, and in its place was another verse from Gareth and Lynette:

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"O birds that warble to the morning sky,
O birds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly; twice my love hath smiled on
me."

The opening of the pool was a success in every way. The nymphs nymphed, and the mermaids wagged their spangled tails to the delight and wonder of the spectators, and the royal barge swept up and down to the strains of stately music. Then the pageant retired, the islands folded up their tents and vanished, and the swimmers went behind the scenes to prepare for the races and the stunts. To bridge over this interval, Hinpoha had been left in the pool all

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alone to amuse the crowd by floating on a barrel and trying to balance a tray on her head as she bobbed up and down. The crowd shouted with laughter and cheered her wildly. All but one. With arms crossed triumphantly over her breast and tray steady on her head, Hinpoha looked up to see Miss Snively standing by the edge regarding her with a coldly sarcastic expression. It was as if she said in words, "Only such a flathead as you could balance a tray on it." But the great happiness that surged inside of Hinpoha made her charitable and forgiving toward all the world, and she sent a sweet and friendly smile into Miss Snively's face. But that marble-hearted lady looked away. The next minute there was a slip, a shriek, the flash of a silk dress, and a splash, and Miss Snively had disappeared beneath the surface at the deep end of the pool. Hurling the tray into space Hinpoha made a magnificent plunge for distance toward the spot where Miss Snively had gone down. Simultaneously with her plunge there was another movement in the crowd, and Professor Knoblock, stripping off his coat, jumped over the rail into the pool. Hinpoha reached Miss Snively first, just as the blue silk appeared on the surface, and, evading her wildly clutching hand, managed to hold her head above water while she struck out for the rail toward the hands that were stretched down to her everywhere. Then she became aware of another figure struggling at her side. Professor Knoblock had come up after his plunge, struck out blindly and then suddenly doubled up and gone down again. Thrusting Miss Snively hastily toward the helping hands, Hinpoha turned and rescued her professor, who had miscalculated his leap and struck his head on the side of the pool. The whole business had not taken two minutes since the first alarm, but Hinpoha was the heroine of the hour. She was cheered and praised and petted and patted on the head and exclaimed over until she was quite bewildered. Her heart was thumping until it deafened her. She had saved her lover's life, and, bashful as he was, she knew that now he must speak. It would not happen tonight. They had rushed him home in a taxicab. But tomorrow—

Somehow she managed to finish her part in the program and drink fruit punch in the gymnasium afterward. While she stood in a corner cooling her burning cheeks at an open window somebody came and stood beside her. Hinpoha turned and faced the Captain, and listened absent-mindedly to his words of praise. Then one sentence he said caught her attention. "Say," he said bashfully, "how did you like the flowers?"

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"What flowers?" asked Hinpoha wonderingly.

"The roses—pink ones—I sent you when you had the mumps."

Hinpoha stared at him blankly, unbelievably. No, no, it could not be true, the roses had come from her light-haired professor. "Did *you* send them?" she asked in a tone in which no one could have detected any degree of appreciation for the favor.

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"Wasn't there any card in the box?" asked the Captain. "I gave one to Mr. Forester to put in."

"No," answered Hinpoha, with a gulp, "there wasn't; and I thought—somebody else sent

them.”

“Didn’t you like them?” asked the Captain, feeling in the air that something was wrong somewhere. “Don’t you like roses?”

Hinpoha pulled herself together with an effort. Tears of disappointment were standing in her eyes. “Ye-es,” she answered politely, but without enthusiasm, “they were lovely; perfectly lovely.” And she ran hurriedly out of the corner, leaving the Captain staring after her in bewilderment.

“I don’t believe he sent them to me at all!” she told herself in the solitude of her own room that night. “The horrid thing found out that I got them and told me that just to tease me. Anyway, it doesn’t make a particle of difference about Professor Knoblock.” And she fell asleep whispering to herself with bated breath, “Tomorrow!”

She walked to school with lagging steps the next morning. Now that the great hour was at hand she was filled with a desire to flee. Then she heard footsteps behind her, and, glancing out of the corner of her eye, saw the professor approaching. With a wildly beating heart she walked on, her face straight to the front. He was coming. He was overtaking her. Now he was upon her. With a great effort she turned her head to look at him, her lips parted in a tremulous smile. Professor Knoblock raised his hat stiffly, nodded frigidly and passed on without a word, leaving Hinpoha staring after him stunned. Unseeingly she stumbled on to school. One question was racing back and forth in her mind like a shuttle in a loom—what was the meaning of it? Classes recited around her in school; she heard them as in a dream. Professor Knoblock did not look at her as she entered the Literature class room; he was taking two of the boys sharply to task for never being able to recite. Hinpoha sat with her eyes fixed on her book. Professor Knoblock was evidently ill-humored this morning, though apparently none the worse for his mishap the evening before. He was dealing out zero marks right and left if the recitations did not go like clock-work. And as was only to be expected the morning after such an elaborate affair as the dedication of a swimming pool, clock-work recitations were very few and far between.

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The professor finally lost all patience. “Take your books,” he commanded, “open and study the lesson the remainder of the hour, and the first one I see dawdling or whispering will be sent back to the session room.” Hinpoha’s eyes followed the lines on the page, but she could not have told what she was reading. The question was still beating back and forth in her mind.

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“Lend me your pencil,” whispered her neighbor. Mechanically she held it out to him and when he took it he thrust a stick of gum into her hand. He was still in a festive mood. Professor Knoblock caught the movement. At the same moment another pair in the back of the room began giggling about something.

“You two are out of order!” shouted the professor. “Leave the room!” All eyes were turned toward the two in the back.

“I mean you, George Hancock, and you, Dorothy

Bradford," said the Professor severely. Hinpoha turned pleading, unbelieving eyes on him. "Leave the room," he repeated with rising anger, "go back to your session room!" And with the world rocking under her feet, Hinpoha went.

As the pupils came back from their respective classes that noon there was a sensation in the air. Groups of girls stood around whispering to one another and exclaiming. "Did you ever hear anything like it?" rose on all sides. "Who would ever dream of her getting——"

Hinpoha, dumb and miserable, sat apart, until some one dragged her into the center of a group. "Have you heard the news?"

"No," she answered dully.

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"Miss Snively's engaged!" announced a young lady, in the same tone she would have said: "The sky has fallen!"

"She is!" said Hinpoha. "To whom?"

"Professor Knoblock!" continued the speaker. "They've been engaged a long time—but it just leaked out yesterday in a teachers' meeting. That's why he came here to teach."

"But the notes he wrote me," moaned Hinpoha to the Winnebagos, who had gathered for an indignation meeting that afternoon. "And the curl I gave him—— Oh-oh-oh!" and she hid her face in her hands and groaned.

Katherine had been poking about in a corner of the room during the preliminary wail. She now came forward carrying a box in her hand which she laid on Hinpoha's knee.

"What's this?" asked Hinpoha.

"Open it and see," advised Katherine.

Hinpoha complied and there fell into her lap a long, curling, red ringlet and a piece of paper written over in Hinpoha's hand.

"I have a confession to make," said Katherine, striking a dramatic attitude. "I put that note into your book asking for the lock of hair, and watched until you put it into the dictionary. Then I took it out after you left the room. I wrote the notes that followed to keep the ball rolling. I don't believe Professor Knoblock knows a thing about his great romance with you."

"You did it!" cried Hinpoha blankly, turning fiercely upon Katherine. "You made such a fool out of me that I'll never be able to show my face again as long as I live. You—you——" sobs choked her and cut off all utterance.

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"But the flowers," gasped Gladys, "who sent them?"

"Captain did, the mean old thing!" sobbed Hinpoha.

"But the Key, and the Horoscope, and the Fortune Teller," continued Gladys, "they all said he would be the one. I don't see how it could have come out any other way."

Katherine rose from her knees and rapped on the table for attention. "Girls," she said

seriously, "I suppose you think it was a very unkind and low-down sort of joke I played on Hinpoha, getting her all worked up like that with those notes, and under ordinary circumstances it would have been. But isn't there a saying somewhere 'that awfully sick people need awfully strong medicine,' or something to that effect? Here you all were gone completely loony—excuse the expression, but it's just what you were—gone perfectly loony about this fortune-telling business. You did it so much that I actually believe you began to think it was true. Then that fool fortune-teller told Hinpoha about the light-haired man that was coming into her life soon, and when the new professor arrived you all thought he was the one. I just happened to find out soon after he came that he was engaged to Miss Snively. I knew if I told you then you wouldn't believe it, so I waited until it came out. But I was afraid Hinpoha would do something really silly before she got through, and decided to take a hand in the game myself. When I wrote that note about the hair I was sure she would see through it and come to her senses. The fact that she swallowed it shows how far out of her right mind she was. I never believed she would put a lock of hair into the dictionary. But when she seemed to take it all for gospel truth I couldn't resist the temptation to go on and have some more fun."

"But—his handwriting," said Hinpoha faintly.

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"Easiest thing in the world to imitate," said Katherine, saying nothing about the weary hours it had taken her to accomplish that feat. "And I signed my own initial, 'K.,' which was certainly not taking the professor's name in vain. I never told a soul, so there's nobody to crow over you. You stand just exactly where you did at first with the professor."

"But," said Gladys, still not satisfied, "why did he always look at Hinpoha when he read the sentimental passages?"

"Because he's built that way," answered Katherine scornfully. "There are plenty of men who will make eyes at every pretty girl they see, whether they have any right to or not. Besides I heard him tell one of the other teachers once that your red hair reminded him of the hair that belonged to a dear friend he 'lost in youth.'"

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After hearing Katherine's clean-cut and sensible version of the affair the whole thing seemed unutterably ridiculous and one by one they began to think that she was right, and had played the part of the friend instead of the mischief-maker, in shocking Hinpoha back into common sense. Hinpoha advanced shakily and held out her hand. "I thank you, Katherine," she said, "for 'saving me from myself!'" And Katherine seized her hand in a crushing grip, and soon they were hugging each other, and their friendship, instead of being shaken to its foundations, was cemented more strongly.

"I think he's horrid," said Gladys, "and if I were you, Hinpoha, I'd never look at him again—the way he treated you this morning, after you had taken the trouble to fish him out of the pool last night. He's an ungrateful wretch, and doesn't deserve to be rescued."

Katherine was looking at them with a queer

expression. "There's something else I suppose I ought to tell you," she said, "although I wasn't going to at first. But now he's acted so you really ought to know. Miss Snively's falling into the pool wasn't exactly an accident."

"Did he push her in?" asked Gladys in a horrified tone.

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"Goodness, no," said Katherine. Then she added: "Yes, in a way he did, too, for he was responsible for her falling in. You know what a dub the boys all think him; they never call him anything but 'that mutt,' or 'that cissy.' He couldn't help seeing it, and it bothered him that he wasn't a hero in their eyes. Besides," she continued shrewdly, "if he was thinking of getting married he probably was looking for promotion, and he never would get it as long as he couldn't control the boys. So he complained to Miss Snively about it and she obligingly offered to fall into the pool and have him rescue her, and so make a hero out of him overnight. I heard them planning it yesterday; they were on one side of a big pile of greens waiting to go up and I was on the other. She was to do it during the intermission when no one was in the pool. They didn't seem to know that you were going to be in then. But she did it anyway, thinking that the professor would reach her first. But you were too quick for them. That's why he's so furious with you; you kept him from being a hero, and got all the praise he expected to get. Then when he bumped his head on the side of the tank and had to be rescued himself, it put the finishing touch to the tragedy."

"Gee!" exclaimed Hinpoha and Sahwah and Gladys and the other two girls, all in a breath. In moments of great emotional stress refined language seems an utter failure as a vehicle of expression. Slang is the only thing that adequately expresses the feelings. They said it again, intentionally and emphatically—"Gee!"

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"What a foolish thing to do," said Sahwah, when they had all recovered somewhat, "falling into the pool to give a man a chance to be a hero. She might have been drowned."

"She didn't run such an awful risk," observed Katherine, the all-knowing. "She's a good swimmer herself; I've heard people say so."

And again the girls sought relief in the expression not sanctioned by the grammar.

"Going to the Lodge?" said the Captain's voice in Hinpoha's ear a few days later, as she swung along the street. The Captain's manner was decidedly diffident. He was not at all sure how she would treat him this time.

Hinpoha nodded companionably. "I'm going to practice with the handball," she said energetically. "Come on, I'll race you across the field."

"That was great, wasn't it?" she cried laughingly, as she stopped before the door, breathless, with her hair flying around her face.

"Say, give us a curl, will you?" begged the Captain, tugging at one that hung over the collar of her coat.

"Don't be silly, Captain," she said reprovingly. "You know I hate people who are sentimental."

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Hinpoha's romance was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER XIII

RANDALL'S ISLAND

"I can't help it, it simply won't roll!" exclaimed Katherine in despair. "I've tugged and tugged until my fingernails are all broken, and it just naturally won't turn over!" And Katherine sat down with a discouraged thud and fanned herself with a hair-brush.

"Well, we'll 'just naturally' have to stop and see what's the matter with it," said Nyoda soothingly. The Winnebagos were having a contest in poncho rolling to be in practice for the coming summer's camping trips. The aim of each one just now was to accomplish this in two minutes. Two minutes to spread out a poncho, two blankets and enough clothes for an overnight trip, roll it up into a neat stove-pipe, bend it into a tidy horseshoe and fasten the ends together with a rope tied in square knots.

The record was held by Medmangi, quiet, neat Medmangi, who, while the others were working like mad, had serenely completed her task in a minute and three-quarters.

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"She's a regular phenomenay, that woman," said Sahwah, who had thought she was doing wonders when she straightened up at the end of two minutes exactly. "She must have four hands, or else she packed with her feet. But what else could you expect of a girl who's going to be a doctor?"

Poor Katherine, alas, made no time at all that could be recorded in Nyoda's book. It was only her second attempt at poncho rolling, but it is doubtful whether it would have been any different if it had been her hundred and second. She simply was not built for order and speediness. At the end of ten minutes she still sat beside her pile of belongings, the poncho askew, the blankets askew on it and hanging over the edge, the extra middy bundled up into a wrinkled lump and the small articles sliding off on all sides. She had begun to roll it from the wrong end, and after one or two turns it absolutely refused to go any farther, in spite of forceful attempts.

"Here, spread your things out properly, and then it will go," said Nyoda patiently, picking up the blankets. Out rolled the object which had obstructed the wheels of progress—an umbrella, which had been tucked under the blankets lengthwise of the roll. "No wonder it wouldn't roll!" exclaimed Nyoda, laughing aloud. "Did you expect the umbrella to bend round and round like a hose? Whatever would you want an umbrella for, anyway?"

"For rain," answered Katherine with touching simplicity. Nyoda and the other Winnebagos doubled up in silent mirth. Katherine's inspirations invariably left them without power of comment.

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"Katherine, you're *positively* hopeless," sighed Gladys affectionately. "The only safe way is to divide your things up among the other ponchos; yours would never arrive at a journey's end, anyhow."

"Oh, if I had only been born neat instead of handsome!" said Katherine plaintively, and then joined heartily in the irresistible laughter that followed.

"Hush, girls!" said Nyoda. "There's somebody down at the door. Don't you hear somebody rapping?"

Hinpoha, who was nearest the window, peeped down. "It's a whole bunch of girls," she reported in an excited whisper. "All strangers. I don't know any of them. What can they want?"

"Want to see us, probably," said matter-of-fact Sahwah. "Isn't somebody going down to let them in?"

"The way this place looks!" sighed Nyoda, looking at the floor strewn with the contents of Katherine's poncho. "Gladys, you and Hinpoha go down and let them in and detain them downstairs until the rest of us can put this room in order. It's a disgrace to the Winnebagos."

Gladys and Hinpoha descended the ladder and threw open the door. "Welcome," they cried, "whoever you are! Welcome to the House of the Open Door!"

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The six strange girls came in. One who was tall and thin and had hair almost as red as Hinpoha's, stepped forward. "We are members of the San-Clu Camp Fire," she said. "We have heard quite a bit about you Winnebagos and thought we would come and call. Is this your famous Lodge?"

"It certainly is," said Gladys hospitably. "We are delighted to become acquainted with you. Make yourselves at home. This gymnasium outfit belongs to a club of boys who share our Lodge, and over there is Sandhelo's stall. Sandhelo is our pet donkey; you must see him right away." She led the girls to the stall and kept them there telling about Sandhelo's exploits until she was sure from the sounds above that the room was in order. Then she invited them to ascend the ladder.

"The San-Clu Camp Fire have come visiting," she announced, as she stepped out on the floor.

"All Hail to the San-Clu Camp Fire from the Winnebagos," chanted the hostess ceremoniously, and seven pairs of hands performed the fire sign.

"San-Clu returns All Hail," responded the guests with no less ceremony.

The newcomers were shown the beauties of the Winnebago Lodge, and it seemed they would never get done exclaiming over the rugs and skins and pottery, and most of all, the beds.

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"They aren't so terribly hard to make," the Winnebagos assured them modestly, but at the same time glowing with a feeling of superiority. The San-Clu girls were plainly older than the Winnebagos; they all wore dresses down to their

ankles and seemed quite grown up, almost enough to be guardians themselves; yet they did not appear to have won nearly so many honors as the younger Winnebagos.

During the tour of inspection Nyoda and Gladys held a whispered consultation in one end of the room. "Nothing here to make a spread with," said Gladys. "I'll have to hurry out and get something."

"Do," said Nyoda. Gladys nudged Hinpoha and drew her down the ladder and together they sped after canned shrimp and condensed milk.

"Now, if you'll excuse us a minute," said Nyoda to the San-Clus, "we'll retire behind our curtains and prepare to do the stunt with which we always inflict company. Come, girls," she added in a whisper, "the Battle of Blenheim." And the players retired to array themselves in the necessary sheets.

Five minutes later the curtains were shoved aside, and the players stood before the audience. They looked in bewilderment. For seated where they had left the San-Clu Camp Fire Girls were the Captain, Bottomless Pitt, the Monkey, Dan Porter, Peter Jenkins and Harry Raymond. The girls had vanished.

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"Why, when did you come in, boys?" asked Nyoda in surprise. "And where are the girls?"

"What girls?" asked the Captain.

"Why, the San-Clu Camp Fire girls," said Nyoda, "who were visiting us."

"Here they are," said the six boys, rising and speaking together. "We are the 'San-Clu' Camp Fire Girls. 'San-Clu'—short for Sandwich Club! Ho-ho-ho, Katherine! You'd know us in a minute with girls' clothes on, would you!" And from under the rugs and furniture they drew the dresses, hats, gloves and wigs which the late San-Clus had worn a-calling. "Oh-h-h, Katherine, we do this to each other!"

The girls sat staring, speechless for a minute, unable to believe that there really had been no girls there. But the evidence was before their eyes and it could not be doubted. And they were far too game not to see that the joke was on them, and laughed just as heartily over it as the boys did.

"We'll have to have the spread, anyhow, for your benefit," said Nyoda, taking up the cans of supplies that Hinpoha and Gladys had just brought in. "You carried that off too splendidly not to be rewarded. We congratulate you on your ability to act, and confess that we were completely taken in. Where's Slim?"

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"We left him behind the fence," said the Captain, with a start of recollection. "We didn't dare let him come in with us, because you'd have recognized him right away."

"Figures never lie, especially stout ones," laughed Nyoda. "Go and bring him to the spread."

"Are you folks going on a trip?" inquired the Monkey, with his mouth full of Shrimp Wiggle and his eyes on the ponchos piled in the corner.

"We are, next Saturday," answered Sahwah. "We were just practicing rolling the ponchos today. Saturday we're going to take the steamer across the lake to Rock Island. Some friends of Nyoda's have a cottage there, but they haven't gone up yet and they said we might stay in it all night if we wanted to. We're coming home on the boat Sunday night."

"Are you going by yourselves?" asked Slim, leaning across the table and listening to the conversation. He was fishing for an invitation for the Sandwiches.

"We certainly are going by ourselves," said Sahwah, to his disappointment. "We haven't been off by ourselves for a long time. We're going in a lonely place and have a Ceremonial Meeting on the shore of the lake and tell secrets and do stunts and have a beautiful time. It's strictly a Winnebago affair—a hen party, you'd call it."

Slim sighed and consoled himself with five pieces of fudge and an apple. He was one of those boys who like to be around girls all the time. Too fat to enjoy the more strenuous society of the boys, he preferred to sit with his gentler friends and dip his hand into the dishes of candy that they usually had standing around. The fact that they made no end of fun of him and never took him seriously only increased his desire for them. And, like the Captain, he delighted to look upon the hair when it was red. He admired Hinpoha with all his corpulent soul.

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The winter and spring months had flown by with swifter wings than the white-tailed swallow, and the clock of the year was once more striking June. Saturday found the Winnebagos skimming over the blue waters of the lake in the big daily excursion boat bound for Rock Island. Nakwisi, of course, had her spy glass and was carefully scrutinizing the empty horizon. "Has Katherine come into your range of vision yet?" asked Nyoda, a trifle anxiously. Katherine had boarded the boat with them safely enough, for she had been personally conducted from home by the whole six, but had disappeared within ten minutes after the boat started.

Nakwisi lowered her glass and laughed. "No, I don't see her in the sky," she said, "though I shouldn't be very greatly surprised if I did."

And they began a thorough search of the boat from top to bottom and finally found her hanging over the rail of a gangway, trying to touch the snowy foam flying in the swirling wake of the paddle wheel. It was the first time she had ever been on a lake, and she took a perfectly childish delight in the racing water. Pulled back to safety by Nyoda, she gave an animated account of her adventures since seeing them last, in the course of which she had nearsightedly walked into the pilot house and caught hold of the wheel to steady herself when the boat gave a lurch, and had been summarily put out by an angry first mate. "I've been everywhere on the boat except down the smokestack," she concluded triumphantly.

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Soon Rock Island appeared as a speck on the horizon in Nakwisi's glass, then as a long black streak which they could all see, and finally grew by leaps and bounds into a beautiful wooded

island with trees and lawns and beautiful summer cottages shining in the sunlight. Shouldering their ponchos, they went ashore, and walked around the point of the island to the cottage where they were to spend the night. It was close to the water, where a curving indentation of the shore line made a lovely little beach. If Sahwah did not make the record at poncho rolling, she left them all behind in getting into her bathing suit, and five minutes after the door was unlocked her hands clove the water in a flying dive from the end of the pier.

Katherine splashed about courageously, trying to swim, and finally succeeded in propelling herself through the water by a series of jerks and splashes unlike any stroke ever invented by the mind of man. "This is too hard on my dellyket constitooshun," she remarked at last, clambering out and draping her ungainly length around a rock, thereby disclosing the fact that her bathing suit was minus one sleeve. Katherine regarded the yawning armhole with mild vexation. "Broke my needle when my suit was all done but putting in the one sleeve," she remarked serenely, "and there wasn't time to go out and buy one—I finished the suit at eleven o'clock last night—so I just pasted that sleeve in with adhesive tape, and it didn't show a bit. But it must have let go in the water," she finished plaintively. Nyoda looked at the girls, and the girls looked at Nyoda, and once more they were dumb.

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Tired of swimming, they dressed and explored the island and then sat down on the big boat dock and dangled their feet over the edge. Soon a tug came up alongside the pier and the sailor who ran it chanced to be a man whom Nyoda had met the previous summer on the island. "Hello, Captain McMichael," she called.

The sunburnt sailor looked up. "Hello, hello," he answered. "What are you doing up here so early in the season?" When Nyoda had explained that she had brought the girls up on a sightseeing trip, Captain McMichael promptly offered to take them for a ride in the tug. "Got to go over to Jackson's Island and get a lighter of limestone," he said. "I'd have to set you ashore on Randall's Island while I went over to Jackson's to get the lighter," he continued, "because you'd get all covered with lime dust if you stayed in the tug while they were loading, and it's no place for ladies to go ashore. But Randall's is all right. The quarries there aren't worked any more and there are only a few summer cottages. But there are excellent wild strawberries," he finished with a twinkle in his eye. "I'll call for you on the way back and get you here before dark. Will you come?"

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"Oh, Nyoda, may we?" cried the girls, delighted at the prospect.

"Why, yes," answered Nyoda. "I think that will be a delightful way to spend the afternoon. I have always wanted to explore Randall's Island; it looks so interesting from the steamer. We accept your invitation with pleasure, Captain McMichael."

"Glad to have you," responded the tug master heartily, as he set the powerful engine throbbing.

"Don't fall overboard," he yelled above the steam exhaust a minute later as Katherine hung over the stern and trailed her hands in the water. Nyoda clung to her dress and the rest sang in chorus:

"Sailing, sailing,
Over to Randall's I,
And dear Sister K would fall into the bay
If Nyoda weren't nigh!"

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The run to Randall's Island took just fifteen minutes and Katherine managed to get there without accident, other than upsetting an oil can into her lap. The wild strawberries were as abundant and as delicious as Captain McMichael had promised, and it was with sighs of regret that they finally admitted they could hold no more. Then they scrambled around in the abandoned limestone quarries until Nyoda, coming face to face with Katherine, announced it was time to play something else. Katherine had torn her dress on sharp points until it was nearly a wreck; she had stepped into a puddle up to her shoetops, her hat brim hung down in a discouraged loop and her hands and face were scratched with briars.

"If one more thing happens to you, Katherine Adams," said Nyoda sternly, "you'll have to spend the rest of your life on this island, for you won't be respectable enough to take home."

"Then I'll be Miss Robinson Crusoe," said Katherine, "and eat up all the strawberries on the island, and not have to write the class paper. I believe I'll consider your offer. Our literary member, Migwan, can write a book about it — *Living on Limestone*, or *The Queen of the Quarry*. Wouldn't that be a fine sounding title!"

"What is that long stone building way over there?" asked Hinpoha, as they promenaded decorously over the island beyond the quarries, two of them arm-in-arm with Katherine, to keep her in the straight and narrow path.

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"Looks like a fort," said Sahwah, with immediate interest. "Is it a fort, Nyoda?"

"I doubt it very much," answered Nyoda. "I never heard of a fort on any of these islands. Let's go over and investigate."

Katherine hung back, screwing up her face and rolling her eyes like an old negress. "Don' lead dis child into temptation," she begged. "Feel lak de climbin' debbil would get into mah feet agin foh sartin sure, ef ah went near dat pile of stone, an' den good-bye, dress! Only safe way's to keep dis child far away!"

Her veiled, husky voice made her imitation indescribably droll, and the girls shouted with laughter. "Never fear, my weak sister," said Gladys, "we'll all keep you out of danger."

"I can't imagine what this could have been," said Hinpoha, when they had reached the ruin. "It looks more like a mill than a fort."

"Mill!" exclaimed Sahwah scornfully. "There isn't any wheel, and there isn't a sign of a stream. Mills are always on streams."

"Maybe this was a windmill," suggested

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Katherine. "It's windy enough to set any kind of machinery going," and she started in pursuit of her hat, which that moment had been whirled from her head by a mischievous zephyr.

The ruin which the girls had found that afternoon was the remains of an old wine cellar which had been used for storing great quantities of grape wine in the old days when Randall's Island had been in the heart of the grape region, before quarrying became the chief industry. Nothing was left now to tell what valuable stores it had once sheltered, only stones and crumbling brick walls, overgrown with high weeds and wild vines.

"It's an enchanted castle," said Hinpoha. "A beautiful princess used to live here, only she got married and moved to—to the big hotel on Rock Island, and when she left the bad imps came and knocked out the mortar with their little hammers and it all fell to pieces."

"Oh, wonderful," drawled Katherine. "Let's poke about a bit in the ruins and see if we can find any of the solid gold toothpicks the princes used to strew around after a meal."

The ruined wine cellar proved utterly fascinating. They could still see where it had been divided into rooms; and here and there a thick wall still stood higher than their heads.

"Hi, what's this?" asked Katherine, as they stood before a doorway partially filled with debris, behind which a black hole yawned.

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"It's a cave," said Sahwah, poking her head forward into the hole like a turtle. "Let's explore it," she continued, stepping carefully over the pile of bricks. "Come on," she called over her shoulder; "it's perfectly wonderful. It's a room, but it's under the hill. Come on in."

"Are there any bats?" asked Gladys, hanging back.

"Nothing but brickbats," came Sahwah's cheerful voice from within.

Gladys and Hinpoha crawled through the opening, and Katherine, with a resigned, "Goodbye, dress," followed with Nyoda and Nakwisi and Medmangi. The room was nothing more than an extension of the cellar, built into the side of the hill, but to them it was filled with romantic possibilities.

"What do you suppose it was?" asked Hinpoha, straining her eyes in the semi-darkness.

"The dungeon, of course," answered Katherine promptly. "Here's where your beautiful princess confined the lovers that didn't suit her fancy—light-haired ones and fat ones, especially. She chained them to the wall and the rats nibbled their toes."

"Oh-oh-oh!" shrieked Hinpoha, stopping her ears. "Don't say such dreadful things. I can feel the rats nibbling at my toes this minute."

The walls of this cellar were badly crumbled, and at the farther side the girls discovered another cave-like opening. This was entirely dark and they hesitated before going in. Then Nyoda took her pocket flash and Gladys found

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hers, and by the combined glimmer of the two the girls found their way into the farther cave. At first they had to keep the light on the ground to see where to put their feet and they were all inside before Nyoda turned her flash on the walls. Then a great cry of amazement burst from every girl, ending in a breathless gasp. The walls and roof of the cave seemed to be made of precious stones—pearls, sapphires, emeralds, amethysts and diamonds. They caught the gleam from the pocket flashes and twinkled and reflected in a hundred points of dancing light. Great masses of crystal, faceted like diamonds, hung suspended from the roof almost touching their heads, seemingly held up by magic.

“Am I dreaming,” cried Hinpoha, “or is this Alladin’s cave? What is it, Nyoda? Where are we?”

Nyoda laughed at their open mouths and staring eyes. “Only in one of Nature’s treasure vaults,” she said. “This is one of the famous crystal caves that are found throughout these islands. It’s a form of rock crystal, strontia, I believe some people call it, and I don’t doubt but what it’s related to the limestone in the quarries. Take a good look at it, for some of these crystals are simply marvellous.”

Their voices echoed and re-echoed weirdly, as they called to each other, the sound seeming to roll along the low ceiling. “Look at this mass over here,” cried Sahwah, penetrating deeper into the cave, “it looks like a man standing against the wall.”

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“And this one looks like a dog lying down,” said Hinpoha, pointing to another.

Laughing, shouting, exclaiming, they explored the wonders of the cave until a heavy shock as of something falling, accompanied by a deafening crash, rooted them to the ground with fright. “What is it? What has happened?” they asked one another, and made their way back to the entrance. But the entrance was no longer there. Where it had been there was a solid wall of stone. Their climbing around among the ruined walls had sent some of the bricks sliding and these had released a large rock which had rolled down directly over the opening into the crystal cave. With desperate force they pushed against the rock, but their sevenfold strength made no more impression than a fly brushing its wings against it. With white faces they turned to each other when they realized the truth. They were imprisoned in the cave!

“The other direction!” cried Sahwah, shaking off her terror and setting her wits to work. “We may be able to get out the other way.” Taking the flashlight from Gladys, whose trembling fingers threatened to drop it, she led the way into the gloomy recesses of the cave, whose depths they had penetrated only a short distance before. They shuddered at the icicle like crystals, which now seemed like long fingers reaching down to catch a hold of them, and shrank back from the crystal masses that took the forms of men and animals. These now seemed like ghosts of creatures that had been trapped in the cave as they were. For trapped they were. In a few moments their progress was barred by impassable masses of crystal. Back again they went to the rock-blocked entrance and beat

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upon it and pushed with all their might. All in vain. The rock stood firm as Gibraltar. They shouted and called and screamed until the echoes clamored hideously, but no answering call came from the outside. From somewhere, far in the distance, came the dismal sound of falling water, chilling the blood in their veins.

Helplessly the girls all turned to Nyoda, asking, "What shall we do?"

Nyoda stood still and tried to face the situation calmly. She held her flashlight close to the rock and looked carefully all around the edge. At one side there was a tiny fissure, not more than half an inch wide and about six inches long, caused by the irregular shape of the rock. Nyoda regarded this minute opening thoughtfully. "If we could put something through that opening which would act as a signal, we might attract somebody's attention who wouldn't be able to hear us calling," she said at length. "Our voices are so muffled in here they can't carry very far outside."

"Is there anybody on the island to see it?" asked Gladys doubtfully.

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"There are some people here," answered Nyoda, "because the fishermen stay all the year round. You remember those houses we passed on the other side of the quarry, where the nets were hanging in the yard?"

"What shall we use for a signal of distress?" asked Gladys. "Not one of us has a tie or a ribbon on today."

"Use my dress skirt," said Katherine generously. "It's so torn anyway that it'll never feel the same again, even if it recovers from this trip." Which was perfectly true. So they tore the wide hem from her dress, which made a pennant about six feet long. Then Sahwah had a further inspiration, and, dipping her finger into a dark puddle formed on the floor by a thin stream of moisture trickling down the wall, she wrote the word HELP on the strip. Nyoda poked the end through the opening and shoved the rest out after it, keeping the other end in her hand, and she could feel by the tugging at the strip that the high wind had caught the portion outside and was whipping it about.

"Now shout for all you're worth," commanded Nyoda.

Early that Saturday morning the Captain had aroused Slim from his peaceful slumbers unceremoniously. "Hurry up and come over," he said, in response to Slim's protesting grunt. "Uncle Theodore's here with his automobile and he's going to take a run over to Freeport this morning and he said he would take all the fellows along that were ready at nine o'clock. Hurry."

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Slim needed no second invitation and roused himself immediately, while the Captain sped to collect the remainder of the Sandwiches, which was accomplished in short order, as none of the other invitations involved resurrection. Nine o'clock found them all on the curbstone before the Captain's house, standing beside Uncle Theodore's big car, waiting for the word to pile in. The ride to Freeport was accomplished in a

few hours' time and after dinner Uncle Theodore turned the boys loose to see the town by themselves while he transacted the business which had taken him thither. Freeport had no attraction outside of its harbor, and thither the boys betook themselves without delay. Passenger steamers left every half hour for the various islands nearby; lime boats, tugs and scows crowded the mouth of the river, and the whole atmosphere breathed of ships. The boys stood and watched a while and then pined for something to do.

"Let's hire a launch," suggested the Captain, who felt that it was up to him to furnish the amusement, inasmuch as he had invited them to come along, "and go out on the lake."

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Launches were readily to be had and soon they were curving around in great circles through the waves, drenched with the spray, and enjoying it as only boys can enjoy the sensation of riding in a speed boat.

"Let's go to Rock Island," said Slim, who had not forgotten who else had planned to go there that day.

"What for?" asked the Captain.

"Oh, nothing," answered Slim, "except that there's a pretty nice aquarium there, and—and the girls said they were going to be there."

"But we were politely invited to stay home, if I remember rightly," said Bottomless Pitt. "They're going to have a pow-wow, or something like that."

"But if we should run into them accidentally they would probably be glad to see us," persisted Slim. Slim was fond of picnics gotten up by girls on account of the superior quality of the "grub"; he was especially fond of Winnebago picnics, because the Winnebagos treated him better than any other girls he knew, and as mentioned before, he had a decided weakness for red hair. Hence his ingenuous desire to go to Rock Island. The Captain, knowing Slim like a book, laughed. But he, too, wished he had been invited to the picnic, and his reasons coincided in their last item with Slim's.

"All right," he said, and turned the boat's head toward the green outline of Rock Island. Half of the distance across the bay the launch wheezed and stopped dead.

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"Pshaw," said Slim disgustedly, when the Captain announced that they had run out of gasoline. They had come to a stop just off a small rocky island and with the aid of the one oar the launch boasted the Captain proceeded to paddle in to shore, in the hope that he could obtain gasoline there.

"Regular desert island," grunted Slim, as they walked and met no one. "None of the cottages seem to be occupied."

"Cheer up; we'll find someone," said the Captain. "The fishermen live on these islands all winter. Look at the limestone quarries over there."

"And the ruined something or other behind

them," said the Bottomless Pitt.

"Let's cut across here," said Slim, who was ever on the lookout for short cuts. "I see some houses over there."

"And break our necks crawling over those stones," said Monkey. "Not much."

So they started to follow the path that led around the curve of the shore. "Wonder if it wouldn't have been better to cut across, anyway," said the Captain, when they had gone some distance. "These blooming little stones are worse to walk on than spikes. Those rocks couldn't have been much worse." And he stood still and looked thoughtfully back at the ruined cellar.

"Hi!" he exclaimed suddenly. "What's that?"

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"What's what?" asked Slim.

"That white rag flying from the rock over there. It surely wasn't there a minute ago."

"Probably was, only you didn't see it," said Slim, impatient to go on.

"I'm positive it wasn't," said the Captain. "I'm going over to have a look at it. When rags start out of rocks there's something in the wind." And he walked briskly toward it, the rest following. As they drew near their startled eyes fell on the black letters of the word HELP, traced in wobbly lines.

"Yay!" shouted the boys at the top of their lungs. "Where are you and what's the matter?"

Apparently from inside the rock came the feeble echo of a shout: "We're in the cave! The rock covered the doorway!"

"Wait a minute!" called the Captain in answer, and boylike tried to move the rock himself. "Lend a hand, fellows," he said, after one shove against its solid side. They lent all the hands they had, but could not budge it. "Pull the bricks out from around it," commanded the Captain, taking charge of the affair like a general, "and look out for your feet when she lunges over!" They set to work, dislodging the bricks that held it in, and before long it moved, tottered, grated and finally, with a great crash, lunged over and rolled down a little slope.

Pale and shaken, the Winnebagos emerged into the light of day. Had the ghosts of their great grandmothers appeared before them the boys could not have been more surprised. Questions and answers flew back and forth thick and fast until the tale of their finding the cave was told.

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"And I'll never, never, explore anything again!" finished Hinpoha, in an emphatic tone.

"Oh, yes, you will," said Gladys; "and so will we all, but the next time we'll have a company of guides fore and aft."

"Wouldn't it be a better plan," suggested the Captain mildly, "to take us along with you wherever you go? I notice we generally have to come to the rescue, anyway."

And the Winnebagos promised to consider the

matter.

CHAPTER XIV

KINDLING THE TORCH

Hinpoha and Sahwah were patiently teaching Katherine hand signs one Saturday afternoon when Gladys burst in with a tragic face.

"Girls," she cried, with extravagant emphasis, "have you heard the *news*?" Then, without waiting for reply, she continued: "Nyoda's going to be *married*!"

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"We know she is," answered Hinpoha, "a year from this summer."

"No, not a year from this summer," said Gladys, swelling with the importance of the announcement she was about to make, "*this* summer. This very month!"

An incredulous exclamation burst from the three.

"It's true," continued Gladys. "Sherry's going to be sent away on a long trip and he wants to take her with him, so they're going to be married right away."

All four sat stricken, trying to realize that the evil day which they had dreaded so and which they had thought far in the future was actually upon them. Only two more weeks and their idolized Guardian, who for three years had been a part of nearly everything they did, would be gone from them. It seemed that the world was coming to an end.

In the days that followed gloom hung thick over the House of the Open Door. Now that Nyoda was to be in it no longer the Winnebagos lost all joy in its possession. Each article of furniture that she had helped to make, each sketch of hers on the wall telling in clever little pictographs the tale of some adventure or frolic, gripped them with a fresh pang. Plans for summer excursions and activities were dropped.

"And we were all going ca-camping together!" wailed Hinpoha, and damp weather prevailed for many minutes.

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But this was the end of their Senior year in high school, crowded to the limit with all the bustle and excitement and festivity of Commencement time, and the Winnebagos were so busy with examinations and essays and clothes and songs and parties that there was no time to fold their hands and grieve. Katherine, as editor of the class paper, was the star performer on Class Night, although Miss Snively, who trained the speakers, had tried to sandpaper her speech of everything clever. Katherine agreed to every change she suggested with suspicious readiness, and then when the night arrived calmly read her original paper, while the chandeliers dripped giggles and Miss Snively made sarcastic remarks about the cracked-voice orator. Somehow the story of Miss Snively's attempt to make a hero out of her fiancé had gotten out, although Katherine always looked preoccupied whenever the subject was mentioned, and of late

Miss Snively had found the seats in her recitation room occupied by rows of wise grins, which somewhat disturbed her lofty dignity. It was well that this was to be her last year of teaching.

One of the big events of the last week was the interscholastic track meet and athletic contest, to be held on the Washington High athletic field, in which ten big schools took part. The field was thronged with spectators, the grand stand was crowded, school colors floated from tree and pole, cheers burst from groups of students every few minutes and the air was electric with suppressed excitement.

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First came the track events, and in these Washington High was tied with Carnegie Mechanic for second place. The Winnebagos were glad it was so, because now the Sandwiches could not crow over them. The Captain finished first in one of the hundred-yard dashes right in front of Hinpoha, where she sat in the grandstand, and he looked over the heads of the cheering boys straight at her. Hinpoha dared not applaud him, because he belonged to Washington's bitterest rival, but she smiled brightly, and he dropped his eyes, flushing suddenly.

The girls' events opened with a game of volley ball between Washington High and Carnegie Mechanic. Much to the surprise of the Winnebagos, they saw Katherine come in with the Washington players. Katherine was not on the team. But just before the game opened the girl's gymnasium director had spied Katherine sitting at one side of the field, unconcernedly shaking a pebble out of her shoe in full view of the grandstand, and hurried over to her. "Will you fill in this game?" she asked breathlessly. "One of our team can't come and we're short a girl."

"But I've never played volley ball," protested Katherine.

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"Oh," said the gymnasium teacher disappointedly. Then she added in a kind of desperation, "Well, I don't know as it makes any difference. I don't seem to be able to find a girl who has played. Just stay in the background and strike at the ball with the palms of your hands every time it comes near you. Let the girls in front get it over the net."

Katherine uncurled her length from the ground and followed the gymnasium teacher obligingly. She was not in the least sensitive about being asked at the eleventh hour to "fill in," when she had not been asked to be on the team before. Washington's volley ball team was not a very strong one, and went all to pieces against the concentrated team work of the Carnegie Mechanicals. The score rolled up against Washington steadily. The deafening yells from the grandstand bewildered them, and they could neither volley the ball over the net nor return the Mechanicals' volleys. They were helpless from stage fright.

Katherine dutifully stayed in the background, sending the ball to the girls at the net, her brow drawing into anxious puckers, as they fumbled it time after time. She began to comprehend the rules of the game and was "getting the hang of

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it." The Mechanicals, with fifteen points to their credit, had just lost the ball by sending it out of bounds. It was time to do something. Katherine had noticed that most of the Washington girls had been trying to volley the ball across the net from the back line, instead of passing it on, as she had been doing, and had been falling short nearly every time. With a commanding gesture, she claimed the attention of her team.

"Get back on the volley line in a row," she ordered. They obeyed her like sheep. Then she took her place half-way between the volley line and the net, facing the girls. "Now," she said crisply, "whosoever's turn it is to volley, shoot the ball to me and not an inch farther. I'll get it over the net. The first one that shoots it over my head is going to get ducked in the swimming pool!"

In their surprise at this sudden rising up of a leader, they forgot the racket around them, and the triumphantly clamoring team on the other side of the net, and calmed down. The girl with the ball sent it straight toward Katherine, and with a windmill motion of her powerful arms, she hit it a sounding whack and sent it over the net like a meteor. There was no returning such a volley.

"One!" cried the scorekeeper, and the Washington corner of the grandstand gave its first yell of triumph.

"Now, everyone of you do just the same thing, one after another," commanded Katherine to the volley line. Her utter lack of excitement was bringing them out of their confusion. The next girl made an equally good throw and another loud whack announced that Katherine was volleying. Backing the net, she could not see where it was going, but a squeal told her that the girl who should be returning the ball was fleeing it. Then the machine started to work. As long as one side scored it was privileged to keep the volley.

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When in operation the machine sounded like this: "Next!" Whack! Bump! That was all. Katherine's command to the server; the impact of her palms on the ball; and the thump of the ball on the ground on the Mechanical side of the net. Up went the Washington score.

Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Nine!
Ten! Eleven! Twelve!

"Washington Rah!
Washington Rah!
Katherine Adams,
Rah! Rah! Rah!"

The atmosphere was rent with the yell.

Thirteen! Fourteen! Fifteen!

"Next!" Whack! Bump!

SIXTEEN SEVENTEEN! EIGHTEEN!
NINETEEN! TWENTY!

"WASHINGTON RAH!
KATHERINE RAH!
KATHERINE AD——"

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TWENTY-ONE!

The umpire ran along the net, holding up her hands, and the teams broke ranks.

"Washington High winner in the volley ball game!" shouted the scorekeeper through her megaphone. "Score, twenty-one to fifteen!"

And the grandstand thundered at Katherine, who suddenly got stage fright when it was all over and stood pigeon-toed with her head hanging down. Then she noticed for the first time that her middy was on hind side before and the long collar was down in front. Her horrified expression threw the spectators into convulsions. They had been laughing at it all through the game, but her amazing performance had made it a secondary consideration.

A few moments later she strolled nonchalantly into the grandstand and sat down among the Winnebagos. "That certainly is a strenuous game for a person with a dellyket constitooshun like mine," she remarked ruefully, rubbing her swollen knuckles. Three fingers were sprained as a result of doing all the volleying for twelve girls, but she didn't think it worth while to mention the matter.

Thus passed the days, filled to overflowing with fun and excitement. Katherine, thoroughly uncomfortable in a crisp new white dress and blue sash, tripped blithely along the elm-shaded avenue in the glow of the late June sunset. It was the night of the class banquet, and her mind was intent on the speech she was to make. Thus absorbed, she did not watch where she was going, and a sprawling root from a big tree tripped her unexpectedly and brought her to her knees on the soft lawn. Brought into such close contact with the ground, she spied something lying at the foot of the giant oak beside which she had fallen. It was a black leather bill fold, with a heavy elastic band around it.

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"Daggers and dirks!" said Katherine, borrowing the Captain's favorite expression. "What's this?" She slipped off the elastic band and opened the bill fold. Across the inner flap there was a name printed in gold letters. Katherine squinted at the name and explored the inner recesses of the wallet. She took one look and hastily bound the wallet together again with its elastic and dropped it gingerly into her hand bag, as if it were red hot. Then she proceeded on her way, more absorbed than ever, but the thing her brain was intent on now was not her banquet speech.

Crossing the little park-like square, which lay on the way to school, she came upon Veronica walking slowly up and down the sidewalk, intently searching for something on the ground. She was very pale and showed signs of great agitation. It was the first time Katherine had met her face to face since she had left the group.

"Have you lost something?" asked Katherine abruptly.

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"No," said Veronica, straightening up and flushing deeply, "that is, nothing much, I—I just dropped a—something out of my purse along here somewhere."

"What was it?" asked Katherine.

Veronica gave a last frantic look along the walk.

"It was a—" She hesitated, and then burst out:

"Oh, Katherine, it was my bill fold, and it had five hundred dollars in it!"

"Five hundred dollars!" echoed Katherine faintly.

Veronica ran back and forth along the walk, looking desperately into every crack and crevice. Every few minutes she held up her hand and looked at her wrist watch; then she would return to the search with more energy than before. Katherine also looked at her watch.

"I'll help you hunt," she said, taking the other side of the walk. "Are you sure you lost it along here?" she asked.

"Pretty sure," answered Veronica. "I know I had it when I was back on Elm Street, because I looked to make sure."

"The last time you saw it was back on Elm Street," mused Katherine. "That's two blocks behind us. We'll have to go all the way back."

"By the way," said Katherine, a few minutes later, "it's none of my business, I suppose, but what on earth were you doing with five hundred dollars in your bag?"

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Veronica started and looked confused for a minute. But she answered naturally enough. "I drew it from the bank this afternoon to give my uncle to pay for some investment he is making for me, and I was to take it over to his studio, but I was detained and he had gone when I got there, so I was just bringing it home when I lost it." She stared up the road with widening eyes, not toward Elm Street, where the purse might lie, but toward the big avenue in the other direction, where the streetcars clanged townward. Katherine stared thoughtfully at the suitcase Veronica had with her.

"Have you been away?" she asked casually.

"No," said Veronica, with a start. Then, as her eyes followed Katherine's, she added: "I've just been carrying some—things in there."

Katherine looked at her watch again. "What did your bill fold look like?" she asked.

"It was a small black one," answered Veronica, "with an elastic band around it. It had my name in gold letters across the inner flap."

"Hadn't we better go home and tell your uncle," suggested Katherine, "and get him to help us find it?"

"No, no!" cried Veronica, shrinking back in alarm. "Don't tell him! I wouldn't have him know for worlds that I've lost it."

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"But if you don't find it he'll know about it, anyway," said Katherine practically.

Veronica's face went white again and she returned to the search with desperate haste. "I must find it! I must find it!" she was saying over and over again under her breath.

Katherine was just as diligent in her search. She pawed through the bushes with her white gloves and sank on her knees in the soft grass, accumulating more and more grass stains all the while. The last streak of daylight faded and the big arc lights began to blaze among the tall trees, and still they searched—Katherine in a patient, systematic way, Veronica hysterically. The few people who crossed the square were closely questioned as to whether or not they had found anything, but the same disappointing answer came from all of them. Veronica looked at her watch with ever-increasing anxiety; Katherine looked at her furtively almost as often.

After two hours of nerve-wracking search a steeple clock nearby boomed out nine strokes; slowly, deliberately, its clamor shattered the summer night's stillness. Veronica sank down on a stone which bordered the walk and covered her face with her hands. Katherine straightened up and stood for a moment looking thoughtfully at Veronica; then she went on searching methodically. Veronica sat huddled on the stone for fully five minutes; then, with an expression which was strangely like relief, she rose up and followed Katherine's example. Fifteen minutes more went by with scarcely a word from either girl. Then the steeple clock chimed the quarter hour. A moment later came the sound of a train whistle, far off, but borne clearly on the still air, followed by the faint rumble of distant cars going over a culvert.

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Katherine stood still until the sound had died away, then she went up to Veronica, led her to an iron bench nearby, and shoved her into it. Then she opened her handbag and took out a small black wallet fastened round with an elastic band, and laid it on Veronica's knee without a word.

Veronica looked at it and uttered an incredulous scream of joy. "Where did you find it?" she gasped.

"Back on Elm Street, before I met you," said Katherine quietly.

"Back on Elm Street, before you met me?" repeated Veronica wonderingly. "You had it all this while?" Katherine nodded. "Then why did you keep it all this while?" demanded Veronica. "Why didn't you give it to me at once and save all this agony?"

Katherine looked at her narrowly. "I didn't dare give it to you *before nine o'clock*," she said significantly.

Veronica started and clutched Katherine's arm nervously. "What do you mean?" she asked faintly.

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Katherine put her arm around Veronica and drew her toward her so she could look into her face. The light from the swinging arc was directly upon her. "You were going to run away on that nine o'clock train, weren't you?" she asked quietly.

Veronica jerked away and turned dreadfully pale. "How—how did you know?" she faltered.

"I didn't, for sure," said Katherine. "But I made a pretty good guess. You see, when I found that

wallet, I naturally looked inside. There I saw your name, five hundred dollars in bills, and a note which read:

“Take the New York Central Flyer at nine o’clock Wednesday night.’ It was signed with the initials A. T., which I suppose stand for that friend of yours with the plush whiskers, Alex Toboggan.”

“Alex Tobin,” corrected Veronica under her breath.

“That looked suspicious to me,” continued Katherine. “I’ve seen him around with you a good deal, and I don’t like his looks, not a little bit. Then a minute later I came upon you with a suitcase, hunting your wallet and looking at your watch as if you were crazy. So I came to the conclusion that you were planning to run away on that nine o’clock train, and decided to hold you up by keeping the money until the train was gone. Am I right?”

Veronica’s eyes dropped and her face was crimson. “You are right,” she said unsteadily. “I was planning to run away on that train. After I dropped out of the Camp Fire Group I had no girl friends and became lonelier and lonelier all the while. The only interest I had was my music, and the only place to which I went was to hear the Symphony Orchestra rehearse. There, Alex Tobin, who is really a fine violinist, was always very friendly to me and kept telling me I should go to New York and study with Martini, who is the best teacher in the country. Uncle would not let me go because he said I was too young and he could not go with me. But Alex Tobin kept telling me that uncle was jealous of my talent and was trying to keep me back on purpose, and if I had any money in my own right I should take it and go anyhow. Uncle quarreled with Alex Tobin and after that he forbade me to have anything to do with him, but he used to meet me outside, and always he talked about my talent, and what a shame it was I could not study with Martini, and things like that, until I began to think I was abused. I was very lonely, you know, and had nothing else to think about.

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“Well, this week was the end of the Symphony Orchestra rehearsals, and Alex Tobin was going home to New York. He promised me that if I would play in a restaurant there in which he is interested he would see me safely there and introduce me to Martini. He talked so much about it that I finally yielded and said I would go. I had money in the bank, but could not draw it out without uncle’s consent. However, just this week he wanted to invest five hundred dollars for me and gave me his signature so I could get it. You know how easy uncle is about money matters, and he thought it was perfectly all right to send me to the bank alone. I have gone about by myself so much, you know. But instead of going to his studio with it, as I was supposed to, I kept it with me and did not go home at all.

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“I was to meet Mr. Tobin in the station at a quarter before nine. If I was not there when the train went he was going without me. I was so excited all day I did not have time to stop and think what I was doing, and how terrible it was to run away from uncle and aunt, when they had been so kind to me, even to study with Martini. I looked upon Alex Tobin as my friend and

benefactor, instead of a horrid, scheming man, as I see he is now. He just wanted me to play in that restaurant of his for nothing, and draw crowds, and beyond that he really didn't care what became of me.

"When I lost the money I was nearly frantic, because I was afraid I would miss the train. But when the clock struck nine and I knew the train was gone, I suddenly felt glad, glad, although I had been so anxious to go. For I had come to myself and felt sick at the thought of what I had almost done. Oh, Katherine, how can I ever thank you for keeping me from doing it?"

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"Don't try," said Katherine cheerfully, rubbing away at a grass stain on her skirt with the wreck of a white silk glove.

For the first time Veronica noticed Katherine's white dress. "Oh, Katherine," she exclaimed in distress, "tonight is your class banquet! I heard some of the other girls talking about it. And you have missed it for my sake!"

"Why, so it is," said Katherine, with a well-feigned start of recollection. "I had forgotten all about it."

"No, you didn't forget it," persisted Veronica; "you deliberately spent the time here with me."

"Well, never mind about that," said Katherine soothingly. "It was worth it."

"Worth it? Oh, Katherine, after the way I have treated you! I once called you a peasant, but you are noble—you are a princess! It is I who am not fit to associate with you!"

"O Glory!" exclaimed Katherine in an embarrassed way. Katherine was like a fish out of water when anyone began to express emotion. "Forget about the whole business," she said, "and come back into the group. You need to have something on your mind."

"They will never take me back now," said Veronica sadly, "after this dreadful thing I did."

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"But you didn't do it," maintained Katherine, "you came to your senses in time. We all have done some pretty foolish things, I guess, if they weren't quite so startling as the one you planned. But anyway, they'll never know a thing about it, so they can't have the laugh on you."

"You mean you'll never tell anyone?" cried Veronica unbelievably.

"Not a soul," said Katherine earnestly. "Not any of the Winnebagos, nor your uncle, nor your aunt, nor even Nyoda. Never a word, on my honor as a—a peasant! If I had intended telling anyone I'd have taken your wallet to your uncle right away, with the note in it, instead of keeping you back in the way I did. But I knew you'd come to yourself presently, and there was no use making a fuss. I'll keep your secret, never fear. I won't even have to explain my absence from the class banquet. They all know how absent-minded I am, and they will simply think I forgot. That's the advantage of having a reputation!" And Veronica, looking into Katherine's homely, honest face, knew that her word would stand against flood and earthquake.

"Do you really think the Winnebagos will take me back?" she asked timidly.

For answer Katherine picked up Veronica's suitcase, linked her arm through hers, and started homeward at a lively pace. "You *are* back," she said simply. "You never were really 'put out,' you know. You left of your own accord and we have missed you very much and were just waiting for you to say the word. Oh, I'm so glad!" And her feet began to shuffle back and forth in a lively manner, and she began to hum in sprightly tones the tune, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Thus it was that the Torch, carried by Katherine, drew Veronica to the Fire after all, although Katherine did not even know that she held the Torch in her hand.

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The last meeting of the Winnebagos with Nyoda came, oh, much too soon! The boys were warned to stay away, for not even these dear friends were to be allowed to disturb the sacredness of that gathering. They cooked supper for the last time, trying to be riotously cheerful, with the tears dripping off the ends of their noses into the dishes. All the favorite Winnebago messes were cooked, because Nyoda couldn't decide which one she wanted most. There was Shrimp Wiggle and Slumgullion and scones and ice cream with Wohelo Special Sauce, which was a heavenly mixture of maple syrup, chocolate and chopped nuts.

The feast was soon spread, and they gathered around the table to sing the Camp Fire blessing,

"If we have earned the right to eat this bread,"

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and most of the voices quavered before they came to the end.

That supper remained in their memories many years afterward. Katherine had to deliver all her familiar speeches over and over again; Migwan, who had come home from college in time to attend the farewell meeting, gave a fine history of the group from its beginning; Gladys danced her best dances; and all the favorite stunts were gone through and the favorite songs sung. And Nyoda looked upon and listened to it all with a smiling face and tear-dimmed eyes. The Winnebagos had formed a large part of her life for the past three years. Veronica, who was at the supper, and had been welcomed back into the group with open arms upon her humble apology, wept disconsolately most of the time. To have been restored to the good graces of this wonderful young woman, only to lose her again immediately afterward! She bitterly regretted her withdrawing from the group during the winter and thus losing her last opportunity of comradeship with Nyoda.

Supper over they wandered out into the warm June twilight to watch for the evening stars before beginning the ceremonial meeting. "We'll have the same stars as you do, anyhow," said Hinpoha, "and when they come out we'll think of each other, will you, Nyoda?"

"Indeed I will," said Nyoda, heartily.

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"And when Cassiopea comes out the W will stand for Winnebago," added Gladys.

"And that long scraggly constellation will remind you of me," said Katherine, and they all had to laugh in spite of their sadness.

By and by they wandered back to the House of the Open Door and Nyoda went up alone and left them standing before the door. Then pretty soon the signal bird calls floated up and Nyoda's voice called down from above, saying, "Who's there?" and they answered with the foolish passwords and countersigns that they loved because they were so foolish. One by one they climbed the ladder and took their places in the circle, their eyes on Nyoda, as she twirled the drill with the bow, kindling their last Council Fire. The spark came immediately and leapt into flame and kindled the fagots piled on the hearth. Feeling the spell of it as they never had before, they sang "Burn, Fire, Burn."

Then came the last roll call. Nyoda's voice lingered lovingly on each name: "Hinpoha; Sahwah; Geyahi (Gladys); Iagoonah; Medmangi; Nakwisi; Waban (Veronica)."

Migwan read the Count, written in her inimitable lilting metre, which touched on the many happy times they had had together, and ended,

"All too brief that Moon of Gladness,
Long shall be the years of parting!"

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Then Hinpoha put her head on her knee with a stifled sob, and at that they all broke down and cried together, with their arms around Nyoda.

"Come girls, be good," said Nyoda, after a minute, sitting up and wiping her eyes. "Stand up and take your honors like men!"

And she proceeded to raise all the girls who had not already taken that honor, to the rank of Torchbearer, excepting, of course, Veronica. As she awarded the pins she spoke a few words to each girl, telling in what way she had become worthy of this highest rank. When she came to Katherine, she laid her hand on her shoulder. "Good wine needs no bush," she said with a whimsical smile. "And Katherine needs no advocate. Her actions speak for themselves. Her masterly handling of that volley ball game the other day gives the keynote to her character. The ability to snatch victory from seeming defeat is a gift which will carry one far in the world. And do not forget that Katherine went into that game as a humble filler-in, simply to oblige the team, and without a thought of gaining any glory thereby. That is what I meant by losing one's self in the common cause which is a necessary qualification for a Torchbearer. Katherine would go to any trouble to help somebody else get glory for themselves, or to help them out of trouble." And Veronica almost burst with the desire to tell of the last great service Katherine had done her.

Katherine blushed at Nyoda's words and winked back the tears and dropped the pin, and murmured brokenly that she would try to be a worthy Torchbearer, and would do her best to stop being so absent-minded. And then all the Torchbearers, new and old, joined hands in a circle and repeated their desire:

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"The light that has been given to me

I desire to pass undimmed unto others."

"And now a word about the future," said Nyoda, putting wood on the fire and sending the flames roaring up the chimney. "You girls declare you do not want another Guardian. I heartily agree with you in this. That does not mean that I would be jealous of a possible successor. But I think the time has come when you no longer need a Guardian. For three years you have been bound together by ties stronger than sisterhood, and have had all the fun that it is possible for girls to have, working always as a unit. You have stood in a close circle, always facing inward. Now you must turn around and face outward. You have been leaders from the beginning, and I have trained you as leaders. And a leader must stand alone. Each one of you will have a different way of passing on the light. The time has come to begin. The old order has passed when you did every thing under my direction. You must kindle new Camp Fires now and teach to others the things you have learned."

"Oh, Nyoda," cried Gladys sorrowfully, "do you mean that all our good times together are over? That this is the end of it all?"

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"No, dear, this is not the end," said Nyoda cheerfully, "this is the 'beginning of it all.' I do not mean for a moment that you girls are not to meet and frolic together any more; but that must not be the main thing. You must begin leading groups of younger girls and teaching them to have a good time as you have learned to. What wonderful Guardians you will make in time!" she said musingly.

"Besides," she added, after a moment's silence, while the girls thoughtfully pondered the new idea she had given them, "you had come to the parting of the ways, although you didn't seem to realize it. You have graduated from school, and next year Hinpoha and Gladys and Katherine are going away to college, each one to a different city, and Nakwisi is to travel with her aunt, and Veronica will be going to New York to study music sooner or later. That leaves only Sahwah and Medmangi here in the city. You couldn't go on as you have in the past, even if I were not going away. But come," she cried in an animated tone, "enough of solemn talk! We've had three years together, and nobody can take them away from us, never. And we're all together now. Let the future take care of itself; this is today! Come, come, a song!"

And once more the rafters rang:

[253]

"O we are Winnebagos and we're loyal friends
and true,
We always work in harmony in everything we
do,
We always think the weather's fine, in
sunshine or in snow,
We're happy all the time because we're maids
of Wohelo!"

The echoes died away and then sprang into life again.

"For we are Winnebagos,
For we are Winnebagos,
For we are Winnebagos,
And that's why we're so spry!"

“A toast!” cried Nyoda, “a toast to the future!”
 And they drank it in the remains of the cocoa.
 Their eyes met as they clinked the cups, and
 overflowed. “Oh, my girls,” cried Nyoda, trying
 to get her arms around all of them at once,
 “there never *was* such a group! And there never
will be such a group! I just can’t leave you!”
 Then she pulled herself up again. The time was
 passing and she must hasten, for she was
 leaving on the train late that night. Her
 marriage was to take place in the East. “Come,
 girls, ‘Mystic Fire.’” And once again their voices
 rose in musical chant:

“With hand uplifted we claim thy power,
 Guide and keep us as we go,
 True to Wohelo.
 Thy law is our law from this hour,
 Thy mystic spirit’s flame will show
 Us the way to go.”

And so on to the end.

But when they stood in the close circle with
 which the song ends, Nyoda stooped to the
 hearth, and, plucking forth a burning brand,
 held it aloft as a torch, and the girls passed in
 front of her, each carrying a tiny torch in her
 hand, which she lit from the big one. Then the
 circle stood complete once more, a ring of
 shining light. Silence fell on all. The moment of
 parting had come.

“Don’t say good-bye,” begged Nyoda. “Act as if I
 were a guest just leaving for a short time.”

And bravely, with voices that did not falter to the
 end, they sang the familiar guest song:

“Our guest, may she come again soon——”

and followed it with a fervent cheer:

“O Nyoda, here’s to you,
 Our hearts will e’er be true,
 We will never find your equal
 Though we search the whole world through!”

Then the circle turned resolutely and faced
 outward. A moment more they lingered, and
 then they went forth into the night, carrying
 their torches with them.

THE END

Transcriber’s Notes

- Silently corrected palpable typos in spelling and punctuation
- Adjusted front matter to give a complete list of the series

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