

SCATTER

HER SUMMER AT
A GIRLS' CAMP



LESLIE WARREN



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SCATTER
Her Summer at a Girls' Camp



“CANDOR!” SHE GASPED. “YOU’VE BEEN IN CANDOR, TOO!”

--Page 161

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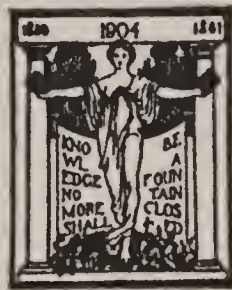
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*For Beaver Camp
on Its Twenty-first Birthday*

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SCATTER

Her Summer at a Girls' Camp

CHAPTER I

UP AT PANTHER

“Well, Frosty,” remarked Scatter, my red-headed roommate, thoughtfully, “it’s very comforting to think that we have only two things to do this summer.”

She was sitting cross-legged on her trunk, gazing benignly upon me where I sat on the floor of our Loon Attic, sorting out my goods and chattels before stowing them away neatly as became a Camper and a Panther. We had arrived at Camp the day before for our third, and probably our last, summer and were still in the process of getting settled.

“Two things?” I inquired, sitting back on my heels the better to cogitate. “I can think of only one thing myself, and that is for the Raggeds to beat the Hatchets and bring the banner over to Loon Attic. And I suppose

that that's one of the things on your mind, too. So what might the other be, O wise one?"

"Explore Nirvana and solve the mystery of its opium-eating inmate, of course," Scatter answered scathingly. "For two whole years he has lived upon that lone Point of his, uninvestigated and aloof. It's time he was tracked to his lair and explained."

Up at Panther, let me hasten to remark, the mystery of the "Opium-eater" had troubled us ever since we had first arrived at Camp. The nickname was an invention of Scatter's, derived from the peaceful title blazoned large above the front door of the man's tiny abode—"Nirvana."

Aside from Maryld, the other girls' camp on Clearwater, he was the only inhabitant of our lake, and, as a neighbor, he was a total and complete loss. His Point was only half a mile from our bathing-beach, but we never caught more than a fleeting glimpse of him by day and an occasional flash of his wandering lantern by night.

We knew that he had a Chinese servant, for we had seen the man buying supplies at the general store down in the village. But he

talked English only with clucks of his tongue and pointings of his fingers, and there was nothing to be learned from that.

Our Camp Management had always protected this strange hermit on the Point from intrusion on our part, although they never would explain him to us. They merely smiled sweetly and told us never to bother the man on the Point, with that detached air that older people put on when they are afraid of telling more than they would have us know. Even Mr. Milton, the postmaster at the store, professed to know nothing of the man or his habits, be they honest and aboveboard or sinister and dark.

“Quiet-spoken feller,” he said non-committally on the one occasion when Scatter managed to wiggle herself far enough from all chaperoning Counsellors to question him. “No, ma’am, he ain’t a native of these parts that I know of. No, he don’t get no mail here and he ain’t never ast for any. Likely he goes to East Fellowship for it. It’s nearer his place.”

Of course Scatter had always been all agog to ferret out what there was to ferret about

the lone inhabitant of the Point. She is never happy if there is anything in her neighborhood that she doesn't know about, and this mystery had baffled her for two whole years. Therefore she was determined to solve it this third year before leaving Camp for good and all. As for me, I considered the matter judicially before committing myself to extensive detective operations.

“ I don't know,” I said at last. “ Of course it would be nice to know all about the Opium-eater, and I wouldn't mind going sleuthing with you once in a while, Scatter, as long as it didn't interfere with the Raggeds. But we simply *must* win the banner this year, and that's not going to be easy with Happy Jack determined to be a Ragged and all. Of course there's you and Koko and Janice and Mary. You're all good athletes, but the Hatchets have good ones, too. Sally and Elsie and Peggy, for instance.”

Scatter shook her red head vigorously. She had had her hair cut just before starting for Camp that year, and her gorgeous halo of red curls was very intriguing.

“ Certainly we've got to beat the Hatchets,

Frosty. That comes first of all, of course, and we have a splendid chance with you for Captain and so many of the old girls back. Oh, we'll win in spite of Happy Jack. She will have to be a Ragged, but there are lots of things that she can do well. Swimming and paddling and nature work, anyhow."

"I know that," I answered. "But it does seem hard on the Raggeds. I like Happy Jack as well as you do, but it would be better for the Ragged side to have a good lusty baseball player in her place—the kind she used to be before she was smashed up in that automobile accident. In fact, I can't quite see why a lame girl like that ever wanted to come to an athletic camp like Panther."

"Be fair, now, Frosty, be fair," warned Scatter soothingly. "Happy Jack is a nice girl and you know it, and her heart will break if she isn't made a Ragged next week. She came here because she's a friend of ours and in our Troop and all."

"That's all right," I hastened to assure her. "Don't get excited. Happy Jack is going to be a Ragged. I'm just wishing that she'd never had that accident that ruined her leg, that's

all. They say that she used to be a perfectly marvelous baseball player before she was in the smash-up, and I'd like it if she was still."

"Well, she isn't, and if you don't like that, Frosty, you know what you can do," responded Scatter brightly. Then she reverted to her pet obsession again.

"Frosty, listen to me. I have a queer idea that the Opium-eater is going to become heavily involved in the fate of the Ragged team this summer. Laugh if you want to, but I honestly feel that it is most important for us to find out all that we can about him as soon as possible. I'm positive that he is going to bring us luck. Just you wait and see."

I didn't laugh. There is never any use in laughing at Scatter when she becomes involved in an idea, and I realized that, as long as she felt that she had to sleuth the Opium-eater in the interests of the Ragged team, the only thing to do was to let her sleuth, aiding and abetting her in her quest in order that it might be over the sooner and the field left fallow for new ideas to sprout. However, I don't think much of hunches and superstitions myself, and I told her so.

“He may be an opium-eater,” I said firmly, “only I don’t really think he is. And he may be Il Duce himself, or he may be the Czar of all the Russias escaped from the murderous Soviets, for all I know, but I’ll never believe for one minute that he is involved in the affairs of the Ragged team in any way at all. If we win the banner this summer, it won’t be by any opium-eating tricks, but by our playing—you and Koko and Janice and Mary and me and all the other Raggeds—playing as hard as we can on land and lake, and a little harder than that, too, to make up for the handicap of Happy Jack on the side.”

Our Panther Camp is divided into two sides, Hatchet and Ragged, named for the mountains on the other side of Clearwater from Camp. The Hatchet color is green and the Ragged color is red, and all summer long we compete in every kind of sport for the banner that is awarded to the winning team at the end of the season. Every single girl in Camp, from the youngest and frailest up, has a chance to help her side, for progress in tennis and swimming and nature work and crafts counts just as much as winning the tennis champion-

ship or making a record swim. Therefore no one ever feels left out; we all pull together for the side as hard as we can, and it's no end exciting.

The banner itself doesn't look like much. It's only a faded old blue and white flag with "Panther Camp" on it, and it hangs beside the door of the Captain whose side was victorious the year before. Of course that year it was beside Sally Robbins' door over at Shack One, and Scatter and I felt bad to see it there, for it would have been outside our own Loon Attic if we had only managed to earn a few more points the year before.

Probably people wonder why we all want to win that banner for our side so much. It certainly means a lot to us Panthers. All the spirit and tradition of our Camp center around it, and it is the main reason why we old Campers go back year after year the way we do.

Each of our sides has a Captain, and it happened that year that I had been made Captain of the Raggeds. Of course I was too thrilled and pleased for words. But I was scared, too. In the two years that Scatter and I had been roommates in Loon Attic, our dressing-room

in Shack Two, the Hatchets had won the banner both times, so it was frightfully important to us that third year that the Raggeds win again as they used to in the old days when Miss Palmer, our Water Sports Counsellor, was a Camper and Ragged Captain, too. I had voted for Scatter for Captain, and I honestly felt that she would make a better Captain than I. She is so red-headed and stubborn. Nothing ever baffles her.

“Never mind, Frosty. I’ll be your little lieutenant,” she told me joyously after the elections were over and we had returned to Loon Attic to get on with our unpacking. “This is going to be the best summer yet.”

Scatter’s real name is Sarah C. Atwell, and she has been my best friend ever since I found her up the pear-tree in our back yard at home, placidly eating pears and throwing the cores at my Airedale, Guffin, who was having hysterics at the foot of the tree. She had come to live with her aunt, whose back yard joins our back yard. Her mother had died a year or two before, and her father, who was a missionary bishop in Siam or Ceylon or some such outlandish place, had found himself utterly

unable to cope with his younger red-headed daughter. So he shipped her back home to his sister to have her educated in the States. We were in the same class at the old Oak Tree School and in the same Girl Scout Troop, and for two years we had roomed together at Panther along with Margery Woodward, another girl from our town.

Marge was a Hatchet and a morose kind of girl, not easy to live with, but we were used to her after two years together.

She came lounging into Loon Attic in time for the tail-end of our talk about the Opium-eater.

“What *is* the point?” she inquired flatly. “He’s nothing but a man in a cabin on Clearwater. There’s no mystery about that that I can see.”

Marge never can see the point to anything. Of course she is an awfully good sort and a fine scorer for the Hatchets, but at times she’s a dreadful wet blanket.

“Mystery?” flared Scatter, insulted that the pet figment of her imagination should be so flatly trodden upon. “Don’t you call it a mystery, Marge Woodward, when a person

lives all alone on a point in a lake miles from anywhere, in a tiny house called Nirvana, with a flagpole in his yard [personally I think that Scatter was largely attracted to this mysterious character by the tall and barren flagpole beside his door-step], and is never seen on the lake by day in any sort of a conveyance, but waits for nightfall before setting forth to roam? Many a time we've seen a lantern leaving his place and wavering about the lake after dark. And you know that as well as I do, Marge Woodward."

Marge grunted.

"Why shouldn't he go out at night if he be so minded?" she asked. "There's nothing mysterious in that."

Scatter ignored her loftily.

"A character ——" She caught her breath and warmed to her subject. "A character who is never seen fair and square like the natives around here. If we paddle past his Point, he's always slamming the door behind himself or vanishing around Nirvana. And besides that, Marge Woodward, if he isn't a mysterious character, do you think that the Management would bother to put their heaviest ban on his

Point? 'Never land at Nirvana,' they decree. Well, we never do, but no one ever tells us not to go calling on the Holts or on Mrs. Phillips, do they? Or not to eat cake at the Foggs'?

"Well, then, if this Opium-eater wasn't a mystery, we'd be allowed to go and call on him, too, and ask him for doughnuts and play with his offspring and his fuzzy kittens. And mark my words, Marge Woodward, before this summer is over, I am going to find out why we can't and what he is up to on that Point of his and," she added under her breath, "what sort of magic charm he will lay on the Ragged team."

I was intrigued by Scatter's enthusiasm, but Marge merely grunted again.

"I can't see why you call him 'Opium-eater,'" she remarked blightingly. "How do you know he is one?"

Scatter glowered at her savagely and began to twist her forelock on her finger, a sure sign of mental agitation with her.

"What else would he be, living on a point and naming himself Nirvana?" she demanded firmly.

"He might be a bootlegger," answered

Marge, a lofty flight of the imagination for her, "or a miser or . . . or something."

"Something else!" jeered Scatter relentlessly. "Bootleggers, my good woman, do not bury themselves on forlorn points in the north woods. They seek the haunts of man, where gold is rife. And misers do not, as a rule, have Chinese servants attached to their persons—or flagpoles in their yards, either."

Marge shrugged her shoulders, unconvinced.

"Now I'll tell you something that's really true," she said in the important tone of one who has news. "You know that new Counsellor, Miss Pond?"

"Yes," replied Scatter, "the funny-looking one who has taken Miss Barber's place at craft work."

"Well," said Marge with tantalizing slowness, "guess who she is."

"She's Miss Pond, the new craft teacher," responded Scatter brightly. "The only Counsellor we've ever had who is not a Panther, born and bred."

"She's far more than that," answered Marge. "She's none other than the sister of the famous Commander Pond himself."

“ Marge! ” Scatter’s eyes grew as round as saucers, and her mouth flew wide open. “ Honestly, Marge, you’re fooling me. Do you mean to say that that new Counsellor is the sister of Commander William Pond, the navy airman who rescued those castaways at the South Pole last winter? ”

Marge nodded.

“ She surely is. Mother Panther told me so herself. ”

Scatter was dumbfounded, and so was I, if the truth were told. To think that the sister of the nation’s hero should be our craft teacher right here in Camp!

We had both been thrilled by the reports of the Commander’s daring exploits, but Scatter, particularly, was simply carried away by them.

“ Why, Frosty, ” she had said to me in the spring, when we had read of his all but unbelievable courage and self-sacrifice, “ I think he is the greatest hero in history, and I am sure that he is the bravest. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to see him sometime? ”

“ Is there any chance of his coming over here to see his sister? ” I asked Marge breathlessly.

Marge shook her head.

“I don’t know,” she said. “I shouldn’t think there would be, though,” and she stalked out to the sleeping-porch to put an extra blanket on her bed.

“Well,” said I thoughtfully to Scatter, “I think that you might well make that your third objective for the summer—to meet and speak with Commander Pond, if possible.”

Scatter laughed that thought away lightly.

“My Frosty,” she said, “things like that don’t happen. They’re too good to be true and far more than any one would dare to make an objective for any summer.” She dismissed the subject for the time being and returned to our former discussion.

“And now how about the sleuthing of Nirvana? Will you join me on the quest for the good of the Raggeds, or shall I have to ask some one else?”

“Oh, I’ll go with you,” I promised her, “just as soon as we get the sides chosen and everything is in good running order.”

I honestly was thrilled with her enthusiasm and was ready to start with her on the quest at once, only Ragged-Hatchet plans could not be interfered with, and for a while we were too

busy to do more than watch that alluring Point from a distance and wonder about its mysterious inhabitant.

The slogan of Panther Camp is "Busy every minute," and I don't mind saying that that slogan is lived up to under such heavy Counsellor supervision as to make independent detective operations almost an impossibility.

The first week in Camp each year is spent in trying out the new girls in all our sports and pastimes, so that they may be chosen Ragged or Hatchet and the sides kept just as even as it is possible to make them. It is quite a hard job, for lots of girls come to Camp with the set idea that they are going to be either Ragged or Hatchet because their older sisters were or their best friends are or something like that, and of course those preferences have to be considered, as well as athletic ability, when we Captains and the Counsellors choose the two sides.

Well, we worked away at that job all that Saturday afternoon, trying to make things come out right. There was an uneven number of girls in Camp that summer, and it worked out so that the Hatchets had one more girl

than we did, and of course we had Happy Jack. We simply had to have her.

She had come to our town only a few months after the automobile accident that had twisted and shortened one leg and turned her from a splendid athlete into a limping cripple. When she first arrived at our school, she wasn't so easy to get along with, not being used to her changed self yet. But eventually she joined our Girl Scout Troop and entered into the other things that we were doing—that is, she entered everything that she was able to—and showed such marvelous spirit that she soon earned for herself the nickname of Happy Jack, although her real name was Eleanor Jackson. She had come up to Panther because Scatter and I were so keen about the place, and of course she was determined to be a Ragged. I was glad to have her on our side because I liked her and all, but I did feel that we, rather than the Hatchets, ought to have the extra girl.

“ I know you ought,” admitted Miss Mason. She is the physical director at our Oak Tree School at home and is our Girl Scout Captain, too. At Camp she is the Senior Counsellor,

and every one likes her a lot. "I know you ought to have the extra girl, but if we give you any of these girls who don't care which side they are on, the Raggeds will be much stronger than the Hatchets, and you Raggeds wouldn't like that any better than the Hatchets would. It really isn't unfair this way. Happy Jack is good at some things, you know, even if she is lame."

"Oh, I know that," I said wearily. It was a hot day, and the session had been a long one. "And I'm sure that it's all right if you say so, Captain Mason."

Of course she wasn't a Captain at Camp, but the title clung to her from Girl Scouting at home.

At that moment Miss Palmer returned from an errand at the Camp House. She was our Shack Counsellor and the very Panther who had once been Ragged Captain herself.

"I have news for you," she said cheerily. "There's another girl coming up to-morrow night. Mother Panther got a telegram about her this afternoon. The Raggeds could have her, and that would even up the sides."

"What kind of girl is she, Miss Palmer?"

Sally Robbins and I asked the question in a duet.

“Her name is Ellen Hunt-Crosby,” replied Miss Palmer with a twinkle in her eye. “She comes from New York, is fabulously rich, and is being parted from her family for the first time in her life.”

I groaned.

“Very well, I’ll take her,” I answered, “if Sally thinks that’s fair.”

“Well, I don’t want her,” said Sally with firm decision.

So that was that, and I sought Scatter to tell her all about it. I was troubled about the unknown Ellen Hunt-Crosby, and I felt the need of being soothed.

But when I found Scatter, she was even more troubled than I.

“It’s Happy Jack,” she told me, twisting her forelock viciously. “She’s packing to go home. You’re the only one who can stop her, Frosty, and you had better go to her quickly before the Management hears about it.”

“What’s the matter with her?” I asked. “Homesick?”

Scatter shook her head.

“ She’s realized what an athletic sort of place this is, and she’s trying to get away before she makes a mess of things.”

I looked at Scatter with my mouth wide open.

“ Doesn’t she like it here? ” I demanded incredulously.

The bare idea of any one’s trying to leave Panther before she was forcibly evicted at the end of August was as strange as an unknown language to me.

“ Oh, Frosty! ” Scatter was exasperated, and she showed it. “ Can’t you see for yourself that she simply adores it here? But she knows that she’s bound to be a Ragged, and she knows how frightfully we want to win and what it means to you as Captain and all, and she’s running away before she becomes a drag on the team. You are the only person that can make her change her mind, and you had better go down to Shack Three right away and tell her how much we are counting on her swimming and paddling, before she goes away for good.”

“ Oh, Scat! ” I groaned in abject terror. “ I can’t talk to people when they are tempera-

mental. You go! You're . . . you're so fluent. You always know just what to say. And you're always trying to lift up the down-trodden, anyhow."

That was true. Scatter is always and forever finding poor unhappy souls and giving them a hand up. But with me that day she was as firm as a stone.

"No, Frosty," she said. "I'll not even go with you, for if I did, I'd be sure to do all the talking. This is your job as Captain, so hurry right along."

I went, only I didn't hurry. I dragged my feet and wished that I were anywhere but on the path to the Third Shack and Happy Jack.

However, I did arrive there at last and found her packing, even as Scatter had foretold.

"Why do you want to leave Camp now when we've got the sides even and everything?" I asked her. "Are you homesick?"

"N . . . n . . . no. I'm not homesick, exactly," Happy Jack said slowly. "But I thought that I had better go home. No reason . . . really."

"You are going to leave us Raggeds in an

awfully bad way," I told her earnestly. "We've been counting on you for the war canoe and swimming, and there simply isn't any one to put in your place. Please, Happy, don't go yet—not until you have given the place a chance. It's just marvelous here, and we need you. Honestly we do."

Happy's grave face brightened with the ghost of a tiny smile. She was sitting on the floor beside her trunk, and she looked up at me wistfully.

"Do you truly mean that, Frosty? That the Raggeds need me? Or are you just saying it to make me feel better?"

"Of course I mean it, Happy," I assured her. "I wouldn't say it if I didn't."

"Are you absolutely sure that I won't be a drag on the team and keep the Raggeds from winning the banner?" She searched my face with pathetic eagerness, and I almost wept over her.

"Of course I'm sure, Happy Jack," I lied cheerfully. "You're going to help us no end. Please don't leave!"

"All right, I won't! I'll stay, and I'll swim and paddle as hard as I can." Happy's face

was pink with pleasure, and she started to dig her belongings from her trunk in the way that Guffin digs for woodchucks in a meadow. Then she paused in her eager work to regard me with shining eyes.

“And do you know, Frosty, I honestly believe that I could help with baseball, too. I used to be a pretty good pitcher before . . . before . . .”

She stopped. She never could talk about that horrible accident that had crippled her for life.

But I had already turned to leave the Shack, and I spoke hastily over my shoulder as I banged the screened door behind me.

“I’m afraid that’s out of the question, Happy,” I told her, and I know that I must have sounded brusque. Scatter would never have spoken in that way. “Stick to water sports. You can help us there. You have to be able to run in baseball to be of any use.”

I realized as soon as I had spoken that I had said the wrong thing, for I stopped on the step outside and saw Happy Jack’s face fall. She looked soberly at her duffle strewn about her on the floor.

“All right, Frosty,” she said gently. “I see the point, and I’ll stick to what I can do. Thanks awfully for coming over.”

That was the one and only time that Happy Jack tried to join us at baseball, although she used to limp out to the field and sit by the sidelines, chewing at a bit of grass, whenever the Ragged team was practising. And of course she was always on hand for Ragged-Hatchet games, regardless.

Then, on Sunday evening, Man o’ War came pacing into our midst; and with her arrival it seemed that not only was the Ragged side put completely out of the running for the banner, but the very friendship between Scatter and me was likewise threatened with an awful doom.

CHAPTER II

MAN O' WAR

Of course that wasn't her name when she first came to Panther. It takes a long time to earn a name like that at our Camp, and when Ellen Hunt-Crosby arrived in the family limousine, it honestly looked as if she would be Ellen Hunt-Crosby for the rest of the summer.

It was a very bad beginning, for her mother came with her and unpacked her duffle and made her bed for her before she abandoned her to an uncertain fate among us uncouth Panthers. It simply isn't done at our Camp that way. One arrives, properly, with the horde by train and Ford truck. And one never by any possibility allows one's family to arrange one's things if by any ill chance one is unfortunate enough to receive a visit from them during the summer. I seem to be somewhat mixed up on my "ones," but honestly there is very strong feeling at our Camp about certain

things, although we don't talk about them much. We haven't time.

The next morning Ellen Hunt-Crosby appeared at our table for breakfast, and you can't imagine how uncomfortable she made us, for she crouched in a heap on the bench between Mary Martin and Polly Stevens, and cried and cried and cried as if her heart would break. She was a great long, lanky girl, all arms and legs and elbows, and it was a depressing sight to see her all hunched up with the tears flowing down her cheeks like rain.

She ate a good breakfast, though, and I'll never forget how she scraped the sugar out of the bottom of her cocoa cup, crying bitterly all the while. We all tried to be nice to her, of course, and after breakfast we rallied around and told her what rare fun it is to be a Panther and what our habits are. And we tried to impress upon her the fact that she was a duly elected Ragged and all that that should mean in her life. But we might as well have been talking to a visitor from Mars. She couldn't seem to understand us, so after a while we kept quiet and left her alone.

We hoped that she might get used to Camp

in a day or so, but instead she became more and more unhappy. She wept buckets of tears at every meal, and she kept the girls in Shack One awake for hours every night, snuffling and blowing her nose.

Her roommates suffered, too.

“Can you believe it?” Elsie Howard said to me the second day. “She’s never had a broom in her hands in her life. I gave ours to her this morning, and she began to cry.”

“And that’s not all,” groaned Koko. “Did you hear that our Shack was marked off at inspection this morning? That was Ellen Hunt-Crosby’s bed. She never was taught how to make one at home.”

“Where is she now?” I asked.

“Over on her bed, crying because it’s hot and she can’t find her hair brush. She says when it’s hot at home, they close all the shades and a maid brings cold lemonade. I’m afraid, Frosty, that she will never learn to be a Camper—not even an excursionist, probably.”

The very worst thing that any one at Panther can be called is “excursionist,” so you see our new inmate had fallen mighty low in our social scale.

“And Frosty,” Koko went on with a note of bitterness in her voice, “she won’t even be nice to Abey. I introduced him to her the very first thing, and she wounded his feelings terribly by bursting into tears and fleeing from his presence. He’s such a sensitive little fellow that he simply can’t bear to be treated like that. In fact, he feels so badly about having her for a roommate that he spends most of his time on the rafters, and it’s awfully cold up there at night. I’m sure he’s going to catch his death of cold or something. The Doctor is worried, too, and so is Miss Mason.”

Koko ended her plaint gloomily. I laughed, and so did Scatter.

“I can sympathize with Abey,” I said. “But I can feel for Ellen, too. I’ll never forget the time you introduced him to me, Koko. I thought I was seeing things—or maybe I wasn’t.”

Koko grinned impishly.

“You *were* rather amazed, Frosty,” she admitted. “We had to translate him for you finally, I remember.”

“And it took a lot of translating, too,” Scatter broke in. “You’ll find that Frosty

isn't a bit bright about people like Abey, when you've known her as long as I have."

I don't mind saying, though, that Abey does take considerable translating for those who are not acquainted with him, and I don't wonder that poor Ellen Hunt-Crosby, a stranger in a strange land, burst into a renewed spasm of weeping when she met him for the first time.

Abey is a purely imaginary character of Koko's—an Australian Filliloobird, no less—and she has imagined him so hard for so many years now that he has become quite real and familiar to her and to all the rest of us Panthers. He is a creature of very tender feelings, which are most easily hurt, and Koko insists that he be treated with due respect by Management, Counsellors, and Campers on all occasions. Every one joins her in her game, and at times it is very amusing. At other moments it becomes rather inconvenient for those who happen to be involved.

There was one awfully cold night when Koko firmly refused to go to sleep until Miss Mason allowed her to go out on the porch and retrieve Abey, who had placed himself dismally under the spigot in a fit of the sulks. Miss

Mason tried to assure her that he would come in of his own accord when he was cold and wet enough, but she finally had to give in and let Koko rescue her pet and carry him back to his warm dry bed. There was no sleep for Camper or Counsellor until she did.

However, it takes educating to get as used to Abey as Miss Mason and the rest of us are, and I could well understand Ellen Hunt-Crosby's horror of the imaginary creature.

But the rest of her aversion for Panther was utterly strange to me and the other girls, and we weren't the only ones to be upset about the child. The Management and the Counsellors spent hours trying to cheer her up and make her feel at home, although, if I had been in their place, I am sure that I would have sent her flying back to her mother where she would be happy.

As for my position as her Captain, it honestly seemed more than I could cope with. Sally Robbins is a gentle, sympathetic soul, and she would have been much better able to look after the child than I. But the Fates had spoken. Ellen Hunt-Crosby was a full-fledged Ragged, tears and all, and it behooved

me to see that she became imbued with the true Panther spirit before the summer came to an end.

Of course she was a great disappointment to the Raggeds. We had needed that extra girl badly, and while none of us had expected much from the newcomer, still we had hoped that she would be able to contribute at least as much as Happy Jack to the side. To have her prove worse than useless was unfortunate.

At this point, when we had given up all hope, Scatter began to take such an interest in the dreary child that it seemed for a while as if the mystery of the Opium-eater itself were eclipsed. But, as I have said before, she is always fascinated by those who are down-trodden and oppressed.

“Frosty, you don't understand Ellen,” she said to me.

“Why don't I understand her?” I inquired. “I know that she is an awfully bad Camper and a total loss as far as the Raggeds are concerned. There isn't one thing that she can do for us outside of a weeping contest.”

“That's just the point,” answered Scatter calmly. “We don't think that she can do any-

thing, but it's up to us to prove it. If we can only show her that she is good at something, she will be a different child. Just you wait and see."

Well, we waited, and we watched Scatter, who was determined to make a Camper and an athlete from this hothouse bloom who had been grafted upon us, and we aided and abetted her as far as seemed practical to us.

We tried her at basket-ball. It was awful. She bumped the ball off the ends of her fingers, fell down and skinned her knees, and that was that.

We tried her at baseball. But the first time she played, she made connections between a pitched ball and her eye, and that was that.

She didn't care for the water. The Doctor had to drive her in to swim, and a creature with arms and legs like hers is next to impossible for a diver. Even Scatter recognized that truth.

"Tennis!" decreed Scatter, hope rising triumphant over despair.

But the racket that Ellen had brought with her was brand-new, she had never been on a tennis court in her life, and even Scatter can't

manufacture tennis prodigies overnight. So that, again, was that.

She wasn't allowed to go out in canoes because she hadn't passed the Red Cross swimmer's test, and at that time we hadn't taken up crew racing as a sport, although Scatter was already evolving the idea which was to make it quite the rage later on in the summer.

The only thing that Ellen really liked was photography. She spent hours taking pictures and developing them in the tank-house with Miss Pond, who was thrilled to have such a diligent pupil, but that, of course, was no help to the Raggeds.

So most of us gave the girl up as an asset to the side, outside of carrying water and shackling balls, and we resigned ourselves to being as nice to her as possible, convinced that no scoring abilities lay concealed within her long, lank person.

Now, it happened that, on the Sunday in July that brought Ellen Hunt-Crosby into our midst, we older girls went on a hike with Miss Mason. We walked around the lake, a good hike for a Sunday afternoon, which had the added advantage of bringing us close to the

Opium-eater's Point. However, we saw nothing of that suspicious man, although we looked carefully for signs of him when we were in his neighborhood. Just before we got back to Camp, the road climbed a high hill and then rolled steeply down the other side. We all started down, and Miss Mason called out:

“Race you to the bottom!”

Of course we all ran, and Scatter won easily. When it comes to running, Scat can tear like an antelope.

At the bottom of the hill we sat down by the road to rest, and when we had recovered our breath, Miss Mason had an idea.

“Why not have track teams at Camp?” she asked. “We've never tried it, but I should think it would be lots of fun. I loved track when I was in college.”

We thought upon the idea for a while and decided it would be fine, although all of us could think of better places for a hundred-yard dash than the side of Rock Hill.

“Tennis courts,” said Scatter. “Relay races around them, and jumps and so forth at the back by the wire.”

“Good!” declared Miss Mason. “I'll bring

it up at the next Council meeting." And she did, in time for us to have a track meet that first scoring week of the season.

Up at Panther we have Ragged-Hatchet competitions only every other week. The alternate weeks are non-counting weeks, and we use them for hikes and following nature trails and pioneering and things like that. Of course all the hiking we do counts in the final score, as does the nature work, but for the most part on those in-between weeks we just have a festive and a jovial time.

The Doctor wasn't a bit enthusiastic about the idea of track meets at first, but she finally gave in and said that we might try it out if we would promise not to break any bones or jar out back teeth over the jumps, and of course we promised cheerfully.

We worked out a list of events for the first field day with Miss Mason's help—standing and running broad jumps, hop-step-and-jump, basket-ball and baseball throws, and two relay races, first and second teams. No girl was allowed to compete in more than one event, we had to grant the Doctor that much, and it proved something of a mathematical

problem for us Raggeds to figure our teams so that we had enough girls to go around.

Try as we might, we couldn't come out even. There were always two vacancies left with no one to fill them but Happy Jack and Ellen Hunt-Crosby. Two of our Raggeds were temporary cripples. Mary Martin had a sprained knee and Janice Taylor a cut foot. We could count on them for future field days, but for the present they were out of it.

Scatter was all for having Happy Jack try the baseball throw, and I finally gave in to her.

"Very well," I said at length. "She can try it, but I'm afraid that she'll not be able to throw the ball very far. She's liable to pull herself off balance and fall."

"Let's give her a chance, anyhow," said Scatter. "And we could put Ellen on the second relay team. She probably can't run, but at least there will be an opportunity for the rest of the team to make up whatever she loses."

That sounded as reasonable as anything we had thought of until then, so Happy Jack was placed with the baseball-throwing group and Ellen Hunt-Crosby was listed "No. 2" on

the second relay team, and Scatter took her in hand to teach her her paces and to impress upon her the importance of the event.

Thursday came at last, the day on which we had planned to have our first meet, and it was a marvelous day—cool and clear, as only Maine weather can be.

The track meet began auspiciously, and even our Doctor had to admit that it was a milder affair than she had expected at first. We started with the jumps; then came the basketball and baseball throws, in which Happy Jack succeeded in making herself and us deliriously giddy with joy by scoring a second place for the Raggeds in spite of her bad leg.

The scoring was mighty even up to the relay races. The Hatchets were ahead of us by two points, and on account of Ellen Hunt-Crosby we conceded them the second relay race, which counted three points. However, we figured that we had the first-team race as good as won, and as that counted five points, it meant a tie score for the afternoon, which wouldn't be bad for a beginning.

The second teams were to run first—six girls on a team, each one to run half-way

around the two tennis courts and hand the stick to the next in line.

Scatter walked Ellen Hunt-Crosby up to the starting-line, waving her arms violently and chattering like a red squirrel. Then she left the youngster and took up her position at the exact spot where the poor girl would finish the race.

“What in the world were you saying to the child?” I inquired, as I joined my roommate. “She looks frightened to death.”

“Never you mind, my good woman,” answered Scatter. “I’ll tell you afterward. In the meantime, keep your eye upon our Ellen. She’s about to run.”

And run! How that child did run!

She got a bad start, about four jumps behind her opponent, but with one agonized glance at Scatter she set off at a gallop and passed small Hatchet Carol as if she were tied. Then, with her long neck stretched out and her mouth wide open, she came pounding down the home-stretch to the spot where Scatter was dancing like a mad girl and shrieking aloud.

“Come on there, Man o’ War! Look out for the fungus! Oh, Man o’ War! Yea!”

And Scatter fell upon the gasping youngster and pummelled her on the back until she choked herself red in the face. Of course all the Raggeds were thrilled, for we won that race and the first-team race, too, giving us a lead of two points on the Hatchets for the afternoon's work.

"Why were you shrieking about funguses to your Man o' War?" I asked Scatter curiously, as we strolled back to the Shack to wash for supper.

Scatter grinned and twisted her forelock around on her finger.

"That, my Frosty, is what scared the child into running her legs off in the race. She hates those fungi that sprout in the woods after a rain—the horrid red and yellow ones. The first time she ever saw one, she thought it was alive, and she ran shrieking to Mother Panther for fear it would bite. I heard Else and Koko teasing her about it one day, so I promised her if she didn't beat Carol in the race, I'd have a nice ripe fungus waiting for her at the finish."

Scatter's grin broadened, and she gave her hair an extra hard pull.

“Little did she guess, as she galloped along,” Scat chortled, “that I myself wouldn’t touch one of the horrid things with a ten-foot pole.”

“It’s lucky for you that she won her race,” I laughed. “But, thank fortune, you’ve found something she can do at last. Suppose we try her on the first team next time? She’s really too fast for the second.”

“Well, I don’t know,” replied Scatter thoughtfully. “Maybe.” And we let it go at that.

With the acquiring of a new and illustrious name, Man o’ War found that she had come into comparative popularity with the younger element in Camp, and overnight she became a changed girl. If it hadn’t been for the calming influence of Scatter, she would have swelled up with pride like a baby balloon, all thought of fungi completely erased from her mind.

But Man o’ War was simply terrified of my red-headed roommate, and yet she was fascinated as well. She tagged along everywhere that Scatter went, and Scat lectured her so extensively and profoundly on her responsi-

bilities as a Panther and a Ragged that the child became as meek as Moses again, though not weeping any more.

As for Scatter, she was highly amused by the gawky girl, who followed her about so faithfully that she earned for herself the secondary nickname of Scatter's Little Shadow. I found it amusing, too, at first, but after a few days it became a fearful bore to have the child hanging around Loon Attic morning, noon, and night. Marge and I didn't have the privacy of the well-known goldfish, and gradually we drifted further and further from Scatter and her Shadow and played around with Else and Koko, who had no inconvenient appendages, unless you count Abey.

But Scatter didn't seem to care much or to notice how bad I felt about it all, and it took a grand revival of interest in the Opium-eater and a valiant attempt to trap him in his nefarious operations to bring us together in our old-time intimacy once more.

CHAPTER III

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD

“Frosty, Frosty, where are you?” Scatter’s voice was choked and breathless, and I could hear her stumbling over roots as she came running down the path to our Shack.

“Hullo!” I answered. “Here am I!”

That was just where I was, in Loon Attic, getting ready to start on an overnight hike to Kendall’s Pasture. It was the first overnight hike of the season and therefore an easy one, for up at Panther we begin with short, simple climbs and work up to harder ones gradually.

Scatter burst into the room, her gorgeous red hair a halo of unruly curls. I was both surprised and pleased to see that she was without her young shadow for once.

“Frosty!”

She was so excited that she sounded as if her mouth were full of hot potatoes.

“You’ll never guess what I’ve just heard.

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I've found out why the Opium-eater sits on his Point and what his mysterious trade is."

"Why and what?" I inquired with bated breath.

"Receiving stolen jewels and smuggling them out of the country!" Scatter's breath was still coming short and puffy with excitement. "Listen! Mrs. Milton just drove in from the store with the order, and she told Mother Panther and Miss Hunt that there are jewel thieves right here in this neighborhood. They stole a lot of jewels in the West somewhere, and they are working their way to the coast, where they have a confederate who will take the loot and smuggle it out to sea for them. All the postmasters around here have been warned to be on the watch for them. That's how Mrs. Milton knew about it. Her husband got a notice with their description and everything. There's five thousand dollars reward for the person who catches them, she says."

Scatter paused to draw a deep breath, and Marge Woodward looked at her glumly.

"What good will jewels do them at sea?" she inquired bleakly. "I think it's dumb."

Marge always thinks everything is dumb, so Scatter ignored her loftily and continued with gusto.

“Frosty, wouldn’t it be exciting to catch them? ‘Brave girls capture desperate bandits!’ Five thousand dollars reward would be mighty nice, I don’t mind saying, and Frosty, can’t you see how important it is, besides that? They’re smuggling them to the Opium-eater, of course, and he in his turn will carry them to the coast at the dead of night. That’s why we see his lantern roaming the lake after dark. It’s a signal for his confederates.”

“Don’t be silly!” I rebuffed her, although I was honestly thrilled and pleased at having Scatter her old self again without Man o’ War trailing behind her. “We Campers have no chance of catching any thieves, or the Opium-eater, either, if he is that kind of a man. And if you see any of them around here, you’d better look the other way, for they are probably armed with guns and black jacks. How did you happen to hear about them, anyhow?”

“Ummm,” grinned Scatter, giving her forelock a twist. “I was in the storeroom, getting some ginger cookies from Christine to take on

the hike to-night. So they told me all about it, too!"

"Did you remember to ask for the cookies?" interrupted Marge anxiously.

"Of course I did," answered Scatter. "They're in my bloomer-leg. But honestly, Frosty, I don't want to go away from here on a hike to-night. I want to stay and sleuth jewel robbers. For all you know, they may be under our noses right now. And it's the best chance we shall ever have to catch the Opium-eater absolutely red-handed."

"Don't be simple!" Marge and I spoke at once, and I went on.

"They would be awfully stupid thieves to hesitate at a girls' camp on their way to the sea and let themselves be caught by Sarah C. Atwell. Roll up your duffle and the cookies, and come on over to Captain Mason's room. She told us to meet her there at three o'clock."

We rolled our duffle into long sausage-shaped bundles and started for Shack One. Scatter muttered morosely to herself on the way, although up to now she had been as eager as any of us to take this hike. But she cheered up a bit when I reminded her that our route

lay close to the Opium-eater's Point and that perhaps there might be an interesting clue or two to be seen.

The hike started on the water. We were to paddle across the lake and hike up the hill to the old barn, where Miss MacLean, the Junior Counsellor from our Shack, would meet us with our duffle, which she was taking as far as that in the camp truck. Man o' War was not on the expedition, thank fortune, for she had not yet qualified for canoeing, so Scatter was able to give her undivided attention to a thorough survey of the Opium-eater's Point as we paddled slowly past it. There was nothing of the least interest in sight, however, except a dish towel flapping briskly on a line stretched between two trees.

Scatter drew a deep breath of disappointment as we landed in a little sandy inlet tucked behind Nirvana, pulled the canoes up on the beach, and turned them upside down. Then, with our tin cups swinging at our belts, we set off after Miss Mason along the swampy trail that led to the road. Scatter kept a wary eye out for possible clues to any jewel thieves who might have passed along the trail recently for

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a rendezvous with her Pet Problem, but, once on the road, she joined us as we marched along with a grand swing, singing a song that Miss Mason had learned at a Girl Scout Officers' training camp:

“It's the far Northland that's a-calling me away,
As take I with my pack sack to the road;
It's the call on me of the forest in the North,
As step I with the sunlight for my load.
By Mount Crawford and Clearwater to Panther I
will go,
Where you see the loon and hear his plaintive wail;
If you're thinking in your inner heart there's swagger
in my step,
You've never been along the border trail. . . .”

We sang it over and over, and to this day it reminds me of that remarkable hike. It seemed to flavor the whole thing, somehow.

We didn't have very far to go on the road before we came to a little overgrown cart track that began to climb steeply as soon as we had set foot on it.

“See,” said Miss Mason, pointing to the broken twigs and crushed grass. “The truck has already gone on ahead. They'll meet us at the barn at the head of the lane.”

“Have people ever lived up here?” asked Scatter curiously.

“Oh, yes,” Miss Mason replied. “They did years ago, I guess. Don’t you remember the old cellar hole where the house once stood? It must have been burned, for the stones are all charred. The barn is kept in fairly good condition, though. I think that a farmer down in the valley uses it in haying season.”

The barn was a dismal-looking place, lop-sided and weather-beaten, with no doors. But its lofts were filled with hay; we could see that from the outside. Forrest and Miss MacLean were waiting for us, and we loaded up with grub and duffle to carry the rest of the way.

“So long!” called Forrest, as he drove down the rutty road on his return trip to Camp. “Watch aout for shaowers to-night.”

We laughed. The natives up at Panther are always threatening us with showers, but that particular afternoon was clear and sunny. And so, with all our equipment on our backs like adventurers of old, we started up the narrow trail that led to the top of the pasture.

The path was a rough one, seldom used, almost overgrown with blueberry bushes, juni-

per, and sweet fern. Every now and then we had to climb over a stone wall, pushing our way through the tangle of alder and poplar that had grown up beside it.

It was hot work, and once Miss Mason made us sit down and rest. The blueberries were thick, and we gorged on them while we waited—that is, all of us but our fat cherub, Polly Stevens, and for once in her life she was too winded to even think about food. She was a new girl that year, and a nice one, too.

After we had caught our breath, we toiled on and came at last to the bare rocks at the top of the pasture. At first we just lay and panted, but presently we revived and began to take notice.

“Why, there’s the lake and Camp and the beach and everything!” Polly had never been on a hilltop hike before, and she was astounded at the map of that part of the State of Maine spread out before her.

“Loads of lakes,” Scatter assured her with the possessive air of one who has been there before. “Eight in all. Count them! And Frosty,” she added in a private voice to me, “you can get a fine view of the Opium-eater’s

Point from here. Let's ask Captain Mason if we can build our fire where we can watch and see if he goes out boating to-night."

We did, and then we set to work and made our beds, and Scatter and I will never cease regretting the one we made together in that delectable hollow under a scraggly pitch-pine tree. There was such soft, soft moss between those two crags of rock! We've never been up there again since that eventful night, for the people who owned the pasture closed it to Panther after that. They felt that we were too adventurous, I guess. Anyhow, I am convinced that there never was such a spot for a good sleep on an overnight hike in all the world. Of course it might have developed rocks or bumps before morning if we had stayed there. Such beds often do. But somehow I doubt it. It was a perfect bed, and both Scatter and I appreciated it thoroughly, such likely spots having been few and far between on the hikes that we have taken.

It was good to be out in the open again after the long, slow winter, and the things that we cooked tasted just scrumptious, even though the smoke pursued us spitefully from one side

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of the fire to the other until our eyes wept salt tears into our food.

After supper we sang songs around the camp-fire, and Scatter and I kept a sharp watch on the Opium-eater's Point.

Finally bedtime came, and we snuggled down into that priceless moss with ecstatic grunts of joy and comfort. We didn't go to sleep right away. It was so perfect to be back on the top of the world again, and we had saved some ginger cookies to eat in bed, and Scatter had to keep raising herself on her elbow for another look at the black void that was the Opium-eater's place before we settled down for the night.

We were really too wide awake to sleep, and then Abey began to riot about. He climbed to the top of a pitchy pine-tree, and Koko couldn't get him to come down and couldn't climb up after him because it was so sticky, and we laughed and laughed and it was such fun.

The night was black, with no moon nor stars at all. But we didn't pay much attention to the heavens, so that it didn't trouble us any. Then, just as we began to feel drowsy

and snug, we were aroused by a brilliant flare of lightning and a rumble of thunder. The air suddenly turned dank and chill and began to move past us stealthily, hurrying away from the approaching storm.

“Girls!” Miss Mason’s voice was sharp in the hush that followed the roll of thunder. “Get up and pack your duffle. Keep your sweaters on. We shall have to hurry down to the old barn before the storm breaks. Be quick!”

We all scrambled out of our blankets, thrilled by the adventure that stared us in the face. Scatter and I helped each other roll our duffle neatly, and then we helped Polly. She didn’t care for thunder-storms and was about to burst into tears on the spot.

We started down the trail single file, Miss Mason at the head of the line and Miss MacLean at the end, our flashlights flickering dimly between flashes of lightning that came more and more often.

As we slid down the rock on which we had cooked, Scatter grabbed my arm from behind.

“Look!” she hissed dramatically between clenched teeth. “A light at the Opium-

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eater's! What can that mean at this hour of the night?"

Sure enough, there was a tiny light, as if a lantern were hung out on the porch for an expected guest. We watched it, fascinated, as we stumbled down the hillside, until the bushes closed in about us and hid it from our sight.

"It looks as if he were expecting belated guests," remarked Scatter, and from her tone I knew she was grinning broadly.

It was no joke to keep to the trail in that world of barren darkness and uneasy light, but we plodded along as best we could and Miss Mason started us singing again:

"It's the flash of paddle-blades a-gleaming in the
sun,
Of canoes softly skimming by the shore . . ."

We were over the first stone wall. Polly fell down and dropped her flashlight.

"Never mind." There was no comfort in Miss MacLean's grim tones. "Carry on without it."

And we caught up the song again:

“It’s the tang of pine and bracken coming on the breeze,
That calls me to the waterways once more.
By Mount Crawford and Clearwater to Panther
I will go,
Where you see the loon and hear his plaintive wail. . . .”

We were over the second wall. Now there was only one more to climb, near the barn.

“If you’re thinking in your inner heart there’s swagger in my step,
You’ve never been along the border trail.
It’s the far Northland that’s a-calling me away. . . .”

Blueberry bushes whipped our bare knees, and a blackberry vine tore at my hand. I could hear Polly sneezing dismally as she trudged along behind Scatter. She wasn’t a bit happy, poor girl.

We came to the third wall. Scatter tripped on a loose stone and twisted that ankle of hers which has always been weak, but she limped on with a reckless laugh.

The wind was rising now, bolder than the thunder, and it hurried us into the open door

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of the barn just as the first great drops of rain began to fall.

“Woof!” said Scatter, as she ducked out of her duffle and dropped it beside her. “I feel like Christopher Robin when he went ‘up-ing and up-ing until . . . just to go down to the bottom again.’”

“That’s right!” laughed Miss Mason, relief ringing strong in her voice. “Now let’s see where we are. It’s dry here, anyhow,” she added, as the rain pounded on the rickety roof in a torrential downpour. She turned her flashlight above her, and we could see racks full of sweet hay, two long ones on each side of the barn and a little extra one at the back, all by itself.

“That’s the one for us; come on, Frosty,” said Scatter, and we picked up our sausages and climbed to the little private hay bed in the back loft.

The others settled themselves in one of the side lofts after the Counsellors had disposed of the extra dunnage behind an old broken wagon to keep it from being soaked by the deluge of rain that came beating in at the open door.

The hay was soft and delicious-smelling, and Scatter and I made a nice nest in it with our blankets and curled up to wait for the weather to cease its tantrums.

What a storm that was! It seemed to last forever. It was right overhead most of the time, with lightning and thunder following one another so closely that you almost got the sight and sound mixed up in your mind. And the rain came down in buckets, finding its way between the cracks in the old barn and making a series of drips that it was impossible to dodge.

Scatter and I shrank into as small a space as possible under our ponchos, and I am bound to say that neither of us was deliriously happy. Lightning does strike, after all, and that lightning was mighty near.

At last, after ages and ages of time, the storm withdrew itself reluctantly, as is the habit of storms, and became a muffled threat in the distance, with pale flashes and sulky mutterings, accompanied by the slow drip of rain-drops.

Soon after that we fell asleep in the soft hay, and I was fathoms deep and dreaming

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when I felt a hand over my mouth and heard Scatter's excited voice in my ear:

"Frosty, l-l-l-listen! I hear a noise. K-k-k-keep quiet, for pity's sake."

I listened, and as I did so, cold shivers ran down my spine and the hair on the back of my neck began to creep. I had read of those unpleasing symptoms in books, but it had never been my ill luck to feel them before. Right underneath our perch there were faint thumpings on the floor of the barn. A scraping noise followed, and then silence.

"Rats," I whispered. "There must be loads of them in a barn like this."

That comforting theory was short-lived. In the stillness, punctuated by the plunk of belated rain-drops on the roof, we heard the rumble of men's voices, gruff, indistinct, but men's, just the same, and not for a moment to be mistaken for any Panthers'.

Scatter and I clung to each other, too petrified to listen or move.

Finally Scatter placed her lips close to my ear, and I heard her say, "J-j-j-jewel thieves . . . Opium-eater . . . going to listen."

“Where are you going?” I demanded in a muted whisper, making a wild grab for her. But she was slipping slowly and carefully down the slope of the hay toward the front of the rack. What little noise she made was covered by the gruff murmur of the men’s voices.

I followed her—not that I wanted to, but it was better to be close to her there on the edge than alone in that ghoulish nest in the hay. Together we lay on our tummies and hung our heads as far over as we dared.

It was pitch-black down there except for a gleam of light way back under our loft. It must have come from behind some sort of stall or partition, for it showed in faint little lines as though shining through chinks in boards. The voices went on talking softly, and, even with our heads hanging down, we couldn’t make out very much of what they were saying.

“Safe here . . . lie low till morning . . . rain’s most over now . . . sleep here till sun-up . . . take the stuff to him later . . .”

The voices paused, and we could hear hay being thrown about in the stall. Shadows passed to and fro across the slits of light.

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“ Making beds for themselves,” I whispered to Scatter.

Scat was shaking so hard, it was a wonder she didn't fall overboard, and my teeth were chattering up and down like a squirrel's. It was an awful feeling to be perched there in the dark above an unknown number of desperate jewel thieves—not at all the sort of indoor sport that I would choose if I could have any word in the matter. I found myself hoping that Scatter was having her fill of sleuthing. Personally I didn't consider it either pleasant or amusing.

The rustling down-stairs ceased, and the light went out with a puff, leaving a darkness so black that it seemed solid.

“ Bedded down!” I muttered and started back from the edge. But the voices began again.

“ Sun-up . . . breakfast . . . stuff here until we come back . . . return about eight o'clock . . . take them to Rockland as quick as he can”

Then there was silence again. We hung about the edge for a while in case anything more should be said, but we were rewarded by

snores, deep rhythmical ones that shook the rafters.

“Captain Mason will think we’re making all that noise if she wakes up now,” giggled Scatter, as we wormed our way back to our blankets. I think we must have been hysterical or something, for we sat and laughed and wept over that silly remark for ages before we calmed down and realized that something must be done and that right quickly, before the situation got beyond us.

“It’s the thieves, Frosty!” whispered Scatter. “They have the jewels, too. They probably missed their way to Nirvana in the storm, but they’ll go there in the morning. The Opium-eater is the one who will take the stuff to Rockland. What shall we do?”

“Stay here,” I answered her. “They probably have guns in their pockets. We don’t want to be shot.”

“N - - - no . . .” said Scatter thoughtfully. “Neither does Miss Mason nor any of the others. We must warn them, Frosty, for they have to keep quiet until those men get out of this barn. How long is it till sun-up, anyhow?”

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I stole a look at my watch by a brief flare of my flashlight.

“It’s almost dawn now,” I whispered. “Three-thirty, and the sun’s up by five.”

Scatter was still shivering, but she was also twisting her forelock. I could feel her doing it in the dark.

“One of us will have to climb over to the Counsellors and report,” she said, “the other stay here in case the men talk any more. I don’t believe we could hear them from the other end of the barn.”

“I’ll climb,” I said. “You’ve hurt your foot and you might fall off the ceiling right on top of the villains.”

I didn’t want to go a bit. In fact, it was my idea of absolutely nothing to do. But Scatter saw my point and she said:

“All right, but, for pity’s sake, come back here again.”

I climbed out onto the beam without any trouble, and, aided by tiny gleams of the flashlight that Scatter held to guide me on my way, I crept toward the other rack at the far end of the barn.

One of the men behind and below me gave

a stifled whoop in his sleep, and my heart jumped into my mouth. It felt as if it might fall out and get lost on the barn floor, but the snores became rhythmic again, my heart slid back to where it belongs, and I perched myself on the edge of the long haymow to consider my next move. I had stupidly left my own flashlight back there in my blankets, and if I prowled into the midst of the sleeping Panthers and stepped on some one in the process, the uproar that would follow would be devastating.

So I crept slowly up the hay, feeling before me with my hands like a blind person. I touched a foot in my progress. Sneakers! It was not Miss Mason, then, for she was wearing moccasins.

I felt along the leg from the foot and on up to the face. It was Polly. I could feel her fat cheeks. I put my hand over her mouth and muttered in her ear, just as Scatter had done to me not long before.

Polly awoke with a bounce and a smothered squeal, and I sat myself firmly upon her stout person.

“Keep quiet,” I warned her, “if you don’t

want to be shot! Where is Captain Mason? Whisper softly!"

"Over th-th-th-there."

"Where? I can't see in the dark."

"M-M-M-Marge is next to me, and Miss Mason is next to her. Whatever is the matter, Frosty? Are you playing a game?"

"Never mind, cherub. Keep still and go back to sleep."

I left her and prowled around her feet and Marge's and came to Miss Mason's moccasins at last. Then I played the hand-over-the-mouth game again and whispered the story into her ear. It was a relief to have her take charge of the situation. Cool and confident, never ruffled or rattled, that was our Girl Scout leader, and as long as she was with us, I knew that we were safe.

"We must wake the girls and tell them they must keep quiet until the men go out," she decided quickly. "They wake up too noisily when they do so naturally. It's lucky that no one slept in the rack across the way. It would have been a hard climb to get over there."

One by one we aroused all the sleeping Panthers and explained the situation to them.

Then I left them to their thoughts and returned over the beam to where Scatter sat hunched like a gargoyle on her perch.

“Still snoring,” she reported. “I hope they don’t oversleep. In fact, I wish that they would go now so we could go about catching our man, and getting that five thousand dollars reward as well.”

“Humph!” said I. Somehow I wasn’t avidly interested in that reward. All I asked was safe passage home to Panther and my own cot in Shack Two.

“Don’t be pessimistic, Frosty,” Scatter reproved me. “We’ll get them both. Just you wait and see.”

Well, we waited for the next thousand years or more, and the air around us seemed to be as tight as a drumhead. I suppose that came from our waiting so violently, pushing against time, trying to make it move faster.

At last, however, the darkness became tinged with pearl, and we could see the outline of the open door. The rafters and haymows and Scatter’s tousled head were dark shadows in a misty lightness, and slowly the world gained color. Through the door we

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could see that grass was green and dawn was golden, even after that ghastly night.

Finally a slanting beam of young sunlight fell across the doorway, and we heard thumpings from down-stairs. Our hearts thumped in unison with them as we clutched each other and listened feverishly at the edge of the hay-mow.

“Sun-up,” we heard again. “Ow . . . I’m stiff. . . . Breakfast . . .”

This was nothing new, and we shrank back into the shadows as we heard heavy feet come forth from the stall and tramp out into the sunshine.

After that we waited another age until we saw Miss Mason’s head come popping up over the edge of the other rack, followed by the heads of the rest of the Panthers.

“Keep quiet,” she told them shortly. Then she leaped to the floor of the barn and beckoned to Scatter and me. She had the thing all thought out in her mind, and her orders were quick and to the point.

“It’s five-thirty now,” she said. “Daylight-saving makes that six-thirty at Camp. Early dip is at ten minutes of seven. That

gives you two girls just twenty minutes to get down to the shore and signal across that we need help. Miss MacLean will go with you. Some of the girls who are over at camp can take wigwag, can't they?"

"Happy Jack and Elsie," we nodded.

"Well, both of you know how to send it. Tell them that we think we have the thieves red-handed and to get Mr. Milton here before eight o'clock, or they will get away. We will pack your duffle for you and bring it with us when we come. I want to have a look in that stall before we go. Understand? Very well! Run! You can signal with the old Invincible neckerchief."

"But Scatter . . ." I hesitated, thinking of Scatter's twisted ankle.

"Keep quiet!" hissed Scat. "And move quickly if we are going to catch them at the beach."

"What's the matter?" asked Miss Mason, looking back at us.

"Scatter has hurt her ankle again. She ought not to run," I blurted out. "Give me Invincible, Scat. I can signal with it alone."

Scatter's Invincible neckerchief is never far

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from her when in Camp. It is a relic of the one year that she went to boarding-school, and she looks upon it as a very potent mascot.

“Stay here, Sarah, and help me hunt for the loot!” Miss Mason’s voice cracked like a whip. “You others, hurry! You’ll have to run.”

We did, getting ourselves soaked to the waist as we tore down the overgrown road, the shiny drops of last night’s storm showering us as we ran.

It was just ten minutes of seven as we reached the cove where the canoes were drawn up on the beach, and faint across Clearwater we could hear Elsie blowing Swimming on her bugle.

There was a stir on the Panther beach. All the girls who were left at Camp were lining up for the early dip.

I tied Invincible to a stick and began to wig-wag.

“Attention! Attention!” I signalled. There was no response.

“They aren’t going to see us,” I groaned to Miss MacLean, who stood beside me, shading her eyes with her arms.

“There they go!” she cried suddenly.
“They have a flag at last.”

“Get Milton,” I spelled slowly, for the distance was a long one. “Thieves will be at the old barn at eight o’clock.”

“Repeat” came back to us. It was so faint and far away that we had to strain our eyes to see the flag at all.

“Why don’t they get field-glasses?” I panted. “They’ll never be able to read it without.”

I repeated the message, not only once but twice.

“O. K. O. K.” The welcome signal came at last, and I amused myself while waiting for the others to arrive by sending the whole story, trusting that the field-glasses would still be in use.

When I had finished, the large flag across Clearwater started to wave, and I could make out:

“Forrest has left here in Camp truck. Milton and State Police will follow. Come home immediately!”

When the others appeared, they had nothing further to relate.



“ATTENTION! ATTENTION!” I SIGNALLED.--Page 77

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“No, there were no jewels there that we could see. Just farm truck and blueberry boxes. We didn’t stop long. We thought we’d better get away in case one of the men had an afterthought and returned for something he had mislaid,” said Miss Mason, as we climbed into the canoes and started for Panther, tired to death and starving for breakfast.

Of course we looked searchingly at the Opium-eater’s Point as we paddled past it, but there was nothing moving to be seen, not even a wisp of smoke from the field-stone chimney.

Our Doctor was waiting for us on our own beach, her walking-stick in her hand. And she gave us scant time to eat our breakfast before bundling us off to bed in our Shacks for a good long nap.

Scatter was disgusted.

“I want to go back there and collect my reward,” she protested loudly. But the Doctor was adamant. Protests availed Scatter naught, and in spite of them she fell asleep like all the rest of us.

We didn’t wake up until almost lunch time, and it was hysterical laughter that roused us

then. Mother Panther was standing outside the sleeping-porch of our Second Shack, talking to Miss Mason and Miss MacLean.

“Blueberry-pickers!” wept Miss Mason and bent herself double in the agony of her mirth.

“Yes, dearie,” replied Mother Panther patiently. “It was Mr. Kendall and his brother, the men who own that pasture, and they were very much surprised and hurt when the police pounced upon them with guns. They had gone to Rockland yesterday for blueberry boxes, and on the way back their car broke down. They were caught in the storm and soaked. They got the boxes into the barn finally and were planning to pick berries all morning. A friend was to carry the full crates to market in Rockland this afternoon.”

I looked at Scatter and Scatter looked at me.

“Five thousand dollars reward *and* the Opium-eater!” I said softly.

“Well, Frosty,” she answered with a slow grin, “if you don’t like that, you know what you can do.”

CHAPTER IV

WITHOUT FUNGI

Scatter was heavily crushed when she found that the night's work had brought no results, and for a while she brooded bleakly upon the problem across the lake. The rest of the Panther population didn't make life any happier for her, either, as they took pains to emphasize the five thousand dollars reward that she hadn't received and the fact that Kendall's Pasture had been closed to all Panthers. Both Scatter and I became bored to death with the subject and ready to run a mile every time it was mentioned.

"Never mind, Frosty," Scatter told me in the privacy of Loon Attic. "Those men may have been berry-pickers, and probably they were. But just remember that the jewel thieves are still at large, the reward still stands, *and* the Opium-eater never hung his lantern out at the dead of night to guide the wavering footsteps of any benighted blueberry-pickers."

That was true enough, and we continued to keep as close an eye as possible on the forbidden Point.

But our hopes were doomed to be dashed to the ground once again. The thieves were captured with all the jewels on their nefarious persons in a town thirty miles to the north, and the Opium-eater continued his nightly wanderings on the lake. We often saw his lantern after dark and knew that he hadn't been arrested with the other robbers.

Then the second counting week was full upon us, and Scatter abandoned the quest of the Opium-eater with a sigh of temporary defeat and turned her attention to the more pressing matter of the Ragged team.

"He may not have been involved in that affair, Frosty," she conceded reluctantly. "But I am positive that he is involved with us and the Raggeds somehow, and next non-counting week I am going to make it my business to find out all about it."

"You have an unreasonable obsession," I told her. "Of course that man has nothing to do with the Raggeds. Forget him, and come and pay attention to this track team. What

do you think of putting Man o' War on the first relay team this time?"

Scatter shook her head dubiously, and I was surprised, considering how fond she was of the child and all. But, though she wouldn't commit herself, the rest of the Raggeds thought it was a splendid idea. So we gave our promising new runner plenty of practice in starts and sprints, and we felt that she would not disappoint us.

I was running first on the team, and Scatter, whose ankle had recovered nicely, was running sixth. We put Man o' War second, figuring that Mary Martin, who was third, was fast enough to pick up any ground that the youngster might lose.

The events were arranged in the same order as they had been that first week, with the first team relay the last thing on the program. We lost the second team relay, and that put us two points behind the Hatchets for the afternoon. If we won five points for our race, the red would nose out the green by three points. Otherwise, we would lose seven, which was more than we could afford. The Hatchets were ahead of us in the total score, and we

had to fight hard for every point to even things up for the Raggeds.

But we weren't worrying. With both Scatter and Man o' War on our side, it looked like an easy victory, and we laughed and joked as we lined up at the start.

Sally Robbins and I were running first for our teams, and I had a good lead when I handed the stick to Man o' War. She took it from me, but as she did so, I felt that there was something wrong with her. For a long instant she hung back, fumbling at the stick; then, with her eyes glued on her opponent, she set off, her arms and legs going like windmills. There was no drive or force to her whatsoever, and Hatchet Peggy Bartlett raced along behind her, making up ground like a steam-engine.

But, at that, Man o' War might have ended about even, if she hadn't wound up her two gawky legs like a corkscrew and gone flat on her face three yards from the finish. All she got from the tumble was a pair of scratched knees, but the Raggeds lost the race and received a black deficit of seven points for the afternoon.

“That child is just plain stupid,” I groaned to Scatter. “Any normal human being can keep her feet from winding up if she honestly wants to.”

“I don’t know. Maybe,” answered Scatter impassively.

“You said that before,” I remarked. “What *is* the point?”

“The point is this,” replied Scatter, twisting her forelock reflectively. “Man o’ War will never run as fast as she can until she forgets all about herself and the fact that she’s Ellen Hunt-Crosby. She’s young yet, but some day she will learn, if she is given time.”

“Psychologist!” I jeered.

“Don’t be impudent, Frosty,” replied Scatter calmly. “That’s true, honestly. Captain Mason explained it all to me. You see, it’s this way. The first time that Man o’ War ran, she was so scared that she never once thought of herself or the side. She was just running away from the poisonous fungi as hard as she could. To-day I wasn’t waiting for her at the finish, and she had been so filled with the idea of winning for the glory of the side that she was just plain embarrassed. She

was thinking about how badly the Raggeds needed five points and where she was putting her feet, and they got away from her, that's all."

"How can you cure symptoms like that?" I inquired.

"Get her so scared and interested sometime that she'll forget that she ever was Ellen Hunt-Crosby. After that, relay racing will be easy for her, and she'll carry on like something else."

"Well, Scat," I answered, "you can play ghost for her if you be so minded, but in the meantime she'll run for fungi on the second team."

That was the end of our flash in the pan as far as the rest of the Raggeds and I were concerned. But Scatter began to cultivate her hothouse bloom intensively again, and again we drifted apart from one another, and this time the rift was wider than before, for Scatter became interested in promoting rowing at Camp, and she dragged Man o' War along with her on her Passionate Pilgrimage.

CHAPTER V.

TIN TUB

The first year that Scatter and I went camping at Panther, there was only one rowboat there. A splendid boat it was in those days, long and narrow and easy to row. It was made of tin and was inevitably called Tin Tub, although its real name, "Poke o' Moonshine," was painted in large letters on its bow.

By the time that young Man o' War arrived at Panther, the old boat was beginning to show its age and had acquired two helpers—squat wooden boats that were just as apt to go around and around in the water as forward. None of us liked the new boats, but we took canoes if we wanted to go anywhere on the lake, and we had always done our racing in war canoes until Scatter suggested rowing. So the wooden boats did well enough for life-saving duty at swimming hour and for poor swimmers to poke about in.

At first we didn't bother our heads with

them, but when Scatter became crew-minded, the two new boats acquired an importance that they never really deserved. Why Scatter should have been the one to become passionately fond of rowing is a mystery that has never been solved, unless she was hoping thereby to get herself nearer the Opium-eater and his Point. I wasn't seeing much of her at the time, and she didn't bother to explain herself to me.

Anyhow, she just naturally couldn't row—not with two oars at once—and it was probably one of the darkest days in her life when the Ragged crews were announced for the first race and she found that she wasn't even chosen for coxswain, which she naturally wouldn't have been anyhow, since she is a lusty girl for her age. It seems a funny thing that a girl like Scatter, who can run like a deer and play basket-ball and tennis like a streak, is perfectly helpless when she has two oars in her hands. She could paddle a canoe, swim, and dive, but when it came to rowing, she was simply impossible.

“Honestly, Frosty,” she said to me in an aggrieved tone of voice, “if you would only

let me use one oar at a time, I'd be a wonderful rower—like this. I take an oar, and you take an oar, and Else and Marge each take one behind us, and we'll be a four-passenger crew instead of a two."

"No!" I declared firmly. "Those waltzing boats are too small for that. It's two oars or nothing. You can take old Tin Tub and go and help judge at the finish line, if you want to."

Well, we all found crew-racing good fun, although we didn't care much for the boats we had to race in. Scatter never did give up the idea that she might blossom out as a rower eventually, and she spent hours of practice in Tin Tub to no avail except that it gave her an excellent chance to hover about the Opium-eater and his Point. However, two oars at once were one too many for her, and we spared no insults to make her see our point.

But she stuck valiantly to her job, wounded at the thought that she couldn't go crewing when it had been all her own idea in the first place. She finally persuaded three other hopeless landlubbers, among them Man o' War, of course, to accompany her on her excursions in

the Tub, and after a while, as she seemed happy, we stopped teasing her on the subject.

Every summer up at Panther, just after the second counting week, we have some sort of a pageant or field day, to which we invite our parents, the neighbors, and Maryld, the camp across Clearwater from us. We entertain them during the afternoon, show them around Camp, feed them, and wave good-bye, overjoyed at the thought that we have four more weeks at Panther in which to recover from the invasion, and all worn out from saying such dull things as:

“No, we don’t have bathtubs. We bathe in the lake.”

“Yes, we have to make our own beds, but we don’t cook, except when we go on hikes.”

“No, I haven’t darned any stockings since I came, but you can take some with you if you like.”

That year, because of our new interest in rowing, we decided to have a water day instead of a pageant. And we asked Camp Maryld to join us in some friendly competition, just to make it more exciting for our guests.

“Um-m,” gloated Scatter. “Trick relay races and diving and life-saving and *crew*. This time I will be on it, won’t I, Frosty? It doesn’t count for the Raggeds, and you don’t know how I long to go a-crewing. Please say that my chance has come.”

“Don’t be simple,” I rebuffed her. “We want to give the Marylds a good race, and we’ll make a crew out of the best Hatchets and the best Raggeds—a real Panther Camp varsity crew.”

Camp Maryld accepted our invitation, and so did crowds of parents and neighbors, and we worked hard getting ready for the festivities.

A short time before the fatal day the old Tin Tub began to show such signs of senile decay that the Management ruled it off the lake.

Scatter was frightfully upset. With her red hair in doleful disorder, she came running to Mother Panther for comfort. I was in the office at the same time so I couldn’t help hearing her plaint.

“Mother Panther, you aren’t honestly going to give up the old Tin Tub?”

Mother Panther looked surprised at Scatter's distress.

"Yes, dearie," she told her. "It has been leaking quite badly, and we don't feel that we ought to take any chances with it. And now that we have the nice new boats, we don't need Tin Tub as much as we used to."

"But, Mother Panther . . ." Scatter was almost in tears. "What are you going to do with Tin Tub? It's much too good yet to grow nasturtiums in. Let me have it for mine. Please! Oh, pretty please with sugar on it!"

When Scatter talks like that, she generally gets her way, and I could see that it was coming to her this time.

"But, dearie," protested Mother Panther, "what could you do with it? You don't row. [Bitter blow for Scatter.] And anyhow, it isn't safe."

"Forrest says that it could be made just as good as new with a little work, and I hate to see it thrown out," lamented Scatter forlornly. "It's . . . it's such a *nice* boat. And Mother Panther, I'm a Life-Saver. Will you let me have it for mine if I promise, Girl Scout

Honor," and she raised her hand in the Girl Scout sign, "that I'll never take any one in it who is not a Red Cross Life-Saver, except Man o' War?"

"Why do you wish to take her, dearie?" Mother Panther was patient but perplexed.

"Well," replied Scatter, "she's a good child, and I'm teaching her to row. No young girl should ever grow up without that knowledge." Scatter grinned at me complacently as she said this. "Man o' War can swim well now, and I'll always put a life preserver on her when we go out. And Mother Panther, we'll also promise, Girl Scout Honor, that we will never go more than fifty yards from shore. We'll be awfully careful. Honestly we will."

Mother Panther finally gave in. People usually do give in to Scatter, for Scatter is red-headed and Scatter is stubborn, and when she wants anything very badly, it generally comes her way.

"Very well, dearie. I think it will probably be all right if you are very careful. I will tell Forrest to do what is necessary to make the boat seaworthy again."

Forrest went to work on Tin Tub that night, as it leaned on its weary side on the beach, and he said that he was able to do a fine job on it. But his time was wasted, for before morning the poor old boat was no more.

It had been a hot, sultry day with thunderheads surging and muttering over the hills to the northeast. We felt uneasy when we went to bed, and, sure enough, in the blackness of the night the storm went off with a bang. A howling wind lashed the rain against the Shack in sheets, and we knew it must be raising such a sea that the boats would be tossed all over the beach. Miss Palmer, our Shack Counsellor, was also Water Sports Counsellor, and when the storm hit the Shack, she leaped out of bed.

“Miss MacLean!” We heard her rousing our Junior Counsellor. “Come on down to the beach with me before the boats blow away.”

“Oh, let them blow. We can catch them in the morning.” Miss MacLean’s job was tennis, and her bed was warm and dry. “We’ll get soaked.”

“Never mind.” Miss Palmer was inexor-

able. "Get your flashlight and come along. It won't take a minute."

Miss MacLean groaned heavily, but she went just the same.

Scatter sat up in bed and called after them virtuously, "Take good care of my Tin Tub, Miss Palmer. May I come along and help you?"

"Indeed no!" replied our mentor, as she went forth into the storm, banging the door behind her.

Scatter swallowed the rebuff amiably, and I heard her chuckling to herself as she snuggled down in bed.

It was a long minute before the dripping Counsellors returned to the Shack, but when Scatter heard them, she bobbed up again.

"Is my boat all right, Miss Palmer?" she called softly.

"We couldn't find Tin Tub anywhere," Miss Palmer answered. "The waves are awfully high on the beach, and it must have drifted off. I don't believe that Forrest could have tied it when he went home this evening. We'll find it somewhere up the shore in the morning, I guess."

Scatter groaned and hiccuped, and I felt sorry for her, but not too sorry to sleep, let Tin Tub roam as it would.

Came the morn, but with it came no boat. Miss Palmer spent the morning exploring the coast, and a number of volunteer search parties set out to hunt for it in the afternoon. But the poor old thing had disappeared as completely as if it had been eaten.

Scatter was distracted.

“It can’t have gone out of the lake,” she mourned. “It must be somewhere around here unless some one has stolen it. Maybe the Opium-eater has hidden it away for use in his mysterious business.”

Mother Panther broke the sad news to her.

“Dearie,” she said sympathetically, “we are afraid that the poor Tin Tub has sunk. You must remember that it was made of tin, and if it drifted out into the lake and filled with water, it would have sunk right out of sight.”

“I never thought of that,” said Scatter sadly. At the same time she twisted her forelock around and around on her finger. That made me wonder, for I knew that she must

be thinking deep and devastating thoughts. But, think as hard as I might, I couldn't figure what was on her mind this time.

The day of the water sports arrived at last. Scatter and Man o' War had been doing an amazing amount of giggling during the past few days, but no one had taken the time to pay much attention to them. Our minds were on higher things for the moment.

We were lucky to have a fine day for our party, and right after rest hour we donned our Camp uniforms, ready to greet our guests. And when we are all in Camp uniform, we really make a mighty fine showing—forty-some Panthers in white jumpers, dark blue ties, dark blue bloomers, white sneakers, and dark blue socks, each with a sprig of bunchberry stuck in her neckerchief. Bunchberry is the Panther emblem: red berries for the Ragged team and green leaves for the Hatchet.

We didn't have to wait very long before Maryld arrived, clean and pleasant in their green and white—no doubt a splendid camp, but not Panther, not for a minute. You know how it is.

We showed them all around our Camp, and they were very polite, but we could see that they were saying to themselves, "Nice place, but not Maryld, not for a minute." And that is as it should be.

At last the time came to shift into bathing-suits, dark blue for us, of course, and dark green with light green caps for Maryld, and we gathered at the beach where the spectators awaited us.

The first event on the program was an obstacle race with two contestants. They ran down the beach, swam to the raft, dove off, climbed into a rowboat, and rowed ashore. It was very exciting, and Janice Taylor won easily for Panther.

The next race was a bug-race. Four girls in a canoe without paddles use their hands to propel themselves. The course was out and around the raft and back to the beach. Bug-races are funny, and we all laughed until we cried. Scatter was steersman for the Panther canoe, but they got it so full of water that they ended up by swimming ashore with it, while the Maryld girls managed to land with their gunwales awash.

After that we had canoe-tilting and diving and a life-saving demonstration and a relay race in which you had to swim on your back with a lighted candle in your mouth. I had thought that Scatter would enter that race, but she had vanished, and Marge swam in her place.

The last thing on the program was the crew race, in which, of course, our revolving craft would be used. It was the only event that either camp was taking at all seriously; for some reason or other we both wanted to win badly. Up to now the score was even, and whoever won the crew race would receive the big water ball, the prize for the afternoon. We would hand it over to Maryld if we won, as they were our guests, but just the same we did want to win that race.

The starting-point was the raft, moored a hundred feet offshore, and the finish was staked out opposite the Camp House, where our guests might watch it from the veranda. Every one went up there except the two crews and the two fathers whom we had invited to be starters. They paddled themselves out to the raft in a canoe, and we rowers got ready to follow them.

Three girls stood beside our boat, but five stepped into Maryld's boat and pulled out to the raft. That seemed a bit queer, but we thought that two of them would be left at the raft as spectators. We started to embark and follow them, but, woe betide us, there was not an oarlock in our boat, and a frenzied search failed to reveal any in the neighborhood of the beach.

“Lost overboard in the obstacle race,” I groaned. “Run to the tool-house and see if you can find some more, Betty. They'll have to wait for us, that's all.”

Our little coxswain set off obediently, but it was not long before we found that no one was to do any waiting but us. For, as we sat there in our disabled boat, we saw, to our amazement, the ghost of the old Tin Tub come surging gaily up to the raft, its four rowers dipping their erratic oars to the tune of a lusty chant.

“Hip, hip, hullabaloo!

Panther Camp varsity four-oared crew!”

Scatter was right-hand stroke, and beside her sat our long Man o' War with a big white

life preserver around her middle. Marion Tomkins and Polly Stevens, both hopeless rowers, were in the bow, and little Charlotte Hunter was cox.

They all wore regulation blue bathing-suits with clumps of bunchberry stuck in their shoulders. Tin Tub had received a coat of many colors, red and green stripes separated by blue bands. I knew now why Scatter had been smelling strongly of turpentine of late. In the bow of the boat rode a huge blue Panther, red and green ribbons fluttering about his neck.

We laughed when we first saw the apparition go alongside the raft, with its oars raking the sky, then splashing like grampuses. It looked funny to us, but we soon changed our minds, for the people at the starting-point took the matter very seriously.

Scatter climbed aboard the raft and shook hands ceremoniously with the officiating gentlemen and with the nearest Maryld oarsman. Then she slid into her place again, and, to our horror and consternation, just as Betty came puffing down the path with our spare oarlocks, we heard the starter say, "Ready,

Maryld? Ready, Panther? One, two, three, go!"

"Stop!" I shouted. "That's not the Panther crew!"

But it was too late, for away went the two crews toward the finish, oars flashing, coxswains bobbing back and forth, and the audience on the veranda yelling itself hoarse. We could hear them from where we sat marooned.

The Tin Tub wobbled a bit at first, as its crew had difficulty in adjusting their various strides to each other. But in a few strokes they settled down to a curious crab-like motion, not like anything that we had ever seen before but which, strange to say, kept them well abreast of the Maryld crew.

Flash, flash! Stroke, stroke! Even we, the deposed crew, began to get excited.

"Come on, Panther!" Elsie yelled, and I joined her.

"Come on, Scatter! Yea!"

And, believe it or not, they managed to beat Maryld by the Panther's length and were greeted on the shore with such an ovation as never a crew received before.

"How *did* you do it?" I asked Scatter,



SCATTER SHOOK HANDS CEREMONIOUSLY.--Page 101

when the shouting and the tumult had died and our guests had departed for another year.

She grinned ecstatically.

“In the first place we took Tin Tub ourselves, and we hid it ’way up the creek in the long weeds. Of course the storm fitted in beautifully there. Mother Panther knew all about our plan, so that was all right. Then we slipped off every time we got a chance, and painted Tin Tub and fixed her so that she would stand the strain of a race. Forrest helped us a lot. He’s an old dear. And honestly, Frosty, didn’t you see us explaining to Maryld before the sports began that we really had to have five girls to a crew, that we felt it to be too much of a physical strain for three?”

It was awfully funny, and I laughed until I wept.

“And Frosty,” Scatter added, twisting her forelock ecstatically, “Mr. Hunt-Crosby was so impressed and pleased to find that his little Man o’ War had made the Camp crew her first summer at Panther that he has offered to give the Camp two new boats—real racing boats. He’s having them shipped from Portland to-morrow.”

CHAPTER VI

WITHOUT FUNGI AGAIN

Of course we were all highly entertained by Scatter's crew and were hopeful, now that Man o' War had been set squarely on her feet, not only as a passable runner but as an accomplished oarsman as well, that Scatter would turn her attention elsewhere. But our hopes were vain. Scatter was just as interested in the child as ever. She even decided to take her along on a very special hike that we older girls planned a few nights after the Maryld episode.

I was frightfully annoyed. So were the other girls.

We were going to climb the ridge behind Camp to do star-gazing. It was a two-mile tramp by road, but much less than that by the old logging trail through the woods. We were to start after supper with Miss Mason for our Counsellor, and we would carry our blankets and a few marshmallows to toast by the fire

for sociability's sake. Then we would settle down for a séance with Cygnus and the Great Bear.

"Be reasonable!" we implored the impassive Scatter. "Leave your Little Shadow at home just this once. She's nothing but a kid, and we're all tired of her anyhow."

"It will be a fine experience for the child," replied Scatter with calm. "She might get a good scare or something, and, besides that, it's part of her education. She's never been on an overnight hike before, you know—wide open spaces and lying under the stars and all that sort of thing."

And, Scatter being Scatter, we knew it was no use to argue any more.

Right after supper we set off on the old, dim trail that the loggers had left in the woods, over the brook on a bit of sagging corduroy, past the flat stones at the turn that always look wet, and so out into the open at the crossroads, where the clump of rural free delivery boxes are gruesomely like a Chinese beheading party.

From there the road goes straight up like the side of a house, narrow and stony, with

grass growing in two ribbons between the ruts. We were puffing hard by the time we had reached Holts' farm, where the road ends, and we were glad to sit down for a minute to rest our backs and shoulders. Man o' War's mouth sagged drearily, and Scatter helped her lean back comfy against her blanket roll before settling down herself.

While we rested in a row against the stone wall, Mr. Holt came out of the barn leading a horse, half harnessed. He was a great friend of us Panthers, and we hailed him loudly.

"Hullo, folks!" he called, waving his free hand. "Looks like good weather fer campin' aout. I'm jest settin' aout fer Rockland to see a feller abaout an extry hand fer hayin' next week, and I wun't be home till late. If yer needful fer anything, jest step inter the haouse an' ask the wife. Allus aim to help you aout any time."

As it happened, we were needful for a drink of water, and, Holts' well being on our tested list, we stepped over to the house in search of "the wife." She was also an old and valued friend of ours, just as apt as not to produce milk and doughnuts along with the

water. She was sitting in the kitchen with her new baby in her arms, trying to rock him to sleep.

“Don’t get up,” said Scatter, nobly foregoing any chance of incidental refreshments. “We know where the pump is, and we’ll just help ourselves.

“Hullo, baby,” she went on, poking her finger at the child in the strange way people have when they come near infants.

He was a peculiar-looking baby, awfully red, with his eyelids half closed and his eyes rolled back out of sight. He was making unpleasant moaning noises, and I turned my back. I didn’t like his looks at all. But Scatter and Man o’ War were thrilled by the poor little thing.

Miss Mason was interested, too, but in a worried sort of way. She said something to Mrs. Holt in a low voice, but the woman answered cheerfully enough.

“No, he ain’t never ben very rugged. Seems like there’s not much the matter with him. He jest daon’t thrive like the other young ’uns.”

“I see,” said Miss Mason dubiously. “Why

don't you bring him to Camp some day when your husband comes down with the eggs? Perhaps our Doctor could tell you what to do for him. We'll be going now. Thank you for the water. Come along, girls. Good-night."

We started out again, single file, along the cow path that leads to the bare rocks at the top of the ridge. It was getting dusk and damply cool as we wound along through the low blueberry bushes and clumpy juniper. Smells of sweet fern and moss came out of the hollow, wet places, and 'way far off like the ghost of a sound we heard Elsie blowing Assembly down at Panther.

We came out on the rocky ridge just in time to see the afterglow on one side of us and a baby sickle moon riding high above the lake on the other. It would be a perfect night for stars, and, regardless of dew, we spread our blankets in the open where we might have a good view of the sky when we settled down for the night.

We lit a roaring fire, and even Man o' War laughed with the rest of us when Scatter and Koko recited their everlasting dialogue about the things that happened at "My Uncle's

Farm " and Peggy Bartlett sang her old-time darky songs.

There is no place in the world where you can get to know a person better than on an overnight hike, and, by the time we were curled up in our blankets under the Milky Way, we began to feel that Man o' War was learning to be a better Camper than we had ever hoped for. So far she had had nothing to say for herself, which was right and proper in the company of her elders, but we all noticed for the first time that she had a remarkably nice smile as she sat there in the firelight, hugging her long legs in her arms. She was taking things just as they came, and, after all, that's half the science of camping when you come right down to it.

We were sleepy by the time we got to bed, and, in spite of Miss Mason's inspiring harangue on the habits of the Dipper and its Dragon, we were soon sound asleep among the rocks and juniper that formed our beds.

It must have been hours later, for the moon had gone away and the stars were covered with ragged clouds, when we were aroused by the crying of a child on the path below the ridge.

“Who’s there?” called Miss Mason, and we all shivered close together, our hair standing on end in the cold night wind.

“It’s me, Charley Holt,” wailed the small voice. “Ma says to come quick. The baby’s took bad, and Pa ain’t home yet. Oh, where are you folks? I can’t see you at all.”

“We’re right here, dear,” Miss Mason called gently. “See my flashlight? We’ll go back with you. Don’t be frightened.”

Then she turned her flashlight on Scatter and me.

“Come with me to the farmhouse,” she ordered. “I may want some help. Sally, take charge here. There’s no need of all going, for it may be just a false alarm. If I need any of the rest of you, I’ll call and you can come running. In the meantime, go back to sleep.”

“Aye, aye, sir!” replied Sally obediently, and every one settled back in her blankets, all but Miss Mason and Scatter and me and one other dim figure who stood beside us.

“I want to help the baby, too,” said this fourth person in Man o’ War’s voice, and, to my surprise, Miss Mason was willing.

“Very well, you may come along. You may

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be useful." And off we went down the path by the light of our flashlights.

When we got to the farmhouse, it was worse than we had expected. The baby had some sort of croupy spell and was choking itself black in the face, and poor Mrs. Holt rocked desperately back and forth, clutching it tightly in her arms. But Captain Mason, as usual, was equal to the occasion.

"Have you a telephone?" she asked Mrs. Holt.

The poor woman shook her head, and Miss Mason turned to Scatter and Man o' War.

"You two girls, run to Camp and get the Doctor as fast as you can. Fly! We'll stay here and do what we can until she arrives."

Well, we built up the fire in the stove and got a kettle of water to boiling and did what else we could, which wasn't much. It seemed like hours and hours before the Ford truck came grinding into the steep yard and our Doctor took the job out of our hands.

"Just in time, thanks to the Crosby child," she announced at last. "The baby is asleep now, and he ought to be all right by morning. I want to see him again, though."

“What do you mean by ‘the Crosby child’?” asked Miss Mason curiously.

“She came thundering in with the message, all by herself, her clothes half torn off her and mud up to her ears. Sarah Atwell had turned her ankle again, going down the hill, and she sent Ellen on alone. We picked Sarah up, hobbling along by the crossroads. She’s asleep in the car by now, I guess.”

“Man o’ War went alone over the wood trail?” I gasped.

“Well, hardly over the trail, I think,” chuckled the Doctor. “She just took the down-hill route and ploughed through the slash and swamp, judging by her looks when she arrived.”

“The poor child,” I muttered. “She must have been frightened to death, all alone in those strange woods at night.”

“Poor child, nothing,” Scatter scoffed later on when we were talking it over. “She was scared for the baby, and she ran as she never ran before—or ever will again, most likely,” she added ruefully. “But mark my words, Frosty, this is the scare that the child needed. Try her on the first relay team next week, and

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I'll wager a ducat to a fine fresh doughnut that she'll run as if she'd forgotten all about Ellen Hunt-Crosby and her feet."

And so we did, and so she did. And, thanks to Man o' War, the Raggeds won the race.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRIZE CALF

When our Total Loss finally turned herself, with Scatter's help, into a Real Asset, and a heroine, to boot, Scat obviously lost interest in her. The child was not downtrodden nor forlorn now and so appealed no longer to my impressionable roommate. As for Man o' War, she was too busy receiving the plaudits of the multitudes to have the time to shadow her former crush any more. And Scatter and I resumed our old-time friendship after a dreary lapse of weeks.

Of course we Raggeds were all excited, for at the end of the third counting week we found ourselves almost even with the Hatchets, with seven whole days to be whiled away before we could start on that fourth and last week that led to the banner.

"I don't see how we can ever wait for a week from Monday to come," I said to Scatter, as

we drifted about on the lake on Sunday afternoon.

“Never mind,” she comforted me. “There will be plenty for us to do. We’re going to be busy Panthers, you and I. Have you forgotten our Opium-eater and his unsolved mystery? If he is to be of any benefit to us Raggeds before the end of the season, we must get busy and track him to his lair. This week is our last chance, my girl.”

“We’ll not get much time for sleuthing this week, I’m afraid,” I told her. We Captains sit with the Council once a week to plan coming events, so I knew that we had a full program ahead of us.

“Hike to the sea to-morrow.” I ticked the busy days off on my fingers. “That will take two days. Games with the Counsellors on Wednesday. That will take all day and most of the evening. Nature clue party on Thursday. We might get out on the lake for an hour or so if we get home in time from that. Archery tournament on Friday. That always lasts late. And the hike up Crawford on Saturday. Sunday is the best time, I guess. We can take the whole afternoon again.”

Scatter shook her head sadly.

“No,” she said drearily. “Had you forgotten that my family are to be with us on Sunday? My Dad and my sister Caroline? They’re an awfully nice family, Frosty, and I think most highly of them, but I honestly don’t think that they would care very much about helping us to sleuth mysteries on Sunday afternoon.”

“Well, then, it’s Thursday afternoon or never,” I replied. “We can hurry and get home early.”

We were near the mysterious Point itself at that moment, and Scatter stared at it with a gaze so intense as to all but absorb it. The only living being in sight was the Chinese servant, sunning himself beneath the flagpole. The intent gaze must have been too much for him, for, as we drifted nearer and nearer, he arose to his feet and departed hastily around the house.

Scatter grinned and twisted her forelock around her finger.

“Do you know, Frosty, Mother Panther must have caught wind of the fact that we are intrigued with this Point, for yesterday she

gave me a special warning to be sure not to bother the people at Nirvana.”

Scatter humped herself in the bow of the canoe and brooded morosely over the prospect of the bit of deserted beach, the bare flagpole, and the tiny cabin with its wide porch and rickety railing.

“I do wish we could just step ashore and find out all about it,” she yearned. “Come on, Frosty. I dare you to do it!”

But I backed water hastily and swung her around in the direction of the Panther bathing beach and diving tower.

“Removing temptation from your path,” I explained grimly. “If you were to land there this afternoon after what Mother Panther said to you, she’d send you home on the next train. And if she didn’t do that, she’d keep you out of sports for the rest of the summer, and you know what that would mean to the Raggeds, don’t you?”

Scatter sighed deeply and revolved her head like an owl to take a last look at the fascinating Point.

“What troubles we girls do have!” she moaned. “With mysteries and roommates

and rules and regulations, it's a hard life. I wish I were a Counsellor, I do."

"If you landed on that Point," I argued, as we neared home, "we would soon find that your Opium-eating mystery really was involved with the Raggeds, for you would be off the tennis team and the banner absolutely lost. You know just as well as I do, if you don't win the singles for us, there is no one else on the side who can."

Scatter faced front again, somewhat abashed, and began to paddle. Then she laughed.

"You win, Frosty. But promise that you will go paddling with me on Thursday afternoon after the nature clue party. It is absolutely the only time we shall have to get out here again before scoring week, and I am still positive that somehow or other the fate of the Raggeds hangs on the Opium-eater and his Point."

Although I don't believe in hunches and superstitions, yet I knew that they often worked for Scatter, and I was beginning to be impressed by her obsession about the Opium-eater and the Raggeds. So I promised to go

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with her on Thursday afternoon, and we left it at that.

The nature clue party up at Panther is a sort of combined nature trail and treasure hunt. It is one of the few things that we do in non-counting week that scores for our side. The day before the party the Counsellors lay two trails, one for the Raggeds and one for the Hatchets. They use signs that bring in all the accumulated nature lore of the summer, and they make them just as even as they can, and somewhere in the middle they come together at a spot where we all meet and eat our lunch.

We leave Camp after craft work in the morning and follow our trails until lunch time. Then we journey on to find the treasure that is hidden at the end of the trail. There is a separate piece of treasure for each girl with her name on it, and every girl who returns to Camp with her treasure intact scores one point for her side.

It is lots of fun, and every one on the side goes in for it. Of course it isn't violent competition, for speed doesn't count, and we roam about the country, herded by Counsellors, of

course, and talk to our friends the farmers and eat blueberries and swap yarns with the Hatchets over our lunch.

“ I hope that our trail leads past Nirvana,” said Scatter, as we milled around the steps of the Camp House, waiting to be set loose on the hunt. It was a gorgeous morning, clear and cool, and the scrubby pastures lifting high above the mysterious Point looked near and pleasing for a clue party.

But we had no luck. The Hatchets were sent off down the path to the bathing beach, and we Raggeds, with Miss Mason and Miss MacLean escorting us, set off on the cart track that leads out of Camp to the main road a half a mile away. The trail was plainly marked, and we bounded off with a whoop, leaving poor Happy Jack behind us, wistful on the porch.

We left the cart track where the woods run into hay fields, crossed the stubble, and started to climb the ridge on the other side of the road.

“ Holts’ pasture,” guessed Scatter. And she was correct.

“ Well, that’s fine for Abey and me,” quoth Koko. “ Mr. Holt is mighty kind about his

blueberries. We would rather be here than anywhere else we know.”

We made slow time, for the blueberries were plentiful, and you know how it is when you can pick them by the handful. But we finally did get to the top of the ridge, where we found the Hatchets waiting for us. They had been part way around the lake but not as far as the Opium-eater's.

“No, he wasn't even sitting on his front porch,” Marge answered Scatter's questions scathingly. “He was probably in the kitchen eating his dinner, where he belongs at this time of day.”

Scatter groaned and bit into her cheese sandwich dismally.

“Well, Marge,” she remarked, “here is something that you *can* understand. I bet you two ginger cookies that I beat you back to Camp with my treasure.”

Marge wasn't interested.

“Probably you will,” she answered placidly. “As long as I get my treasure back to Camp, it counts, you know.”

Scatter gave our roommate an exasperated look and threw herself flat among the sweet

fern. She was presently aroused by Miss Mason's decree of "Onward."

"And remember," Miss Mason added, "each girl must find her own treasure and is on her honor not to tell any one else where hers may be."

We nodded and set off again, we Raggeds keeping to the backbone of the ridge, trailing along the skyline toward Holts' farm, while the Hatchets trickled down through the juniper and blueberries into the woods at the border of the pasture.

We followed the trail on for about a mile, and just this side of Holts' farmyard we came to a stone wall around an apple orchard. Here the trail ended and our search for treasure began. We found it hidden in the mossy chinks of the old wall and in the gnarled crotches of the trees—sprigs of bunchberry tagged with our names.

"Come on, Frosty, hurry!" urged Scatter, when I had found mine. Hers was already stuck in the knot of her Invincible neckerchief. "It's early yet, and we can tear down to Camp and have a good hour on the lake before supper."

“Very well,” I agreed, and Scatter sought permission to go.

“May we start, Miss MacLean?”

Our Junior Counsellor nodded, and off we went through the orchard and past the house, where we were warmly greeted by Mrs. Holt and the baby, who offered us refreshments which we nobly refused. We crossed the barnyard and came upon two bicycles leaning against the barn.

“All saddled and bridled and ready to ride,” murmured Scatter, entranced by the sight of so much rapid transit, and she paused in her rush for Camp to look at the wheels.

“Frosty,” she pondered, twisting her forelock into a curl, “suppose Mr. Holt let us borrow those two bikes. Just think of the speed we could make going down that hill.”

I nodded.

“We certainly could travel fast,” I agreed.

“We would probably have two hours on the lake instead of one,” Scatter figured.

I agreed again.

At that moment Mr. Holt himself appeared in the doorway of the barn.

“Shore, gals. Borry them bikes ef ye be

a mind to. Bring 'em back to-night, though. They belong to them two extry hands o' mine, and they'll be goin' home afore dark."

"We'll surely have them back before dark," we promised, and off we went down the hill, lickety-cut.

What a ride that was! There were no coaster brakes on those ancient bikes, and, once started, we had to let them go. Rattlety bang, down the rutted road between its ribbons of grass we went. My heart felt as if it were hanging out of my mouth, and my legs were pinwheels, going around with those wild pedals.

When we finally slowed down at the flat crossroads where the Chinese beheading party is, we dismounted feebly from our fiery steeds to adjust our wayward hearts and sort out our knees and elbows. But this proved to be a false move on our part, for who should be sitting among the executed ones but Miss Mason! She had left us at our treasure-hunting and strolled ahead.

She fixed us with a stern and moral eye.

"Where did you girls find those bicycles?"

When Miss Mason wants to know anything,

it is best to tell her the answer immediately and get it over with.

“ Mr. Holt lent them to us,” we assured her cheerfully.

“ Permanently?” She was prying most unpleasantly, but we bore up nobly under the ordeal.

“ Oh, no, not permanently,” we told her. “ We’re to take them back after supper. We promised.”

Our Counsellor’s face did not relax.

“ How can you take them back after supper? The Shack Two play is this evening, and you’re both in it.”

“ Oh, Captain Mason,” we wailed, “ we’re in an awful hurry to get back to Camp. We have an important date. Honestly we have.”

But Miss Mason was adamant.

“ No!” she decreed firmly. “ You must go back to Mr. Holt’s with these bicycles right now. For if you don’t, some one will have to ride them back for you after supper, and that seems hardly right as long as you borrowed them. So up you go!”

And, of course, we went.

It was a steep climb, wheeling those bikes

beside us, and of course we met all the rest of the Raggeds on their way down, and every one of them made a funny remark as we toiled past them. It was a relief to reach the barnyard at last, and we sank down upon the ground to rest and cool off.

“Some day I’m going to be a Counsellor at Camp,” quoth Scatter bitterly. “And when I am, I’m going to grind the poor Campers under my feet just to see how it feels. And,” she added as an afterthought, “I’m going to grind some of the other Counsellors, too, particularly Miss MacLean. Did you see her laughing when she passed us on the road?”

“Well, that’s all very well for another year,” I answered, “but how about this afternoon? Our trip on the lake is spoiled, and I was honestly beginning to take some stock in your dreams of the Opium-eater.”

Scatter shrugged her shoulders.

“Perhaps we can get ourselves put out of the archery tournament in the first round tomorrow,” she said hopefully. “Come on home to supper now. Let’s go!”

We started to do so but were prevented by Mr. Holt, who dashed across the road and

kept shouting to us violently, "Head 'er off, there!"

"Er" was a brindle calf that had broken loose and was tearing for the woods with great, ungainly leaps, its tail held high in a funny loop, its hoofs flying in every direction.

We did what we could to "head 'er off," but it was a long, hot half-hour later when we finally led the calf in triumph to the barn.

Mr. Holt was very grateful for our kind assistance. It seemed that the calf was a very special one which he was planning to show at the county fair. We accepted his thanks as gracefully as possible and started for Camp once more.

"My word, Frosty," said Scatter, as we trudged down the lane, "it's 'most supper time, and I'm a wreck."

"If it's any comfort to you, that calf's a wreck, too," I told her. Then I gasped with horror. "Oh, Scat, your treasure! Where is it?"

Her hand flew to her Invincible, and my hand sought my tie, too, and we eyed each other, aghast. Both gone!

"The calf probably ate them, labels and all,"

Scatter mourned. "Frosty, what a dreadful afternoon! We lost the bikes, lost two points for the Raggeds, lost our trip to the Opium-eater's, and we'll probably lose our supper, too, if we don't hurry along mighty fast."

We did, drearily and wearily. I felt bad about those two points. With the Hatchets slightly ahead and with Happy Jack unable to go on hikes and clue parties, every point was extremely important, and it was a shame to cast them down a calf's throat like that.

Scatter kicked moodily at the stones in the road. I knew she was thinking of the Opium-eater, and I sympathized with her. It's hard to be thwarted in your heart's desire.

As we came to the place of execution again, we heard First Call blown at Camp 'way down the hill, and we began to run. Being late for meals up at Panther is something to be avoided.

"There's time yet," gasped Scatter, as we turned into the logging trail and tore over the flat, wet rocks. "Hurry, Frosty."

Well, we hurried, but, believe it or not, we got lost. It was shameful of us, I'll admit, ancient Panthers as we were. We should have

known that trail in the dark, but we found ourselves absolutely at sea in a waste of slash and briars and swampiness, with the far-off notes of Mess sounding a knell in our ears and hearts.

“Aren’t we senseless!” wailed Scatter, as we forced our way through the dim woods, which grew dimmer every minute. “And we must have been over that trail a hundred times, more or less. The only thing to do now is to keep going downhill. We’ll be bound to find the lake eventually. Even such idiotic excursionists as we are couldn’t possibly miss a target two miles wide.”

We didn’t miss it, for we finally came out on the rocky shore half-way between our beach and the Opium-eater’s Point. Here we paused to breathe a bit and take a look at our mystery. There was no light in his cottage, but we could hear the strains of a violin, heart-breaking and sad, like a lost soul roving our Clearwater. Nothing like that had ever been heard at Nirvana before in our time. It was a new phase of our problem. Even Scatter was torn by the sounds.

“Wow, Frosty,” she said. “My hair is

standing straight up on my head. Let's go over there and see what's going on."

But I seized her elbow and dragged her back violently.

"Don't be any more foolish than you have to be," I implored her. "We're in trouble enough as it is, without getting involved in any more to-night. There must be search parties out for us right this minute, and if they found us over there, we'd be ruined."

Even as I spoke, auto lamps went flashing the length of the Point, and the eerie music ceased as if cut with a knife.

"Forrest and the truck on our trail," whooped Scatter. "Run for Camp!" And we fled, arriving, completely winded, in the midst of the Shack Two play, which was going on nobly without us.

Of course Mother Panther and the rest of the Management were in a frenzy, and they carried us away to the privacy of the office for a star-chamber inquisition.

"We're hungry. We want our supper," wailed Scatter, but we didn't get it. Instead, we were seated side by side on a little bench with the three grave faces of the Management

opposite us and the Doctor looming grim behind them.

“Now, dearie,” began Mother Panther, appealing to me, “where have you been all this time since Miss Mason sent you back to the Holts’ with those bicycles? We have been very much distressed about you both. We were beginning to be afraid”

She bit off her words and looked expectant.

“We’re very sorry to be so late, Mother Panther, honestly we are,” I told her. “You see, we took the bicycles back and there was a calf and he ran into the road and we chased him Mr. Holt asked us to”

Then I remembered that funny loopy tail and those flying hoofs, and I began to laugh and laugh, and I couldn’t stop. I didn’t honestly want to laugh, but somehow I couldn’t help it. So Scatter took up the story.

“We got all involved with Mr. Holt’s calf, the one that is going to win a prize at the fair. We were trying to be helpful, truly we were,” she explained carefully.

Then it struck her as funny, and she began to laugh, too.

The Management didn’t realize that we

were laughing. They thought we were crying, and of course the more they thought that, the more we laughed, until the tears really did run down our cheeks and we lost our breaths.

“There, there, it’s all right,” Mother Panther soothed us. “You ran into the poor little calf with the bicycles and injured it? Is that the story?”

We gulped and shook, and she went on, stroking our quavering backs to comfort and soothe us.

“Don’t feel so bad, dearies. If you hurt the little calf, we will make it all right with Mr. Holt in the morning. There, there, don’t cry any more.”

Well, it was really a difficult situation, for the more we tried to explain, the more she tried to comfort us, and finally the worst happened. The Doctor had been hovering in the background like a hawk, and at last she swooped and pounced; and once again that ill-fated day we two long-suffering mortals were made the victims of those in power over us.

“Off to the infirmary,” she ordained harshly, and she herded us, shamefaced, from the chamber of inquisition.

“Hysteria,” she explained to the Powers That Be.

“You are probably just tired out,” she remarked testily, as she shut us into the ward for the night. “But I am going to keep you here for twenty-four hours until you are rested and I am sure that nothing further is going to develop.”

“Oh, Doctor,” Scatter besought our jailer, “do let us have some supper, and please tell us who won the clue party.”

“Hatchets, of course,” replied the Doctor firmly. “And your supper will be over in a few minutes.”

So that was that, and there we stayed, imprisoned, counting the minutes until we would be free and wondering what in the world the Management made of Mr. Holt’s version of the story when he came down with the eggs in the morning.

CHAPTER VIII

NIRVANA

We weren't released from prison until supper time on Friday night, and our schedule for hunting the Opium-eater was completely ruined.

"I simply cannot see a way out," remarked Scatter, as we left the ward and strolled back to Loon Attic to wash up before supper. "I'm baffled. It will take all day to-morrow to climb Crawford, and Sunday is out of the question. My daddy is a priceless parent, and I am terribly fond of him, but I am sure that he would never want to go on a detective jaunt, no matter how great the need, especially when I haven't seen him for three years."

Scatter paused and twisted her forelock around and around.

"There is one way, Frosty," she said slowly. "You might go without me on Sunday. Mary or Elsie or some one would probably go with you."

“No!” I decreed firmly. “We will go together or not at all. Perhaps it will rain tomorrow so that we can’t climb Crawford. Then we could go out on the lake in the afternoon if it clears up.”

Scatter brightened perceptibly, and we held our thumbs for rain. But the Fates were against us. A brighter, fairer day never dawned over Clearwater, and we dutifully set off in the morning through the goldenrod and asters to climb Crawford and get a view of the sea.

I don’t want to seem unenthusiastic about that climb, for it is a good one, the best of the season. But I had been up there several times, and I had never sleuthed opium-eaters before.

We stopped for cake and milk at old Mrs. Fogg’s house on the way home. She is a nice old farmer-lady, and she delights in feeding us enormously with the most delicious cake in the world on our annual ramble past her little old white farmhouse with its red barn and towering elms.

Scatter and I had hoped against hope that we would get back to Camp early enough for a reconnoitering expedition on the lake before

supper, but, between the blueberries on Crawford and the cake at Mrs. Fogg's, we were somewhat delayed and didn't arrive at Camp until First Call was blowing for supper.

Saturday night up at Panther is always Camp-fire Night, and if the weather is good, we have the fire on the beach and Mother Panther reads the log and we sing and it's nice.

That Saturday night all was as usual. Scatter kept an eagle eye on the Point, but we saw nothing of interest until after dark. Then Scatter clutched my arm until it hurt, for a wavery light had left the Point and was heading straight for us. We were singing at the moment "The flames leap high on Camp-fire Night," and suddenly we heard that soul-destroying violin again. It fitted its music to the song we were singing, and when we had finished, it went wailing off into a minor tune all its own.

Mother Panther half rose from the sand where she was sitting. Then she turned to Miss Hunt as if to say something. But the words were left unspoken. She shrugged her shoulders and started us off on another song.

The music ceased as if it had wailed its heart out, but the light drifted about for a long time.

“He’s a maniac,” said Scatter, as we stumbled up the path to our beds. “He’s a wild, mournful maniac, and he’s anchored out on that Point for safe-keeping. No wonder the Management doesn’t want us to play around with him.”

“Perhaps,” I admitted. “But what is there to keep a maniac anchored on that Point? All he has to do is row off in his boat, or else walk along his Point until he comes to the road.”

Scatter sighed despondently.

“My Frosty, there are times when words fail me. Isn’t it enough to have to live with Marge without having you become practical, too?”

I grunted. In some moods Scatter is impossible and not to be coped with. So I let her alone until morning.

On Sundays we Panthers always dress in our best Camp uniform of dark blue and white, and Scatter ties her red Invincible around her waist under her blouse where it doesn’t show, for she considers it bad luck to be without it

in Camp. Also on Sundays we surrender our dirty wash and receive our clean wash and have chicken and ice-cream for dinner.

I was placidly sorting my wash after breakfast—"Three white jumpers, two pair blue bloomers, five handkerchiefs," and so forth—when Scatter came running down the path to Loon Attic, her red hair every which way and one end of the Invincible flapping behind her like a danger signal.

"Yoohoo! Frosty!" she hallooed, fracturing the Sabbath calm into a million fragments. "He's been called to Bangor! Praises be!"

"Who?" I asked. "The Opium-eater?"

Scatter seized me by the neck and waltzed me around and around, stirring up my wash as if she were a cyclone. Then she spun me onto the sleeping-porch and threw me upon my cot with a crash.

"No! My daddy!" she chortled. "My Priceless Parent! He's gone to Bangor, but he's coming here next week so I'll see him just the same. He sent me a night letter, and I'm all agog. Frosty, do you realize what it means?"

Slowly the meaning of the good news

dawned upon me. The afternoon would be ours. The long, golden, beautiful afternoon, from the end of rest hour to First Call, would be free, clear, and unimpeded for us to sleuth and detect to our hearts' content.

"Your parent *is* a priceless one!" I gloated. "Sign up for a canoe, and we'll make an afternoon of it."

Scatter nodded and twisted her forelock.

"And honestly, Frosty, I do have a feeling that our moment is at hand. We're going to run the Opium-eater to earth and make the banner safe for the Raggeds, all in one fell swoop."

I wasn't so sure about the Raggeds, but I could see that it was our last chance to solve the Opium-eater problem, so I was almost as excited as Scatter herself.

Our church service in the outdoor chapel dragged as never before, and Scatter wriggled and fidgeted as if she were beset with one million mosquitoes, more or less. But it was over at last, and so were swimming, dinner, and rest hour, and we set off for the beach with plenty of equipment for comfort in case the sleuthing business should prove unprofitable.

Scatter had begged a goodly supply of ginger cookies from Christine, and of course we had pillows and what not. Also, Scatter removed her Invincible from the inside of her jumper to the outside, where it gave her a very piratical effect.

“It may bring us better luck that way,” she declared. “You never can tell.”

All was well, and we felt very smug and satisfied with ourselves as we reported to Miss Mason and Miss Palmer, who were at the beach in charge of boating. We were all ready to shove off when we heard the sound of pelt ing footfalls on the path and Man o’ War’s voice raised in agonized entreaty.

“Scatter! Oh, Scatter, wait a minute, we’re coming!”

Scatter looked annoyed but called back, “Hullo, what’s up?”

Man o’ War galloped into sight and answered with one of those nice slow grins of hers that are all white teeth in a dark brown face. Behind her, Koko came scuttling like the White Rabbit in *Alice*.

“Wow!” exclaimed Koko, drawing rein and pulling herself to an abrupt halt. “Thank

goodness, you haven't started yet. I ran so fast I left Abey 'way behind."

"What do you want us for?" asked Scatter impatiently. "And don't worry about Abey; he can catch up with you in time."

"We're going with you on the lake," announced Koko, unembarrassed, "but you'll have to wait for Abey. He would feel terribly bad if we left him behind."

"No!" declared Scatter with a violent shake of her red head, as she prepared to shove off with the handle of her bow paddle. "We can't take you with us, and we can't consider waiting for Abey."

Man o' War's grin became sadly tarnished, and she began to braid her long fingers into ropes. Miss Mason strolled over to see what the trouble was about.

"Do we *have* to take them with us, Captain Mason?" Scatter, almost in tears, appealed to our mentor piteously. But Koko flared up like a Jack-o'-lantern.

"I think you're mean, Scatter Atwell. Every other canoe is taken for the afternoon, and this is Man o' War's first chance to go in one since she came to Camp. She only passed

her Life-Saving test on Friday. Please, Miss Mason, tell Scatter to take us with her."

"Ummm," remarked Miss Mason judicially to Scatter. "Wouldn't it be rather good Scouting for you to share your canoe? You have plenty of room in it for two more."

Scatter grinned sheepishly.

"I hadn't thought of it that way," she said, abashed. "Of course we'll share. Jump in, you two. But you must do just what we tell you, and we'll not wait for Abey."

Man o' War's grin shone forth again and she unraveled her fingers.

"Thanks a lot, Scatter," said Koko gratefully, and the two roommates climbed aboard and settled themselves on our ginger cookies and cushions. "And you needn't wait any longer for Abey; he just hopped aboard, and we're all ready to start at once."

So Miss Mason shoved us off and we betook ourselves to our adventure.

Well, we paddled over opposite the Point, and we paddled around it and back again, but there was nothing to be seen—just the little cottage, the flagpole, and the strip of sandy beach.

We told our passengers all about our quest, and Scatter enlarged upon her hunch and its probable effect on the fate of the Ragged team.

“That’s all very well,” said Koko, as we drifted aimlessly and consumed many ginger cookies. “But what are you going to do about it? You aren’t any better off now than you were before. The ban is still on, and Miss Mason and Miss Palmer are watching us like hawks from the beach. We can’t land, and we can’t even see the man from here.”

“I don’t know.” Scatter shook her head stubbornly. “But I’m sure that something will happen. It’s got to. This is our last chance, and we’ll never have another, probably.”

Sometimes it seems as if the very elements themselves play into the hands of stubborn, red-headed people like Scatter. Many a time she has gone through a tight place with absolutely nothing on her side but the weather, or something equally dependable, and, believe it or not, that is what happened that day.

If it had been I or Koko or Marge who was anxious about sleuthing the Opium-eater, the

lake would have stayed just as flat and calm as a mill-pond, and we would have gone in to supper with all our suppressed desires still suppressed and our quest absolutely unquested. But Scatter is different. Things happen for her. Maybe it is her red hair. I don't know.

Our Clearwater Lake is about two miles square and is usually a placid bit of water, but it is surrounded by high hills and low mountains, and once in a while it has a dreadful tantrum. And that is the reason why the Management are so very strict about allowing no one but Life-Savers in canoes. By the time a girl has passed the Life-Saving test, there is no danger at all, for she is a strong enough swimmer to take care of herself in any kind of a sea that Clearwater can produce.

Well, we were drifting along on that Sunday afternoon about half-way between our beach and the Opium-eater's Point, eyeing it forlornly and wondering what next. The wind had been blowing from the south all afternoon, but, unbeknownst to us, it made a sudden shift into the west and all in a moment came pouring off the hillside behind Camp like roaring vengeance. As soon as it reached the lake, it

raised waves that seemed mountain-high, with frothy whiskers on their topknots. It was a typical squall, but heavier than most. It caught us from behind, as it was blowing from Camp and our attention was heavily focussed in the opposite direction.

I was paddling stern, and I had some trouble in holding the canoe steady before the wind. Scatter was in the bow, and there was no danger of capsizing as long as we didn't let ourselves get broadside to the waves. With four people in the canoe, it would have been impossible to turn around without upsetting, so there was nothing for it but to run before the wind and stop when we came to land.

It was superb fun. The canoe climbed and flopped in smothers of spray, with oftentimes a splash of deep green water coming inboard. I glanced at Man o' War to see how she was taking this wild ride, but she gazed calmly about her as if squalls from the mountain were every-day affairs when canoeing. Koko continued to eat ginger cookies, placid and unhurried.

“Frosty, I do wish you'd not splash poor Abey so. I'm afraid the little fellow will catch

his death of cold" was her only complaint against the weather.

Scatter, of course, was doing no complaining at all. For, if you have followed our course, you have perceived long ago that we were being driven straight to the goal of her heart's desire, the strip of sandy shingle that lay shining in the sunlight at the foot of the Opium-eater's flagpole.

We flopped extra hard at the bottom of an extra deep valley in the lake, and Scatter flung an ecstatic shout over her shoulder.

"Any chance of veering around the Point and landing over at Maryld, Frosty?"

Her glorious red halo of hair glistened like fire in the sunshine, and the ends of her Invincible fluttered violently in the wind as she knelt erect in the bow amid the showers of spray into which we plunged with every wave.

"No!" I replied. "Can't you see that we have to go straight?"

Man o' War interrupted us casually.

"Miss Mason is signalling to us with a wigwag flag," she drawled.

"Turn around and take the message, Scat," I said. "I can paddle alone for a few

minutes." Scatter spelled the message out slowly:

"Land at Nirvana and stay there until the squall is over. Do you need help?"

Scatter flourished Invincible aloft on her paddle and replied, "We are O. K." Then she let forth an ear-splitting whoop.

"Wow, Frosty, the ban is removed! We're within the law!"

"That's all right for a few minutes," Koko answered. "But Miss Mason will probably send Miss MacLean or some one after us in a boat to make sure that we don't get into any trouble."

"She knows that we can easily swim ashore if we upset," argued Scatter. "She will make sure that all the other boats and canoes are safe ashore before she bothers to send any one to chaperon us. We'll have loads of time before they can arrive."

The nearer we were driven to that haunted Point, the wilder Scatter became.

"Do you know what this is like, Frosty?" she shrieked at me in ecstasy. "It's just like a fairy-tale that I heard when I lived in the East with Daddy."

I grunted. I was too busy for fairy-tales at the moment, as every wave threatened to twist the paddle from my hands and turn the bow around into the fatal trough. But Koko, who was licking up the last of the ginger cooky crumbs, said that she and Abey were very fond of fairy-stories, and Man o' War looked up with a gleam of excitement in her eye.

"Look ahead there," directed Scatter with a flourish of her paddle toward the approaching beach. The canoe gave a corresponding flourish and all but tumbled us into the raging deep.

"Keep your paddle in the water where it belongs," I protested violently. "What *is* the matter with you?"

"Be calm, Frosty, be calm." Scatter's voice was getting that smug, irritating edge to it that it has when things are coming her way.

"See that sand—how it gleams all golden in the sun?" she went on, her voice half blown away so that she talked in a series of explosions.

Koko and Abey and Man o' War saw it. As for me, I didn't care about it. Scatter makes me cross when she acts like that, and I

began to be gloomy in spite of the adventure. So I stuck to my paddling, grateful that Scatter had at least stopped using her paddle as a pointer. Anyhow, the sand did gleam golden in the sun. You could see that without pointing at all.

Scatter continued to explode her story in this wise:

“Once upon a time there was a beach of golden sand, only it was on an island, not a Point, and it was real gold, not just sand. And a mighty Genie lived on the island and kept a flock of fierce eagles and birds of prey to attack any one who tried to steal the golden sand.”

The canoe wallowed in the trough of a wave, and Scatter paused to say “Woof!” as a spurt of water leaped into her face.

“Do stop fooling and pay attention to what you’re doing,” I implored her, as I leaned on my paddle with all my strength to steady us against an angry puff of wind.

“I *am* paying attention—and telling a story, too,” Scatter answered back. She was in a hopelessly perverse mood, and Koko egged her on.

“What happened next?” she inquired.
“Abey’s all agog.”

So Scatter went on.

“Well, he not only kept birds of prey, but he kept dreadful, long, slimy sea-serpents, which lay in wait around his island to wrap themselves about any canoes that dared to enter those waters.”

Man o’ War shuddered visibly and peered over the gunwale at the boiling green water about us.

Scatter chuckled. As we drove nearer to her long-sought goal, she got more and more out of hand.

“Of course no one ever dared to approach those golden shores. But it once so happened that in spite of the ban, and you must believe this, for it was told me by a perfectly good priest from the village temple when I was young. . . . Wow, head her up, there, Frosty! What are you doing? Trying to drown us all?”

“Head her up yourself,” I retorted. “If you would only keep quiet and paddle, we’d be all right. Bail yourself out, Koko. I’m sorry you got wet, but this is a hard job.”

Koko nodded agreeably and mopped up the bottom of the canoe with a cushion. Scatter took up her story where she had left off.

“It so happened, my good Koko and Abey and Man o’ War,” she went on with a grin over her shoulder at me, “that one day four good, kind, benevolent natives went paddling upon the lake in a canoe. No doubt they were hunting for wabashes or warwhoops or whatever natives do hunt for in a canoe on a lake, when a terrific squall arose and bore them resistlessly toward that golden strand whereon dwelt the mighty Genie.”

Man o’ War’s mouth hung open a trifle, and she turned her head to stare at the deserted beach which we were fast approaching.

“You’re frightening Abey,” remarked Koko gravely. “I honestly think that you had better stop, Scatter.”

But the force of Niagara itself would not have stopped Scatter at that moment.

“Full on that awful serpent-guarded shoal were the terror-stricken mariners driven, and their canoe was flung high upon the golden sands by the raging waves. Aghast at their fate, the trembling wretches huddled together,

shivering and moaning, and they could see the grinning sea-monsters lolloping about in the water at their feet, ready to wind them in their cold, slimy coils. And over their heads hovered a cloud of taloned birds of prey, awaiting the word of the mighty Genie of the island to begin scalping operations.”

A great black crow flew over us with a mighty cawing noise, and Man o' War threw her arms over her head. But she quickly withdrew them with an abashed grin. I could tell by the back of Scatter's head that she was enjoying herself intensely.

“And as those poor natives cowered there upon the magic sands, the mighty Genie himself came striding forth from his cabin, and beside him paced the sacred Red Panther. The Genie, with Red Panther by his side, strode majestically to the wretches shipwrecked on his island. He raised an arm above them and bellowed in a voice of thunder”

We were running in close to shore, and I interrupted the bow paddler's story:

“Cease paddling! Easy does it!” and, riding aloft on the crest of a wave, we came safely to land on the beach of golden sands. Scatter

leaped lightly forth, as was her duty, and tugged at the painter of the canoe. Then she turned an expectant eye upon the lodge of the opium-eating Genie.

Man o' War and Koko disembarked, and I followed them. Behind us on the Panther beach I could see Miss Mason waving her arms at us in pleased relief at our safe landing. She showed no signs of launching an immediate chaperoning expedition, either.

“Help me pull this canoe up and turn it over before you start sleuthing operations,” I said to my crew, and we left it well above the waves. Then we all stood in a row and looked slightly foolish. Our objective was reached, but what to do next was a problem.

Finally Scatter took matters into her own hands.

“We're all soaking wet,” she announced firmly, “and that breeze is as cold as Greenland. Even an Opium-eater can't refuse comfort to such homeless waifs. Captain Mason ordered us to land here, and I'm going to demand shelter in the name of humanity.”

“—And curiosity!” I added under my breath, as she stalked off toward the steps of

the little house, we three drenched seafarers trailing soggily after her.

Just as Scatter reached the flagpole, the door of the cottage was flung open with what seemed to us, apprehensive as we were, a violent gesture, and the mighty Genie himself strode forth. He halted on the top step, and we three in the rear rank shrank together. His lofty gesture was altogether too much like the story that Scatter had been babbling to be reassuring. In fact, my very scalp began to creep uneasily, as though menaced by the talons of those fierce eagles and vultures.

Scatter, however, stood her ground, straight and slim, her wet jumper clinging damply to her person, her red hair curling defiantly around her thin face. The string of one of her sneakers was undone, and the old Invincible trailed, sodden, at her side.

The man halted in the midst of that appalling gesture and stood upon his porch as if frozen in place. He gazed at Scatter, hypnotized, and she stood firmly balanced, feet well apart, and returned his gaze, eye for eye.

Minutes passed, or hours—it seemed that long to us. Anyhow, we had plenty of time

to observe the man, and we found that he wasn't such a terrifying sort, after all. In fact he was a most pleasing-looking character. If it hadn't been for that first devastating impression of him as he had burst out of his door, I, for one, would have found him an interesting person. He had one of those long, lean, hard, brown faces that look their best when their owners are smoking pipes. He was wearing a stunning English ensemble of soft heather-grey tweed with a sweater to match. Maybe he was an Opium-eater and a Genie, and a bad one at that, but I was all for him, and so were Koko and Man o' War. I could feel it as we pressed close together for company's sake.

Scatter, meanwhile, decided that she and her problem had communed in silence a sufficient length of time.

“If you please, sir—” she remarked with her most engaging and bewitching smile. “If you please, we've been shipwrecked on your beach and are hoping that you will ask us in to get warm by your fire until the squall is over.”

The man continued to stare, but said nothing. Scat tried again.

“We’re from Panther Camp across the cove,” she explained unnecessarily. Who else in the world would we be, cavorting about the lake in blue bloomers and blue ties on a Sunday afternoon, in a blue canoe that had “Panther Camp” written large on each side of its bow?

The man continued to stare, entranced.

“Perhaps he’s a deaf mute,” murmured Koko in my ear. If that were so, the mystery might be easily solved.

Suddenly he sat down upon the top step—flopped would better describe it. His eyes were glued on Scatter.

“‘A glory ——’” he remarked in a strange voice. “‘A glory in the sunlight, seen afar and worshiped by the king.’”

Even Scatter looked bewildered at this development.

“Maniac!” flashed into our four minds, as if they were one. I looked anxiously across the lake. The Counsellors were helping some other storm-tossed mariners to land, all fears about us apparently at rest. If this man really were a maniac, they would have been on their way to rescue us as fast as they could

row, and I heaved a sigh of relief at the sight of their unconcern.

The squall was still squalling, but the sun was hanging low over the top of our hill. With sundown the lake would be sure to grow calm and we could get away, provided the Genie hadn't chained us up or fed us to the sea-serpents by then.

"My word!" exclaimed Scatter in a wondering tone of voice. "Perhaps you *are* a Genie, after all. But you don't look like the kind that would keep sea-serpents. And where is Red Panther? He ought to be standing beside you."

The man collected his thoughts a bit at this remark of Scatter's. Maybe he thought that she was a maniac, too. Anyhow, he seemed to come somewhat closer to earth.

"Sea-serpents?" he asked vaguely. "No, no sea-serpents or birds of prey. Not for you, at any rate. And Red Panther is in the house. Do you mind telling me your name?"

"Scatter!" replied Scat promptly, excitement getting the best of her manners, for of course it would have been more polite to have used our own names instead of nicknames

when introducing us. "And this"—she waved at us—"is Frosty, my roommate. The long, lean, brown child is Man o' War, and the others are Koko and Abey."

Fresh bewilderment swept over the face of the man on the porch. He looked us backward and he looked us forward, and it was obvious that he was counting on his fingers. One, two, three, four girls. Scatter, Frosty, Man o' War, Koko, and Abey. . . .

It wasn't possible. His eyes sought Scatter's for enlightenment, but her mind was off on another track and she gave him no help.

"We do think that we would love to be asked in beside your fire," she suggested most politely.

The man arose to his feet abruptly, and we shrank away from him nervously. But the expression on his face was relieving. His mouth was set as firm as a rock, but his eyes were twinkling.

"I *am* a Genie," he confessed grimly, "a real Genie with a Red Panther and a bright fire burning in the room behind me and lots of hot tea and biscuits and jam and . . ."

It was too much for Scatter. She started

eagerly for the steps. But he held a firm arm across in front of her and shook his head forbiddingly.

“Not a step across the threshold of my lodge,” he decreed, “until you explain which is Koko and which is Abey and why one of them remains invisible.”

“Oh, that!” Scatter grinned and twisted her forelock around her finger. I really think that she had forgotten that the man hadn’t been introduced properly to Abey. We are all so used to him at Camp that we forget that outsiders don’t understand him.

So Scatter explained Abey very carefully so as not to hurt his tender feelings, and the Genie was charmed to meet him and greeted him very politely.

“And now I must understand the meaning of these remarkable names,” he said, “before I can let you in. Are they real names, may I ask?”

I thought I probably imagined it, only I know now that I didn’t, but it seemed to me that there was a tense edge of excitement in his voice when he asked this question.

“Well,” said Scatter thoughtfully, “Frosty

can't help hers. Her family gave it to her, it being Frost. Koko is really Caroline Cook. And Man o' War is Ellen Hunt-Crosby. She is one of those gnome children that live in the deep, cool hemlock woods. She lives on the plump pink fungi that grow on trees in the night. Why, do you know ——" Scatter was carried away by her subject. "Do you know, we often have to tie her at night to keep her from overeating and growing too fat to run for the Raggeds."

Man o' War showed her teeth in an embarrassed grin, and I could see that her fingers were neatly braided again.

The Opium-eater bent beetling brows above Scatter's ruddy head.

"My child," he said, "I can perceive that you are a poetess in the making—if not a newspaper woman. Now tell me the reason for your own remarkable name."

"Sarah C. Atwell," replied Scatter with courtesy, "and now may we please come in beside your fire?"

The man dropped his arm. It seemed to go limp by his side, and he stood at one side as we four shivering souls filed past him into

the room where the fire awaited us, warm and cheery in the field-stone fireplace.

It was a gorgeous room, all foreign and Oriental-looking, and on the mantel above the fire there stood, strangely enough, the statue of a small red panther.

Man o' War and Koko and I sat cross-legged cosily before the hearth, pleased to be warming our frigid persons in such a thrillingly exotic atmosphere.

But Scatter was as one electrified. The instant that she set eyes on that Panther, she stiffened and froze stock-still in her tracks.

"Candor!" she gasped. "You've been in Candor, too!"

The Opium-eater had come in behind us, and he closed the front door before he answered her.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I've been—lived in Candor, and I suspect that you have, too. In fact, I knew that when I first saw your hair. 'A glory in the sunlight.' There is only one other head like it in the world."

For an awful moment I thought he was going to say those tabooed words, "red hair," in which case Scatter would probably have

flown up the chimney. But he didn't, and, for her, Scatter was strangely humbled.

"How—how did you know?" she asked softly. She had taken the red stone Panther from the mantelpiece and was stroking it with tender fingers.

"You're Doctor Atwell's younger daughter, aren't you?" the Opium-eater asked, smiling down at her gently. "The one that was sent back to the States the year before I went out to Candor."

"Yes, I'm Dad's youngest," Scatter admitted, her fingers still yearning over the Red Panther, loving it as she stroked it again and again.

"How did you get this sacred Red Panther?" she asked. "Do the temple priests know you have it?"

The man nodded.

"Yes," he said. "It was given to me by the head priest himself for service rendered in that uprising a year ago. You heard about it?"

Scatter said that she had, and continued to keep fascinated fingers on the sleek red stone beast in her lap. We three Panthers huddled

on the hearth, hugged our bare knees, and watched the drama before us.

“Red Panthers like this, that have been prayed to by every pilgrim in Candor, are probably the luckiest beasts in the world,” Scatter remarked finally after a long crooning silence in which she had been caressing the Panther, unable to keep her fingers from his smooth sides. And I must say that he was an intriguing beast, glassy smooth, alluring to touch.

The Opium-eater's face turned grim.

“Don't you believe it, Sarah,” he retorted bitterly. “There's no luck in that beast. I've had him for almost a year now, and I'm probably the most luckless being alive.”

Scatter shook her head violently.

“You're wrong. You must be wrong. Why, he just can't help but bring luck. That's what he's made for. It's his job. Why, over in Candor he can even perform miracles. The temple priest told me so.”

The Opium-eater turned on his heel.

“Time for tea,” he remarked coolly.

The Chinese man brought it forth with clucks of his tongue and funny little bows, and

we did our Panther best to show him that we appreciated it. Anyhow, I hope that our host wasn't counting on having any left over for company the next day, or anything like that. For there wasn't any.

By the time that we had eaten every crumb of that delectable meal, we had discovered many things, and our mystery was a mystery no more. In fact, he stood forth revealed as Miss Hunt's own nephew, recently returned from the East. Nirvana, it seems, is owned by our Camp and was usually inhabited by his brother, Miss Hunt's other nephew, who was at present, in his turn, a traveler in foreign parts. The ban was put firmly on the Point because the brothers came to Clearwater in search of peace and quiet and refused to live there unless guaranteed safe from invasion by flocks of perambulating Panthers.

"Ummmm!" murmured Scatter softly at this point in the tale. "Just think what you've been missing all these years."

The Opium-eater laughed and continued to answer questions.

Yes, he often went out on the lake with a lantern at night, fishing. Both he and his

brother were ardent fishermen, and the fish bit well at night. And besides that, he often rowed over to Panther in the evening after Taps to visit his aunt. Imagine it! The Opium-eater in our midst and us sound asleep!

The night of the storm when we caught the blueberry-pickers, he had hung out a lantern for his Chinese servant, who had also been benighted on the road home.

Oh, yes, he played the violin quite often. We had just never happened to hear him before, or the wind was wrong, or something.

And finally, he absolutely refused to admit that he had ever eaten opium or consorted with jewel thieves in his life.

Of course it was all very blighting information, considering how interested we had been in the man, and it certainly had nothing to do with the Raggeds or the banner. I began to have a cheated feeling, and I wanted to go home to Panther.

But Scatter seemed rooted for the night. She had paid but scant attention to the questionnaire, for she was still haunted by the statue of the little Red Panther. She picked him up again and caressed him softly.

“It makes me feel unhappy to think that you don’t like him,” she said sadly. “I always loved them so in the temples when I was in Candor with Daddy. They’re such enchanting beasts, somehow. Are you perfectly sure that there is no chance for this one to bring you luck? You haven’t had him a year yet, you know.”

The Opium-eater smiled grimly at her.

“Luck!” he said. “Luck! Finish this story and try to put some luck in it, my poetess with the gorgeous hair, for I have perceived by your conversation that you are familiar with the folk-lore of Candor.”

Scatter looked at him, a bit puzzled, but he went on regardless.

“Once upon a time there was a poor but honest Genie, who traveled in far places, and he fell in love with a beautiful red-headed princess on the other side of the world from here.”

At the fatal word “red-headed,” Scatter stiffened perceptibly, but she said nothing. Presumably the story did not apply to her.

The Opium-eater went on.

“But the princess loved another—a mere man, not even a lower caste of Genie—and

so our poor Genie could but worship from afar. And finally, after passing through sundry dangers and adventures in that distant land, he found it necessary to pack up his Red Panther and return to his lodge by the golden sands of Clearwater. And there he has lived, forlorn and forsaken, ever since, trying to forget the beautiful princess with the gorgeous hair, whom he had left to a mere man on the far side of the earth. And," he added challengingly, fixing Scatter with a piercing eye, "I dare you to find any luck in that story, my friend."

Scatter broke forth with a shout.

"Luck!" she cried. "Luck! Why, you're the luckiest man in the world, and Red Panther has brought it to you. You are the man who was ordered back to New York after that uprising, and then you resigned from the company you were working for and came up here. So you didn't know that Caroline broke that horrid engagement right after you left Candor and that she has been trying to find you, ever since she came back to the States, to explain what a horrible misunderstanding it was, only no one knew where you had hidden

yourself. I haven't seen her since April, but she told me all about it then. And, if you can believe your good luck, that princess that you were telling about is over in Bangor, Maine, at this very moment with my daddy, which is the reason that we are having a tea-party with you on your golden sands. And the folk-tale ends with the good old line, 'They all lived happily ever after,' with the Red Panther showering blessings on their hearth.

"And now, Frosty, if your arms are rested, I think that we had better start for Camp. The squall is squalled and all is calm, and it would be fatal to miss supper twice in one week."

This last was very tactful of Scatter, for the Opium-eater had passed quite beyond words.

"Bangor!" was all he could say, and again, "Bangor!" just as if it was heaven or something. But his face was hard to look at. It shone.

So we left him, and Scatter was mighty silent as we launched our canoe.

"My word, Frosty!" she exclaimed at last.

“That was worth the trip. Wouldn’t it have been awful if we had never gone there at all!”

And for once in her life she wasn’t thinking about the Raggeds and her mystic hunch.

On our way home we met Mother Panther and the Doctor, rowing over to the Point after us in one of Man o’ War’s father’s new boats.

“We didn’t want you to bother Mr. Hunt any longer than necessary, dearie,” explained Mother Panther. “And now that you’ve met him, you must remember not to pester him with any more visits. He came up here to Clearwater for rest and to be quiet. That is why we have always forbidden you to land on the Point.”

“We won’t do it again, Mother Panther,” we promised. “But there was nothing else we could do this time.”

Mother Panther nodded and smiled, and we went on our way toward home. Only the Doctor was heard to mutter that it was strange that every other canoe on the lake managed to get back to the beach without having to land on foreign soil, but, as long as Miss Mason had commanded us to and Mother Panther smiled upon it, that was all right.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVENTH VEIL

“The thing that disturbs me,” I told Scatter that evening after our adventure with the Opium-eater, “is that we proved nothing for the Raggeds on our trip. Of course I realize that the Opium-eater is probably even now on his way to Bangor to cast himself at the feet of his ladylove, and that’s very nice for him, and for your sister, too. But it doesn’t score the Raggeds a single point, when you come to think of it.”

Scatter shook her head stubbornly.

“I’m not so sure, Frosty,” she answered. “Something may come out of that adventure yet. Remember that Red Panther was involved in it, and he’s honestly the luckiest beast in all the world. Of course you couldn’t expect anything as sudden as having the Opium-eater offer to strike all the Hatchets with lightning, or anything like that, you know. And anyhow, my good woman, I

thought you didn't hold with hunches and superstitions."

I laughed.

"Well, I don't," I answered. "But somehow you seemed so sure, and the score is so awfully close."

It really was, and, with the mystery of the Opium-eater solved, it behooved us to turn our attention to our other objective of the summer and do what we could to win victory for the Raggeds.

The Hatchets were ahead of us, as far as we could tell, and the results of the events of that last counting week that lay ahead of us were all nip and tuck. You see, it's hard to tell just what the total score is up at Panther, for so many things count for points—hiking and swimming classes and tennis ladder and nature quests and things like that. They all have to be averaged up at the end, and of course we all work at them until the very last minute.

But all the known points put the Hatchets ahead by a slight margin. Of course we could count on tennis as long as Scatter could roam out on a court and swing a racket. Basket-

ball ought to be ours, for we almost always did win that, and baseball was a toss-up. The Hatchets were sure to beat us in hiking and crew, and they'd probably win in the war canoe, although we had a chance there, and in diving, swimming, and track we were even.

Scatter and I went over the chances for the week for the thousandth time, and for the thousandth time we came to the conclusion that we could foretell nothing. And it's a lucky thing for us that we couldn't. We probably would have lost our minds on the spot if we had been able to look forward and see what slim, neglected threads were to hold our Ragged side together during the coming week.

Monday started inauspiciously, for we lost both crew races and the second relay swimming race in the morning. That made eleven more points for the Hatchets, which wasn't encouraging to us, and on top of that our baseball practice that afternoon went badly.

Then, to crown all the mishaps of that unpleasant Monday, Scatter went on a wild and glorious tear in the Shack after Taps. It was a crazy thing for her to do, but she didn't honestly mean any harm by it. It was just

one of those things that happen every once in so often, even when your intentions are of the very best.

Monday was an extremely hot day, and Scatter and I lay out in the woods for a while after rest hour. Every one else had gone back to the Camp House with Mother Panther, but we were too sleepy and lazy to move, and for a long while we just lay, chewing pine-needles and grumbling about the heat. Scatter hates heat even worse than being called red-headed, but, for her, she was taking the weather very calmly.

“Frosty,” she said suddenly, “do you realize that to-morrow will probably be the last basket-ball game that we ever play for the Raggeds?”

“It probably will be,” I answered, “but it ought to be a marvelous game. You and I have mapped out that new play, and the centers are working nicely with us. If we win basket-ball to-morrow, it will help a lot toward the banner. I only hope that you don’t lose your red-headed temper and let Sally beat you in the tennis finals.”

Of course every one knows that Scatter is

absolutely unbeatable at tennis when she stops fooling long enough to put her mind on what she is doing, just as every one knows that she is as red-headed as a woodpecker, and no one can understand why she objects to her red hair so much. Heaven knows, I would gladly change with her any day.

Scatter sat up with a bounce. Her red hair stuck out all over her head like a gorgeous halo, and her funny bare knobby knees pointed at right angles.

“F-Frosty,” she stammered, “you’ve said the unspeakable. I’m not red-headed and you know it. Take it all back, or you’ll be sorry.”

But some imp within me, born of the heat and the excitement of the day before, no doubt, urged me on, and I chanted the sure sign for battle, the absolutely unforgivable. It had been invented by our saturnine Marge in a moment of abandonment and relaxation when we were young and foolish, and it had been forever taboo as far as Scatter was concerned.

“The chief defect of Scatter At,
She never knows where she is at;
She wears an Invincible neckerchief red
That swears like sin with the color of her head.”

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It's not beautiful poetry, I'll grant you, but highly useful as a stimulant. Scatter snorted wrathfully.

"Frosty," she said, "you know that this Invincible tie is the best mascot that the Raggeds have. Have we ever lost a basketball game that it was in? Answer me that!"

"I couldn't tell you," I answered her. "Why don't you stand it on its own feet tomorrow and see if it can beat the whole Hatchet team single-handed?"

Scatter chewed silently on a pine-needle and regarded me morosely. The insult had been a double one, directed at both her beloved neckerchief and her despised red hair. Suddenly a gleam came into her eye.

"Very well," she said firmly. "The worst will come to pass. I've decided. To-night at exactly five minutes past Taps the Dance of the Seven Veils will take place in the Shack. The pure and spotless reputation of Shack Two will be lost forever."

Scatter had seen a Russian ballet at home in the spring, and she had been threatening to give a version of the Seven Veils Dance'off and on all summer. Sometimes I had wondered

what kept her from the performance and had come to the conclusion that she was just talking. So her threat of imminent action left me unmoved.

“Imagine caring,” I said negligently. “It’s time we went to baseball practice; come on.”

Scatter regarded me darkly.

“Imagine not,” she muttered, but she came with me just the same.

It was cooler that evening, and I noticed how close the stars seemed over the hemlock trees when I was brushing my teeth over the railing behind the Shack. Of course we aren’t supposed to brush our teeth out there, but every one does, and if you pour the water from your mug carefully, it washes the tooth-powder off the bushes and no one is the wiser. At least, no Counsellors can notice the marks at inspection in the morning.

“Listen to the Counsellors in swimming again,” remarked Jan, who was brushing her teeth beside me. “You would think that they might get enough of the lake during the day, wouldn’t you?”

“Well, they have to do something to amuse themselves once in a while,” I answered. “I

should think it would be tiresome to be a Counsellor, myself. Have you seen anything of my roommates?"

"They were here just a few minutes ago. Scatter was looking for her red Mackinaw coat."

"For pity's sake, why does she want that in this hot weather?" I gasped in astonishment.

"I don't know; she didn't tell me." Janice went into the Lion's Den and banged her door. All the dressing-rooms at Panther have names; also, every one at Panther always bangs doors. It is one of the traditions of the place. Often when I am at home in the fall, I hear some one bang a screened door at night, and it makes me homesick for the porch of Shack Two, the taste of tooth-powder in my mouth, and the sight of Cygnus flaming overhead on his slide down the Milky Way. It gives me a prickly feeling in my throat, somehow. If only Camp could last most of the year, instead of school!

Well, I don't mean to be camp-sick here and now, although it is hard to tell about Camp and not feel that way. You know how it is.

Anyhow, I hunted around for Scatter and Marge, but I couldn't find them anywhere, so

I went out to the screened sleeping-porch and curled myself down in my cot. I decided that they must be ranging the Camp on some nocturnal business of their own, and I was sleepy and ready for bed. However, when they hadn't appeared when Tattoo was blown and were still absent at Taps, I began to be worried. Up at Panther we Captains are responsible for enforcing our self-government system, which takes care of silence after Taps and rules like that, and so it was my job to see that Scatter and Marge came home to bed. As I lay there wondering what I had better do next, a strong flashlight was turned on me from somewhere high up in the rafters, and a tom-tom began a hideous pounding.

“Who is making that noise?” I demanded, in terror lest the Doctor be prowling about and hear it.

Then I saw, in the ray of the flashlight, a swaddled figure, silent beside my bed. It was wrapped in red checked blankets gleaned from some Counsellor's bed, for we Campers have plain red blankets, and it was swaying back and forth to the rhythm of the drum. Then, of course, I realized what was coming to pass,

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for I remembered Scatter's threat of the afternoon, and I knew that there was nothing for me to do but make the best of a bad situation. Wild horses couldn't change Scatter's course, once she had started on a tear, and the worst thing that I could do was to argue with her.

Every one in the Shack was sitting up in bed to see the fun, so I lay back and resigned myself to the inevitable.

"Remember to report yourself to the Council in the morning for rioting after Taps," I said. "And if that's you up there with the tom-tom, Marge, don't you forget to report, either. They'll probably take away your swimming privileges for two days, but if you don't mind that, it won't hurt my feelings any."

The tom-tom beat faster and faster, and the bulky figure beside me went into swift action. Spinning like a blind top, it went the length of the Shack and back again, and then, with a swoop, the Counsellor checks were unwound and flung upon my bed.

Scatter now appeared, her red hair aflame, arrayed in the Doctor's old red mackintosh, its skirts flapping about her feet, its cape swirling about her arms.

Off came the mackintosh, on top of me, and the next layer was Scatter's own red Mackinaw, swearing at her head, loud as usual. The dance waxed faster, and applause came lustily from the spectators in the lined-up beds. Lights flashed on in the other Shacks across the way.

"They're wondering what's happening in poor old Shack Two," I thought ruefully. "But it can't go on forever. The Counsellors are bound to hear the noise, and they will soon put a stop to it."

The red Mackinaw came off as dramatically as the first two veils, and after a few swoops by one sleeve it landed on the rafter over my bed. Scatter knew better than to trust that valuable garment to my tender care.

Under the Mackinaw was Christine the cook's pink house-dress, and under that was Miss Palmer's Harvard baseball sweater. Never before had that priceless garment been seen out of the hands of its proud owner, but Scatter can be very persuasive when she wants to be, and Counsellors, as well as lesser folk, are as wax in her hands.

I could hear voices approaching from the

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beach. The Counsellors were on their way to the rescue, and Scatter's time was growing short. She realized that herself, for she draped the sweater on Miss Palmer's pillow with great haste and stood forth in the sixth veil. We gasped loudly, for, if Miss Palmer's sweater had been daring, here was sacrilege indeed. The sixth veil was none other than Mother Panther's own famous swimming-suit—the red one with the polka dots in which she had learned to swim when a young girl at Hot Springs, the good old suit over which she had reminisced ever since Camp was Camp.

How Scatter had managed to borrow that relic was more than I could see, but there she was, whirling and spinning in its abbreviated length. Then her hand was at its fastening. The seventh veil was about to be revealed! We all leaned forward, breathless with excitement. What could be underneath the suit?

Whang! The drum hiccuped and was silent. The light went out, and Marge leaped from aloft and lit squarely on her bed with a great thud and a bounce. At the same time Scatter's bed-spring squeaked loudly and the door banged behind the Counsellors.

“What is going on here?” Miss Palmer sounded very stern, and she turned her flashlight on me in inquiry.

“Nothing . . . now, Miss Palmer,” I answered as calmly as I could. “Did you hear anything?”

I knew that, as long as Scatter and Marge were quiet for the moment, they would probably stay so for the rest of the night. They could explain their actions to the Council in the morning themselves, and there didn't seem to be any use in prolonging the scene that night. Anyhow, none of us had anything to say, and Miss Palmer went into her room to get ready for bed. Personally, I felt slightly sorry for Scatter; Mother Panther's ancient swimming-suit couldn't be the most comfortable nightclothes in the world. Also I wondered about the seventh veil, which had not been revealed.

The next day was splendid weather for basket-ball—as cool as September. Sally Robbins and I strolled out to the basket-ball field in the morning to make sure that the tapes were down and that everything was ready for the game in the afternoon. The air was so

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clear that it seemed as if we could reach over and touch Pete Clifton and his wife where they were making hay across the pasture by the edge of the wood-lot.

As we walked back to Camp again, we talked of Scatter's outbreak of the night before. I said that I thought it was funny, but Sally was not so sure about that.

"You know, the Council may keep them out of sports to-day, and then where shall we be? After all, they're your best forward and my best guard," she said.

"My word!" said I, stopping short in the middle of the road in my dismay. "You don't honestly think that they would do that, do you, Sally? I thought that they might keep them from swimming for a day or so, but I never dreamed of their keeping them out of other sports, too."

"You can't tell," answered Sally. "You know how the Doctor feels about noise after Taps. 'If you can't sleep at night, you can't play in the daytime,' and what she says, the Council does."

It was almost time for swimming, and I tore down to Loon Attic as fast as I could go.

There I found Scatter and Marge, each sitting on a cot, head in hands. There was no use asking them what was wrong. Sally had guessed right; they were ruled out of all sports for the day, and there was nothing more to be said about it. It was as hard on one team as on the other, for Marge was just as good a guard as Scatter was a forward, and for two years they had played against each other in almost every game.

I felt bad at losing Scatter. We had played together for so long, and this would probably be our last game and all. And I knew that Scatter felt just as bad as I did about it.

“I’m sorry, Frosty!” was all that she said, but what was the use of talking? The harm was done, and that was that. However, she didn’t feel depressed for long. Scatter always lands right side up, no matter what may go wrong.

When rest hour was over, she and Marge rushed off to the Shack, and I paused to talk to Man o’ War. We had decided to let her play forward in Scatter’s place. She had really turned out to be a remarkably good athlete, in spite of her bad beginning at Camp,

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and she was fast on her feet and had a good eye for the basket. Of course she wasn't as good as Scatter, but she was the next best we had.

When I arrived at Loon Attic, I found Scatter sitting cross-legged on the floor, inking the word "Raggeds" in huge black letters on the back of my red rain-coat.

"For mercy's sake, what are you doing?" I demanded in no uncertain tones. "That's my best and only rain-coat, and you've ruined it."

"Well, it's red, isn't it?" answered Scatter serenely. "I need it in my business, Frosty, and anyhow, this is all worn out; you need a new one, my good child. Now let me see," she went on briskly. "Something old—that's the rain-coat. Something new—Else's red beret that she can't wear because she's a Hatchet. Something borrowed . . . something borrowed. . . . What can I borrow that's red? Oh, yes, I'll take Polly's red candlestick for that. Run and get it for me like a good girl, Marge. And something blue. Well, Camp color is blue. I'll wear my Camp pin and that ought to bring mighty good luck.

There, what do you think of your mascot, Frosty?"

Dressed in the red rain-coat and beret, with the red candlestick in her hand, she was a disgraceful-looking mascot, and I told her so.

"Anyhow, you're all mixed up with marryings," I argued. "That rhyme about old and new and borrowed and blue goes with weddings, not basket-ball games."

"If it is good for weddings, it ought to be twice as good for basket-ball games," answered Scatter with conviction. "Now step along, my Frosty, it's time that we were going. You too, Marge, old dear. And you'd better take your tom-tom with you, for you Hatchets are going to need piles of luck to overcome this mascot to-day."

Marge left us, and we started toward the gathering-place of the Raggeds. Scatter whispered thickly in my ear:

"I've got the seventh veil with me, too, Frosty. We absolutely *must* win, do you hear, and at the end of the game I'll dance all the way home to Loon Attic."

I looked her over curiously, for I wanted to see this mysterious seventh veil, but it wasn't

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visible, as far as I could tell, and Scatter only laughed when I asked her to show it to me.

We Raggeds marched out to the basketball field, singing our marching song:

“ When the Raggeds come marching along
With their banner, the red and the white,
We feel that we cannot go wrong,
That we will fight a gallant fight. . . .”

And at the head of our column strode our mascot with the rain-coat flying from her shoulders, the old Invincible fluttering in the breeze, and Elsie's tam on the back of her head. The Hatchets were at the field ahead of us, and they laughed loudly when they caught sight of Scatter. But Scatter didn't mind that at all; she is not afflicted with bashfulness.

She marched the length of the field all by herself and once around each goal-post. Then she set the candlestick down in the middle of the center circle and revolved around it solemnly, after which she joined us six players where we had gathered in a little hollow place behind the south goal. We had been feeling rather edgy and nervous, but the sight of Scatter playing hoodoo to the Hatchets had

made us laugh it off, and even Man o' War stopped braiding her fingers into crooked ropes.

“It's going to be all right,” I assured Man o' War. “You know all the plays. They're bound to put a sub guard in Marge's place, and you ought not to have any more trouble than you do on the second team. Watch for the center-center signal on the toss-up, and when you do come up to the line, come up fast.”

The long, lean child nodded, Miss Mason blew her whistle, and we all ran onto the field.

As soon as we reached our places, my heart sank like a stone, for the Hatchets were showing themselves to be smarter than I had given them credit for being. As sub guard, they were using Sally. Although she was the Hatchet Captain, basket-ball was not her game. She was a wonderful diver and could beat every one in Camp except Scatter at tennis, but she lacked that last bit of speed and dash that makes a real basket-ball player. I had counted on her playing guard that afternoon, but against Man o' War, of course. And that was where I had guessed wrong.

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They matched Sally up against me, and Peggy Bartlett, their steam-roller guard, against poor Man o' War.

"Heavens!" I groaned to myself. "It's all over but the shouting."

I glanced at our youngster, but she didn't seem to be upset, so I grinned at Sally as if I was just as happy as a clam in a mud bank.

"Ready, Hatchets? Ready, Raggeds?" Miss Mason tossed the ball between the two center-centers, and the game began.

What a game that was! On the first play I came up to the line for the ball, Sally 'way behind me, but when I tried to slip my pass between the guards to Man o' War, there was no one in sight but Peggy. Of course she intercepted the pass and cleared the ball out to her centers, and, from then on, it was hammer and tongs, our guards and centers getting the ball to us forwards and Peggy walking away with it.

Janice, our center-center, got more and more savage. She is always easily discouraged, anyway, and when she found that none of our old plays were working, she began to drop high balls to us right under the basket.

Of course any one can see where high balls are going, and they were an easy matter for a giraffe like Peggy. She just reached up in front of Man o' War and knocked them down. The kind of game that is difficult for her is short, quick passes, in and out between the guards, and Scatter and I had that system worked out to a fine point. Poor Man o' War was simply nowhere that half, and Peggy and Sally ambled about in a contented kind of way, cleaning up everything in sight.

We did manage to do some scoring. Both sides did. What with the flock of high balls that Jan was dropping over and the bombardment that our guards were getting, we would have been much more stupid than we looked if we hadn't managed to put in a few goals on the side.

But at the end of the half the score was 12-8 in favor of the Hatchets, and we Raggeds slumped down in our hollow, discouraged. We weren't used to having our best plays broken up so rudely, and it came very hard to us, somehow.

Of course Scatter came over to the rest of us and listened while I spoke a few well-

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chosen words on the subject of high drop balls and what not to do with them.

When I finished talking, Scatter took Man o' War by the arm and dragged her off to the nearest blueberry patch, where she sat her down and engaged her in earnest and vehement conversation.

"If I were you, I'd take Man o' War out and put Koko in her place," said Jan gloomily.

I grunted. I didn't have much opinion of Jan's judgment, she is such a born pessimist. But I put the question up to the team.

"There is no one but Scatter that could get away from Peg," said Mary Martin, our side-center. "Man o' War is really the only forward we have left."

The other girls agreed with Mary, so we decided to let Man o' War stay in.

"Perhaps Scatter can talk some speed into her," remarked Mary hopefully. "She's waving her arms at her like a windmill."

Well, Jan and I talked it over, and we decided that in the next half I should come up to the line, on whatever side she signaled me, for a short, quick pass. Then I was to bounce the ball around Sally and make a long shot

for the basket. Of course, if Man o' War happened to be clear, that would be so much the better. Anyhow, we'd have no more high drop balls for Peggy to frolic with.

Time was called, and Scatter galloped up with Man o' War, fresh as watercress. I noticed that they had changed neckerchiefs, and I marveled, for Scatter is extra careful of that precious old Invincible of hers. It didn't mean much to me, though, for we got right into the thick of it when the whistle blew, and we stayed there until the end.

What a half that was! Man o' War was everywhere at once, in front of Peggy, behind her, quick change! Poor Peg began to wear an injured look, as our long infant dodged about her at will. It reminded me of my old Airedale, Guffin, the time he was busily chasing a mouse and it turned around and ran up his hind leg. Peg had just that same look in her eyes while Man o' War cut fancy circles and loops and squirls about her.

We ran the score up to 22-14 in our favor, and even Janice cheered up. After every goal Scatter waved the red candlestick aloft and kicked her feet, and the Raggeds sang:

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“On the line, on the line, by the side of the line,
Cheering for our team in rain or shine,
Cheering for the Raggeds, and we’re cheering all
the time,
When we’re out on the side of the line.”

It sounded good to us, and we gave them plenty of chances to sing. But then, with the last half almost gone, we ran into sore trouble. The Hatchet side-center passed to her forward, and our guards cleared the ball out high to Jan. She juggled it on her finger-tips for a second but couldn’t hold it, and it rolled over the side-line with Jan and Elsie after it, both stretched at full length on the ground.

“Hatchet ball outside!” was Miss Mason’s decision, of course, and Jan and Elsie stood up ready to carry on, but Jan had hurt herself. She had coasted along the ground on a sharp stone, and one of her knees was all gory. The Doctor bore her off to the infirmary, and we sent Koko in in Jan’s place. How we did have to work after that!

Mary played like a little buzz-saw, but there wasn’t much she could do when her center-center never got the jump, and the score crept up on us: 14, 16, 18, 20. Then

we scored one, making it 24-20 in our favor still.

Two minutes more to play! Anything might happen in two minutes, and the ball went back and forth like a shuttle.

24-24! It was heart-breaking for Man o' War and me to have to stand there and watch the play at the other end of the field, our guards scuffling for the ball, making a clean pass to Mary, and Koko fumbling it.

"Mary, use your head! Bounce across center," I groaned, and, just as if she had heard me, she caught the ball and made a long bounce and a short, quick pass right into my hands. Man o' War was ready for me, we passed twice between the guards, and I had an easy basket before me. I was sure that I would make it—too sure, I guess—for the ball balanced on the edge of the basket like a thing bewitched, and then it fell lazily on the wrong side. My very soul turned sick. Peggy, with her long reach, would clear it out in short order, and I fell back to keep Sally covered.

But even Peg's long arms didn't avail her that time, for Man o' War bounded up into the air as if she were made of rubber, caught

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the ball with both her hands, whirled, dribbled around Peggy, and bounced the ball off the backboard into the basket for as pretty a goal as ever was made, and, as the ball hit the ground, the whistle blew for time.

What a relief! We fell upon each other's necks and cheered the Hatchets, and they did the same for us. And then we hugged Man o' War and pummeled her on her back until she almost choked to death, and all the Raggeds crowded around like maniacs.

Of course Scatter was the maddest of all that mad mob, although she carefully removed the Invincible from around Man o' War's neck before she began. As we started back toward the Camp House, she went into violent action again, minus the tom-tom this time, for you could hardly expect our Marge to help celebrate a Ragged victory. With rain-coat flying, hair aflame, Scatter led the team down the road. And as she whirled and spun from side to side, she waved the Invincible fetish aloft and chanted at the top of her lungs:

“The seventh veil! The seventh veil! It won the game! The Invincible seventh veil!”

CHAPTER X

HAPPY JACK

When Man o' War, our delicate hothouse blossom, finally stepped up and won that basket-ball game in the last minute of play, I learned a very valuable lesson in underrating the abilities of those about me. If it hadn't been for her, we should have lost the game along with crew and half the swimming and diving. I don't mind saying, though, that I was a nervous wreck by the time the game was over and Scatter had led us triumphantly back to Camp; and the events of the evening did not help to soothe me at all.

“We're two nutty nut, nut, nuts;
We're two nutty nut, nut, nuts;
However it ends,
We'll always be friends;
We're two nutty nut, nut, nuts.”

Bedtime had come at last, and Scatter and Marge were sitting on Scatter's cot, singing

the stupid verse over and over, rocking themselves back and forth violently in time to the music.

The noise finally became more than I felt I could cope with in my frazzled state of mind, and I bolted out of Loon Attic, slamming the screened door behind me.

It was almost time for Tattoo, and up at Panther that means all in bed and ready for Taps. But there were still a few minutes in which I might slip off by myself and think. I paused by the corner of the sleeping-porch where Scatter and Marge were still at it.

“Come on, Mary, make it three nutty nuts,” and off they went again.

“They won’t be happy until they have the whole Shack involved,” I thought, as I prowled unhappily along the path, trying to think my problem out clearly. Now that I am at home and can look back on that summer, it seems stupid of me to have acted as I did, for there was only one possible solution to the problem. But at the time I was pretty well keyed up and anxious for the Raggeds to win, of course.

It was baseball that was bothering me that night. I have said before that practice had

gone badly. Of course we all realized that practices often do go badly, and we didn't think much of it—at least I didn't—until after supper that Tuesday night. I had gone down to the Shack to get my fountain pen, and quite by accident I overheard this conversation. Miss Palmer and Miss MacLean were talking in their room, but I didn't pay any attention to them until I heard my own name. After that, I heard it all, and it came full force, like a blow in the stomach.

“ Since she is Ragged captain and all, I am so sorry for her.” Miss Palmer's tone was regretful.

“ What's the matter with her? ” This from Miss MacLean.

“ She was pitching so badly at practice yesterday. She's stale, I think, and I don't see how she can last out the game to-morrow.”

“ That will be hard on the Raggeds. What will they do for a pitcher? She's the only good one they have.”

“ I don't know. Of course the Captains are expected to arrange their own teams, and I can't give them any advice unless they ask for it. And if she did ask me, I don't think that

I would have the heart to tell her to stay out of the game to-morrow. It will be her last chance to pitch for the Raggeds, and you know what that means.”

“ But,” Miss MacLean inquired further, “ if she did ask you and you were stony-hearted enough to tell her that she’s gone stale, who could you advise her to put in her place? There is no one else who can pitch.”

Miss Palmer’s answer came as quick as chain lightning, and it made me feel mighty uncomfortable.

“ I’d tell her to put Eleanor Jackson in the pitcher’s box. Yes, I said Eleanor Jackson, and I meant it. The Raggeds haven’t a chance of winning the game, but they’re more apt to get somewhere with Eleanor than with their Captain. Where’s there a needle? I have a splinter in my thumb.”

I stood there in Loon Attic, fighting hard to keep back the tears. The last baseball game of the season with lame Happy Jack in the pitcher’s box, while I sat on the side-lines! It couldn’t be as bad as all that. It was too much to ask of a Captain. Miss Palmer had no right to expect it of me.

I started to call out to the two Counsellors, for, after all, I had no business listening to the conversation, but they began to talk again, so I kept quiet.

“Ouch! Thanks!” By the sound of her voice Miss Palmer was sucking her thumb. “Don’t look so peculiar about Happy Jack. She may be lame now, but she used to play baseball better than any boy her age in our town. She lived near us before she had that accident, so I know. And just look at the way she hurls the ball in the track meets up here.”

Miss MacLean made a noise that sounded doubtful.

“Yes,” she said, “I know that she used to be a fine ball player before she was hurt, and I know she can throw a ball now. But to play baseball properly she would have to run as well as throw.”

“She’d have to have some one run for her, of course. But that’s all right. When Scatter twisted that ankle of hers the last time, she had some one to run for her in the baseball game the next day. Let the Crosby child run for Eleanor, and I think the Raggeds stand

an even chance of winning. It would be rather amusing to have those two win the game, wouldn't it? They were such hopeless characters when they arrived at Camp."

But I didn't think it was amusing, not one bit, and Miss Palmer made me angry by talking like that.

"What troubles we girls do have!" sighed Miss MacLean. "And now, if your thumb is better, I think we had best go back to the Camp House." And they did, banging their door lustily behind them.

Well, of course I felt sick. I wanted to pitch that game badly (what Captain wouldn't?), and I just couldn't imagine giving way to Happy Jack, whom I had all but ordered off the field at the first of the season. And by the time I finally got away from the howling mob and off by myself, I didn't know whether I was afoot or horseback. Was the game for Jack to pitch or for me to pitch? For me to pitch or Jack to pitch? A line from the Camp motto kept running through my head: "Loyalty to Panther Camp ideals." Well, just what were Panther Camp ideals, anyhow? I was Ragged Captain. The team had

elected me, and they counted on me. It wouldn't be right to desert them and leave it to a lame girl to pull them out of trouble. That wasn't loyalty, not to the Raggeds, anyhow.

Yet, if Miss Palmer were right and I *had* gone stale, it might be better for the Raggeds if I did step out and give my place to Happy Jack. But perhaps Miss Palmer wasn't right. She didn't know everything, and Jack might make an awful mess of the game. Of course, she was a good sport, but when it came to taking a chance on her as a pitcher, it was a risky business. We were hard up for pitchers that summer. Marion Tomkins pitched for the second team, if you can call it pitching, but she would be no earthly good on the first team, and there was no one else who could hit a barn door with a baseball, much less put one over the plate. Then there was Janice Taylor, our catcher, to think of. She and Happy Jack might not do well together. The chances were that they wouldn't, for Jan didn't care for changes.

Loyalty, of course, meant putting the team before myself, but what in the world was the

best thing for the team? Would it be better to have lame Happy Jack or stale me?

I sat down on a stone at the place where the trail from the Shacks joins that to the bathing beach. The moon path was silvery on Clearwater, and out beyond it were the near hills, crouching like tired beasts. Up in the Shack Scatter had gathered her cohorts about her, and apparently she had added recruits from other Shacks, for the noise was terrific.

Suddenly Tattoo sounded, staccato and sharp, and I reluctantly started back to Loon Attic.

“Seventeen nutty nut, nut, nuts.” The song ended with a yell, and doors banged violently as white figures rushed across the clearing to their own abodes.

There was a clashing of bed-springs, and Scatter’s voice paged “Frosty” loudly as I slipped into the big, dim Shack and under my red blankets.

When I woke up next morning, I still felt miserable, and breakfast tasted awful.

“Why don’t you eat your cereal?” demanded the Doctor, regarding me severely.

“Oh, Doctor, must I?” I groaned.

“Certainly you must,” and I did. But, ugh . . .

The morning dragged by, a dead weight. It was scorching hot, a still, muggy, pitiless sort of day, and I couldn't seem to get a deep breath. The line-up for the game would have to be announced at dinner time, and so far I had come to no decision about the pitcher.

Of course I could have talked to Miss Palmer about it, but I knew already what she thought, and she would probably tell me to use my own judgment, anyhow.

I could have talked it over with Scatter, but she would have spluttered like a soda fountain at the very idea of my dropping out, and so would any of the rest of the Raggeds, Happy Jack herself the most of all. I had to make the decision for myself. And I couldn't. It was awful.

The morning swim was a relief, and I lay awash in the water like an old log, soaking in the luscious green coolness of it, wriggling just enough to feel the ripples, soft and bubbly, as I floated.

But that was a short respite, and the dinner hour came all too soon. The Doctor's eye was

on me, so I choked down what was on my plate—never ask me what it was.

Finally the bad moment came.

Sally Robbins stood up and announced the Hatchet team for the afternoon. Mother Panther looked at me.

“Very well, dearie,” she said. “And who is going to play for the Raggeds to-day?”

My throat was as dry as a stick as I stood up, and my voice gulped on the first name as I started to read the batting order: shortstop, right field, center field, and on down the list to “first base, Atwell; catcher, Taylor; pitcher . . . Frost.”

All the same as usual. No one looked either surprised or interested, and I sat down with my heart hammering against my ribs, my breath coming short and sharp. Miss Palmer had drawn her brows together and puckered her mouth into a soundless whistle as she pushed some bread crumbs into a mound with her finger. I wished that she would look at me with a friendly smile, but when we were dismissed, she left the table without a word, and so did I.

Well, we all assembled after rest hour, and

the game began at last, as such games do, with a proper interchange of songs between the two sides. The non-players settled down to the task of cheering for the players, the Hatchets took to the field, and Miss Palmer called, "Batter up!"

First up for us was Phyllis Ward, our short-stop. A nice hit to left field put her on first. Polly Stevens, our center fielder, struck out. Nancy White got to first on balls, and Koko knocked out a fly which was caught in right field.

That made two out and two on bases. A long hit meant a run, but Mary Martin struck out, which made it quick work for that inning, and we Raggeds started for the field.

The heat seemed to rise in waves all about me as I walked to the pitcher's box, and I felt as if I were pushing it to either side of me as I went.

It was an effort to raise my arm, and the ball floated to Jan balloon-like on the heavy air, as we tossed it back and forth.

"Batter up!"

I simply had to make good.

"Strike one." It felt wide to me.

“Ball one.”

The next one was a foul tip.

“Two strikes,” said I to myself. “One more, and I’ll know I’m all right.”

But it was another ball, and after that two more, and Elsie walked gaily to first base.

“That’s judging them, Else,” yelled the Hatchet rooters. “Good work.”

Then the next girl was up, left-handed Marge, my own roommate.

“Strike.”

“Good girl, Frosty!” Scatter’s voice had an anxious edge to it.

Another strike, but with it came a shooting pain down my neck to the top of my shoulder and down my upper arm. It was like a red-hot iron, at once searing and numbing. I could hardly raise my arm to throw the ball. It hit Marge on the leg, and then there were two on bases, with none out, and Sally, the Hatchet Captain, was coming to bat.

I pulled myself together a bit. If she hit the ball with her usual strength, it meant two runs and maybe three. In spite of the pain in my arm, I must get it across. I had to.

Jan’s lower lip was caught in her teeth, giv-

ing her dark face a savage look, and, regardless of arm and heat, I hurled them over, three good strikes.

One out, but two on bases still, and my arm was hanging by my side like a tassel.

It was a bad inning, but, by dint of some good fielding on the shortstop's part and some real head-work on Scatter's, we ended it with only one run against us. But it was good luck rather than good management, as far as I was concerned.

“What's wrong?”

“Does your arm hurt you?”

“What's the matter, Frosty?”

The barrage of questions rattled about my head like hailstones.

“Nothing's the matter,” I answered crossly. “I'll get going next inning. You're up, Libby. Line out a home run.”

She didn't do it, but she managed to get to first on a short hit.

We had a harvest that inning, and the score was 3-1 in our favor when I pushed through the heat to the pitcher's box once more and raised my aching arm.

The less said about that inning, the better.

Once again it was only the team that saved us from utter destruction. But when we trailed in from the field at the end of the inning, the score 6-3 against us, I could feel the girls shaky behind me—not a pleasant feeling when felt for the first time—and it made me stubborn. After all, I was Captain, and I was going to stick to the team whether they liked it or no.

Well, we struggled through to the fifth inning. The score was running high, more like a basket-ball game than a baseball game score: Hatchets 10, Raggeds 6.

When I stalked out to pitch at the end of the fifth, I was seeing double.

Jan tossed the ball to me, I fumbled it, and I felt the tears near. How ridiculous! I couldn't remember crying in years.

I tried to raise my arm to toss the ball back to Jan and found that I couldn't. The stabbing pain raced through my shoulder, and I was helpless.

“Batter up!” Miss Palmer's voice was strained and dry. “Play ball, Raggeds.”

But I shook my head, dropped my glove and the ball, and walked off the field.

Scatter sprang to my side, her arm across my shoulder.

“Frosty!” Her voice was sharp and frightened. “You can’t quit now!”

“I’m all right,” I answered gruffly. “My arm has given out. Where’s Happy Jack?”

“Here I am,” and she bobbed up in the group of Raggeds by the side-lines.

“Go in and pitch,” I said to her. “It’s up to you now. I can’t go on.”

Her face turned white and then flushed scarlet as she lurched toward me.

“N-n-n-not me?” she stammered. “You don’t honestly mean for me to pitch, Frosty?”

“Yes, I do,” I answered as quietly as I could. “You can pitch just as well as I can, and Man o’ War will run for you. Do the best you can, for you’re the only one that can get us out of this hole now.”

She looked pathetic as she limped out there to my place, and I began to wonder if I had made a mistake, after all. Perhaps it would have been better to put Marion in, but the Raggeds were singing to Happy Jack as she took her place on the field:

“ Oh, Happy, oh, Happy,
We are singing,
Praises ringing;
We will never find your equal;
Oh, Happy, here's to you.”

Happy Jack grinned. She wasn't used to being sung to, and she looked so happy that I didn't have the heart to take her out before she had even started. If she was too bad, I could put Marion in her place, but that meant making a present of the game to the Hatchets, and it was better to wait for a while and see what happened.

Happy Jack could pitch; there was no doubt about that from the very first ball she hurled over the plate. And she was as cool as a cucumber, never the least bit rattled or disturbed, with a broad grin on her face even when, with bases full behind her, she faced Sally and the prospect of a three-bagger.

She held the three-bagger to a short grounder, fielded it herself, and tossed it to Jan at home, who slammed it to Scatter at first—a neat double play—and the next batter was out on a pop fly.

When the team came in from the field, there

was some explaining to be done, and some exhorting, too. Jan wasn't a bit pleased to be catching for a strange pitcher and made no secret of it. I talked to them all as best I could, pointing out the advantages of the change, and Scatter backed me up nobly. As for Happy Jack, she just beamed.

However, when the team took the field at the end of the sixth with one run made up on that four-run deficit, they were feeling better about the new pitcher, and I was beginning to get a new idea about loyalty.

Happy Jack certainly was a marvel—smiling, no matter how deep a hole she got into, pulling herself out by her shoe-strings and sheer grit, apparently confident of the team behind her though, after the way they had talked, it was hard to see why she should have been. And the team couldn't help but catch her spirit. Before the end of the seventh they were as keen as she was. Jan had stopped biting her lip, and Scatter was playing at first base like a big leaguer.

We began to make up for lost time. By the first of the ninth inning we had held the Hatchets to two more runs and made four our-

selves, and the score was: Hatchets 12, Raggeds 11.

“It’s now or never!” I said, as Koko stepped up to the plate.

“Ow!” It was a grounder to shortstop, and Koko was out at first. “Better luck next time.”

Mary came up next and got to first by dint of a good slide. She took second when Libby Hall sacrificed. And there we were, with two out, a girl on second, and Scatter up.

“Slam it, Scatter,” I implored her as she left me, her red hair gorgeous in the hot sunshine. A line of a poem popped into my head and turned itself around and around as she stood there by the plate, swinging her bat.

“‘A glory in the sunlight, seen afar and worshiped . . . A glory in the sunlight . . . A glory . . . a glory . . .’”

Where in the world had I heard that line before? Suddenly I remembered. It was the verse that the Opium-eater had said Sunday afternoon when we had thought he was a maniac.

“‘A glory in the sunlight . . .’ Oh, Scatter, go it! Run!”

Her bat had met the ball with a hard crack, and she beat the throw to first by several seconds. Mary landed safe on third, and Jan stepped up to the plate.

Else was pitching for the Hatchets, and I could tell by the way she turned her head from side to side that she was beginning to get nervous. She walked Jan. The bases were full, and Happy Jack was up.

She limped to the plate with Man o' War pacing along beside her, ready to run in her place if given the chance.

"Happy Jack!" I groaned. "Come on, now. You've got to do it. Oh, Jack!"

She settled herself calmly and swung her bat over the plate. It was a shame to see her splendid body so crooked and twisted as she stood there. But she was grinning happily, and, behind her, Man o' War's fine teeth showed white in her brown face as she waited to be set loose.

"They're taking it calmly enough," I said to Polly. "If only they can get a hit!"

"Calm" was the word for them. Still grinning, Happy Jack stood there, and Elsie put two strikes across before she moved her bat.

She fouled the next ball, and the next one was wide of the plate.

And then she swung! Pivoting on her good leg and swinging with all her force, she lined it out over left field, bringing in the three Raggeds on bases and landing Man o' War safe on third, her teeth showing in a broader grin than ever. The next girl up struck out miserably, and so it was up to us to hold our two-run lead through the last of the ninth if we were to earn the ten points that went with the winning of the game.

What a job for Happy Jack! Her first game, as well as her last, that year! But Happy wasn't the least bit sorry for herself. She worked like a well-trained hunting dog, with not a hurried motion, awkward but certain, slow but sure.

How stupid I had been at the first of the year when she had offered to play baseball for us and I had refused so abruptly! She was ten times the pitcher that I could ever hope to be, and I had kept her sitting on the sidelines the entire summer. And here she was, calmly saving the day for the Ragged team, while we had never even troubled ourselves

enough over her to find out what she was good for. Certainly I was learning a lot about loyalty that I hadn't thought of before.

The strain was almost over. The first Hatchet struck out. Marge got to first on a muffed fly. And then Happy Jack fell into a bit of trouble. Sally was up again, and this time she made a two-bagger.

"Glory!" I groaned. "If those two ever get around!"

But my anguish was wasted as far as Happy Jack was concerned. Slowly and deliberately, with perfect control, she struck out the next girl.

Hatchets on second and third, and two out, and then heavy-hitting Peggy Bartlett came up to bat.

Happy Jack grinned delightedly. Nothing could bother her.

Crack! Peggy's bat met the ball with a sickening, tearing sound. Marge came racing in from third, and up stretched Jack's arm. No rush, no hurry on her part, but, in the same motion with which she picked the ball from mid-air, she slammed it to Scatter.

Peggy was out, the game was over, and

Happy Jack had won for the Raggeds. Loyalty, after all those weeks of waiting!

As soon as the commotion had boiled down sufficiently, Scatter took what was left of Happy Jack firmly about the neck and started on the homeward road.

“Come on, every one,” she croaked, her voice hoarse from shouting.

“We’re all nutty nut, nut, nuts;
We’re all nutty nut, nut, nuts;
However it ends,
We’ll always be friends;
We’re all nutty nut, nut, nuts.”

CHAPTER XI

MINOR RACES

Thursday morning the Hatchets beat us at diving and war canoe, and Thursday afternoon we beat them at track by five points. There was only tennis ahead of us on Friday, and we Raggeds felt quite contented. The points we had won during the week were enough to offset the extra ones the Hatchets were sure to get in hiking and nature quests, and if Scatter won the tennis championship, we knew we had a splendid chance for the banner. So we went to bed on Thursday night serene in the thought that the morrow would find Scatter mistress of the tennis court and victory clinched for the Raggeds.

And that only shows that it doesn't pay to be too sure. The one thing that we hadn't counted on happened, and for once in her life Scatter was not popular with the weather man.

Friday morning arrived in torrents of rain, as if some malignant spirit had turned a giant

shower on us. Tennis was absolutely out of the question. Even if it cleared up at noon, the courts would be too wet for use in the afternoon, and so we moped about, as gloomy as the weather and just about as hard to get along with.

After craft work in the morning some of us gathered together in Shack Two, regardless of the fact that a gorgeous fire was blazing in the great fireplace at the Camp House and that an impromptu ping-pong doubles tournament was in full swing.

Oceans of rain poured onto the roof of the Shack and dripped off its eaves in a silvery sheet. It was that kind of a drear day when your other sneakers are as wet as the pair you have on and all your clothes feel damp.

We lolled on our beds and gloomed, all but Scatter, and she perched herself on the rafters above us and busied herself in writing an ode to Abey on one of the broad cross-beams. It can be seen there to this day if you have the curiosity to climb up and search for it.

“What rhymes with ‘ape’?” she inquired brightly, pausing in her work to chew her pencil and peer down at us.

“Crape,” grumbled Marge Woodward gloomily. “Hang some up there and come on down. What *is* the point?”

Scatter grinned and scribbled a last line to her ode. Then she descended to her cot with a mighty clash of bed-springs.

“I know what we’ll do,” she proclaimed loudly. “Marge needs cheering up, and this is the way we’ll do it. We’ll have minor races all up and down the Shack, and the one that doesn’t win will have to swim up to the store-room and ask Christine for ginger cookies for all the rest of us.”

Marge groaned heavily and rolled over on her stomach.

“Why ‘minor races’?” she inquired. Her voice was muffled from having her face buried in her arms.

“Why not?” answered Scatter profoundly, and then the fun began.

There were seven of us in the Shack that forenoon—Mary Martin, Polly Stevens, Peggy Bartlett, Happy Jack, Marge, Scatter, and I. Happy Jack retreated quietly into a corner.

“I’ll be referee,” she said, and I could see

that Scatter bit her lower lip in irritation at having proposed a pastime in which Happy Jack couldn't join. However, it was too late to draw back tactfully then, and she turned her attention to Marge, who was protesting vehemently that she was Janice Taylor's partner in the ping-pong tournament and had to leave us immediately. But we persuaded her to stay a while.

"Jan will let you know when she wants you," said Scatter. "She never suffers in silence for long."

So Marge consented to remain with us a little longer, and we ran in heats of three, and the winners raced the winners.

Our first race was a simple one. We started on Miss Palmer's bed at one end of the Shack and raced down the fairway at the foot of our beds to Miss MacLean's bed at the other end of the Shack. That was easy—just plain running—and naturally Scatter won her heat, and the race, too.

The next one was a trifle more difficult, for the course lay over the beds down the length of the shack. Marge had begun to see the point, or at any rate *a* point, by that time, and

she won that race triumphantly, all thoughts of ping-pong having apparently flown.

We went on planning more and better minor races until ideas failed us. Of course the Shack looked rather disheveled by that time. Beds and blankets were every which way, and one bed was flat on the floor, due to Polly's having landed her portly person upon it unnecessarily when she should have cleared it with a graceful bound.

We reclined heavily among the débris and planned the best and most complicated of all minor races to bring that morning of true indoor sport to a fitting close, for the time was getting on toward dinner and we craved ginger cookies. Scatter and Marge had the most minor races to their credit, Polly and I the fewest.

"Remember"—Marge always has to emphasize an unpleasant thought—"whichever of you two loses has to ask Christine for those cookies for the rest of us."

"We remember," we promised. "Don't worry." And Scatter proceeded to lay out the course.

"We'll all run it," she said, "just for the

fun, but of course it's most important for Frosty and Polly. It will be under and over those ten beds in the middle of the Shack, then back on top of the five that are end to end against the wall. Then we will climb up to the rafters and walk the length of the partition between the dressing-rooms and the sleeping-porch, each carrying a pitcher of water. The pitchers must be filled and in place before we start. Then we will sit on the last rafter, fill a cup from the pitcher, and drink it without spilling a drop. Then we will descend gracefully to Miss MacLean's bed and race back down the fairway to Miss Palmer's bed. How's that?" she asked, swelling with pardonable pride at her inventiveness in the art of minor racing.

"How are you going to race on the partition?" inquired Happy Jack from her sheltered corner. "It's only six inches wide, and there's not room to pass any one on it."

"Oh, that!" said Scatter lightly, and I could tell by her tone that that particular problem had not occurred to her before. "Oh, that's easy. By the time we get to the partition, one person will be bound to be ahead, and she will

have the right of way and may climb up and seize the first pitcher in line. If any one can catch up with any one else while she is crossing the partition and can touch her from behind, they are the same thing as passed and must drop out of the race. Is that clear? ”

We all said it was, and we drew lots for the first heat, which proved to be between Marge and Mary and me. Scatter lined us up on the ledge beside Miss Palmer's bed. I felt slightly troubled at the introduction of water into the game, for as a rule, when that appears, a good old-fashioned rough-house generally follows, and, as Captain, I was responsible for the condition in which the Shack was left that noon. On the other hand, I was one of the heavy losers whose duty would lead to Christine, so I honestly couldn't question the race. It would have sounded mighty bad.

So I salved my conscience with the thought that I really wasn't on duty in the Shack at the time. In fact, I might just as well have been up at the Camp House playing ping-pong, and if that had been the case, probably no one else would have given a thought to throwing water all over the place.

Therefore I climbed up on the ledge with Marge and Mary, and at Scatter's word of command I went leaping off down the Shack with them. The course was over Miss Palmer's bed, under the next one, over the third one, and so on. In one place some one had stood an extra bed on top of another bed, and that wasn't so easy to climb without breaking your neck. We kept very even until we came to that. Then Mary caught her bloomers on a corner of the bed and came apart with an agonized r-r-rip. She kept running, however, with a long tatter trailing behind her, but it caused her to lose ground considerably.

"Come on, there, Frosty! I'm betting on you!" Scatter had climbed to one of the rafters and was cheering us on furiously.

Marge and I scrambled and leaped and bumped our knees, neck and neck, but I beat her in the bounding run along the five beds placed end to end and touched the wall of the partition first. Marge was close behind me, and Mary a near third.

I climbed to the top of the partition, picked up my pitcher, and started to edge along the six-inch beam between the sleeping-porch and

the dressing-rooms. What a job! I'm no good at balancing acts, and I had to keep stopping to waver back and forth, clutching my pitcher with one hand in a grip of death, flourishing the other like a windmill wing. I was an easy victim for Marge, who advanced upon me with little swift, gliding steps and beat me on the shoulder with her free hand.

"Oh, Frosty, how could you?" mourned Scatter. "And you had such a splendid lead!"

But I didn't care, and I descended thankfully to terra firma with a mighty splash of water from my pitcher. As far as I was concerned, I would fetch ginger cookies five times a week rather than walk that partition once. To me, it was one of the lowest forms of indoor sport, and I was glad to be safely off the beam.

Marge won that heat, and Scatter won the next one, with Polly coming in last again.

"Never mind, Frosty," she grinned. "We'll go for ginger cookies together. Come on."

"Wait a minute." Scatter held us back. "Marge and I have to race this off and see who is winner for the morning. And you must

ask Christine for an extra fine prize for whichever one of us wins.”

Scatter and Marge cleared the ten beds in good time and came thundering down the long five against the wall, with Scatter in the lead by a good margin. She reached the partition first, flew up it with a rush, grabbed her pitcher, and started to edge along. But here Marge began to cut down the lead, slipping along with uncanny speed on that narrow beam with those insidious little gliding side-steps of hers.

It was exciting, and I was beginning to hold my breath when Happy Jack, who was standing in the corner nearest the Camp House, said suddenly, “Here comes Janice Taylor down the path, Marge.”

“Let her come,” muttered Marge, “and tell her I’ll be ready in a minute.”

I don’t know why it is that rainy days so often produce rough-houses, but they do, and this one was no exception to the rule, although I still think that all would have been well and Scatter would have won the race and descended graciously to do no more damage to herself than to dull her appetite for dinner with ginger

cookies, if Jan hadn't burst upon the scene at just this wrong moment.

She came splashing down the path with her rain-coat thrown over her head, just spluttering firecrackers at Marge.

"Marge Woodward, where are you? Have you gone to sleep in the Shack? You said you were coming right back to play ping-pong with me, and every one in Camp is waiting for us to take our turn, and . . ."

Scatter was nearing the far end of the partition, Marge was gliding up on her like a serpent, and I couldn't take my eyes off them. Neither could Polly or Mary or Peggy or Happy Jack.

I forgot that I was dealing with the uncertain-tempered Janice, and I tried to make her keep quiet.

"Hush," I said sharply, my attention riveted aloft. "You'll ruin this race."

"I'll not hush. I want Marge," glowered Jan, and she disappeared around the corner of the Shack.

"Let her go" was all the notice I paid her, for Scatter had arrived at the far rafter over Miss MacLean's bed and was carefully filling

her enamel cup from the pitcher in her hand. With a last long glide Marge came beside her and began to do likewise.

And it was at that breath-taking moment that Jan slammed open the screened door of Loon Attic and came bursting out onto the sleeping-porch.

It was too much for Scatter's balance. She gave a lurch, dropped pitcher and cup to save herself from falling, and of course, as luck would have it, splattered Jan plentifully in her face as she appeared on the scene of action.

Scatter uttered a horrified gasp and leaped lightly to her own bed, and I could tell by the light in her eye that she was about to apologize and be polite. But she reckoned without Jan, whose temper is uncertain at the most favorable of times. The douse of cold water must have made her lose it completely, I guess, for she picked up the nearest pitcher of water that we had left on the floor after the last race and hurled it at Scatter. And with it she hurled the unmentionable, the unforgivable—"Red-head!"

The whole pitcherful of water caught Scatter in her chest just as she landed on the bed.

For a moment I was afraid she was going to fly at Jan like an infuriated terrier. I could hear her breath catch as if some one had hit her in the middle, and her face went just as white as a sheet.

Then, with an awful war whoop, she bent low and darted under Jan's upraised arm into the sacred precincts of the Counsellors' room.

"Why use water when there's ink?" she roared, and almost immediately she reappeared on top of the partition, holding the large and impressive bottle of ink with which the Management kindly furnishes all Counsellors' rooms.

Janice gave one horrified look at Scatter and dove under the nearest bed.

Scat had chosen a strategic position, for she commanded both sides of the partition. Dressing-rooms and sleeping-porch were alike to her, and Jan knew her well enough to be sure that she would not stop at ink or anything else when her face had that white set look on it and her hair flamed red as a beacon light.

In the meantime our Marge had carefully filled her mug and drained it dry. Then she descended slowly from the rafter, strolled



I WAS AFRAID SHE WAS GOING TO FLY AT JAN.--Page 230

down the shack to Miss Palmer's bed, and announced in dulcet tones, "I won that minor race, Scatter. And I'm quite ready for ping-pong whenever you are, Janice."

Scatter tossed a threatening look in her general direction and raised the ink bottle menacingly.

Marge chuckled banefully, and then she set briskly to work to clean up the Shack.

I will say one thing for Marge: she is a tidy girl, and a decided asset as a roommate for two who aren't as tidy as they might be. The rest of us began to help her in a half-hearted sort of way. All thought of ginger cookies and prizes had flown from our heads, and we watched the drama at the end of the Shack with that helpless feeling of uncertainty one has when events get beyond control. And I, for one, was apprehensive.

Of course the whole affair had started as nothing but a joke, but it was ending badly and I was worried. If Jan should be foolish enough to force the issue and Scatter really did throw that ink bottle, she might well be kept off the tennis court the next day, and I simply couldn't cope with that thought.

Things had reached an impasse, and Happy Jack limped bravely to the rescue.

“Pax, Scatter,” she said quietly. “Jan didn’t understand when she rushed in like that. Come on down with that ink bottle and go and put on dry clothes.”

“I’ll not,” answered Scatter firmly. “I’ll not put it down until she apologizes. And if she tries to come out without apologizing, I’ll hurl it at her, and see if I care! I didn’t mean to throw water at her and I am not red-headed, and I came down to tell her how sorry I was that the pitcher slipped. She had no business to deliberately drown me like that. It was a mean thing to do, and I’ll sit here all night, if I have to, until she says she’s sorry.”

“I’ll crawl out when it gets dark.” Jan’s voice came muffled from under the bed.

“I will hear you,” answered Scatter quickly, “and I’ll throw ink all over you and that bed.”

Scatter knew that she had the upper hand, and a note of awful glee was strong in her voice.

Happy Jack looked puzzled and said nothing. The rest of us continued to clear up the Shack until it really looked almost neat again.

In fact, one would not think for a moment that it had been the recent scene of minor races.

Scatter fondled the ink bottle lovingly. She took out its cork and peered into its depths with a purr of satisfaction.

“Yes, Janice Taylor,” she remarked conversationally, “this Camp is coming to a sad end when one of its law-abiding citizens can’t sit quietly upon a rafter of a rainy morning and take an innocent drink without being brutally assaulted with a pitcher of water, just because in her perturbation the poor girl let fall a few drops of moisture on the enraged visage of her assailant.”

Jan snorted disdainfully, but Happy Jack laughed and so did the rest of us.

The Shack was all neat and tidy at last, and I edged up to the scene of the conflict.

“Oh, come on, Jan,” I said. “Tell Scatter that you are sorry. Be a good sport. It would be awful if the Management thought that Scatter was in trouble again and were to rule her out of tennis to-morrow. Once a week is enough.”

“Don’t be so humble, Frosty,” protested

Scatter from aloft, but I didn't pay any attention to her.

"She started it," grumbled the prostrate Janice. "I just came down here to get Marge, and she hurled water at me. But it would be awful for the Raggeds if she couldn't play tennis, so I'll come out and say nothing more about it."

Thereupon she stuck her head out from under the bed, turtle-wise, and proceeded to scramble out after it, only to retreat into her lair again with great and unseemly haste, for Scatter raised the ink bottle aloft, its cork withdrawn and fiery menace in her eyes.

"Stay there!" she warned her abject victim. "There is something for you to say before you can emerge, Janice Taylor."

"Oh, I'm sorry I soaked you, Scatter, and your hair isn't red at all. It's as inky black as a raven's wing." Jan was laughing now. She flies into tantrums with ease, but she flies out again just as easily.

Scatter dropped off the rafter and put the ink back into the Counsellors' room, and at that moment young Charlotte Hunter came scuttling breathlessly down the sippy path.

“Frosty!” she panted urgently. “Mother Panther wants you and Scatter to come to the office right away.”

My heart skipped two beats and I gasped out loud. How could she have heard about the fracas as soon as this?

“Better change your clothes, Scatter, before you catch your death of cold,” Happy Jack called after us, as we trailed gloomily through Loon Attic and out to the porch. Scatter’s only answer was to take a heavy blue sweater from a hook in passing and haul it on over her head, and we betook ourselves toward the office with slow footsteps and a becomingly somber demeanor.

Fear of every sort of penalty, from loss of swimming privileges to solitary confinement in the infirmary, was in our minds. Of course, minor races and a trifling misunderstanding with Janice Taylor are not really criminal acts, and Scatter didn’t really throw the ink, and the Shack was all tidy again. Yet you never can tell what is going to happen next, and this call to the bar of justice followed too closely on the heels of the events in the Shack to be comfortable.

We found Mother Panther alone and enthroned in state at her desk. She was writing a letter.

“Sit down, girls.” Her tone was absent and distraught. “I must finish this letter before dinner.”

We sat drearily upon the little bench and watched her bent head and busy hand, wondering what horrid fate awaited us when the letter was complete.

“Now, girls.” She turned to us at last. There was something of vast importance on her mind; that was plain.

“You’ve been Campers here with us for three years?”

“Yes, Mother Panther,” we said bravely. It was clear that she was leading up to our duty as old Campers and dependable girls. Scatter humped her back gloomily, and I gazed at my hands. The blow was about to fall. Might it be merciful and swift!

“And what are your plans for another summer?” Mother Panther pursued her subject with calm, but I was puzzled, for I failed to see just where that particular question led her.

“Why . . . I . . . we don’t know. I . . . we hadn’t thought that far ahead.” I answered for both of us. “Our families think that we are too old to come back to Camp again.”

“Well, dearies”—Mother Panther bent a piercing eye upon our abject persons—“the Management has had a conference . . .” If it were as bad as all that, we were certainly doomed. We cowered lower before the majesty of law and order, and Mother Panther went on.

“. . . And we have decided to ask you two girls to return next year as Junior Counsellors to help Miss Palmer with water sports and Miss MacLean with tennis.”

The shock was too great! We were stricken dumb with amazement and relief. Mother Panther smiled kindly on us.

“Wouldn’t you like to be Counsellors, you two?” she asked cordially, and we nodded our heads in unison.

“Only . . .” I said. “Only . . .”

“Only what?” Mother Panther was curious.

“I’d like to be a Counsellor next year if the

Raggeds win to-morrow. If they don't, I am going to try to persuade my family to let me come back as a Camper to have another try for the banner."

"Me, too," said Scatter, and Mother Panther saw our point.

"Very well, dearies," she said. "You needn't make up your minds until to-morrow night when the banner is given out. But if the Raggeds win, I know that you will accept?"

We nodded our heads again, and Mother Panther changed the subject.

"We have just had a Council meeting," she said, which explained why no Counsellor had looked in at our recent minor racing. "And we think it would be nice to have our annual masquerade dance to-night instead of next week, as usual. You girls are disappointed over the postponement of the tennis matches, I know, and it would keep you busy all afternoon getting ready for the party."

"Oh, Mother Panther," gloated Scatter, "that's a gorgeous idea. We haven't had a party for ages, and I am just dying to dance. Frosty and I will go together as the Owl and the Pussycat, and we'll get one of the canoes

for the Pea-green Boat, and we'll make Marge and Koko go as the Piggywig and the Turkey who lived on the Hill. It will be more fun . . .”

Mother Panther interrupted Scatter's raptures with a smile.

“We have another plan for the Captains, dearie,” she said. “We want them to go together and lead the Grand March. You two won't mind being separated this once, will you?”

My face fell dolefully, for Scatter and I always went to parties together, but Scatter merely looked thoughtful and began to pull her forelock with vigor.

“No, we don't mind a bit,” she assured Mother Panther. “In fact, I rather think that I have other plans myself for to-night.” And with no further explanation she bolted from the office and was seen no more until dinner time.

CHAPTER XII

CATERPILLARS

It stopped raining after rest hour, and Happy Jack, Scatter, Marge, Koko, Man o' War, and I betook ourselves out on the lake for an hour's relaxation in Tin Tub before completing our arrangements for the party. Man o' War had long wanted to try her hand at fishing, and, this being a cloudy afternoon, it seemed as if the right moment had come.

"Caterpillars," remarked Scatter severely to her young protégée, as we drifted about in the neighborhood of Nirvana, "*ought* to make better bait than earthworms."

"But," replied Man o' War mildly, "I like worms better. They're smoother."

Scatter pulled a pond lily into the boat and sniffed it loudly.

"Who is going with whom to the masquerade to-night?" she inquired brightly. I was glad that she had brought up this subject, for

I knew that she had an idea and I wondered what it was.

“Koko and I are going together,” said Marge, “but we won’t tell what as.”

“I’m going with Elsie,” mumbled Man o’ War from over her fish-line.

Happy Jack remained silent, for dancing parties were not for her. Scatter finished the roll-call:

“And Frosty is taking Sally, and my partner is Happy Jack.”

Happy Jack looked at her for a moment with her mouth wide open. Then she flushed resentfully.

“I don’t know what you mean by that, Scatter,” she said. “I can’t dance, and you know it. Don’t try to be nice to me. I don’t like it.”

Scatter grinned impishly and tugged at her forelock.

“I don’t know how to be nice,” she said, “and imagine wanting to dance.”

I looked at her as if she were bereft of her wits, for only a short time before she could hardly wait for the dance to begin and now she had changed her mind completely.

“ Same old costumes from the costume box,” she grumbled. “ Same girls we’ve played with all summer, dressed like sailors in pajama trousers and white hats. Just one horrible sameness, but you and I are going to be different, Happy. I promise you that.”

Happy Jack looked perplexed. Apparently she was not able to decide whether Scatter was fooling or not. But Koko laughed. She was lying prone in the stern of the boat, watching her reflection float along beneath her. She laughed again, finding the effect distorting and pleasing.

“ What’s the matter, Koko? Seasick?” drawled Marge, hoping for the worst as usual.

“ No, I’m not seasick.” Koko’s voice came muffled from over the side. “ I’m wondering if Scatter would feel better about the masquerade if there were real sailors there to dance with. Commander Pond, for instance.”

Man o’ War gave a surprised chuckle and looked around from her fishing with the air of a startled fawn.

“ What’s the matter, child?” asked Scatter.

“ His sister went . . . Ooh . . .” She broke off in the middle of her sentence and

hauled in her line. She was rewarded with the prize of a baby perch, a dismal, flapping young thing, over which she yearned with loving pride.

“That fish is not grown up yet,” declared Scatter. “Give it back to its mother and tell us what you know about Commander Pond.”

Man o’ War parted with her perch reluctantly and threaded another worm on her hook.

“Oh-h-h, Commander Pond . . .” she said. “His sister went to Rockland to see him this afternoon. She told me about it this morning when we were in the tank house, printing some pictures. We got a nice one of you in Tin Tub, Scatter,” she added conversationally. She was obviously not impressed with the importance of her news.

But Scatter thrust this remark brusquely aside. Turning on her seat, she eyed Man o’ War with a piercing gaze.

“Put that worm down and explain yourself,” she said. “Is Commander Pond really in Rockland? Is he coming over here?”

Man o’ War swallowed meekly and obeyed her mentor.

“His ship came into Rockland yesterday, and Miss Pond and Miss Hunt went to tea on board with him to-day. I don’t know whether he is going to come here or not. She didn’t say.”

There was deep and poignant silence in Tin Tub while we pondered on the tantalizing nearness of the hero of the nation, and Scatter pulled at her forelock until it all but broke loose from her scalp.

“Well, anyhow,” she declared finally, “you simply have to be my partner at the dance to-night, Happy Jack. I don’t intend to dance, and I need cheering up.”

Happy Jack started to speak, but Marge interrupted her.

“Don’t be stupid,” she said. “Imagine going to any party that Mother Panther is running, and not dancing. We’ll all have to dance to-night, regardless, and Happy Jack, too, probably.”

“I wish that you would all stop talking like that,” protested Happy Jack bitterly. It was the first time all summer that I had seen that old resentful manner that she had first worn when she came to our school, and I didn’t like

it. "You're just trying to be nice to me, Sarah Atwell, and I just . . . can't . . . s-stand t-that." Tears were perilously near the surface, but Scatter didn't let that ruffle her.

"I'm not being nice, honestly I'm not," she assured Happy with a grin. "I merely have a marvelous idea, and you have to do it with me because Frosty has gone and gotten herself another partner and I can't do it alone. Listen, we're going to have a contest, you and Marge and Koko and I, and whichever couple wins will have for a prize the other couple's second helps of ice-cream on Sunday. And the contest is this: to see which of us can go to the party to-night and stay there all evening without dancing once and without being recognized. Come on, Marge. It will be loads more fun than dancing."

But Marge was tactlessly blind to Scatter's noble effort to draw Happy Jack into the party, and she refused to be stampeded.

"If you're at the party, you'll have to dance, whether you're recognized or not. That's what the party is for," she protested. "So what is the point?"

“That’s just what I say,” broke in Happy Jack. “What is the point? I still think that you’re trying to be nice to me, Scatter, and I thank you very much, but I still don’t like it.”

“Oh, Happy, don’t be so tiresome,” argued Scatter. “Can’t you see that this will be loads more fun than dancing? I won’t tell you aloud because I don’t want the others to hear, but come here.” She pulled Happy to her and began to whisper in her ear, and little by little Happy’s face lost that haunted, sullen look and regained its usual beaming expression, and at the same moment Koko suddenly understood what Scatter was trying to do.

“Come on, Marge,” she cried. “Let’s beat them at their own game and have extra seconds of ice-cream on Sunday. I have a marvelous idea for a costume. No one will ever recognize us, and I’m positive that we can’t dance.”

Marge remained uncertain but was willing to be shown, and Scatter was in a fever heat.

“Reel up your line, Man o’ War,” she commanded. “Happy Jack and I have to go home and get busy if we are going to be ready for the party in time. And now, every one promise by every moon and yonder star not

to tell anybody about this contest until the masquerade is over. We don't want our plans interfered with."

"Let me tell Sally," I begged. "As long as she is going to be my partner, it would be fun for her to know about it, too."

"Very well, tell Sally if you want, and you and she can judge which couple is the winner," replied Scatter with a gay laugh which quite concealed any lurking disappointment she may have been feeling at foregoing an evening of dancing for Happy's sake.

When we came ashore in Tin Tub, Mother Panther was waiting for me, with Sally by her side. Mother Panther is an enthusiast, and she does get up the most marvelous parties in the world.

"Now, dearie," she said, as she seized upon me, "you and Sally are going to surprise every one to-night by going to the party in the most appropriate costumes. I'm going to dress you myself, so come along. Don't you think it would be fun if you went as Hatchet and Ragged Mountains?"

"No, Mother Panther," said I politely.

"No, ma'am," said Sally.

Mother Panther laughed just as pleasantly as if we had accepted the invitation to be mountains, and from that moment on I was too busy and unhappy to give Scatter and Happy Jack more than passing consideration. Of course it wasn't easy to make two medium-sized girls look like mountains, and the result was mostly symbolic, red rags for me and green paper hatchets for Sally. Her costume was prettier than mine, but that didn't bother me much then.

I told Sally about the contest that was going on between my two roommates and their partners, and as we led the Grand March about the Camp House, we watched for outlandish characters that might be expected not to dance. Immediately behind us were two ghoulish figures clad in bandages from head to foot. The Doctor must have spent a busy hour or so making them up. They were not recognizable, but they were well able to dance.

Behind them were two Hawaiian maidens with hay aprons gathered from the field next to the baseball diamond, and behind them was the usual array of sailors, Gold Dust Twins, and farmers with their wives. Every one

looked not only able, but eager, to dance, and Sally and I began to be excited about our friends.

It was not until we had marched all the way around the room and had come back to the entrance again that we saw anything that looked unable to dance in a normal way. They were the last couple in line, and as soon as we saw them, Sally and I poked each other.

“There is one pair of them,” I whispered. “See that couple in the barrel.”

We couldn't tell which pair they were, but they surely were a laughable sight. They were inserted into an enormous barrel, which they held in place with their finger-tips. They had pulled down over their faces bathing-caps in which eye holes had been cut, and bathing-suits were their other garments besides the barrel.

“That is probably Scatter,” laughed Sally, as they stumbled awkwardly along, one behind the other.

“Well, maybe,” I answered, “but if it is, where in the world are Marge and Koko? That's the last couple in line. Does either of the barrel twins limp?”

But the barrel twins were not the last couple

in line. They marched past us, and we started along after them and almost fell headlong over the pair that *was* last in line, for from the shadow of the writing-table there emerged at our feet a most remarkable spectacle. Two enormous caterpillars, such as are common in the woods in summer, crawled laboriously out and added themselves to the tail of the procession behind the barrel twins.

One of them was grey with tufts of rock lichen all over its body and with great red and black eyes on its head. The other was green with yellow eyes, tufts of white pine for eyebrows, and little feelers of ground-pine growing out of its mouth. In profound silence and amid the cheers of the multitude, they wormed their difficult way across the floor and lay inert upon the ground in a corner by the stage, helpless in the long cambric bags from which their costumes were formed.

“That’s Scatter!” I gurgled to Sally, as soon as I could speak plainly for laughing.

“I don’t know.” Sally disagreed with me. “Somehow, I think that Scatter would be more apt to take to a barrel. Anyway, those caterpillars will never be able to dance unless

they get undressed first, and no one will recognize them, either.”

That was true; the caterpillars certainly couldn't dance, but the barrel twins didn't get off so easily. After Mother Panther had the party in full swing, she considered their problem, and, before you could say “Jack Robinson,” she had turned one of them around so that she faced her partner, and off they had to dance, barrel and all. Yet the barrel so cramped their style as they walked about in time to the music that we could not tell whether or not either of them limped.

One couple had won the contest as far as dancing was concerned, but so far it was impossible to tell which pair it was.

We danced and we danced, and at last Mother Panther stepped to the middle of the floor and made an announcement.

“Every one follow me to the beach,” she said. “The moon has come out and it's a lovely night. Don't unmask until you get there. We are going to have a surprise.”

So we all trudged off down the path, stumbling over the rocks and hoping the surprise was eats.

“What are those caterpillars going to do?” Sally inquired, when we were almost there. “They will have to unmask before they can come this far.”

“Watch for them,” I answered. “They mustn’t be recognized before the unmasking.”

When we got to the beach, we found a fire burning, and we made a circle around it and guessed the identity of the different masked figures. The barrel twins were Marge and Koko, after all, and they climbed out of their barrel with whoops of relief, and we all helped ourselves to ginger cookies and lemon ice, which appeared as the surprise. There were also stacks of marshmallows to toast over the fire, a present from the Management.

“This is a good party,” I said to Sally. “I’m going up to get Scatter and Happy Jack. It’s a shame for them to miss all this.”

“They’ve won the contest, though,” laughed Sally. “They’ll have plenty of ice-cream on Sunday.”

“That’s right,” I answered, as I started up the path to rescue my stranded roommate. But I hadn’t gotten beyond the circle of fire-light before I discovered my errand of mercy

to be totally unnecessary, for coming toward me from the darkness was a most amazing trio—Scatter and Happy Jack, clad in immaculate Camp uniform, one on either side of an imposing naval officer, gleaming in his white summer suit.

Mindful of my own unpleasing tattered appearance, I shrank back into the mob around the fire, and Scatter politely led her captive up to Mother Panther and introduced him in her best manner.

“Mrs. Newell, may I present Commander Pond?”

Commander Pond himself! Before Scatter could think of introducing her roommates to the hero, I had to get away, and I wasn't the only person with that idea, for, as I fled up the path to Loon Attic, bitter at the fate that had sent me to the party clad in such unseemly attire, I saw two shadowy forms in bathingsuits racing along ahead of me. Marge and Koko were also betaking themselves and their costumes far from the bright light of the fire.

It wasn't long before Tattoo sounded, calling all Panthers to bed, and before Taps we heard the whole story from Scatter as she sat

cross-legged on her trunk, twisting her forelock on her finger.

“When you people ran off and left us,” she chuckled, “we couldn’t decide whether to stay in the caterpillar costumes or follow you to the beach. While we were arguing, we heard a car outside the Camp House, and the next thing we knew, the door by the stage opened with a bang and some one stumbled headlong over us—it was dark in that corner—and went full length on the floor. He had a nice voice, in spite of what he was saying, and we began to laugh. We couldn’t see him, of course, but he must have had a shock when he saw what was laughing at him on the floor. Miss Pond and Miss Hunt were with him, and I told them if they would rip us around the edges, we would emerge and be polite. Of course we knew by then who he was, and we were both simply thrilled to a crisp.

“Well, he started to rip us with his own knife, and we began to come out, but I suddenly remembered that, between water fights and minor races and crawling about on the floor in those thin bags, we must be terribly dirty . . .”

Scatter paused for breath, and Koko shivered with excitement.

“What on earth did you do?” she begged nervously.

“Well,” Scatter resumed, hugging her knees in the ecstasy of her recollections, “we said we would come right back, and we rolled off into the kitchen, crawled out of our skins, and ran for the Shack and clean clothes. And when we came back, Miss Pond introduced us properly and told us we could escort the hero down to the beach and refreshments.”

She paused again, grinning tantalizingly. Then she went on, once more almost incoherent with excitement.

“But listen to the best of all. Do you remember what I told you about caterpillars when we were in Tin Tub this afternoon? Well, these two caterpillars have caught an invitation to tea on Commander Pond’s ship next week, and Mother Panther says that we may go and she will chaperon us herself. Oh, Frosty, it’s just too good to be true!”

Marge and I looked drear and most unbelieving. Scatter laughed and ended her story with a last triumphant twirl of her forelock.

“The best is saved until last,” she said. “I told him I had two roommates and a Koko friend, and he said, ‘Very well, Caterpillars, ask them to come too, and we will show you all over the ship!’”

Taps sent us all rushing off to bed, and we settled down to a night of beatific dreams with no gloomy forebodings of the blight that would fall on us in the morning.

CHAPTER XIII

TOURNAMENT

The next day found Scatter in trouble. The morning dawned clear and fair, but not Scatter. If you remember, she had not changed her wet jumper the day before, and when she woke up on Saturday morning, she had probably the world's worst cold in her chest.

Marge and I gazed upon her with horror when she stumbled into Loon Attic after Reveille. She couldn't speak above a whisper, and she looked extremely ill.

"Oh, Scatter," I moaned, "you have gone and done it this time," and I sat heavily upon my trunk with all hope fled.

Of course I don't want you to think that I wasn't sorry for Scatter, for I was—awfully sorry that she felt so sick. But it was so unnecessary. I don't mind holding people's hands if they become sick all unbeknownst to themselves and their friends—a good sprained

ankle or a severed artery, for instance. But there was no need for Scatter to have got herself into this unpleasing state, and she knew it and so did I.

Of course I should have forcibly changed her into a dry jumper myself, but —— Oh, well, what's the use! I didn't, and Scatter was a total wreck with a hollow cough and a snuffly nose, and it would be a matter of minutes only before she was haled away to the infirmary and packed into bed without a chance of getting anywhere near a tennis court before the first of the next week.

I groaned aloud in the anguish of my racking thoughts.

"Dever bi'd, Frosty," Scattered snuffled hoarsely. "I'b goi'g to play teddis just the sabe. I'll bake the grade all right."

"You won't get a chance to play tennis today," I replied hopelessly. "Don't you realize that the Doctor will put you in the infirmary the instant she lays eyes on you? You're in no state of health to be at large, anyhow, my girl."

Scatter blew her nose violently.

"The Doctor was called to Rockla'd last

dight and is dot expected back udtill this evedi'g, and dobody else will dotice be if I ab careful dot to talk."

I had forgotten about the Doctor, but even if she was away, it didn't help any.

"You can't play a tournament match with a cold like that, Scat," I said to her firmly. "You'd get pneumonia and die, probably. And if you try it, I will tell Mother Panther. She can put you in the infirmary just as well as the Doctor can."

Scatter was half-dressed, but she dropped her jumper on the floor and came over to me. Marge, for once in her life, showed some tact and melted out of Loon Attic with a mutter about our mislaid water pitcher.

"Look here, Frosty." Scatter grabbed me by the arm, and I could see that she was all excited and very angry. "If you ever play such a bead, low-dowd trick od be, I'll dever speak to you agaid as lo'g as I live. I'b goi'g to play teddis to-day if it's the last thi'g I do id this world. A'd you a'd the Doctor a'd Bother Padther a'd all the rest of the Cabp cad't stop be. A'd if you dod't like that, you dow what you cad do."

“All right,” I grumbled, somewhat abashed. “Have your own way and see if I care.”

And so we left it at that, and I felt perfectly miserable all morning—worried about Scatter and worried about the tennis match. For even if Scatter bluffed her way onto the court, and there was a mighty good chance that she wouldn't be able to do that, I was very doubtful about the brand of tennis that she would play. You know how it is when you have a bad cold, and your head is as big as a balloon and as unsteady as a whirligig, and your throat aches, and you can't get a deep breath. You don't feel like playing tennis or cribbage or anything else. Bed is the place for you, and that is where Scatter should have been but wasn't.

Anyhow, she did get a good long sleep during rest hour, although she tossed and turned feverishly and coughed hard. I lay wide awake and watched her, wondering what ought to be done about her and knowing that I would probably be just as stubborn as she if I were in her place. Peggy Bartlett had an eye on her, too, and after rest hour she poked her head into Loon Attic and spoke to me.

“Honestly, Frosty, Scatter ought not to play tennis to-day,” she said.

And I shook my head.

“I know it, Peggy,” I answered, “but what can I do about it? The Doctor is away, none of the Counsellors nor Mother Panther has noticed that she is sick because she has kept out of their way all morning, and the girl is determined to play. I can’t stop her, and neither can you nor any one else. And after all, if she doesn’t play, it literally means handing the banner to you Hatchets, for there isn’t a chance of winning it if we lose this match to-day.”

Peggy nodded solemnly.

“I know,” she said slowly, “but Scatter does look sick to me.”

Scatter herself came stumbling into Loon Attic at that moment, and Peggy rapidly effaced herself.

“Calamity Jane!” barked Scat crossly. “I could hear what she was saying. I’m just as able to play tennis as I ever was. I feel fine, honestly I do.”

“You don’t look fine,” remarked Marge with quite unnecessary truthfulness, as she tied

her green Hatchet tie with a jerk. "You look mighty ill to me."

"Keep quiet!" I told her fiercely. "Have you no sense at all?" And Marge stalked forth in high dudgeon to join her Hatchet playmates, banging the screen door lustily behind her in true Panther fashion.

Scatter stood up and tried to grin, but it wasn't such a good grin, at that.

"Honestly, Frosty, I feel better," she lied triumphantly. "I think I must have slept that cold all off during rest hour."

I was sorry for her, she felt so ill, but there didn't seem to be anything that I could do about it.

"That's good," I answered her, laughing jovially and wishing to weep. "Tie up your old Invincible, my girl, and go beat the Hatchets into the middle of next week."

And so, for the last time, we fell into line with the Raggeds and marched out to the tennis courts. And, for the last time, we stood opposite the Hatchets, and they sang to us and we sang to them. And the crickets chirped dryly in the grass by the edge of the courts, and the goldenrod and asters spoke sadly of

the summer all but gone. And I looked at the Counsellors all wearing blue ties and felt sorry for them because they were neither Raggeds nor Hatchets any more.

After all the proper songs were sung, we sat down quietly on the wire at the back of the courts to watch the unimportant matches that came before the real match of the afternoon—that between Scatter and Sally Robbins, which, being the best, was saved until the last. Scatter sat hunched up beside me on the wire, and I could feel that she was shivering in the hot sunshine.

“Cold?” I asked her curiously. “Want a sweater?”

She shook her head.

“No, I’m boiling hot,” she answered. “I wish they’d hurry and get these matches over. I want to begin.”

Well, they were over finally—a couple of doubles and a singles that brought us Raggeds five more points. Every little helps, and we felt as if that were a pretty good omen as Scatter stepped onto the court and began to rally with Sally.

Koko and Abey had just won their singles

match, and they sat down on the spot that Scatter had vacated beside me. Happy Jack was on the other side of me, her strong brown hands clenched on her bare knees, her face a mask of excitement.

“I’ve been adding averages, Frosty,” she said to me. “I’ve got hold of every record that I could find, and if my figures are the same as the Counsellors’, we stand a good chance for the banner. The only figures I couldn’t get were the ones for the swimming classes. Miss Palmer hasn’t marked them yet, but I know that if we have as many as five girls in Class A and if Scatter wins this match, we’ll pull through on top.”

I kept my eye on Scatter, who was rallying languidly and wasn’t trying for anything beyond her reach.

“How many Raggeds do you think we have in Class A?” I asked Happy Jack.

“Miss Palmer doesn’t know yet,” she answered. “Of course you were there already, and so were Scatter and Jan. But the rest of us that have been working on it this week she hasn’t finished marking yet. Seems as if two of us must have made it, though.”

“Seems as if two of you might have made it earlier in the summer and saved us the worry,” I answered unkindly. Scatter had made a half-try at a lob and let it go by her, untouched.

Happy Jack flushed uncomfortably.

“We tried as hard as we could, Frosty, but some of it isn’t easy.”

Of course it isn’t easy. It took me two summers to get into Class A myself, and I have two good legs. It seemed as if all I ever did to Happy Jack was hurt her.

“Sorry, Jack,” I said contritely. “I didn’t mean to be unreasonable, but I’m worried over Scatter. She has such a bad cold, I can’t see how she is ever going to last this set, not to mention the match.”

“I wish there were something I might do to help,” Jack spoke a bit wistfully.

“Oh, you did your bit in baseball,” I told her. “There’s nothing any of us can do now but hold our thumbs and cheer for her for all we’re worth.”

The match was to be the best two sets out of three, and the players were to change courts every odd game. Miss MacLean was referee-

ing, perched high on the ladder between the courts.

“Ready?” she called at last.

“Ready here,” answered Sally.

“Right,” snuffled Scatter, and the match was on.

Scatter’s back was to us, and she had the first service.

“That’s good,” quoth I to Koko and Happy. “If she can only hold her service, she’ll walk away with the set.”

“Play?” rasped Scatter hoarsely.

“Play!” replied Sally.

Scatter’s first service cut the corner for an ace.

“Fifteen-love,” remarked Miss MacLean from the tower.

It was a good beginning, and it looked as if all our worries and fears about Scatter were a false alarm. We were rather perturbed to have her lose the second point, but her old-time service was as good as ever, and she took the first game at fifteen.

“The score stands one game to love, Raggeds leading!” Miss MacLean played tournament tennis at home and liked to have

all the details of our matches according to Hoyle.

Scatter and Sally changed courts, and Scatter grinned impishly at me over her shoulder as she stalked to the other side of the net with a triumphant snuffle.

Sally won her own service.

“The games are one-all,” announced Miss MacLean sonorously.

Scatter kept up the good work, and the Raggeds cheered ecstatically.

“I’ll take it all back, Frosty,” Hatchet Peggy called to me, as Scatter won her third service, making the score three games to two in her favor. “She must have slept her cold off, after all.”

“Oh, she’s all right,” I answered, but into my heart a cold feeling was creeping, for I sensed, rather than saw, that Scatter was weakening. She hadn’t let down yet, and, to those who did not know her as well as I, she seemed to be as strong as ever. But I knew that the burst of energy with which she had started the match was wearing off and that it was only a question of minutes before it would have deserted her altogether. Her drives

weren't quite so deep, her service not quite so steady, and her face was strangely flushed.

Koko didn't notice anything, though.

"Oh, this is going to be easy for Scatter," she gloated. "She always has beaten Sally before. She'll break her service this next game and take the set at six-two. You wait and see."

I grunted and squinted under my hands at Scatter.

Happy Jack moved restlessly beside me.

"Do you really think that Scatter is playing up?" she asked me softly.

"No," I answered sadly. "I think that she is slipping, but she may pull through this set. Don't say it aloud, though. The others might as well be happy as long as they can."

Jack nodded. She is an understanding soul.

Scatter didn't break Sally's service that game. Sally kept it to herself at thirty, and Scatter only managed to win her own service by two deuces and a lucky bounce.

"The games stand four games to three, Raggeds leading." Miss MacLean's voice was without feeling, and I felt a shudder pass over me to think that only last year she had been an

enthusiastic Hatchet, fighting out the championship with Doris Pritchard, who was now playing tennis in the first twenty and too busy to come back to Camp even for a visit.

The two players changed courts, and Scatter paused by the ladder to drink deeply from the bucket of water that was there.

“That’s the worst thing she could do,” I groaned. “She’ll get a pain as sure as fate.”

Sally took her own service at love, making it four-all, and then she proceeded to break Scatter’s service, hold her own, and take the set at six-four.

The players were allowed a short rest between sets. I threw a sweater over Scatter’s shoulders, gave her a lemon to suck, and sat her down to rest. She was breathing heavily and trying hard not to cough.

“Rally around and sing lustily,” I told the rest of the Raggeds, “so that Scatter can cough as hard as she wants without any one’s hearing her. Perhaps it will make her feel better.”

They did, and Scatter hacked away until her face was crimson.

Man o’ War poked her long person into the

ring. In one lean brown paw she was carefully carrying some nice red raspberries she had gathered by the side of the court.

“Eat ’em, Scatter,” she said with that shy, adoring grin of hers. “Fruit is good for bad throats.”

Scatter smiled wanly at her little playmate.

“Thanks a lot,” she said gratefully. “They taste good, Man o’ War.” And the child retired, pleased and gratified.

Miss MacLean called “Time!” and Scatter rose slowly to her feet, dropping the sweater off her shoulders.

“Sorry about that set, Frosty,” she said brusquely. “I’ll do better this time. I couldn’t get going, somehow.”

“Oh, you haven’t started yet,” I answered cheerfully. “Go in and win. There’s lots of time yet.”

Scatter walked slowly to the service line, and my heart was heavy within me. Nothing short of a miracle could win for us now. Scatter had stopped before she had begun, and I knew that, even if she should win the second set, there would be little chance of her lasting through a third when she felt as she did.

“There’s no hope, I’m afraid,” I confided to Happy Jack. “She ought to be in bed, and I simply can’t imagine her winning this match. If a miracle were to fall from heaven and waft her to victory on golden wings, there would be hope. But miracles don’t happen any more. You’ll have to resign yourself to seeing the Hatchets march off with the banner to-night, Happy Jack, and that’s hard on you, your first year and all.”

“I think that it is harder on you, your third year,” she answered. And I think that she was right.

Well, the second set appeared to be an easy victory for Sally. Scatter was helpless. Her trick drives that used to knick the base line were out by inches. Her first serves were in the net, her second serves were out. It was nerve-wracking work, and I know how helpless she must have felt, with everything going wrong and herself feeling worse and worse every minute.

Sally played like a nice steady machine, and with the score four-love it looked as if it were all over but the shouting.

Scatter’s thin face had gone dead white, and

every freckle on it stood out like a baby sun. She was playing doggedly, but her breath came in rasping gasps. I could tell that her head must be splitting, for she kept turning to little Charlotte Hunter who was shacking balls, rather than picking them up for herself.

“Ball!” she would call testily with two of them lying right at her feet. It was not like Scatter at all, and my heart ached for her.

And then, when all was drear and sad, an automobile was heard approaching along the cart road that leads into Camp. Scatter was about to serve. Her first service was a double fault. Love-fifteen!

She moved slowly to the other court, frowning intensely. The auto came nearer. Scatter pulled herself together and served viciously. The ball twanged against the tape at the top of the net and fell into the wrong court. Scatter bit her lip and tried again.

“Out!” called the linesman.

“Love-thirty,” intoned Miss MacLean.

The car drew up outside the tennis courts. Mother Panther stepped around the thicket of hemlocks to meet it. Scatter scowled irritably at the interruption. I knew how she felt.

She wanted that awful match to be over as soon as possible so that she could get away from every one.

“Oh, Sarah, dearie, see who have come to see you,” and Mother Panther ushered three visitors through the gap in the wire. The first was a red-headed replica of Scatter, clad in giddy summer sports clothes, and behind her were a tall clerical-appearing gentleman and the Opium-eater.

Of course it wasn't at all according to regulations, and Miss MacLean was very much perturbed and put out, but what can you do upon the arrival of a girl's only parent, whom she hasn't seen in three years, but let her go and be polite to him? Miss MacLean did so grudgingly, and Sally reclined among the Hatchets while Scatter stepped up and was received into the bosom of her family.

Presently she disentangled herself.

“I have to finish this match, Daddy,” I heard her say. “Then I will show you all around Camp and everything.”

She turned to me.

“Come and be introduced, Frosty,” she called. “You can keep the family happy until

this is over.” And I loped up obediently, wishing that I might have been left to suffer in peace with Koko and Happy and the other Raggeds.

Introductions over, Scatter started to return to her Waterloo.

“Frosty, I’m sorry,” she muttered, “but I’ll try to get going. There’s hope yet.”

The Opium-eater overheard her.

“Hold on, there, Poetess,” he said, catching her by the arm. “Finding it hard work, are you?”

Scatter nodded dumbly, and I found myself not admiring his tact.

“Well,” he drawled with a provoking smile, “I brought you a present. One good turn deserves another, and here’s hoping that this will do as good a turn for you as you did for me the other day.”

He handed a small package to Scatter.

“Don’t let it frighten Abey,” he remarked, with a glance in the general direction of Koko, whom he had spotted in the crowd.

Scatter took the package languidly and opened it without showing much interest in its contents. She probably thought it was candy.

It was that shape, anyhow. But one glance at the contents of the box brought her up short.

“Red Panther!” she exclaimed. “Red Panther!” And she clutched the box to her and sat abruptly down upon the ground to gloat over her gift. We all crowded around to see what the thrilling present might be, and, sure enough, there he was, red and smooth and alluring—the sacred Red Panther from the temple of Candor.

The Opium-eater stood over Scatter and grinned complacently.

“Like it, Fire-eater?” he asked, and Scatter’s answer was a complete success, for she rose to her feet with a leap and a bound, threw her arms about his neck, and gave him a resounding kiss right on his cheek.

“Like it!” she chortled. “Do I like it! Just you wait and see Red Panther win this match for the Raggeds. Frosty, sit down here and hold him for me. Gently, now, and stroke him so. All right. He’s brought us luck; that’s his job. Hulloo, Sally, all ready? Let’s go.”

And right there on that tennis court in Maine a miracle came to pass, as a veritable

bolt launched from the blue, and Scatter's premonitions were fulfilled by an unbelievably dramatic happening. In the space of one moment she had become a changed girl, and I gazed at the Red Panther in my lap, rather frightened by his sinister possibilities. If he could create such a change in Scatter in such a brief space of time, what might he not do to me, sitting in my lap so intimately?

I started to ask the Opium-eater, but he had become so engrossed with Scat's red-headed sister that we Panthers might have been in another world for all he knew or cared. Mother Panther was conversing briskly with Scatter's Priceless Parent, so I just stroked Red Panther, thankful to be able to watch the game undisturbed by the questions of outlanders.

Scatter stepped briskly to the service line.

"Love-thirty, wasn't it, Miss MacLean?" she inquired brightly.

"Yes," answered Miss MacLean grimly. "And the games are love-four in the second set. Are you ready to play again?"

"Oh, quite," snuffled Scatter cheerfully. "Ready, Sal?"

“Play,” answered Sally, confidence writ large all over her person.

Scatter flashed that first serve over for an ace.

“Fifteen-thirty.”

Sally got her racket on the next one but netted it.

“Thirty-all.”

Scatter went ahead gaily and took the game at thirty.

Sally held her own service, but Scatter didn't stop grinning, although I rather suspect that she held her mouth open because she found it so difficult to breathe through her nose.

The games stood five to one, and then Scatter really buckled down to work. The influence of Red Panther worked in her like a magic leaven. With him in her possession she felt she couldn't lose, and she simply charged ahead and took the set from Sally, seven games to five.

The Opium-eater and his ladylove came out of their trance sufficiently to say “Good girl. Keep it up.” And immediately they returned to a happier land where they were the only

two inhabitants. Certainly they didn't realize the miracle that was happening before them—the complete hypnotizing of a perfectly good American girl by an ancient Red Panther from a heathen land.

The Priceless Parent bent a benign look upon his younger child and remarked, “Well played, daughter.”

But Scatter sat herself upon the wire and took the Red Panther in her hands, stroking him gently and crooning over him as if he were alive.

It's a funny thing to see a girl believe in things like that, and it's funnier yet to see them come true for her. Anyhow, I was just as sure of the fact that it was Red Panther, and nothing else in the world, that had pulled Scatter through that last whirlwind set as I was that I was standing on the tennis courts at Camp, wishing with all my heart for the match to be over and the suspense ended.

When time was called for the third set, Scatter sprang to her feet, light as thistledown, handed Sir Panther to me, and stalked off to the court. She did deign to toss me one word as she went.

“Don’t worry, Frosty,” she remarked calmly. “I’m going to win this set.”

And, believe it or not, she did win—easily and swiftly, with such dash and reserve power that even the two lovers had to return to this earthly plane to cheer her on her lusty and spectacular career.

Poor Sally did her best. It was hard for her to have victory snatched from her by one little Red Panther, who couldn’t have understood what it was all about even if you had told him. But, fortunately for Sally, she didn’t understand the fine points of the situation, and when Scatter captured match point with a roaring forehand drive down the alley, Sally ran to the net with only two games to her credit and the firm conviction that Scatter had either been fooling her or else was the world’s most miraculous tennis player. And the latter would be right, I guess.

Of course Scatter and Sally shook hands politely and told each other all the right things, and we Raggeds simply went wild all over the court. The Hatchets were awfully good sports and sang to us and sang to Scatter.

We tried to capture Scatter, but she grabbed

Red Panther from me with a scathing look (I was hurling him into the air at the moment, while I shrieked aloud) and rushed off in the direction of the Shack without a word to her family or any one else.

“She’s gone to change her clothes,” I explained to her father with great presence of mind, for I was as surprised as he was at her sudden and unceremonious exit. Then I rushed after her to see what caused her to act like that.

Happy Jack and Koko and most of the Raggeds trailed behind me to Loon Attic.

“Stay here,” I told them and left them on the porch, “until I see where she is.”

I found her face down on her bed, crying as if her heart would break, the Red Panther standing on her pillow beside her outflung hand. I had never seen Scatter cry before, and I felt embarrassed.

“What’s the matter, Scat?” I asked. “Are you sick?”

But she only dug her face deeper into the pillow and went on crying the more.

Happy Jack came in quietly and stood by my side.

“Get her into fresh clothes and leave her alone,” she advised sagely. “She’s got a bad cold, and she feels awful. I’ll send the others away.” So she did, and I managed to get clean, dry clothes on the weeping Scatter and tuck her into bed.

“There, go to sleep, heroine,” quoth I. “Here’s your Panther and here’s your hanky. I’ll go take care of your family while you get rested a bit.”

Scatter achieved a watery smile.

“I . . . I’m an awful idiot, Frosty,” she hiccuped, “but thanks a lot.”

So I left her there and went in search of her family. The Opium-eater had already taken a canoe and wafted his new-found lady-love from the haunts of man and Panther, but the Parent seemed to be very much at loose ends. I took him in tow and led him about the Camp, first explaining carefully that, after such a grueling match as Scatter had played, a long and extensive toilette was necessary but she would be visible ere long.

This tale was rather ruined by the sight of Sally Robbins out arching a round with Koko, but I trusted that the Parent wouldn’t notice

this coincidence and led him hastily past the archery court to the chapel and other points of interest.

He wasn't a bit distant or distraught as I had always imagined bishops at close range to be. Not so, but far otherwise, and I found him a very pleasing companion in so far as anything could be pleasing to me at that harassing moment, with my roommate and his daughter languishing on what might prove to be her deathbed and with the fate of the Raggeds still hanging in the balance in spite of Scat's Panther-inspired victory of the afternoon.

He was interested in the Raggeds and Hatchets and everything to do with Camp, and I told him all about the invitation to tea on Commander Pond's ship and how excited we were about it, but I kept my mind on what I was telling him with an effort. To this day he holds firmly, with a twinkle in his Episcopal eye, that I assured him in all seriousness that "Abey always reads the Sunday service in the chapel and insists that Mother Panther be left at home in the Shack because she fidgets so in church."

Be that as it may, I did my noble best by

the Bishop, and when Elsie blew First Call, I left him to wash up in the office while I tore down to Shack Two to weep over the remains of my red-headed Scatter.

But therein I was due for a surprise. When I came in sight of the Shack, I heard sounds of high mirth from the sleeping-porch, and I found Scatter sitting cross-legged on her bed, her hair standing every which way, Red Panther beside her on the blanket. Her thin face was a picture of impishness, and she was holding forth to a credulous audience of small fry, giving them a startling and highly-colored version of the tale of the Genie and the Panther. Her voice was still husky, but her cough seemed to be a thing of the past.

“I thought you were supposed to be asleep,” I remarked severely.

“Well, I was,” she answered, aggrieved, “but I woke up, Frosty. It takes a good afternoon of exercise to cure a cold like mine. I feel fine, honestly I do.” And that time I believed her. She looked like a different girl, and I drew a long sigh of relief.

“That’s all there is; there isn’t any more, my children,” she told her entranced audience,

and they melted away while she slid off the bed and joined me in Loon Attic.

“What a perfect idiot you must think I am, Frosty,” she said soberly. “I’m awfully sorry I made such a baby of myself and all.”

“Oh, that’s all right; you couldn’t help it, Scatter,” I answered awkwardly. “Anyhow, you played a marvelous match this afternoon.”

“Red Panther played it for me, you mean,” she corrected me with a laugh, “and he’s cured my cold, too. I told you that he is probably the world’s luckiest beast, Frosty. Why, he’s even more potent than the old Invincible.”

I grunted. As I have mentioned before, I don’t believe much in charms and fetishes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BANNER

When Scatter and I started up to the Camp House for supper, Happy Jack was limping along ahead of us, and Scat paged her loudly:

“ Oh, Happy, wait a minute! ” And Happy did, obligingly.

“ Have any more averages been published? ” we asked in chorus. But Jack shook her head.

“ No, ” she answered. “ Miss Mason and Miss Palmer and all the rest of the Counselors are sitting on the floor in the office, busily adding and dividing, and they probably won't know the final score until it's time for the banner to be given out. Anyhow, they're not coming to supper. It's being sent to them on a tray. Imagine adding with one hand and eating hash with the other, ” she ended with a grin.

“ Wow! ” I exclaimed. “ That means that it's closer than close. If either side had definitely won, they would never bother to add

up all those tennis ladder figures and hiking averages and what not. If we win, it will be by the skin of our teeth and no more, and I, for one, am glad that we are going on that trip to Rockland with Commander Pond next week. It will be something pleasant to look forward to in case we have to lose to-night."

And the other two agreed with me absolutely.

It surely was an unusual situation at Panther that year. Almost every other summer either one side or the other had been so far ahead by the beginning of the last counting week that it was perfectly obvious which side would win and which side hadn't a chance. Of course averages and tennis ladders were added into the final score, but the Counsellors didn't have to spend hours checking and re-checking to make sure that the figures weren't two or three points out one way or the other, enough to make a difference in which side won the banner.

"I'll tell you one thing, though," remarked Happy Jack, as we slipped through the screened door to the dining-porch. "I still think that the whole thing hinges on the swim-

ming classes. If we have five people in Class A, we'll win. If we don't, the Hatchets will win, and that will be that."

When it came time for the banner ceremony that night, Scatter tucked Red Panther under her arm.

"He must be there, come what may," she explained a trifle breathlessly. "For if we win, he's the one that is responsible."

I felt breathless, too, as if some one were squeezing my ribs and the wind couldn't get into them properly. My throat was dry, and my tongue was too big for my mouth. Also I felt slightly ill.

To those who have never seen the banner given out at Panther, I will say that it is an impressive sight—one which a Panther never forgets, once she has been a part of it.

Scatter's family was banished to the craft work balcony that runs around the Camp House. Not being Panthers, they were not privileged to be on the floor.

The Counsellors stood in a row on the hearth rug, stunning in their dark blue and white. Behind their impassive faces was concealed the secret of which side had won the long, even

contest. I looked beseechingly at Miss Mason, hoping that she would make a sign, but her face didn't change. Neither did Miss Palmer's nor Miss MacLean's.

The Management and the Doctor stood on one side of the Counsellors, and we Raggeds took our places on the other side, as we were the side that did not hold the banner.

The Hatchets had the privilege of marching into the Camp House with the banner, which they did, very impressive and dignified, singing a marching song.

When they stood across from us and faced us, we sang that Ragged song which is saved for banner nights:

“Hail, Hatchets! hail, Hatchets!
Side by side we've fought this year.
Though foes a while, we've always held you
Friends most dear.”

Then the Hatchets sang to us, and we all sat down on the floor, and Mother Panther stepped in between us and began to read the records of the summer. It seemed to take forever. Of course they all counted for one side or the other, but I honestly wished that she

might have left them out and said, "Hatchets win" or "Raggeds win," whichever it might be.

Happy Jack had the little notebook in her pocket in which she had been adding her scores and averages. She took it out now and checked it with Mother Panther's figures.

"Hiking. Most miles hiked: individual record . . . Peggy Bartlett for the Hatchets; team record . . . Hatchet."

We applauded stolidly. We had expected them to win hiking, so that didn't bother us any. Scatter sat cross-legged beside me, Red Panther in her lap. From time to time she stroked him gently, her red head bent lovingly over him. Up in the gallery the faces of her family and their Opium-eater made three moons of lightness in the dusk above the lamps.

Mother Panther went on down the long list—crew, paddling, basket-ball, nature lore, craft work.

"Tennis. Most improvement . . . Ellen Hunt-Crosby for the Raggeds; tennis championship . . . Sarah Atwell for the Raggeds; average for the first singles tennis ladder

. . . Ragged; second singles ladder . . .
Hatchet.”

Man o' War, squatting beside Scatter, began to braid her fingers, and Koko poked her reprovngly from behind. Man o' War grinned nervously and untangled them again.

Mother Panther was nearing the end of her list, and Happy Jack was nodding over her little book. Apparently her figures were the same as the Management's.

“Swimming classes.” They were the last thing to be announced, and I was feeling worse and worse.

“Class C. Twelve Hatchets, nine Raggeds.”

And Mother Panther read their names.

“Class B. Seven Hatchets, eight Raggeds.”

Another list of names.

“Class A.” I rose to my knees and clutched Scatter by her arm tightly, hardly conscious that I was doing it. Happy Jack stuck her pencil in her mouth and fixed her eyes on Mother Panther like gimlets. Scatter continued to stroke Red Panther, but I could feel her muscles taut under my hand.

“For the Hatchets . . .” Mother Panther was tantalizingly slow. She adores a dramatic situation and makes the most of every one. “Three girls are in Class A. Captain Robbins, Peggy Bartlett, and Margery Woodward.”

We sighed deeply. Now the moment was at hand when we would know all, when we would be raised to the crest of the wave or be dashed to the nethermost depths.

“Class A for the Raggeds . . . Captain Frost, Sarah Atwell, Janice Taylor. Of course we knew those already.” Mother Panther paused provokingly and cleared her throat. Happy Jack bit through her pencil with a crack, and she bit her tongue, too, probably, for she gave an unhappy little cry. Apparently she had given up all hope. Mother Panther went on:

“. . . And Ellen Hunt-Crosby and Eleanor Jackson.”

A great wave of feeling swept over me, and I sat back in a heap on the floor, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. But there was no time to do either. Mother Panther brought Sally and me to the middle of the floor, and,

after she had made an appropriate speech, the banner changed hands. Sally was a wonderful sport, and she said just the right thing, and I answered her somehow, and we all sang:

“ Though the Raggeds always fight for their flag of
cherry red,
And the Hatchets love their colors, their own green
that waves o’erhead,
Still both own the White and Blue, and all honor
shall we pay,
While with spirit brave and true we all join in
loyal lay.”

And then we were all marching down the path through the thronging woods, we Raggeds in front as befitted the holders of the banner, with the Hatchets, Management, and Counsellors behind us. As we marched, we sang the song that is always sung at that moment:

“ Oh, we are the Panthers, we’re Campers tried and
true;
See us come along, some forty strong. . . .”

We took the long way to Shack Two, down the wide path to the beach and around by Shack One, where the banner would not be

seen for another year at least, then up onto the porch of Shack Two, and around to the door of Loon Attic. The Hatchets stood on the ground and kindly held flashlights for us Raggeds while we placed the banner's pole in the rusty holder that hadn't been used since Miss Palmer was Captain and had lived there with the banner outside her door.

And then we all sang and sang all the old songs over and over again, while the stars seemed near enough to touch the tips of the hemlocks and the loon joined in our chorus with wild laughter from the lake.

At last the bugle blew Tattoo, and every one melted away from our doorway but Scatter and me. We stood by the banner, strangely silent now that all was over. I fingered its dingy white folds with reverent fingers. It seemed hardly possible that it was really hanging there outside Loon Attic. Scatter and I and the others had worked for it so hard and so long. Then I had a sobering thought.

"Scatter, do you realize?" I asked her solemnly. "If it hadn't been for Man o' War and Happy Jack, we Raggeds wouldn't have won this banner at all this year."

Scatter stood silent for a moment in the starlight. Then she chuckled impishly.

“You’re forgetting Red Panther, Frosty,” she said. “He ought to be hung up beside the banner as an omen and a sign for all good Raggeds to steer themselves by in future years.”

I laughed, too, glad to feel the tension relaxed at last.

“Well,” I said, as we turned into Loon Attic to undress and to condole with our Hatchet Marge, “we’ll make him our most important mascot for next year.”

And then Scatter had a devastating thought.

“Frosty,” she exploded with a gasp of recollection, “do you remember what we promised Mother Panther if the Raggeds won the banner to-night?”

Marge went out onto the sleeping-porch, and I looked at Scatter inquiringly. All thoughts of anything but the Raggeds and the banner had been wafted from my head as if they had never been.

“What are you talking about?” I asked her, all agog.

“That we would come back here next

summer as Junior Counsellors," she answered. "Had you really forgotten that, Frosty?"

I truly had, and I stood aghast as the remembrance came flooding over me with the thought of all that it involved—no more Raggeds, no more banner, no more Loon Attic . . .

". . . And no more Invincible!" I told Scatter sadly.

But she tugged at her forelock and smiled contentedly.

"I'll have it dyed dark blue and I'll wear it every day," she said, "and, Frosty, think what fun we're going to have, turning young excursionists like Ellen Hunt-Crosby into Panthers like Man o' War."

THE END

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