

# Freddy and the Popinjay

The 12th Story in the  
Freddy the Pig  
Series

Walter R. Brooks  
1945

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# FREDDY AND THE POPINJAY

Walter R. Brooks

*Illustrated by Kurt Wiese*

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For *Anne*

# Freddy and the Popinjay

## Chapter 1

Out in the field Mr. Bean was cutting the hay. He was riding up and down on the mowing machine behind Hank, the old white horse. Every little while he would stop and take off his big straw hat, and then he would pull out a large handkerchief, which was red with white polka dots, and wipe his forehead. Then he would replace the hat on his head and the handkerchief in his pocket, and say: "Giddap!" And Hank would move on again.

It was hot out there in the sun, but in the shadow of the stone wall it was cool. Even on the hottest days a little trickle of breeze flowed down along the wall. The animals knew this, and sometimes if they were too lazy to go up to the duck pond for a swim, they would go over on to the shady side of the wall and take a bath in the current of cool air.

Freddy, the pig, had been there most of the afternoon. He was lying on his stomach in the long grass, and he had a pencil and paper in front of him, and he was writing a poem. It was called: "Oh, For a Waggable Tail," and it was a subject to which Freddy had given much thought. The poem went like this:

*The dog can wag his tail and bark  
To show what he thinks of you;  
And the cat can purr when you smooth his fur,  
But what can the poor pig do?*

*He knows no stunts, and his piggish grunts,  
And his loud and murderous squeals  
Don't really express true happiness,  
Or tell you how he feels.*

*His voice, when low, is a groan of woe,  
When loud, a despairing wail.  
'Twouldn't be so bad if he only had  
A decently waggable tail.*

*A waggable tail, with which to hail  
His friends, with which to greet  
In a dignified way, with a flourish gay,  
Those whom he chanced to meet.*

*A tail to wave in a manner grave—  
Graceful, stately and slow,  
Would, I quite expect, command respect  
That the tailless seldom know.*

If Freddy hadn't fallen asleep when he got this far, the poem would have been a great deal longer. In fact, it might well have gone on forever, for Freddy was like a good many other poets—he never could seem to find a good stopping place. Even when he had nothing more to say, it seemed always as if the last stanza he had written didn't really make the right kind of ending, so he would start another. But of course, sooner or later, he would fall asleep, and as it was usually "sooner" in Freddy's case, none of his poems are very long ones.

But his nap wasn't a very long one either. Maybe five minutes had passed when all at once his eyes flew open, and with one of the loud and murderous squeals he had just described, he leaped nearly two feet in the air. "Eeeeeee-yow!" he yelled. "My tail! Oh, my tail!" And he whirled around several times, trying to get a look at his tail. But Freddy was pretty plump, and his tail always turned the corner just

before he got a look at it. But it was still there, for he had seen it each time out of the corner of his eye, disappearing.

And then he became aware of a large robin who was standing just about where his tail had been when he jumped up.

The robin had been standing there with his eyes down, looking guilty and rather scared, but when Freddy noticed him, he looked up.

“Oh, sir,” he said earnestly. “I am sincerely sorry. I wouldn’t for the world have disturbed you. I can’t think how it happened—”

“How what happened?” Freddy asked sharply. “You been playing tricks on me?”

“Oh no, sir. Not tricks. I wouldn’t presume. . . . It’s my eyes. They’re getting dreadfully bad; you wouldn’t believe it, but only yesterday I wanted to take the children—you know, a little something extra for their supper, and what do you think I took them? You’ll never guess—”

“I don’t intend to,” said Freddy. “Get to the point, will you? What do you mean by attacking me? You won’t deny that you *did* attack me, I suppose?”

“Oh, not intentionally, I do assure you,” said the robin. “You see, my eyes are so bad; I didn’t see you at all, or if I did, I just took you for a rock—you were so still. I was looking for worms, and there was your tail, all curled up in the grass, and I—well sir, I—”

“You grabbed it,” said Freddy severely. “And I suppose if it had come off—and it pretty nearly did, too, my friend, I can tell you, the tug you gave it—if it had come off, you’d have had it for supper, eh?”

“I—I’m afraid we would,” said the robin, dropping his eyes in embarrassment.

“A fine thing!” said Freddy. “A fine thing that a law-abiding pig can’t take a nap on this farm without having a bodyguard along to look after his belongings! A fine laughingstock you’d have made of me! Look nice in the paper, wouldn’t it? PIG LOSES TAIL IN TUG OF WAR WITH ROBIN. What’s your name?”

“J. J. Pomeroy.”

“Oh yes,” said Freddy. “You live in the elm, out by the gate. Yes, I knew your grandfather. A fine old bird; came back every spring as regular as clockwork. And now you’re living there. Hm, well, Mr. Pomeroy, don’t be upset about this. Aside from scaring me out of a year’s growth, there’s no harm done.” He smiled reassuringly. “But about your eyes, now. You’ll have to do something about that. Can’t have you going round pulling the tails off all the animals on the farm. Aside from the fact that maybe some of them wouldn’t be as pleasant about it as me. Ever been to an oculist?”



“Why should I?” said the robin. “I don’t need anyone to tell me I’m nearsighted.”

“He could make you some glasses,” said Freddy.

J. J. Pomeroy didn’t think much of the suggestion. Nobody would ever make glasses for a robin.

“How do you know?” said Freddy. “Look here; I’ve got to go over to Centerboro tomorrow morning. I’ll go down early and you meet me on the corner by the bank. At nine. We’ll go to see Mr. Watt, the eye man. If anybody can fix you up, he can.”

“Well,” said the robin doubtfully, “if you think so. It’s pretty nice of you, Freddy, to take all that trouble for me.”

“Pooh,” said Freddy; “I’m just protecting myself. You might get my ear next time.”

“Well, I certainly am grateful to you,” J. J. Pomeroy said; “and if there’s ever anything I can do to repay you, just call on me.” He looked down at the paper and pencil. “But dear me, I mustn’t bother you any more. I’m interrupting your literary work.”

“Oh—that!” Freddy said. “Nothing important. Just a little verse I was dashing off.—Would you like to hear it?” he asked. And without waiting for the robin’s reply, he read the poem.

J. J. Pomeroy listened carefully, nodding his head to the rhythm, and when Freddy had finished he said, “Charming! Very fine!”

“Oh it’s—it’s nothing, really,” Freddy murmured.

“You’re too modest,” said the robin. “‘A decently waggable tail’—beautifully put. A very arresting thought, profoundly arresting.”

Even Freddy realized that neither the idea nor the verses were worthy of such high praise. “I’m afraid it’s not as good as all that,” he said. “It’s just that I’ve been thinking a good deal about it lately. In fact, I’ve been taking wagging lessons from Georgie, our little brown dog. But I don’t think I’m making much progress. Trouble is, I can’t see my tail, so when I try, I don’t know whether it’s wagging or not. Just watch it for a minute, will you, while I try to wag it?”

J. J. Pomeroy watched with interest. Freddy put on an expression of intense concentration, then took it off again and said hopefully, “Well?”

“Well,” said the robin, “it seemed to me that it did move. A little.”

“But not a wag, eh?”

“Oh, definitely not a wag. No. More a—a sort of tremble.”

Freddy shook his head in discouragement. “Just as I feared. A tremble! You

can't express friendship with a tremble, now can you? Confound the thing!" he broke out. "What use is it? You birds use your tails to balance you and to steer with when you fly, and cows and horses switch their tails to keep flies off, and cats can curl their tails around them to keep their toes warm. But a pig's tail—what use is it? I'd be better off without it."

"Oh, I don't agree with you there," said J. J. Pomeroy. "I think you take far too gloomy a view."

"I don't take any view," said Freddy. "I can't even see the thing."

"That's just it," said the robin. "If you could see it, you'd realize how very stylish it is. That little curl at the end of you—it sort of finishes you off, don't you know. Like a . . . like an exclamation point at the end of a sentence; it makes it twice as important."

"Goodness, do you think so?" said Freddy. "I hadn't thought of it that way before."

"That's the only way to look at it," said the robin. "Why, you're the only animal on the farm that has a tail that he doesn't have to use for something or other—a tail that's just for show. You ought to be pretty proud of it."

"Dear me," said Freddy, "I—well, I guess I am." He looked down at his poem. "I guess I'd better tear these verses up."

J. J. Pomeroy said it would be a pity to do that; they were so nice.

"I'm glad you liked them," said Freddy. "Perhaps you'd care to come down to my study, and I'll read you some of my other things. There's a long one on friendship I've just finished. . . ."

"Oh, thank you," said the robin hastily; "I'm afraid I haven't time today. You see I'm supposed to be getting something for the children's supper, and their mother will be getting anxious."

"Well, another time then," Freddy said. "But don't forget tomorrow at nine."

"Indeed I won't. On the corner by the bank. Thank you, Freddy." And J. J. Pomeroy spread his wings and flew off.

## Chapter 2

Bright and early the next morning Freddy set out for Centerboro. There were a number of things he would have to bring back with him—many more than he could manage just in his mouth, and so he wore an old coat of Mr. Bean's into the pockets of which he could stuff his various purchases. He made this trip to Centerboro once a week, for as editor of the animal newspaper, *The Bean Home News*, he had to prepare a weekly summary of all the interesting things that had happened and take it in to the printer.

He usually included a poem or two in each issue, and he had intended to put in this week's number the one about the waggable tail. But since talking to J. J. Pomeroy he had begun to feel that perhaps a waggable tail wasn't so desirable after all. He decided to leave that poem out. He could write another on the way to town.

So he began making up a rhyme as he trotted along.

*A lesson which we all must learn  
Is this: without complaint  
To be ourselves, and not to yearn  
To be that which we ain't.*

"That's pretty awful grammar," Freddy said to himself, "but there won't be time to fix it up. If I use it, I won't sign my name." He went on.

*If cats had wings, and cows had claws  
And pigs had shaggy pelts,  
You'd never know your friends, because  
They'd look like someone else.*

"That may be true," he said thoughtfully, "but it would be awfully interesting if they changed around. My goodness, the same old faces day after day—you do get tired of them." But he went on with the poem.

*Then be content with what you've got  
And do not weep and wail,  
For the leopard cannot change his spots  
Nor the pig his curly tail.*

Now this wasn't a specially fine poem, but there was one good thing about it: the idea and the verses had come out even. Usually when Freddy started a poem, he began with an idea, something he wanted to say. Then he took his idea and fitted

verses to it. It was a good deal like eating bread and jam and trying to make them come out even. Sometimes when he got through about the third verse, there would be part of the idea left over. Then he would start another verse. But maybe there wouldn't be enough idea left for a whole verse. You can't cut a verse in two, as you can a slice of bread, so Freddy would spread the idea over it very thin. Sometimes he would spread it so thin over the whole last half of the poem that you could hardly see it. It was very easy for Freddy to write verses, but not so easy to get good ideas. It was as if he had lots and lots of bread, but not very much jam. That is the trouble with a good many poets. They make very nice verses, but you can hardly taste the jam in them at all.

Freddy repeated this poem to himself, and as always, he thought that maybe there was enough idea left over to make some more. So he began:

*For pigs are pigs, and dogs are dogs,  
And never the twain shall meet . . .*

"Dear me," he said, "that's an awfully good line, but it seems to me I've heard it somewhere before. I guess I'd better change it." And he was beginning again when something went *Zzzzip!* across in front of his nose, and a little puff of dust shot up at the side of the road.

The sound was such as a wasp might have made, flying fast, but no wasp would knock up dust from the road. And then it came again, behind him—*Zzip!* with a sort of smack at the end of it, and Freddy felt a sharp sting in his left hip. A wasp would sting like that, but no wasp ever made a smack when he hit you. Freddy had given a loud yip when he felt the sting, and although his forelegs continued to trot along the road, his hind legs jumped into the air, so that he looked a little as if he had suddenly tried to stand on his head. When he had his hind legs under control again he stopped and called out: "Hey, you! Quit that!"

There was a cackle of laughter behind some bushes at the side of the road, and a freckled face appeared among the leaves. It was a boy's face, and it wouldn't have been bad looking if it hadn't worn such an impudent expression.

"Hi, pig!" said the boy. "Gee, did you look funny! Go on, will you? I want to see you do that again." And he stepped out into the road and aimed a slingshot at Freddy.

Freddy was mad anyway, and he was extra mad because he knew that he had looked pretty silly with his hind legs nearly jumping over his front ones. He wasn't any coward, either. One time, several years ago, he had led a charge right up to the muzzle of the shotgun that was pointed at him from one of the windows of the

Grimby house. Of course he had known that the gun wasn't loaded, but still it was a brave thing to do. But to charge on a boy with a slingshot wasn't brave, it was just foolhardy. So he choked down his anger and said: "What do you shoot in that thing, BB shot?"

The boy said disgustedly: "Naw. Pop won't give me any money to buy BB shot. I just got stones." Then he grinned. "Why? You think maybe a BB shot wouldn't sting as much?"

Freddy knew this boy. He was Jimmy, the son of tight-fisted old Zenas Witherspoon who had the farm just over the hill from, and adjoining, the Bean farm. Jimmy had never in his life had a decent suit of clothes. He wore patched overalls and a ragged shirt, week in and week out, and usually went barefoot, even to school, so that all the other children made fun of him and wouldn't have anything to do with him. It wasn't his fault. Freddy remembered how Jerry, Mr. Witherspoon's horse, had had to borrow money from the First Animal Bank to buy himself a new set of shoes, because Zenas was too tight to buy them for him. And Mrs. Witherspoon hadn't been out of the house in years, because Zenas said he wasn't going to have her traipsin' around the country, wearing out good shoe leather. Folks said that she hadn't written to her sister in Ohio in twenty years, because Zenas wouldn't buy her a postcard.

The Bean animals had been sorry for Mrs. Witherspoon, and for Jerry, and for Eunice, the Witherspoon cow, and all their other animals. Though there wasn't anything they could do about it. But they had begun to see that they would have to do something about Jimmy. For Jimmy was getting to be a nuisance. Having no friends, and no books to read, and no money to buy candy or go to the movies with, he just rambled over the fields and through the woods with his slingshot, shooting at everything that moved. And as the Bean animals moved around pretty freely, they got hit pretty frequently.

But of course Freddy knew he couldn't do anything now, except get away as quickly as possible. He said: "I could bring you back some shot from Centerboro. If you'd promise not to shoot at me, or at any other animals and birds with it."

"I'd promise not to shoot you," said Jimmy, "but not anybody else. What's the good of having BB shot if you can't shoot at anything?"

"You could shoot at a mark," Freddy said.

"Pooh, what fun is that?"

"You just shoot for the fun of hurting people," Freddy said. "I never knew anybody like that before—that thought it was fun to hurt people."

"I don't either," said Jimmy. "I like to see 'em jump. That didn't hurt you much

when I hit you.”

“It didn’t injure me permanently, if that’s what you mean,” Freddy said. “But you shoot at birds, and if that stone had hit a bird it would have killed it.”

“Oh, I don’t hardly ever hit a bird—they’re too small and quick. Anyway, what’s an old bird! I hit one this morning, though—Oh look, pig! Up in that tree, there’s a bird that’s been watching us. Want to see me bring him down?” And he pulled up the slingshot.

“Oh, don’t, don’t!” said Freddy. “I know that bird. He’s a phoebe, and he’s got a wife and three children in a nest in the eaves of the Bean house.”

“He’s a what?” Jimmy interrupted. But he lowered the slingshot.

“A phoebe. They’re one of the most useful birds there is.”

“What do you mean—useful?” Jimmy demanded. “Birds ain’t any use.”

“That shows how much you know,” said Freddy. “Most birds live on bugs. If it wasn’t for birds, the farmers’ gardens would be all eaten up by bugs. Phoebes and robins and catbirds and warblers and flickers and peewees—”

“Aw, you’re just making all those names up,” said Jimmy.

“There are—I don’t know—probably a hundred different kinds of birds around here. But I wouldn’t expect you to know anything about them. You just like to be ignorant. All you want to do is go around with your silly slingshot, shooting people to make them jump.”

“Is that so!” said Jimmy. “Well, I guess I know as much as you do!”

“You don’t know one bird from another,” said Freddy—“except maybe robins and sparrows. You’re out in the woods a lot, and I bet you don’t know one tree from another either.”

“I do so! I know maples and elms and—and oaks and—Well what’s that tree over there if you know so much?” Jimmy pointed at a slender tree with a dark striped trunk and large three-pointed leaves.

Freddy looked. He didn’t know what it was. But it would never do to say so. “Suppose *you* tell *me*,” he said. “You’re the one that’s trying to prove that he isn’t ignorant.”

“Yeah?” said Jimmy. “Well, do you know what it is?”

“That isn’t the point,” said Freddy.

“Oh yes it is,” Jimmy retorted. “If you don’t know and I don’t know, then you’re just as ignorant as I am.”

Freddy saw that he had got backed into a corner. Of course there were several ways he could get out. He could get dignified and say that there seemed no use in continuing the discussion. Or he could suddenly charge at Jimmy and knock him

over, and then run. He would probably be out of range before Jimmy could get up and put another stone in his slingshot. But he decided that the best way out was to admit that Jimmy was right. The more honest you are in an argument, the better chance you have of winning.

So he laughed. "You're right," he said. "I'm just as ignorant about that tree as you are. But there's one difference between us: I don't want to stay ignorant. I'm going to find out what kind of tree it is. When I do, I'll tell you." And he started on his way.

"Yah!" Jimmy jeered. "I bet I find out before you do!" And then as Freddy didn't answer, but just kept on going: "Give me a leave, pig? Dare me to shoot you again?"

Freddy didn't turn around, but it took all his strength of mind to keep on walking slowly and not break into a gallop. His front legs were all right; they walked along in a quiet dignified way, but his hind legs, which were a fine mark for that terrible slingshot, kept trying to go faster, and he kept trying to stop them, so that every now and then he humped up in the middle when his hind legs got too close to his front ones, and then straightened out again when he persuaded the hind legs to drop back where they belonged.

But Jimmy didn't shoot. And when he finally got to a turn in the road, Freddy looked back. The boy had disappeared. Freddy heaved a sigh, and all the rest of the way into Centerboro his hind legs behaved themselves, and trotted along patiently in the rear, keeping their proper distance as they had been trained to do.

## Chapter 3

Mr. Watt's store was next door to the Centerboro Bank. In the show window were rows of eyeglasses of all kinds—those that hook over your ears, and those that perch astride your nose, and those you hold up on a handle and look through—and the frames were gold and silver and tortoiseshell and plastic, in a lot of different shapes. On a lower branch of a tree that grew up through the sidewalk close to the store sat J. J. Pomeroy. And with him was Mrs. Pomeroy.

They were so absorbed in the window display that they didn't see Freddy, and he stopped under the tree for a minute and listened.

"I don't agree with you, dear," Mrs. Pomeroy was saying. "Those dark brown rims are too heavy for your face. You have very fine regular features, and I think in those rimless nose glasses you would look very distinguished. You could wear them on a black ribbon around your neck, like Mr. Weezer, the bank president."

"Well—maybe," said J. J. Pomeroy doubtfully. "They look sort of fussy to me. I don't want to look distinguished; I only want to be able to tell the difference between an angleworm and a rusty nail. That was pretty bad this morning."

"I agree with you there," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "You're ruining the children's digestion. I was up all night with Junior after you fed him that rubber band. But seriously, dear, there's no use getting something that isn't becoming. Well, how about those gold rims? Gold is so dignified, I always think." She glanced around and caught sight of Freddy, and at once became very much embarrassed, for she was a very shy and retiring bird.

"Good morning, ma'am," said Freddy, smiling at her. "Good morning, J. J."

"Oh, Mr. Freddy," said Mrs. Pomeroy, "I hope you don't mind my asking, but you have such good taste, and—well, I do hope you won't let my husband get those dreadful heavy rims he seems so set on."

"Well, since all the glasses in the window are much too large for a robin anyway," Freddy said, "I don't see much point in making a selection now. I don't even know if we can persuade Mr. Watt to make them—he'll have to make a special pair anyway. It's quite a job. But you leave it to me. I think I can manage it."

Mr. Watt was a small thin man with bushy grey hair and a little grey moustache. When the pig and the two robins went into the store, he came bustling forward. "Good morning—good morning—lovely morning isn't it, Freddy—nice to see you again—what can I do for you?" He spoke so fast that his words tumbled over one another, and even his sentences sort of overlapped, so that sometimes he almost seemed to be saying two things at once. There were no periods in Mr. Watt's



conversation, so I haven't put any in.

"Well," Freddy said, "I don't know whether you can do anything for us or not." He introduced the Pomeroy. "Mr. Pomeroy, here," he said, "is getting so nearsighted that he can't get food for his children any more. He can't tell a potato bug from an old collar button, unless he gets down so close that he's practically breathing down its neck. Of course, if he was collecting collar buttons that would be all right. But the bug doesn't wait; it runs away. So what Pomeroy needs is a pair of glasses."

Mr. Watt pursed his lips and shook his head. "Never made glasses for a bird," he said—"never have—never shall."

Freddy nodded. "I thought not," he said. "I thought you couldn't make 'em."

"Who said I couldn't?" demanded Mr. Watt. "Could if I wanted to—don't want to—lots of difference between can't and won't."

"Not much, Mr. Watt; not much," said Freddy, looking the oculist squarely in the eye. Then he shook his head mournfully. "Well, J. J., I guess we'll have to take a trip to Syracuse. They've got good men up there who can fit you to glasses all right. As long as Mr. Watt doesn't feel he could do a good job—"

"Who said I couldn't—hey? Who said it?—Not me!" snapped Mr. Watt. "Fitted glasses here—forty years—men, women and children—come to Watt, they say—'Watt knows what's what—Watt'll fit you—make your eyes good as new—better than new—make 'em like telescopes—see a fly on a barn door at forty yards —'"

"Yes, I know you do fine work," Freddy said. "For people. But birds are different. You'd have to grind very small lenses, make a special little frame with side pieces that bend around back of his head because he hasn't got any ears to hook them over. Very fine work—"

"Pah!" Mr. Watt exclaimed. "Birds are no different—just smaller—smaller or bigger, what's the difference?—Watt can make 'em big or small—fit an elephant or fit a flea." He stopped abruptly and dashed over to a chart that hung on the wall. There were rows of letters on it of different sizes, the biggest ones at the top. "Hey, you—Pomeroy—whatever your name is—perch on that chair—read that letter I'm pointing to."

"F," said J. J. It was an M.

Mr. Watt clicked his tongue angrily. "Blind as a bat!" he said. "That's the way with you people—wait till you're half blind, then come expect me to make you over—should have been here years ago—no, sit still—shut your left eye—now look through this glass—"

Freddy winked at Mrs. Pomeroy, then sat down comfortably in a chair and watched as Mr. Watt tried glass after glass on first one eye and then the other. The oculist worked so fast that he fairly danced around the bewildered J. J. But pretty soon he was through, and after taking several measurements of the robin's head, he said: "All right—hop down—glasses ready Thursday and they'll be eight dollars."

"They'll be what?" said Mr. Pomeroy. "Bu—but I haven't—"

"Come along, Pomeroy, come along," Freddy interrupted quickly. "And thank you, Mr. Watt, for your trouble. It will be a great feather in your cap if you can make these glasses. I do hope you're right about it."

"Right about it?—Right about it?—With the eyes I'll give him this robin'll be able to catch bugs up to ten o'clock at night—he'll corner the worm market—he'll be able to see a bug an inch underground—" He was still talking as Freddy hustled the two robins out into the street.

"But, Freddy," said Mr. Pomeroy, "I haven't got eight dollars; I haven't even got eight cents. We robins don't use money much, and I never thought—" Mrs. Pomeroy began to cry.

Freddy hadn't thought either. But there was one thing about Freddy: when he started a thing he saw it through. Even if it cost eight dollars. "Now, now," he said; "don't you worry. I'll lend you the money until we can find some way for you to make some. Let me see; you're good at catching angleworms; how would it be to sort of set up in the angleworm business—sell them to fishermen?"

Mr. Pomeroy said that he could do that, of course. "But eight dollars' worth of angleworms would be an awful lot."

"About a barrel full, I should think," said Freddy thoughtfully. He shivered slightly. "A barrel full of angleworms! I don't like to think about it. No, there must be some pleasanter way."

"I don't see what's unpleasant about it," Mrs. Pomeroy said. "We're fond of angleworms in our family. And they're very nourishing—"

"Please, please!" Freddy begged her. "Can't we talk about something else?—Ah, how do you do?" he said, turning and bowing deeply to a large, elegantly dressed woman who was getting down with some difficulty from the front saddle of an old-fashioned tandem bicycle, the rear saddle of which was occupied by a man in a chauffeur's uniform. "May I help you?" he said, extending a fore trotter.

"Why, Freddy; this is a great pleasure!" She gave him her hand and leaned heavily upon him as she stepped down to the curb—so heavily that Freddy's knees gave a little. She was quite a large woman.

But Freddy braced himself, and in a second more she was beside him on the

sidewalk. When he had introduced the Pomeroy's to her, she said: "You're looking well, Freddy. And how are all the other animals—and my dear friend, Mrs. Wiggins?" She turned to the chauffeur. "Wait here, Riley."

"Yes, madam," panted the chauffeur, and he took off his cap and mopped his forehead.

"I've given up my car, now that gasoline is so scarce," she explained to Freddy. "Had this old tandem in the stable, and so I have Riley take me around on it."

"That's very patriotic," Freddy said.

"I'm afraid most of the patriotism falls on Riley. He does the pedalling, and I do the staying on." She smiled at the chauffeur, and he stopped mopping and smiled back. You could see that he didn't mind.

Freddy thought nobody would mind doing things for the rich Mrs. Winfield Church, not because she was rich, but because she was so nice. Several years ago she had been a lot of help to the Bean animals when they were trying to find a boy named Byram, and afterwards she had come out to see them quite often. But she hadn't been out now in over a year because, as she explained to Freddy, she wasn't using the car, and she thought it was too much to ask of Riley to push her up all those hills.

"But I've missed you animals," she said, "and I want to see you. I hope that you will all come to my niece's wedding next month. I've come into town to see about getting the invitations engraved, and your names are all on the list. And by the way," she said, taking her bag off the handlebars of the tandem, "there is something perhaps you can help me with." She opened the bag with fingers which sparkled and glistened with dozens of diamond rings—at least they looked like diamonds, but Freddy knew they weren't. Mrs. Church was fond of jewelry, but she always bought it at the ten-cent store, because she said: "Why wear diamonds when you can get the same effect with glass at a fraction of the cost?" That shows you what a sensible person she was.

She took out of her bag a piece of paper on which was painted in bright colors a coat of arms. "This is the coat of arms of our family—the Church family," she said. "Three white churches on a green field, and that motto underneath—'Safe as a church'—is our family motto. Rather nice, don't you think? Then you see there's this helmet on the top, and on the helmet is some kind of a bird. Do you know what the bird is?"

The bird had a red breast, and lots of little curly brown feathers on its head that looked almost like a wig, and its tail was made up of long white plumes. Freddy had never seen anything like it.

“Oh, dear,” said Mrs. Church. “You see, we want to have this printed at the top of the invitations. We thought it would look nice. Although to tell you the truth, I’m not at all sure that the Church family ever had a coat of arms. But my dear husband was very much interested in such things, and he hired a man to look it all up, and the man found this thing for him. My husband was never convinced that he had any right to it, because the man never offered any real proof. But it’s just as pretty, whether it belongs to us or not, don’t you think so?”

“Well,” Freddy said, “the bird is pretty too, whether you know what he is or not.”

“Yes. As long as nobody knows what he is. But suppose he turned out to be a butcher bird? Or one of those hawks that steal chickens? Don’t you see, people would say that probably the first Churches were murderers, or thieves. I just would like to be sure.”

“Well,” said Freddy, “why don’t you make up a name for him? Why don’t you call him a—a popinjay?”

“A popinjay? I don’t know what kind of bird that is.”

“Neither do I,” said Freddy. “So probably he really is one.”

Mrs. Church laughed. “That’s very smart of you, Freddy. So if anybody says: ‘Why, that’s a bird that steals chickens,’ I can say: ‘No indeed; the popinjay is a very kind and thoughtful bird; why, he often comes and looks after little chicks when the mother hen is busy.’ Or something like that, eh?”

“I don’t see why not,” said Freddy. “I don’t see why the popinjay isn’t also as brave as an eagle, and as beautiful as a golden pheasant, and as sweet a singer as a hermit thrush.”

Mrs. Church laughed harder than ever, and when she laughed she shook, and all the ten-cent store diamonds sparkled and glittered in the sunshine until she was quite blinding. “Really, Freddy,” she said, “I don’t know why I don’t ask your advice oftener. You don’t know what a weight you have lifted from my mind. I wish there was something I could do for you in return.”

“I think perhaps there is,” Freddy said. “But I’d like to think about it a little more before I ask you. May I call on you when I come into town next time—a week from today?”

“Let me see,” said Mrs. Church. “A week from today I am giving a luncheon for my niece. I can’t ask you because there will be no gentlemen present. But I tell you what—they’re all going to the movies after lunch. You come in about half-past two, and you and I can sit down comfortably at the table and eat up what is left and have a good long talk.”

## Chapter 4

Freddy had a lot of errands to do, so when the Pomeroy's had thanked him for his trouble they flew off home, and he went on up to the printing office and left the material for the next issue of his paper with Mr. Dimsey, the printer. Then he went into the Busy Bee and bought the things on the list Mrs. Bean had given him—a spool of black thread, and some binding ribbon and things like that. And then he went in to see Miss Peebles.

The sign over Miss Peebles' little store said:

HARRIET—HATS  
*Latest Paris Creations*

Harriet was Miss Peebles, and the hats were in the show window—eight or ten of them; not very pretty ones, Freddy thought, although Miss Peebles' hats were highly thought of in Centerboro. And after all, a hat was nothing, by itself, until you got a face under it you couldn't tell whether it was good looking or not. As for "the latest Paris creations," Freddy knew perfectly well that Miss Peebles made every hat she sold right in her own shop. But as everybody else in Centerboro knew it too, it couldn't be said that Miss Peebles was trying to deceive anybody. "I guess it's just advertising," Freddy thought. "If it sounds nice, nobody expects it to mean anything."

In the shop, Mrs. Weezer, the wife of the President of the Centerboro Bank, was trying on hats. She had tried on seventeen, and was just perching the eighteenth—a dark red hat trimmed with forget-me-nots—on her grey hair when Freddy came in. He came in very quietly, and as her back was towards him, she didn't see him. Miss Peebles had gone into the little room at the back of the store for another hat.

Mrs. Weezer looked at herself in the mirror before which she was sitting and gave several disapproving sniffs. Being a banker's wife, she was very hard to please. "No, no," she said irritably; "it won't do. Too sombre—*much* too sombre. I don't know, Harriet, why you can't get a little *life* into your hats. If these were poppies, now, instead of these pale forget-me-nots—"

Freddy had watched Miss Peebles trying hats on people, and knew how it was done. And as Miss Peebles was still out of the room, he couldn't resist the temptation to take her place. He went up behind Mrs. Weezer and took hold of the hat and tilted it forward over her left eye. "You must wear it this way," he said. "Very dashing now, isn't it? And the forget-me-nots just match the color of your eyes. Oh yes, decidedly that is the hat for you, madam. It suits you perfectly!"

"We-ell," said Mrs. Weezer doubtfully. "Yes, I see what you mean. Yes, I will

take it. And Harriet—” She turned to finish her sentence, and saw Freddy behind her where she had expected to see Miss Peebles. And she screamed.

“Oh!” she cried. “Harriet, Harriet! What has happened to you?”

Miss Peebles came rushing in. “Mrs. Weezer—what is it? Freddy, you here? What’s wrong?”

At the sight of Miss Peebles, Mrs. Weezer fell back in her chair. “Harriet!” she gasped. “I thought you had changed into a pig!” She swallowed. “But—what is this animal doing in here? Upon my word, Harriet, if this is a joke . . .”

“I’m sorry, ma’am,” said Freddy. “I just came in to see Miss Peebles about something, and you—well, you had that pretty hat on and you didn’t seem to like it, and I thought it did look so nice on you that I just couldn’t resist telling you so. I’m sorry if I frightened you.”

“Frighten me?—You didn’t frighten me,” Mrs. Weezer snapped. “But I must say I’m rather shocked. A pig, trying on hats!” She caught sight of herself in the glass and said, “It does match my eyes, Harriet.”

Freddy and Miss Peebles looked at each other and Miss Peebles said: “It brings out the blue in them.” She motioned to Freddy, and he moved off and stood by the door, looking at the hats in the window.

He could hear the conversation going on behind him, and after a while Mrs. Weezer came towards the door. She was carrying a hatbox.

Freddy opened the door for her, and she acknowledged his politeness with a cold nod, and went on out into the street.

“That was wonderful, Freddy,” said Miss Peebles. “How would you like to go into partnership with me? I believe you could sell the hats as fast as I could make them.” She smiled happily at him, and then asked if there was anything special he wanted to see her about. “If there is, come into the back room and we can talk while I trim another hat.”

Miss Peebles was quite old, and some people would have thought she was funny looking. She was tall and thin, and she had a long nose and very light eyelashes, and when she stood behind a customer looking down with her head on one side, at a hat that was being tried on, she looked rather like a crane, standing in shallow water and watching for minnows. She always wore a big brooch with a picture of Niagara Falls on it, except on Sundays when she put on one that showed the Bridge of Sighs. But Freddy did not think she looked funny any more than most of the people in Centerboro did. Because if you like people a lot, it doesn’t matter what they look like.

Miss Peebles knew all about trees and wild flowers and bushes, and she knew

all the different birds. She could tell what they were by their songs even if she couldn't see them. She spent all the time she could spare from making hats, out in the woods and fields, and there were some people in Centerboro who said, "I should think she could find something better to do than that!" But I don't know what difference it made to them.

So when Freddy asked Miss Peebles about the tree Jimmy had asked him about, she said at once it was moosewood, sometimes called striped maple.

So Freddy thanked her and they talked for a time, while she stitched some brown feathery stuff around a hat brim. And by and by Freddy asked her what it was.

"I'm almost ashamed to tell you," she said. "It's really nothing but part of an old feather duster. It seemed a shame to throw it away, and really it looks quite pretty. But don't tell anybody. Nobody would wear it on a hat if they knew what it was."

Freddy wanted to know if she could spare a little of it, and how much would it be.

"You can have all you want," Miss Peebles said, "and it won't cost you a cent. My goodness, after your getting Mrs. Weezer to take that hat, you can have anything in the store. Isn't there anything else you want?"

Freddy said if she had a few small soft white feathers, like little curling plumes, he'd be awfully pleased to have them. So she gave him the tips of some ostrich feathers, which he said were just the thing. And then they talked a little longer and Freddy started back home.

He had reached the top of the last hill when he stopped suddenly and said: "My goodness!" Above him, on the right, the upper pasture of the Bean farm sloped down from the Big Woods, and across the pasture a queer procession was moving. In the lead were the three cows—Mrs. Wiggins and Mrs. Wurzbarger and Mrs. Wogus—and behind them trailed Jinx and Hank and Charles and Bill—all his friends, and even some of the woods animals—he saw a dozen or more rabbits, a fox, several squirrels, and Sniffy Wilson, the skunk, and his family. They were moving up over the hill towards the Witherspoon farm.

Freddy was pretty curious to know what was going on. But he couldn't very well follow them until he had gone down to the house and given Mrs. Bean the things he had bought for her. So he trotted on as fast as he could. And it was when he was leaving the house that he ran into Quik.

Quik was one of the mice who lived in a cigar box back of the kitchen stove. At least they slept there, but during the day they were busy helping Mrs. Bean keep the house neat. They cleaned the crumbs up off the kitchen floor, and once a week, on

Saturday, they went over Mr. Bean's clothes and cleaned out the pockets. Mr. Bean was a great hand to stick a few cookies in his pocket when he went out to do the chores, and of course there were a good many crumbs. Mrs. Bean made wonderful cookies, and some Saturdays the mice had regular banquets in the pockets.

Quik was just coming across from the cow barn, and he stopped and said: "Aren't you going along?"

"Along where?" Freddy asked.

"Oh, I forgot," said Quik; "you weren't here when Uncle Wesley came down this morning. Why, just after you left to go to town, he came tearing down here to tell us that that Witherspoon boy had hit Alice with a rock."

"Good gracious!" said Freddy. Alice and Emma, the two ducks, lived with their Uncle Wesley up on the little pond below the woods. They were very gentle and ladylike, even for ducks, and everybody was fond of them. "Was she hurt badly?" Freddy asked.

"Put a dent in her bill and knocked her out for a while," said Quik, "but Jinx gave her First Aid and I guess she's all right now except for a bad headache. Emma said she'd have to eat soft food for a while, but ducks don't ever eat anything but soft food anyway, do they? Just mud. Anyhow, there was quite a lot of uproar for a while. Emma fainted away and had to have First Aid too, and all the excitement upset Uncle Wesley's stomach, and we had to take him in and have Mrs. Bean give him some peppermint. And now everybody's gone to try to find the Witherspoon boy and teach him a lesson he won't forget."

Freddy said: "I see. Well, I guess I'd better follow along." He crossed the barnyard and went on up in the direction the other animals had taken. At the top of the hill where the Witherspoon farm began he stopped. On the slope and in the valley below him, Zenas Witherspoon's fields, with their unpainted farm buildings, lay spread out. Eunice, the Witherspoon cow, was lying down under a tree. But there was no sign of Jimmy, or of the Bean animals.

"Wonder where they've gone," Freddy thought. Then down on a stone wall not far from the house he saw his friend Jinx, the black cat. He started to circle around, to get down to the wall without being seen from the house. And as he did so, Jinx put up his head and opened his mouth wide, and out of his mouth came a screech that could have been heard half a mile.

"What on earth is he up to?" Freddy wondered.

But the second time Jinx screeched, Freddy began to see. For Jimmy appeared at the house door. Jinx walked along the wall a few feet, and Jimmy caught sight of him. He pulled his slingshot out of his pocket and fitted a stone into it, and then



started sneaking up towards the wall. Jinx sat still. But as soon as Jimmy got within range, he jumped down on the other side of the wall, and Freddy could see him running in long leaps, without trying to conceal himself, across the next field.

Jimmy followed; and Freddy saw the same performance repeated on the next wall, and the next. Jimmy never got near enough for a shot. And then he climbed the fourth wall, which was a long way from the house, and as he jumped down on the far side he gave a yell of terror and didn't appear again. But Freddy could see movement behind the wall: a cow's horns tossed up, and a white back that was probably Hank's; and then several rabbits and two young skunks climbed up and sat there looking down with pleased expressions.

Freddy was worried. The Bean animals had all at one time or another had trouble with Jimmy; and the injury to Alice would have made them good and mad, for she was a universal favorite. But if they really hurt him there would be real trouble. He hurried down across the fields.

But when he got to the wall, Jimmy was on his feet. Mrs. Wogus had hooked her left horn under his right armpit, and Mrs. Wurzburger had hooked her right horn under his left armpit, and he was being marched down to the road. There was nothing he could do. Every time he struggled, or started to yell for help, Robert, the collie, would nip at his bare ankles. And they walked him that way all the way back to the Bean farm, and up to the duck pond, with the other animals trailing on behind.

Alice was sitting on the bank under the shade of a burdock leaf. The base of her bill and half of her head was covered with a large white bandage, and Emma was fussing about her and fanning her with one yellow webbed foot. Alice didn't like to be fussed over, but she couldn't protest because the bandage was so tight that she couldn't talk. Uncle Wesley was not visible, and Emma said he had gone to lie down, because he still felt a little nauseated.

Emma was very much annoyed when she saw Jimmy. "I don't see what you want to bring him up here for," she said. "My sister has suffered a severe shock, and this will only upset her."

"Well, she's the one that was hurt," said Jinx, "and she's the one who ought to decide what punishment he should get."

"Aw, I just popped her with a little stone," said Jimmy.

"You've popped a good many animals on this farm with little stones, young man," said Emma. "If I had anything to say about it, your popping days would be over."

"I'm sorry if I hurt her," Jimmy said. "But I don't think she's hurt at all. You take that bandage off and she'd be as good as ever."

Alice blinked her free eye, and put up one foot and pulled at the bandage.

“She’s getting nervous again,” said Emma. “I won’t have it. Her system is in no condition to be put under further strain. Take him away. Take him away and chop him up into little pieces if you want to, but—”

“Don’t talk nonsense, sister,” Alice interrupted. She had loosened the bandage enough so that she could speak. “The boy is right. Except for a slight headache, which in any case is probably caused by too much talk, I am as good as ever. I only let you put the bandage on because you seemed to want to so much, and you were all being so kind it seemed a pity not to let you do things for me.”

“Well, I never!” Emma exclaimed. “Really, Alice, I do think that was most inconsiderate of you. When we were all so worried—”

“Oh, never mind that, Emma,” said Mrs. Wiggins. “Alice, what’ll we do with this boy? You’re the one that was hit. You’re the one to decide on his punishment.”

“Oh, let him go,” said Alice. “You’ve scared him enough, and—”

“I’m not scared!” Jimmy shouted. “And you’d better let me go, or I’ll tell my father, and he’ll—” Mrs. Wurzburger and Mrs. Wogus still had their horns hooked under his arms, and now they lifted their heads a little and shook them from side to side. Jimmy fluttered till he looked like a suit of Mr. Bean’s underwear hanging on the line in a high wind, and his teeth rattled so that he couldn’t talk.

“Oh, don’t!” Alice pleaded. “Really, I think he’s had enough. If you’ll just take that—that weapon away from him—”

“The slingshot?” said Mrs. Wiggins. “Georgie’s got it. We’re going to take it down to the cow barn for safe keeping. Well, Alice, you’re the judge and the jury, and if you say let him go—” She nodded to her sisters, who set Jimmy down and released his arms.

The boy shook himself and looked around uneasily at the animals, none of whom seemed very pleased at Alice’s decision. But none of them said anything. Instead, they moved a little closer to him. He edged away, but as he was standing on the bank above the water of the pond, when they moved up again he couldn’t go any farther. Little sharp noses and big blunt noses, horns and beaks and slant yellow eyes and round brown eyes—they pressed in on him.

“Hey,” he shouted in a panic, “you let me out of here!”

And then Hank’s long white nose shot forward and hit him in the chest, and with a yell he went over backwards into the water.

“Land sakes!” said Hank. He looked down at the boy, thrashing in the water—which was only about three feet deep—and then he waded in and caught him by the collar and dragged him to the bank. “That was too bad, boy,” he said. “Guess

something must have pushed me. I'm sorry."

Jimmy scrambled to his feet, coughing and spluttering, and ran. A little way off he stopped. "You'll be sorry, all right, when I get through with you," he shouted. "You wait! You just wait!" And then he ran off home.

"That was mean, Hank," said Alice. "Nobody pushed you."

"Why, I dunno," said the horse. "Seems like they did. It's kind of hard to tell, sometimes, though, whether it's somebody outside that pushes you or something inside. Seems as if I was pushed. But maybe I pushed myself." He grinned.

"Maybe I pushed you, Hank," said Mrs. Wiggins. "I was pushing pretty hard in my mind. Anyway, you did just right." And the other animals agreed.

But on the way home, Freddy shook his head doubtfully. "I don't know," he said. "Pushing that boy will never get us anywhere. We're going to have trouble with him yet."

## Chapter 5

Freddy had not thought that he would have to go back to Centerboro for another week, but the following afternoon he was again sitting in the back room of Miss Peebles' shop. And with him was J. J. Pomeroy. Miss Peebles was sitting at her work table, and on the table was a sort of hat stand on which J. J. was perched. And Miss Peebles was trimming him. She was trimming him with the feathers she had given Freddy the day before. She sewed the fuzzy little brown feathers all over his head, and then she fastened the ostrich feather ends in among his tail feathers, so that he had a beautiful white plummy tail, almost as long as himself.

Freddy had tried to do the trimming job himself that morning, but although he could do many things with his trotters that other pigs can't—such as using a pencil, and a typewriter, and even a fork and spoon—he wasn't much good with needle and thread. So he had brought the robin down and asked Miss Peebles' help.

When she had finished, J. J. admired himself in the mirror. He hopped back and forth in front of it, waggled his tail, and even stuck out his chest and tried to put on a noble expression, like a senator making a patriotic speech. But he hadn't any features to speak of, and you can't look like a senator without features. Not very much. His face still looked just like a robin's. He was quite disappointed.

"Well, I'm not," said Freddy. "You look just like that popinjay on Mrs. Church's family coat of arms, and that's what I want. I want to raise the eight dollars for those glasses of yours. Mrs. Church wouldn't pay any senator eight dollars to sing at her niece's wedding, but she'd pay a popinjay, I bet."

"So that's your scheme?" said Miss Peebles, and she laughed fit to kill. "You're a caution, Freddy!"

"I think it's a good scheme," Freddy said. "Mrs. Church is going to have that coat of arms on the wedding invitations. My idea is to have it painted up big, only instead of painting the popinjay on top, J. J. will be perched there. And then when the wedding ceremony is over he will burst into song."

"That is a very pretty idea," Miss Peebles said. "But why do you go to all this trouble? If you asked Mrs. Church for the money, I'm sure she'd give it to you."

"So am I," said Freddy. "But J. J. wants to earn it. And I think he's right. He wants to pay you for your trouble, too—"

"Nonsense," said Miss Peebles. "It was a pleasure. I've never trimmed a live hat before. A hat!" she exclaimed suddenly. "My word, Freddy, I've got an idea! Wait a minute!"

She jumped up and went to the phone and called Mrs. Church. "Are you

coming into the village this afternoon, Mrs. Church? Starting now? . . . Good. . . . Well, will you stop in? I've something that I'm sure will interest you."

Freddy started asking questions, but she stopped him. "No. You do just as I say, will you? If it doesn't work, then all right—you can talk to her. Now you, Mr.—Mr. Pomeroy, come out here and perch on this hat stand in the front window, among the other hats. Yes, you're to try to look like a hat. But not until you see Mrs. Church coming towards the store. Then you put your head down and spread your wings—sort of flatten out. And then don't move. I'll do the rest."

Freddy and Miss Peebles waited, watching the street outside through the window. And in a few minutes the tandem bicycle drew up at the curb and Mrs. Church got unsteadily down and started towards the shop. As she put her hand out to open the door, she glanced into the window, and then her hand dropped and her eyes opened wide and she fixed an amazed stare on J. J. Pomeroy, who had tilted forward on the hat stand and flattened out as Miss Peebles had shown him.

Then Mrs. Church pulled open the door and dashed into the shop. "Harriet!" she exclaimed. "The most extraordinary thing—that hat! It's not sold, is it? I must have it. It's exactly the popinjay on our crest—you know?"

"Yes," said Miss Peebles. "It's a popinjay."

"But where did you find it? I didn't know such a bird existed. And—oh, dear!" She stopped short. "It's against the law to trim hats with birds, isn't it? To wear them, anyway. I couldn't wear it—"

"It's against the law to trim hats with dead birds," said Miss Peebles.

"Well, of course. You couldn't very well trim them with live ones. What are you getting at, Harriet?"

Miss Peebles just raised her eyebrows and smiled. "All right, Mr. Pomeroy," she said. "Will you come over here, please?" And J. J. flew over and perched on the back of her chair.

"Merciful heavens!" said Mrs. Church, and sank down into the chair which Freddy hastily pushed forward. Then she looked up at him. "You're here again, Freddy? I suppose you're at the bottom of this somehow. I don't imagine you're learning the millinery trade, though it wouldn't surprise me any—the things you do!" She blinked her eyes, and then turned her head slowly and stared again at the robin. "But there *isn't* any such bird!"

"Yes, ma'am, I am at the bottom of it," Freddy said. "But perhaps Miss Peebles wants to explain."

"Why, you see, Mrs. Church," Miss Peebles said, "we knew you would be getting a new hat for the wedding. And since the popinjay is, in a way, your family

bird, we knew that a hat with a popinjay on it would be exactly what you'd want. But of course, that was difficult—first, because it is against the law to trim hats with dead birds, and second, because there isn't any such bird anyway. So we made up a popinjay for you, using a robin as base."

"It's Mr. J. J. Pomeroy, the robin I introduced to you yesterday," Freddy said.

"I see," said Mrs. Church, but she didn't look as if she did. "How do you do, Mr. Pop—that is, Mr. Pomeroy. Perhaps I'd better call you Mr. Popinjay, to avoid confusion. Though how I can avoid it," she added, "when I'm completely confused myself, I don't know."

"The point is," said Miss Peebles, "that you can hire Mr. Pomeroy to act as your hat—you can wear him at the wedding. Freddy's idea was to have him sing during, or right after, the ceremony, and of course, he could do that, too. You see, he needs money to pay for some new eyeglasses, and that was about the only way Freddy could think of in which he could earn it. Do you like the idea?"

"Like it? Of course I like it! The bird on the family crest singing for joy at the wedding—it's a lovely idea! And as for wearing him—I think it would be marvelous! Mr. Pomeroy, how much would you charge to sing, and to allow me to wear you for the afternoon?"

J. J. said he hardly knew what to ask; he'd never done work like that before. "Would a dollar be too much?"

"He needs eight dollars for his glasses," Freddy said quickly.

"Eight dollars!" exclaimed Mrs. Church. "That's not very much. My goodness, an ordinary soprano would charge me at least twenty-five, and she wouldn't be engaged to sit on my head during the ceremony either. Let's say twenty-five anyway."

"But I really don't need that much—" Mr. Pomeroy began.

"Well, you can buy glasses for your wife and children with what's left over," Mrs. Church said. She lifted off the hat she was wearing and set it on the counter. "But perhaps I'd better try you on."

So J. J. flew up and lit on her head. He spread his wings and flattened his head and his body so that his beak was just over her left eye and Mrs. Church examined herself in the glass. "Really, it's remarkable!" she said. "Very smart. My word, Mr. Popinjay, we've got *style*, you and I!" She smiled at him. "Don't blink any more than you can help," she said, "and try not to pull my hair. On the wedding day we'll fasten something—a skewer would do—in my hair so you'll have something to hang on to." She took some bills out of her purse. "Here's your twenty-five. And you had better come up to the house one day next week so we can rehearse. Freddy, you

come along too. And you, of course, Harriet. I count on all of you to help me make the wedding a success.” She got up, and when J. J. had hopped down, put on her hat. “Goodbye for now. And thank you all. I don’t know what I should have done without you.”

On the way back to the farm Mr. Pomeroy rode most of the time on Freddy’s back. He found that until he could practice using it, his new tail was more of a hindrance than a help. “You see,” he said, “when I’m flying I steer with my tail, and now that there’s so much more of it, it throws me off. I’ll have to get used to it.”

“Oh, you’ll get used to it,” said Freddy. He was thinking of the poem he had written yesterday, and not paying much attention to his passenger. All about how we can’t change our looks, and so we’d better be satisfied with what we’ve got. It had all seemed very true, and yet here today he had been surrounded by people who were not only trying to change their looks, but were succeeding at it. There was this robin, who had become a popinjay, and there was Mrs. Weezer, who had made herself look different with a red hat with forget-me-nots on it. And there was Mrs. Church wearing the popinjay.

Finally he spoke to J. J. about it.

“Well, I think your poem was perfectly right, Freddy,” the robin said. “You hadn’t ought to try to look like something that you aren’t. Of course, you can say that I am doing just that, but I’m doing it in order to make money. Just as when you put on one of your disguises you wear in your detective work, you’re doing it to solve a case.”

“But Mrs. Weezer and Mrs. Church aren’t doing it for business reasons. They’re just not satisfied with the way they look, and they want to look like someone else.”

“Do they want to look like someone else, or do they want to look more like themselves?” asked the robin. “That’s the answer. Take Mrs. Weezer. The forget-me-nots on her hat make her eyes look bluer. Well then, she’s just Mrs. Weezer, only more so. And Mrs. Church—if she wears her family crest, she looks more like a Church, doesn’t she?”

Freddy shook his head. “It’s kind of confusing,” he said. “That’s what always happens when I begin to think about my poems. Pretty soon I begin to wonder if I haven’t said just the opposite of what I mean.”

“There’s always two sides to every question,” said J. J. “And the funny part of it is, both sides are usually right. There wouldn’t ever be any arguments if one side was always right and the other always wrong.”

“And there sure are plenty of arguments,” said Freddy. “You know, J. J., what you have just said makes me surer than ever that there’s something to be said for

that Witherspoon boy. Just thinking about his hurting Alice, and shooting at the rest of us all the time, you'd say he was a bad boy and ought to be locked up. But I don't think he wants to be bad. I think other people have always been bad to him, and he doesn't know how to act any different. Now if we were all to start being nice to him—ask him to play games with us and things like that—”

“Ha ha!” said the robin sarcastically. “If you're going to play games with that kid, you wear a tin suit and carry a sock full of rocks.”

Freddy nodded. “I guess maybe you're right. I guess maybe you ought to carry a machine gun, too.”



## Chapter 6

During the next few days it certainly looked as if the animals had made a lot of trouble for themselves by throwing Jimmy Witherspoon into the duck pond. The boundary between the two farms was partly fence and partly stone wall, and it ran from the road, on the east of Mr. Bean's land, right up into the woods. And now it was as much as any animal's life was worth to go near that fence. Jimmy had always been a nuisance, but now he had declared open war, and although he was afraid of getting into trouble with Mr. Bean, and so never crossed the fence, he spent most of his time in hiding behind it, with a pocket full of stones. And he was a pretty good shot.

In the first two days, Mrs. Wogus and Mrs. Wurzburger had each been hit twice, and Mrs. Wiggins, seven times. Bill, the goat, had a nick taken out of one of his horns, and a large number of the smaller animals had been hit. Rabbit No. 13, who had been one of Freddy's ablest assistants in the detective business, was quite badly bruised, and had to be brought down to the barn on a stretcher. The situation was pretty serious, and so on the evening of the second day of hostilities, the animals held a meeting in the barn to consider what should be done.

The meeting was a stormy one. Mrs. Wiggins made the opening address, but in the middle of it, Charles, the rooster, flew up to the seat of the old phaeton and called for the animals to rise in their might and march upon the enemy. "How long," he shouted, "are we to put up with these vicious attacks upon our homes, our liberty—yes, upon our very lives? I, for one, refuse to cower before these powerful assaults, to squeal beneath the heel of the oppressor. Let us not waste time in idle talk. Let us march this very moment. And I, Charles, will lead you. Let us, beneath the banner of Bean, descend upon the stronghold of the Witherspoons and destroy it utterly, so that not one stone shall remain upon another. Let us—"

It was perhaps fortunate that at this moment Henrietta, Charles' wife, flew up beside him and gave him a jab with her beak, which knocked him squawking to the barn floor. For some of the animals were beginning to cheer and act very warlike, and Charles' rousing words might well have persuaded them to a course which could only have ended disastrously.

"Destroy the Witherspoon house, eh?" she said angrily. "You noisy bunch of feathers, you couldn't destroy a paper bag. Unless you blew in it. You've got wind enough. Now shut up, and let somebody with a little sense talk."

"Henrietta's right," said Mrs. Wiggins. "We mustn't do anything foolish. We can't do much to that boy without getting Mr. Bean into trouble with Mr. Witherspoon."

Anyway, we animals always settle our own quarrels without dragging Mr. Bean into it. Now if Peter were here, he could take that boy in hand without any fuss. A bear is about the only animal that his stones wouldn't hurt. But as you know, Peter is spending some weeks with relatives in Herkimer County.

"Now of course we can keep out of trouble by staying away from the side of the farm by the Witherspoon property—"

"No, no!" shouted everyone.

Mrs. Wiggins nodded. "Quite right," she said. "It's Mr. Bean's land, and we have a right there. Besides, there are a lot of you rabbits and woodchucks that live near the fence, and you aren't to be driven from your homes. But I must say, I don't know what we can do. Has anybody any suggestions?"

Well of course every animal there had a suggestion, and they all began talking at once. And at last Mrs. Wiggins rapped for order.

"Good grief," she said, "we'll never get anywhere this way! If we could drive that boy away with talk, he'd be in China by now. Now I'll take you in order, and you'll each have a minute to talk; we don't want to be here all night. You first, young chipmunk—yes, you in the front row."

Even in this way, it took quite a while. And although some of the plans offered weren't bad, the meeting ended just where it had begun, for as soon as an animal had finished, his plan was voted on; and as no animal liked the plan of any other animal, each plan was immediately voted down.

This would have stumped almost anyone but Mrs. Wiggins. But she had been to Washington and seen how Congress worked, and she knew that if you can't get action from a big meeting, the thing to do is make the meeting smaller. And the way to do that is to appoint a committee. So she said: "Since we don't seem to be getting anywhere, I will appoint Freddy and Jinx and myself as a committee of three to decide on what course to take. The committee will now adjourn upstairs for an hour, and when we have reached a decision we will come down and tell you about it."

So the committee went up the steep narrow stairs into the loft. Jinx bounded up easily, and Freddy climbed up after him, but Mrs. Wiggins was so big that although all the animals got behind her and pushed, she only got halfway up, and there she stuck. So she backed down slowly.

"I find," she said in such a dignified way that all the others stopped laughing at once, "that I am unable to attend the committee meeting. I therefore appoint Henrietta in my place."

The loft had been turned into a workroom for Mr. Bean's Uncle Ben, who sometimes came to visit, and his workbench and all his tools were there, as well as

thirty or forty clocks—for Uncle Ben was an expert on clocks. Jinx turned on the light over the workbench, and the committee all started to talk at once. For of course, each of them had a different plan, too.

But since there were only three plans, instead of a hundred, they were at last able to agree on a sort of combination of the three. “And I think,” said Freddy, “that we ought to keep what we’re doing secret. Of course nobody would tell Jimmy on purpose, but some of those squirrels and rabbits are pretty gossipy, and it might get out.”

“We’ll have to tell them something when we go down,” said Jinx, “or they’ll tear us to pieces.”

“Leave it to me,” said Freddy. “You stay up here a minute.” He went to the head of the stairs and shouted: “Your attention, ladies and gentlemen!”

The animals, who had been passing the time by playing Twenty Questions, all stopped talking and turned their faces up towards him.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said Freddy, “your committee has decided upon a plan, but has not yet settled all the details. It is necessary for us first to ask for three volunteers for a dangerous duty—a mission so perilous that I shudder to think of it.” He shuddered.

“But wait!” he continued, as several animals seemed about to step forward. “You will not only be in great danger, you will also appear very foolish. I must warn you that if you survive the perils, you will not be acclaimed as heroes—you will just be laughed at. For no one will know about the danger but yourselves; no one will see in you anything but three animals making monkeys of themselves. Personally, I have refused to volunteer. As President of the First Animal Bank, I cannot afford to act in a silly and undignified manner. But if there are three among you who are willing to sacrifice their dignity—and perhaps their lives, of course—for the good of all, kindly come up and join the committee.” And he turned away.

Through knotholes in the floor the committee watched the proceedings below. The animals were all talking at once, as they had been before Freddy’s announcement. But now, instead of keeping their places, they were moving around, each one weaving in and out of the crowd until he got close to the door—and then disappearing quietly into the night. In ten minutes the committee went down, and the barn was empty, except for Hank, who lived there.

“They’re a fine lot of heroes, I must say!” Henrietta exclaimed.

“Well, I dunno,” said Hank. “Bein’ a hero’s one thing and bein’ a monkey’s another. Lots of folks wouldn’t mind dying a hero’s death in a good cause—no, you needn’t look at me; I ain’t one of ’em—but to perish looking like a silly fool ain’t got

anything grand about it. At least that's my idea. I'd rather die than do anything like that." He looked puzzled. "That wouldn't fix it, either," he said. "There ain't much difference, is there?"

"You're just as dead one way as the other," Jinx said.

Hank shook his head. "No I ain't. Not as much so. Not near as much." He looked at them triumphantly. "I said something pretty good there, didn't I? Explain it to me, will you?"

"You're going to talk yourself into volunteering before you get through," Henrietta said, and winked at the others. Hank always got mixed up when he tried to think. He was like a kitten with a ball of yarn. He could take a few tag ends of ideas and get so snarled up in them that it took his friends several days to untangle him.

But this time he managed to get untangled himself. "No, sir," he said, "I ain't volunteering. Why should I volunteer to make a fool of myself? I can do that all by myself, without makin' any ceremony of it." He looked at them thoughtfully for a minute, then said: "Well, goodnight," and clumped off into his stall. And the animals turned out the light and left.

But the committee didn't go to bed. They went up to where, just below the woods, a stone wall separated the two farms. Trees and bushes grew close along the wall, but at one place there was a gap through which went a seldom used path. This they examined carefully.

"I guess it will do all right," Freddy said. "I'll get Raymond." And he went back to where a large rock stuck up out of the pasture, and rapped on it.

There was a scrabbling underground, and then in the faint starlight Freddy saw a blunt head poke up out of a hole under the rock, and a husky voice said: "What's wanted?"

"It's me, Raymond," said Freddy. "Get the boys together, will you? I've got a digging job for them."

Raymond was the head woodchuck on the Bean farm. It was a pretty responsible position. He had charge of all digging, and of the location of all new homes. He had had so much experience that he could tell by just looking over a piece of ground exactly how the rocks lay under the surface, and just how the underground rooms should be arranged.

"Well, I don't know, Freddy," he said. "The boys don't like night work. Everybody's in bed and asleep. Can't it wait?"

Freddy said no, it couldn't. And when he had explained why it couldn't, Raymond got up on the rock and sounded the general alarm—three long whistles.

Considering what a sleepy lot woodchucks are, it was surprising how quickly

they gathered. In ten minutes, forty-two of them had reported, and then Freddy led them over and showed them where they were to dig. The place selected was in the path, just on the Bean side of the wall. Raymond looked the ground over. Then he spit on his paws. "O.K., boys," he said. "Let's go."

They didn't start digging from the top as a man with a spade would have done. On four sides of the place where the big hole was to be, they drove slanting shafts downward to meet six feet underground. Pretty soon the dirt began to come flying out of the holes, and one gang of woodchucks carried it away and spread it out so that it wouldn't mound up into heaps. After half an hour or so, the ground in the middle began to cave in, but the workers below kept right on, and by the time they had been working two hours they had finished, and there was a pit in the path some six feet deep and three feet across.

Freddy in the meantime had gone down to the barn and dragged up an old mattress that had been stored in the loft. He put it in the bottom of the hole, and then they laid small branches across the top of the pit and covered them with leaves and grass and rubbish so that it looked no different from the ground around it. And then Freddy thanked the woodchucks, and they all went home to bed.

## Chapter 7

Digging the pit had been an idea of Henrietta's. She said it was the way they trapped elephants in India. I don't know how she knew about it, for she had certainly never been in India, and I doubt very much if she or any other hen had ever gone in much for elephant hunting. But the idea, of course, was to get Jimmy to chase some animal along that path. The small animal would go across the pit without falling through, but Jimmy's weight would be too heavy for the light branches and he would break through. Then the animals would have him where they wanted him, and would be able to come to terms with him.

Freddy hadn't thought it would work. He agreed to try it, but he wanted to try his own plan first. And so next morning after breakfast, when he was pretty sure Jimmy would be out scouting along the fence with a pocket full of stones, Freddy went out into what the animals now called no man's land, near the fence, and hid behind a bush. He had with him a white rag tied to a stick, and a barrel head with a leather loop nailed to one side, to be used as a shield.

As soon as he caught sight of Jimmy, he came out and walked boldly, under his flag of truce, towards the fence. But he kept his shield handy too.

But Jimmy respected the rules of warfare. He didn't have any handkerchief to wave because his father wouldn't buy him any, but he came up to the fence and leaned on it and said: "Well, all right. What do you want?"

"I want to see if we can't get together," said Freddy. "There isn't any reason for us to fight, and we could all have a lot of fun together."

"I'm having fun," said Jimmy.

"I don't think it's fun to hurt people," Freddy said. "And that's what you're doing."

Jimmy said: "Sure I am. I told you I'd get even with you. You threw me in the pond, didn't you? And all I did was just pop that silly duck. It didn't do her any harm."

Freddy felt himself beginning to get angry, but he knew he wouldn't get anywhere with Jimmy if he did, so he said quietly: "Well, I should think we were all about even, then. But the point of it is: you're missing a lot of fun you might be having. Now, we're going to have a party tomorrow night—you know, with games and refreshments and everything—and we'd like to have you come over. How about it?"

Jimmy hesitated. He had never been asked to a party before. At school he had heard other boys being invited to parties, and he had heard them talking parties over

afterwards, but he was so ragged and unkempt, and so cranky, that nobody wanted to ask him. Once, Frank Farrell had said he'd invite him to his birthday party if he'd get his hair cut first. Jimmy had had a fight with Frank over that. But afterwards he had asked his father for money to get a haircut. Of course his father had refused. He had no money to fritter away on barbers, he said; Jimmy's mother could cut his hair, as she always did. But that was no good to Jimmy. When his mother cut his hair she cut it all crooked, so that he looked more like a scarecrow afterwards than before. She did it on purpose, thinking that when Mr. Witherspoon saw how the boy looked, he might relent and get him a real haircut. But he never did.

"We're going to have a lot of fun," said Freddy. "And maybe Mrs. Bean will bake us a chocolate cake."

The nearest Jimmy had ever come to a chocolate cake was to look at one through a bakery window. On his tenth birthday his mother had wanted to buy chocolate to bake him one, but his father had pretty near hit the ceiling. "What do you want to do—ruin us?" he roared. "If the boy wants something sweet, spread some molasses on a slice of bread. That's good nourishing food; if you spread it thin it won't hurt him." So on birthdays and Christmas, Jimmy had as a special treat, bread and molasses. When Mr. Witherspoon wasn't around, Mrs. Witherspoon spread on the molasses good and thick.

So the cake pretty nearly decided Jimmy. Freddy watched the boy's eyes, and he could see hunger in them, and he could see suspicion. The hunger was really as much for friendship as for chocolate cake, Freddy thought. And the suspicion—well, Jimmy couldn't help that, the way he'd been treated. The hunger had the best of it for a minute, but then the suspicion got stronger, and it fought with the hunger and drove it away. And Jimmy gave a harsh laugh.

"Chocolate cake for animals? I guess you won't catch Mrs. Bean at any such foolishness! Anyway, why would I want to go to a party with a lot of cows and pigs and things? No, go on now; you beat it. I'll give you till I count ten."

Freddy saw it was no use. It would have to be the elephant trap after all. He dropped his flag of truce and turned and ran. But Jimmy was counting slowly—he was only up to eight when the pig was out of range. This puzzled Freddy; and when Jimmy threw a stone and it fell short, he took a firm grip of his shield and deliberately walked halfway back. "I'll give you a shot at me," he called, "if you'll tell me what that tree was we saw the other day."

"Pooh, that's easy—moose wood," said Jimmy, and he threw a stone. It whizzed straight for Freddy's head, but he put up the barrel head and smack! the stone hit it in the center.

“Hey! That’s good!” said Jimmy. “Let’s try again.”

“Well,” Freddy said to himself, “this is one kind of game I’ve got him to play. If I don’t get an eye knocked out, maybe—” Tonk! went another stone—“maybe I can get him to playing less dangerous ones.”

“Say, you’re good!” said Jimmy. “Try this one.” And he scaled a flat stone, which swept around in a long curve. But Freddy caught it.

“Wow!” he said to himself. “I hope I’m getting somewhere!”

And maybe he would have, but suddenly he heard a familiar voice behind him. “Hey, you boy! Consarn you, what are you doing, throwing stones at my animals!” And swinging round, he saw Mr. Bean running towards him. And Jimmy turned and made for home as fast as his legs would carry him.

But Mr. Bean didn’t stop. And he could certainly cover the ground. He had his pipe between his teeth, and at every step a puff of blue smoke spurted into the air, so that he looked like a little steam engine. He took the path that went through the gap in the wall where the woodchucks had dug the elephant trap, because that was the shortest way to get across to the Witherspoon farm.

“Oh, stop! Stop!” Freddy yelled. But Mr. Bean paid no attention. He ran on, into the path, through the trees—and then he disappeared. There wasn’t any fuss or noise. He just vanished.

“Oh!” said Freddy. “Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!”



## Chapter 8

Jinx and Henrietta, the other two members of the committee, came out from behind a bush where they had been hiding and ran over to Freddy.

“Freddy!” said Henrietta. “Isn’t this *awful!* What’ll we do?”

“Boy, oh boy!” said Jinx in an awed voice. “I know what I’m going to do. I’m going back to the house and pack up my rubber mouse and my catnip ball and beat it. I wonder if the sheriff needs a good cat down at the Centerboro jail?”

“You can’t do that,” said Freddy. “We’ve got to help him out, anyway. Maybe he’s hurt.”

“He isn’t yelling any,” said Jinx.

“Mr. Bean wouldn’t yell, even if he was hurt,” said Henrietta. “But he can’t be. That’s why we put the mattress there—so Jimmy wouldn’t hurt himself.”

“Well, come on,” said Freddy. “We’ve got to see. But what can we tell him?”

“Tell him the truth,” said Henrietta sharply, “and take our lickings.”

“Mr. Bean never licks us,” said Jinx.

“No, but it’s the way he looks at us when we’ve done something,” Freddy said. “I’d rather have the licking any day.”

“Ho, hum,” said Jinx. “No cream for a month, I suppose. Well, let’s get it over with.” Like most cats, Jinx never worried much about hard looks as long as they weren’t accompanied with broomsticks or going to bed without supper.

They went up unhappily to the edge of the pit and looked down. Mr. Bean was sitting comfortably on the mattress, puffing his pipe, which apparently he had kept in his mouth all the time. When their shadows fell across him he looked up, but he didn’t say anything.

Usually Mr. Bean didn’t like to hear animals talk. He said it wasn’t fitting. I suppose he meant by that that it is a little unusual to hear an animal talk, and he didn’t like unusual things much. I suppose that was why he had worn the same hat for thirty years.

“Well—Mr. Bean,” Freddy stammered, “are you—are you all right?”

Mr. Bean grunted. Then he said: “If I had a mug of cider I’d be as happy as a moth in a blanket.”

“I—I guess we don’t understand, sir,” Freddy said. “We saw you fall in, and—well, we came to help you out.”

“Preserve us and keep us!” said Mr. Bean, and a puff of smoke came out with every p. “What for? This is the first time since I started farming it, fifty years ago, that I’ve been in a place where I can look around me and not see a lot of work that has

to be done. The first time I've been in a place I couldn't get out of to go look for more work." He puffed thoughtfully for a minute. "Only thing is," he said, "I don't know how I got here. I was chasin' that consarned Witherspoon boy, and then I was sitting here, smoking my pipe. There must have been something between."

"We know what it was," said Freddy. "We're responsible for it."

"I give you my thanks," said Mr. Bean.

The committee looked at one another. Mr. Bean wasn't taking it the way they had expected him to. But maybe when they told him—

He looked at them shrewdly. "Better not say anything more," he said. "If you tell me, I'll have to do something about it, and I don't feel like it right now. Go away, go away!" he said irritably as Freddy started to speak. "Sometimes you animals don't know when you're well off. But wait!" he called as they drew back. "Better send Hank up here after a spell to pull me out. I expect Mrs. B.'ll worry if I'm not home to dinner."

The animals started back slowly towards the farmyard. "Well, I guess it's all right," Freddy said. "But I can't figure out why he isn't good and mad."

"Maybe he fell on his head," said Jinx. "My grandmother fell off the roof once and landed on her head, and she always acted queer afterwards. She used to have fits."

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Henrietta sharply. "Mr. Bean isn't having fits. He's enjoying himself. Goodness to gracious, I'd like to get into a nice quiet place like that myself! It would certainly be a change from that henhouse, with thirty cackling children tearing around and asking questions and always wanting something, and Charles practicing his speeches. Well, we've tried my plan, Freddy, and we've tried yours. Now let's try Jinx's."

So they went back and gave Hank Mr. Bean's message, and then they went down to Freddy's study in the pig pen and made out a list of all the animals and birds that would be useful in carrying out Jinx's plan. This plan was very simple. It was based on the fact that if a person is kept awake all night, he isn't likely to be very lively the next day. If they could wake Jimmy up every half hour all night long, he wouldn't feel much like running around and throwing stones at animals in the morning; he would probably spend most of the day sleeping. And if they did it several nights running, he would probably be willing to let them alone if they would stop bothering him. Jimmy went to bed at nine, and got up with his parents at five. That meant that he would have to be waked up fifteen times during the night.

"It means a lot of night work for all of us for a while," Jinx said, "but if we divide it up it won't be so bad."

So Freddy made out a schedule on his typewriter.

9:30. Jinx yells  
10:00. Freddy squeals  
10:30. Charles crows  
11:00. Henrietta cackles  
11:30. Robert howls  
12:00. Georgie yelps  
12:30. Emma quacks  
1:00. Hank neighs

“I don’t know about Hank,” Freddy said. “He’s so big, he couldn’t get out of sight quick enough if Jimmy was laying for him. And we’ve got to remember that he will lay for us after the first few times.”

“If Hank keeps to one side of the window he’ll be all right,” said Jinx. “Jimmy’d have to light a lantern before he could look round. Old Witherspoon doesn’t own a flashlight; he always uses lanterns.”

“But Hank’s white,” said Henrietta, “and the cows are too. I think we’d better leave them out of it.”

“Well, it’s only one o’clock, and we’re running short of animals,” Freddy said. “Some of us will have to make two trips.”

“How about Old Whibley?” said Henrietta. “He’s up most of the night anyway.” Old Whibley was the owl, who lived up in the woods with his niece, Vera. “A couple of those hoots of his will scare Jimmy right out of his nightshirt.”

“And Vera’s got a screech that will scare him right out of his skin, after his nightshirt is gone,” said Jinx. “Boy, you won’t have to put anybody on for an hour after Vera cuts loose.”

“I think they’ll do it,” Freddy said. “He’ll grump and grouch about it a lot, but he’ll do it.” And he wrote down:

1:00. Whibley hoots  
1:30. Vera screeches  
2:00. ?

“We’re still about five animals short,” he said. “I suppose each of us could stay and wake him up twice.”

Jinx said no, that wouldn’t do. It ought to be a different noise each time. “If it’s the same sound, he’ll know what to expect and get used to it. It’ll scare him more if

he doesn't know what to expect."

"I wish I knew a wildcat," said Henrietta. "That is, I wish I knew *of* one. I wouldn't care to meet one personally."

"Let's look over the different noises," said Freddy. "I mean, what noises *haven't* we got down? Let's see—we haven't got twitter or chirp or buzz or growl, but they're not scary noises. I can grunt, but a grunt is a sort of soothing sound—"

"Says you!" Jinx exclaimed. "How about 'snort' and 'bellow'? And 'bawl'? Who can we get to bawl?"

"I wish Mr. Boomschmidt's circus was around," Freddy said. "We could get Leo to roar. Golly, if that lion roared in Jimmy's window—!"

"If, if, if!" said Henrietta impatiently. "We can't work with if's. We've got to use what we've got. Freddy, how about your going up and getting Uncle Solomon to help us out?"

"Great!" said Jinx. "That would give us 'shriek' and 'scream' all rolled into one nice horrible package. Yes, you go see him, Freddy."

Freddy didn't want to go. Uncle Solomon was a distant relative of Old Whibley's, a small screech owl who lived all alone in the Big Woods. Like all owls, he was a terrible arguer. Freddy didn't mind that so much, but nobody had ever been able to win an argument with Uncle Solomon. He could take either side of an argument—and indeed he would usually offer to change sides right in the middle of one; but whichever side he took, he always won.

Now with some arguers, if you want to persuade them to do anything, you have to start by trying to persuade them *not* to do it. And they will argue themselves right into doing it. But with Uncle Solomon you couldn't ever tell where to start. But at last Freddy agreed to go see him.

So he went up into the Big Woods and rapped on the trunk of the tree in which the owl lived. "Uncle Solomon!" he called. "Can I see you a minute?"

The little owl flew down at once and perched just over Freddy's head. And he said in his small precise voice: "That depends, does it not, on just what you mean by the word 'see'? Do you mean that you wish to consult me upon some matter, or that you merely wish to look at me? I assume that it is the latter, since the 'minute' which you mention contains only sixty seconds, and is therefore hardly long enough for a consultation of any importance. Indeed it is now up, and as you have done what you wished to do—namely, seen me for a minute, I will say good morning."

"Oh, dear!" said Freddy hopelessly, and then he got mad. "Oh, all right," he said. "If you want to be that way about it, I'll go home. Just forget the whole thing." And he turned and started back.

But Uncle Solomon loved to argue—which I suppose was only natural, as he always won. And in addition, he was a lot more curious than owls usually are. Old Whibley would have said: “Good!” and flown back into his nest and gone to sleep, but Uncle Solomon gave his long tittering laugh. “Dear me, how very touchy you are, young pig! Come, come; present your case.”

So Freddy came back and told him about Jimmy and their plan for keeping him awake. He talked fast so that the owl wouldn’t be able to stop him, but Uncle Solomon was always very mannerly. He never interrupted. But when you were all through, he would begin and take your whole argument to pieces.

When Freddy had finished, he said: “I do not like boys who throw stones, and I am therefore inclined to assist you. But there are one or two points in your statement which do not appear to be logical—”

“Oh, please!” said Freddy. “If you’ll just come down! And anyway,” he said, thinking that he could perhaps turn the owl’s own method of argument against him, “how can you say that there are one *or* two? If there is one, there can’t be two, and if there are two, then you shouldn’t say ‘one *or* two’—isn’t that so?”

“Very well reasoned,” said Uncle Solomon. “But I was using the phrase ‘one or two’ in the accepted sense of ‘several.’ There are, in fact, six. And to begin with the first one:—”

“Excuse me,” Freddy cut in; “I really have to get back. I don’t want to interrupt you—”

“You do want to, or you wouldn’t,” said the owl. “And conversely, if you didn’t want to, you would. Which proves, of course, that you really don’t know your own mind.” He laughed his neat little laugh. “Correct me if I am wrong.”

“Oh, I don’t care whether you’re right or wrong,” said Freddy, “if you’ll only show up down at the Witherspoons’ at half-past two tomorrow morning, and scream in Jimmy’s window. We’re counting on you. But goodbye for now.” And he ran off. But before he was out of earshot he heard Uncle Solomon starting to tear his remarks to pieces. “Show up down at the Witherspoons’! Well, is it to be up or down—you can’t have it both ways . . .”

It took the rest of the morning to get all the animals lined up and persuade them to do their part, but most of them were willing, and they all felt pretty sure that after a night or two of being kept awake, Jimmy would give in. Freddy and Jinx were going to stay up all night, because not only would they have to make two visits each to the Witherspoon house, but they would have to be sure that none of the others overslept their appointed times. And Freddy was just going down to his study to take a nap until supper time when he met Mr. Bean.

“Ah!” said Mr. Bean, and stopped.

Freddy stopped too, but he didn't say anything. For perhaps a minute they looked at each other, then Mr. Bean leaned down and slapped Freddy on the shoulder. “Smart pig,” he said. “Know enough not to make explanations.” He straightened up and looked off thoughtfully over the fields, puffing his pipe. “Got a lot of thinking done this morning,” he said, as if talking to himself. “Good place to think, down that hole. Guess we'd better keep it. Anybody wants to think, leaves word when he wants to be pulled out, then jumps in and thinks.” He bent and slapped Freddy again. “If you need any help with that Witherspoon boy, let me know,” he said, and went on towards the house.

## Chapter 9

Jimmy slept in a corner room on the ground floor of the Witherspoon house. It wasn't much of a room. As Freddy said: "My pig pen is a palace to it." There was nothing in it but a cot, an old-fashioned washstand, and one small chair. It had one window, but the glass in the lower sash had been broken when Jimmy was three, and Mr. Witherspoon wouldn't put in a new one. He said it would only be throwing money away, because it would only get broken again. In winter an old burlap sack was stuffed into the hole to keep the wind and snow out.

At nine-twenty-nine that night Jinx was at his post, just under Jimmy's window. And at exactly nine-thirty he gave his yell. It wasn't the long mournful rising and falling yowl that cats make when they get together to sing sentimental songs in the moonlight. It was the short sharp screech that a cat gives if you step on his tail. Jinx didn't wait to see just what happened. He bounded off behind some bushes where Freddy was waiting. But they could tell that it had waked up Jimmy, and his father and mother too, for there was movement in the house, and voices, and then somebody leaned out of an upper window and said: "Scat!" But in a few minutes everything was quiet again.

At ten o'clock Freddy went up to the window and squealed. "Boy!" said Jinx when the pig had rejoined him behind the bushes. "That was a squeal and three quarters. I didn't know you had it in you, Freddy."

"I haven't, now," Freddy panted. "That took all my wind. Hey, we'd better get out of here." For a light had sprung up in the house, and as they sneaked off past the barn they saw someone come out with a lantern.

Jimmy and his father hunted around outside for nearly fifteen minutes, while Freddy and Jinx watched from the hill above the house. Then they went back in. And they had just settled again comfortably in their beds when at half-past ten Charles crowed.

And so it went on all night. The only hitch occurred when it was Emma's turn. Freddy and Jinx stayed close to the house, to protect her in case of trouble. But they didn't hear any quacking, and when she rejoined them a minute later, she just said: "I'm sorry, but I listened, and he was breathing so peacefully that I couldn't bear to wake him up. Poor boy! So I just tiptoed away."

So Freddy went down and squealed again.

On the whole, however, the night was entirely successful. Vera's scream was all that Jinx had claimed for it. It scared Mr. Witherspoon so that he jumped up and poured a pitcher of water over Mrs. Witherspoon's head, under the impression that

she was having a nightmare. And Jimmy came out of his sleep with a yell and dove for the chair and wrestled with it until he tore a leg off before he discovered that it wasn't a tiger that had got into the room. The animals were sorry that they had to disturb Mr. and Mrs. Witherspoon along with Jimmy, but as Charles said: "It can't be helped. The innocent have to suffer with the guilty."

Not a stone was thrown the next day, and no one could find out what had become of Jimmy until a scouting party of swallows reported that he was asleep in the hay mow. A little later Mrs. Witherspoon was discovered snoozing quietly out by the chicken coop, where she had been overcome by drowsiness as she was feeding the chickens, and Mr. Witherspoon, snoozing not so quietly, was heard, if not seen, in the cow barn.

Some of the animals thought that the committee ought to go over and try to come to an agreement with Jimmy right away. But most of them agreed with Jinx when he said: "Not on your life—no agreements! What we want is unconditional surrender. Let him come to us." So they decided to keep on with their program of half-hourly yells.

And so they kept on for two more nights. Emma had to be counted out, of course, but Uncle Solomon said he didn't mind taking her place. He said he got a great kick out of scaring people—only of course he didn't say it that way; what he said was: "It affords me much pleasure, and a certain understandable satisfaction." He introduced a variation, too: he screeched down the chimney, so that the sound went down into the furnace and up through the hot air pipes into every room in the house. The Witherspoons couldn't figure out where it came from. They had a pretty miserable time.

On the morning of the third day, Jinx and Freddy had gone up to the edge of the woods on reconnaissance. When they reached a fence corner that overlooked the Witherspoon house, they stopped and Jinx said: "Hey, what goes on?" For Eunice, Mr. Witherspoon's cow, and Jerry, his horse, had climbed up on the back porch and were looking in the kitchen window.

"I wonder if anything's wrong?" said Freddy.

Just then Jerry looked up and caught sight of them, and he jerked his head up at them as if beckoning them to come. They were sure Jerry wouldn't lead them into any ambush, so they went down. They got up on the porch beside the two other animals and looked in the window.

The Witherspoons were sitting at the breakfast table. It wasn't much like the Beans' breakfast table, for there was no tablecloth, and apparently all there was to eat was a loaf of bread and a big pot of tea. Mr. Witherspoon had a slice of bread in



one hand, and a large bite had been taken out of it. But he wasn't chewing it, for his face was in his plate. He had evidently fallen asleep in the middle of the bite, and they could hear him snoring even through the window. Mrs. Witherspoon had hold of the teapot handle but she had fallen back in her chair and her eyes were closed. And Jimmy was huddled down in his chair and he was asleep too.

"Ha!" said Jinx. "So they couldn't take it! Golly, it looks like the castle of the sleeping princess. You be the fairy prince, Freddy, and go in and kiss Jimmy and they'll all wake up."

"How long have they been like this?" Freddy asked.

"All morning," Eunice said. "Mr. Witherspoon and Jimmy got up and did the chores, and then they went in to breakfast, and that's the last we saw of them. We got worried, because there's so much work to be done, and so we came up to see what was the matter."

"Well, you'd better just let them sleep," said Freddy. He went over and took hold of the doorknob with his teeth and turned it, and opened the door and went in. Jinx followed, grinning. "Which one you goin' to kiss, prince?" he asked.

But Freddy didn't go up to the table. He went into the other room and found a pencil and paper and wrote a note which he put in front of Jimmy. It said: "Have you had enough? If so, come down under a flag of truce and we'll talk it over. The Bean Animals."

"But what will we do?" Jerry asked, when Jinx and Freddy came out. "There's an awful lot of work to be done."

"I guess I can wake 'em up for you," said Jinx. "Get a good start, Freddy." And as soon as Freddy was halfway back to the shelter of the woods, he let out a terrible yowl. There was a crash, as Mr. Witherspoon fell out of his chair, and then Jinx turned and bounded after his friend.

But as Jimmy did not appear that afternoon, either with or without a flag of truce, the animals went on that night with their musical program. But by midnight they were all pretty well puzzled. Not a sound had come from the inside of the house; no lights were lit; and no effort was made to drive them away. And the morning after, as the three cows were sampling some rather choice grass that grew so near the fence that they had been unable to get at it for several weeks, a stone came whizzing between them, and they looked up to see Jimmy grinning at them.

They galloped off and got home safely, though Mrs. Wogus was hit once. It was plain that something had gone wrong, and the committee met immediately. Jimmy was certainly wide awake, and two rabbits who were acting as spies brought word that Mr. Witherspoon was hard at work. Yet the animals had yelled on schedule all

night.

Henrietta suggested that maybe the Witherspoons had sneaked off somewhere else to sleep, and so hadn't been disturbed by the noise. But either Freddy or Jinx had been watching the house all night; it wouldn't have been possible for them to go anywhere without being seen.

"This scheme is working out just backwards," Freddy said. "We're the ones that are sleepy. I'm so tired today from sitting up so many nights that my head buzzes like a beehive, and I don't dare wink, because if I was to close my eyes even for the inside of a second, I'd be gone."

"Me too," said Jinx. "I keep dreaming with my eyes open. Seeing things that aren't there. Like when we were in the Witherspoons' kitchen, I kept thinking Mrs. Witherspoon had a pair of ear muffs on."

"What?" Freddy exclaimed, swinging around. "Say that again!"

"Don't jump at me like that!" said Jinx crossly. "I just said I thought Mrs. Witherspoon—"

"—had ear muffs on," Freddy interrupted. "Well, she did! Now I come to think of it, I saw them too, but I didn't think anything about it then. Sure, she probably forgot to take them off when she got up. That's what happened—they all wore ear muffs last night, and probably stuffed their ears with cotton before they put the muffs on. That's why they all slept all night and were so wide awake today: they didn't hear us when we yelled."

The committee looked glumly at one another. "Well," said Henrietta finally, "I guess that spoils our fine scheme, all right. So what do we do now?"

But nobody had any suggestions. Each of them had had a plan, and all three plans had failed.

"Mr. Bean offered to help us," Freddy said. "We never do go to him for help; we always have prided ourselves on getting out of any trouble we got into without bothering him with it. But this time we're stuck. We'd better go see him. Unless one of you can think of something. How about you, Jinx? Got any ideas?"

Jinx mumbled something, and when Freddy looked at him, he saw that the cat's eyes were closed and his chin slowly drooping down to touch his chest.

"Look at him!" said Henrietta. "Fine, intelligent looking committee member, isn't he? And you too; you're so sleepy you're looking cross-eyed at me. Go take a nap, and we'll talk to Mr. Bean later. We want at least to look as if we had some sense, even if we haven't got any."

## Chapter 10

On the day that J. J. Pomeroy was to get his glasses, he and Mrs. Pomeroy flew down to Centerboro together. J. J. had learned to manage his new tail by this time; he no longer bumped into trees or turned unexpected somersaults in the air when he changed direction in flight. He was very pleased with the long white plumes that streamed behind him, although some of his neighbors were rather sarcastic about it. One of them, a wren who lived in the same tree, had remarked that the first time she saw J. J. fly past she thought he was coming unraveled. Mrs. Pomeroy no longer spoke to her.

Mr. Watt didn't recognize J. J. at first. When the two birds flew in his window he tried to shoo them out, but they managed to explain and then he brought out the little spectacles he had made. He had done a beautiful job. The lenses were only about half the size of your little fingernail, and they were set in small gold frames, and the side pieces hooked together at the back of J. J.'s head. Mr. Watt put them on and adjusted them, and then he held up a mirror so J. J. could see how nice they looked.

"Good gracious!" J. J. said. "I'm quite handsome!"

"You always were, dear," said Mrs. Pomeroy loyally.

"That may be," said J. J., "but you must remember that I have never had a good look at myself before. I've tried to see myself in windowpanes, but they're never very good, and then I was so nearsighted that I always had to get so close that my beak was against the glass. And all I could see was my eyes."

"Such nice eyes!" murmured Mrs. Pomeroy.

"They're the most beautifully made pair of glasses I've ever seen," said Mr. Watt, who was never one to underestimate his own work.

"They're very nice indeed," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "But Mr. Pomeroy is a very handsome bird."

"Sets off my glasses well," Mr. Watt admitted.

On the way back to their nest they stopped in to see Freddy and show him the glasses. Freddy was taking a nap. He had slept for two days after the animals had abandoned the yelling campaign against Jimmy, but by now he had made up all his lost sleep. This was just one of his regular naps. He always took several every day. He said it kept him on his toes. I guess Uncle Solomon would have given him a good argument about that statement.

The Pomeroy's didn't like to wake Freddy, so they flew on home. And by and by the pig woke up. He had been dreaming that the two boys, Adoniram and Byram, were still living on the farm, and that they had been kicking around the

football that someone had given them, and that they had then gone up to the duck pond for a swim. “Guess I’ll go for a swim myself,” Freddy thought. He knew that the animals all expected him to go talk to Mr. Bean about Jimmy that afternoon, but he thought: “I’m all hot from sleeping so hard, and I don’t want to talk to Mr. Bean when I’m hot and sticky. I wonder why it is that it makes you just as hot to sleep hard as to work hard? I suppose it’s because even in my sleep my mind is so active.” He was pleased with this idea; it seemed to make all those naps pretty praiseworthy. He had always claimed that his best ideas came to him when he was asleep, and that his mind was at work all the time. If he perspired in his sleep, that proved it, didn’t it?

When he got to the pond, he found Alice and Emma sitting on the bank, watching Mrs. Wiggins, who was trying to learn to float. All he could see of the cow was four hoofs disappearing under the water; the rest of her had sunk.

“She always does that,” said Emma, who seemed not at all disturbed.

“But she’ll drown!” Freddy exclaimed. He ran out on the springboard which Mr. Bean had put up for the boys two summers ago and was about to dive to the rescue, when there was a great bubbling and commotion in the water, and first one horn appeared, and then the other, and then Mrs. Wiggins’s head broke the surface. It came up with a sort of bubbling roar, for Mrs. Wiggins had got to laughing under water. It isn’t a very good place to laugh. She had swallowed a lot of water and got a lot more up her nose, and she coughed and laughed and snorted and whooshed for several minutes. Freddy retreated from the springboard, and even the ducks backed away until she had got her breath again.

“You oughtn’t to go in swimming when you’re alone,” Freddy said. “You might have drowned.”

“I suppose I might have, at that,” said the cow. “But it’s such fun when I think I’m going to float, and then I just sink. Each time, I think: ‘Now this time, Wiggins, you’ll stay up.’ It seems so easy. And then down I go!” And she began to laugh again.

“She’s been doing it all morning,” said Emma, and Uncle Wesley waddled out grumpily from behind a clump of goldenrod where he had taken shelter, and said peevishly: “I suppose she’ll drown eventually, but in the meantime nobody else can get anywhere near the pond. I wish she’d hurry up.”

“I must say, I don’t see what fun you get out of it,” Freddy said.

“I don’t either, Freddy, but I do,” said the cow. “It just tickles me when I think I’m floating around all cool and pretty like a lump of ice cream in an ice cream soda, and then plunk!—my back hits the bottom. It’s me, thinking I’m one thing, and really

being something else; that's what makes it funny. It would be just as funny to me if it was you."

"Well, it wouldn't be as funny to me," Freddy said. And as Mrs. Wiggins got out on the bank, he walked out on the springboard, bounced twice, and soared up and then down in a long clean dive.

"Swan dive," said Emma. "Very pretty, I always think."

"Land sakes!" said Mrs. Wiggins. "There's nothing much to that! I'll wager I can do as good." And before anybody could stop her, she was out at the end of the springboard. "Three jumps, and then up I go. One . . . two . . ."

*Crash!* The board, struck for the third time by several hundred pounds of cow, broke short off, and with a tremendous splash Mrs. Wiggins went down into the pond.

"Oh, my *goodness!*" said Uncle Wesley disgustedly, and waddled hurriedly back to the clump of goldenrod.

Presently Mrs. Wiggins's head reappeared. "How's that, Freddy?" she spluttered. "You and your swan dives! I bet you couldn't do one like that. I bet no swan could dive hind end first, either."

"Well, I'm glad you broke the board," said Freddy. "This pond isn't big enough for any animal your size to practice diving in."

"Ought to hire herself an ocean!" came a grumble from behind the goldenrod.

"You remember, Freddy," said Mrs. Wiggins, climbing out and shaking herself, "the games we used to play in the pond when the two boys were here? Remember the water polo games?"

Freddy remembered them very well. Byram and Adoniram had wanted to play all the games that other boys play, particularly such games as are played between opposing teams. But in the summer there weren't enough other boys in the neighborhood to make up two teams, so they had to fall back on the animals. They had chosen up sides and tried to play baseball first. But although most of the animals could catch a ball, either with a glove or in their teeth, none of them could throw, and the only animal who could bat was Peter, the bear, and he was so strong that when he really connected with the ball he usually knocked the cover off, and then the game stopped until somebody went to Centerboro and bought a new one.

Football and basketball hadn't worked out well either, for about the same reasons. But water polo had been a success from the start. All the animals could swim, and they could all knock a ball in the direction they wanted it to go, with hoofs or paws or heads. At first some of the smaller ones had been at a disadvantage, until a rule had been made that cows and horses could only use their heads, and not their

hoofs, in hitting the ball. After that the two permanent teams—Byram’s Red Pirates and Adoniram’s Rural Commandos—had played a long series of games. Mr. Bean had even come up and umpired some of them.

“Yes, sir, those were great games,” said Freddy. “I saw that ball we used to play with just the other day, when we were up in the loft. Made me quite homesick for the old days. I started to write a poem about them. It went like this:

*When I was a piglet, the grass was much greener;  
Always looked as if it had just come from the cleaner;  
And life was much gayer, in so many ways.  
Ah, those were the days!*

*Now I’m old, and my joints are increasingly creaky;  
My hearing is poor, and my memory’s leaky;  
And I weep as I put down these sad little rhymes.  
Ah, those were the times!*

*In my youth, I was always prepared for a frolic;  
I never had pains, rheumatism or colic;  
I never had aches: head, stomach or tooth.  
Ah, the days of my youth!”*

“Good land, Freddy, you sound as if you were about ninety years old,” Mrs. Wiggins said with a laugh.

“Well, I will be some day,” said Freddy, “and then this poem will be all ready for me. Ho, hum; yes. You know, just thinking about what it will be like when I’m as old as that makes me feel pretty feeble.” He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “I could have sworn I had a long grey beard.”

“I don’t like sad poetry,” said Emma. “Dear me, there are enough cheerful things in the world without thinking up such mournful ones to write poems about.”

“I agree with you,” said Mrs. Wiggins. “I think Freddy probably needs a good dose of sulphur and molasses to tone him up a little.”

“No, thanks,” said Freddy. “But I wouldn’t mind limbering up my creaky old joints with a good game of water polo. What do you say, Mrs. W.? Shall we round up the others, and I’ll get the ball. Of course, we haven’t got the boys to captain the teams, but . . .” He stopped short and stared with narrowed eyes at the cow. “Golly!” he said. “Boys.” Then he whirled and dashed off at top speed towards the barnyard. “Stay right there till I get back,” he shouted over his shoulder.

Emma sighed. “I expect he’s coming down with another idea,” she said resignedly. She knew from experience that when Freddy got one of his ideas it usually meant a lot of work, and probably trouble, for everyone.

“I’ve said before and I’ll say it again,” said Mrs. Wiggins flatly, “that all these ideas aren’t healthy. Sulphur and molasses—that’s what he needs. There isn’t an idea that a good dose of sulphur and molasses won’t cure.” And she went on to tell of boys she had known of who, thoroughly dosed with sulphur and molasses every spring, had been completely free from ideas all the rest of their lives.

While they were discussing this, Freddy ran down and got his barrel-head shield, and then he went up along the fence looking for Jimmy. And pretty soon he found him. The boy jumped up from where he had been hiding and threw a stone. “Yah!” he shouted. “Thought you were pretty smart, keeping us awake all night, didn’t you?” And he threw another. But he didn’t seem to be mad, and that was a good sign.

Freddy caught both stones on his shield. “I guess we weren’t so smart,” he said. Then he backed away until he was out of range.

“Hey, come back!” said Jimmy. “Let’s see you catch some more stones.” It seemed evident that he thought of his stone-throwing—at least when he threw them at Freddy—as more of a game than a fight.

“Can’t,” said Freddy. “Have to go.”

“Oh, come on.” Jimmy came over and leaned on the fence. “There’s a tree up here—my father doesn’t know what it is. I want to ask you about it.”

This was so clear an invitation to a truce that Freddy almost weakened. But he knew he had a better plan. “Not now,” he said. “We’re playing off a big game this afternoon, up at the duck pond. Water polo. Championship match. Red Pirates vs. Rural Commandos.”

Jimmy said: “Oh,” and looked down at the ground. “Didn’t know you played games,” he said. He dug in the grass with a bare big toe.

Freddy thought: “I’ve got him hooked. Better not say any more.” So he just waved his shield. “Be seeing you,” he called, and trotted off. A minute later when he looked back, Jimmy was still leaning on the fence, looking down at the ground.

In half an hour Freddy had got the ball and rounded up the other animals, and after he had given instructions to the two rabbits whom he was employing as spies, he and Mrs. Wiggins chose up sides. Freddy had Hank, Mrs. Wogus, Robert and John, the fox who usually spent his summers on the farm; Mrs. Wiggins had Mrs. Wurzburger, Bill, the goat, Georgie, and Freddy’s cousin, Weedly. Although they hadn’t played in a long time, they were tough experienced teams, and when they had

taken their places and Jinx, the umpire, tossed the ball into the water, the pond began to boil with activity.

In the first ten minute period, Freddy's team scored two goals. But before the second period started, Mrs. Wiggins gave her team such a stirring pep talk that in the first half minute of play, they rushed their opponents not merely off their feet but practically under water, and tied the score. Then Freddy's team pulled itself together and held the score even until Jinx called time.

They were resting after this period when one of Freddy's spies came up and whispered in his ear. Freddy went over to Jinx and talked to him earnestly for a minute or two. Jinx looked surprised, but he nodded. Then Freddy went back and lay down to rest again. But when it was time to get up he just lay there and closed his eyes. And when they called him again, and he was sure everybody was looking at him, he squealed feebly several times and began to pant.

They crowded around him. "Freddy!" said Mrs. Wiggins. "What is it—what's the matter? Are you sick?"

"No, no—it's nothing," Freddy gasped. "I'm just exhausted, that's all. Can't take it—way I used to. Ah, the days of my youth!" he quoted, and moaned a little.

The animals were alarmed—all but Jinx, who knew Freddy's plan. Hank said: "You sure look terrible, Freddy. Don't seem as if anybody could be as sick as you look. Though I dunno, maybe they could be sicker. But they'd have to try hard."

Freddy struggled up on one elbow. "No, no; I'm not sick. Just tired. But carry on, my friends. I insist—the game must go on."

"There'll only be four on our side if we go on," said Mrs. Wogus. "We'd better stop anyway—"

But Freddy insisted. He'd be all right as soon as he'd rested a little. "Jinx, you'll have to find a substitute for me."

So Jinx called in a loud voice: "Anybody want to play? Anybody want to take Freddy's place in the game?"

"There's no sense in that," said Robert. "Everybody on the farm that can play is here now." But Freddy waved his hand towards the woods that came close to the bank on the far side of the pond. "There's somebody in among those trees; I just saw him move."

The animals looked. They hadn't noticed him before, but now they saw Jimmy, standing under the shadow of the trees. He had been there for some time, watching the game longingly.

The animals drew together at sight of the enemy, but Freddy said in a low voice: "It's all right; I planned this." Then Jinx called to the boy: "Hey, you! Want to play?"



Come on—you're holding up the game.”

Jimmy came slowly forward. He would have refused a polite invitation to play. But if you take it for granted that someone will do something, nine times out of ten they will do it. Jinx had seen that, and his offhand manner had turned the trick. Jimmy didn't say anything until he reached the edge of the pond. Then he said: “I'll get wet.”

All he had on was a pair of patched overalls, which water certainly wouldn't have damaged much. But Freddy—who was sitting up now, though he still didn't seem to have the use of his legs—asked Georgie to run down to the house and ask Mrs. Bean for Adoniram's bathing trunks. While they were waiting he explained the rules to the boy. And when the trunks were brought, Jimmy put them on and the game continued.

Freddy sat on the bank and watched. Jimmy didn't know much about teamwork. He played as if he were all alone. He never passed the ball to others on his side, and never apparently expected them to pass it to him. But all the animals knew by now what Freddy's idea had been, and they let Jimmy play in his own way. He could learn about teamwork later.

Of course as in all games there was a good deal of laughing and shouting and complaining, and there were several disputes which Jinx had to settle. Jimmy took no part in all this, but after a little he did begin to laugh. He laughed so hard when the animals splashed the umpire for making a sour decision that he swallowed a lot of water—which by now was pretty muddy—and had to be pulled out and whacked on the back until he stopped coughing. After that he seemed to begin to feel that he was one of the crowd.

After the game—which was won of course by Jimmy's team—the boy dried himself with a bath towel which Mrs. Bean had thoughtfully sent up with the trunks, and got back into his overalls.

“Well,” he said, “I—I've got to go now.”

So the animals thanked him for playing and said goodbye. As he started off towards home, he stopped and turned uncertainly back. “When,” he said, “—when do you—” And he stopped.

“When do we play again?” said Freddy. “Oh, tomorrow, I guess, if it's sunny. We'll let you know.”

“Well,” said Jinx when he had gone, “this is the second time we've got him into the pond. But this time I guess it's going to take.”

“We hope,” Freddy said. “Anyway, I'm glad we didn't have to ask Mr. Bean to help us.”

## Chapter 11

The days that followed were pretty peaceful. Jimmy came over and played water polo every afternoon, and no more stones were thrown. But Freddy wasn't satisfied with the boy. When he wasn't playing games he was rather sullen and grumpy; he never suggested anything to do, and he seemed suspicious of everyone else's suggestions. Most of the animals only put up with him because while he was playing with them he wasn't throwing stones. Freddy and Mrs. Wiggins were the only ones that realized why he was so unsociable. They knew that he was ashamed because he didn't have any of the things other boys had, and so he was afraid that the animals were laughing at him, as other boys had laughed at him in school.

Jinx had been pretty disgusted when on the second day Jimmy had got mad at something he said, and had gone off home in the middle of the game. "I was just kidding him," said the cat. "If he can't take a joke, what good is he? Are we going to have to spend the rest of our lives scratching his head and calling him pretty names?"

"He'll get over all that," said Freddy.

Jinx said: "Yeah? How about

*The leopard cannot change his spots,  
Or the pig his curly tail?"*

"Oh, that old thing!" said Freddy. "If that's all that's bothering you, I'll write a better verse for you."

But Freddy didn't write the verse, for he had another idea. He had been telling Jimmy, at odd times, some of the stories he had been reading. Nobody had ever given Jimmy any books, and he was too far from the Centerboro Free Library to draw out books, so he never read anything in the summertime. The stories that seemed to interest him most were those about King Arthur and his knights, and how they used to hold tournaments and joust with long lances. Freddy didn't know how he could use that interest at first. But then he discovered something about Jimmy that showed him a way.

One afternoon a day or two later, Freddy and Jimmy were sitting under the trees by the duck pond. The game was over and the other players had gone back down to the barnyard, but Jimmy had stayed because Freddy was telling him a story. From where they sat they could see, across the pond, the whole Bean farm spread out—barns and house and fences, and the animals moving among them. And then all at once, down by the house, something glittered. It was as if somebody was flashing a

very small mirror at them, and then other little dazzling points flashed and disappeared. Some were blue and red, as well as white.

Freddy got up. He shaded his eyes with his fore-trotter and looked under it, and then he laughed. For Mrs. Winfield Church was coming up across the fields towards them, and as she walked, all her ten-cent store jewelry flashed and sparkled as if she had planets and constellations pinned all over her. He went around the end of the pond to meet her. But Jimmy stayed where he was.

“Well, Freddy,” said Mrs. Church, “if you won’t come to see me, I have to come see you. Not that I mind for myself, because it’s always a pleasure to see all the old friends, but it’s hard on Riley. He’s down on the porch getting his wind back, and Mrs. Bean is bringing him some cider. But if he eats all the doughnuts she’s brought out to him, he’ll never be able to pedal me back home.”

“Then you’ll have to stay here, and I think that would be nice for all of us,” said Freddy gallantly. And then he turned towards Jimmy, who was still on the other side of the pond. “This is my friend, Jimmy Witherspoon.”

Jimmy said: “How de do,” in an embarrassed voice.

“Very glad to meet you,” said Mrs. Church heartily. “But do come around here, boy. I can’t keep shouting at you across the water.”

Jimmy came reluctantly towards them. He was plainly afraid that Mrs. Church might snub him, because of his ragged clothes. But to Mrs. Church, any friend of Freddy’s was a friend of hers, whether he wore satin or burlap. She smiled at the boy and shook hands with him, and then they all sat down on the grass and she said: “You know, Freddy, my niece’s wedding is next week, and you and our friend, the popinjay, haven’t been down to see me yet. We have to rehearse for the ceremony, but we can’t rehearse without you two. Why couldn’t you come down this afternoon? You could stay to supper, and we’d have plenty of time to go over everything.”

Freddy said he’d find Mr. Pomeroy and they’d come down. “I tell you what we’ll do,” he said; “we’ll hitch Hank up to the phaeton and take you and Riley down.”

“Fine!” said Mrs. Church. “And we’d like to have you come too,” she said to Jimmy.

“I have to go home,” Jimmy said.

“Well, that’s too bad,” said Mrs. Church. “Because I was thinking—there are a lot of books my niece had—they’re boys’ books—she always liked boys’ books—and of course as she’s getting married she doesn’t want them any more. I’ve been wondering who to give them to. Wouldn’t you like them?”

But Jimmy just looked sullenly at the ground. And after they had waited nearly a minute for his answer, he said: "I don't want your old books!" And he turned and walked off towards the woods.

"Well!" said Freddy. "That wasn't very polite!"

"No," said Mrs. Church. "But you mustn't blame the boy too much. He's Zenas Witherspoon's boy, isn't he? I'd like to shake Zenas until his teeth rattled! He's never given the boy anything but his cast-off clothes, and enough food to keep him alive. And the old skinflint has plenty of money; he could buy and sell me three times over. Yet that boy has never had a Christmas present, never had as much as five cents a week spending money."

"You'd think he'd jump at those books, then," said Freddy.

"No. He's ashamed of looking so poor, and he's proud. He won't take anything unless he can make some return for it. Mrs. Bean was just talking about him; she's got all those things of Adoniram's—books and clothes and games that he doesn't want any more, and she said she'd like to give them to this boy. But she was afraid he wouldn't take them."

"I guess he wouldn't," Freddy said. "You know, he's nice in a lot of ways. But we've had a lot of trouble with him." And he told Mrs. Church about the trouble.

The idea of the elephant trap tickled Mrs. Church, and so Freddy took her down to see it. As they approached it, they saw a thread of smoke coming up through the opening in the ground, and Mrs. Church said: "Good gracious, has somebody set fire to your mattress?"

But Freddy sniffed the air and said: "Not unless the mattress is stuffed with tobacco. No, let's sneak up very carefully. We don't want him to see us." So they did. And peering over the edge, they saw Mr. Bean sitting cross-legged on the mattress, puffing contemplatively on his pipe.

Freddy would have tiptoed away, but Mrs. Church was shaking so, trying to keep from laughing out loud, that her jewelry glittered like a fireworks display, and at a slight sound Mr. Bean looked up. They couldn't see his expression because it was all covered up with beard, but his eyes looked amazed for a minute, then they crinkled at the corners, and he said: "Good afternoon, Mrs. Church. I thought the sun had set and the stars were shining down on me. But it was only the sparkle of your eyes."

So then Mrs. Church laughed out loud for quite a long time. But at last she said: "You always could turn a neat phrase when you wanted to, William Bean. Though it's thirty years since I've heard you turn one. Well, you're doing very nicely here and we won't disturb you further. But I'll leave a little of the eye-sparkle with you as

thanks for a nice compliment.” And she detached a large brooch set with imitation sapphires from her dress and tossed it down to him.

“That is one of the best arrangements I have ever seen!” she said as they went on down to the house. “A thinking hole! I shall have one dug in my garden immediately!”

At the house a doughnut-stuffed Riley rose stiffly from the porch chair where he had been talking to Mrs. Bean, and started reluctantly towards the tandem bicycle. But Freddy called to Hank, and they went and got Mr. Pomeroy, and presently the phaeton, with Mrs. Church and Freddy on the front seat, Riley on the back seat, Mr. Pomeroy on the dashboard, and the tandem strapped on behind, rolled off towards Centerboro.

The rehearsal went off well, and the supper party afterwards was a great treat to Freddy, for Mrs. Church—as they say—set a fine table, and Freddy, like most pigs, was always well up in front when the refreshments were handed round. He got home at nine and went straight to bed, but the next morning he was up bright and early, making arrangements for carrying out his idea.

He worked and talked and persuaded and cajoled all morning, until he had got all his friends to agree. Most of them thought his idea might be fun, but they said—why take so much trouble for Jimmy? The boy wasn’t any addition to their games, and they always had to be so careful of him, and let him win at least half the time, and not kid him. . . .

“You won’t have to do that much longer,” said Freddy.

“Why do it at all?” said Jinx. “Why should we have to put up with his nonsense just because you think that way down inside him there’s some good qualities?”

“It’s like digging for buried treasure,” said Freddy.

Jinx said: “I’d rather dig where the gold is nearer the surface. It’s hardly worth while, to dig for a week and turn up an old copper cent.”

But at last even Jinx agreed, and so that afternoon after the game Freddy went on and told Jimmy more about how tournaments were held. There was a long, open space, he said, called “the lists,” and at each end was a fully armored knight, with lance and shield. And when the heralds gave the signal, the knights scrouched down behind their shields and lowered their lances and galloped towards each other. And the one that succeeded in knocking his opponent off his horse with the lance was the winner.

“My goodness, we could have a tournament right here!” said Freddy, as if the idea had just occurred to him.

“Could we?” said Jimmy. “Gee, that would be fun! But we haven’t got armor or

anything.”

“No. But we could get a couple of those light clothes props of Mrs. Bean’s for lances, and tie pillows on the ends so nobody would get hurt. And we could get Hank and Mrs. Wiggins to ride on. . . .” He thought a minute. “We ought to have padded clothes to wear,” he said. “If anybody gets knocked off, he might get hurt.”

“I thought that was the point of the tournament,” said Jimmy.

“Not to me, it isn’t,” Freddy said. “I want to have some fun, not break my neck. But I know what: we can have our lists right through the lower end of the pond. There’s only about a foot and a half of water there, and if anybody gets knocked off, he’ll just get a ducking. We’ll have to have some prizes, though. They always had prizes at tournaments. I’ll see if Mrs. Bean won’t get some for us.”

And so the tournament was held the following afternoon. Freddy had typed out a notice which he posted on the barn door. It read:

## **GRAND JOUST AND TOURNAMENT**

Tuesday, at 2 P.M. Open to all comers.

*War horses, lances, and shields provided  
by the management.*

Come one, come all, and try your luck.

### **Handsome and valuable prizes.**

*Jinx de Catte*, HERALD.

“They always had to have a sort of noble name, the heralds,” he explained.

The notice had ensured a good crowd, and there were more entries for the contest than Freddy had expected, since most of the animals were too small to manage a lance. But one of them was surprising, not to say terrifying. The audience had all taken their places along the edge of the pond, and Jinx, as herald, was explaining the rules and conditions of the contest and exhibiting the prizes: a chocolate cake, baked by Mrs. Bean, a suit of Adoniram’s, a pair of his shoes, practically new, a lot of fishing tackle and some books and games. As there were, so far, only five entries in the tournament, this ensured a prize for every contestant.

“Why don’t you have just a prize for the winner?” Sniffy Wilson asked.

“The management feels,” said Jinx, “that while, of course, the winner should have

a prize, there is every reason why the losers should have prizes too. For after all, the winner has won; the knowledge that he is the best should be enough of a prize for him. Whereas the loser, ladies and gentlemen, gets nothing. Not only is he disappointed because he has lost, but he gets nothing to make up to him for the time and trouble it has cost him. Indeed, in the future, should these contests continue, the prizes will be awarded *only* to the losers. That seems to us a much fairer arrangement.

“In addition,” Jinx continued, “the management wishes to point out that, with the exception of the cake, and perhaps the fishing tackle, the prizes are hardly suitable for animals. Freddy, of course, might use the suit as a disguise in the pursuit of his distinguished career as a detective. But it may be difficult for some of you to see just what use a pair of shoes, however shiny, would be to—for instance—our friend Bill, the goat.”

“He could eat ’em,” piped up Rabbit No. 13, and everybody laughed, for just as some people like to chew gum, there was nothing Bill liked better to chew on than an old boot.

“The point is,” said Jinx, “that they were the only prizes we could get at short notice. And if the winner has no use for them, he will certainly be able to take them over to Centerboro and trade them in for anything he wants. And now, my friends —”

Jinx stopped suddenly and froze, and the other animals, following the direction of his eyes, huddled together. For down out of the woods came strolling a large wildcat.

## Chapter 12

The wildcat was very handsome. He had a thick tawny coat, elegant whiskers, and little ornamental tufts on his ears, but he had fierce yellow eyes, and his mouth was set in a ferocious grin.

There had been perhaps sixty rabbits in the audience, but in ten seconds not one was visible. The other animals bunched together and backed away, and Freddy and Jinx backed with them. The pig could feel his tail coming uncurled as it always did when he was nervous. But the three cows lowered their horns and advanced upon the intruder.

“What do you want here?” Mrs. Wiggins asked, and her voice was a menacing rumble. Cows lead very placid lives and seldom use that tone, but they can if they have to.

“Take it easy, sister,” said the wildcat, and he sat down and twirled his moustache with a big paw. “No harm intended. Can anybody tell me where I can find a bear named Peter in these parts?”

“He has a den up above here in the woods,” said Mrs. Wurzburger, “but he’s up in Herkimer County visiting relatives this summer.”

“So? That’s a pity,” said the wildcat. “Well, I guess I had my trip for nothing.”

“What did you want to see him about?” Mrs. Wiggins asked.

“Oh, just a personal matter. I know his folks up north.” The wildcat didn’t seem very communicative, and now he changed the subject. “Nice place you’ve got here. What’s going on?”

Mrs. Wiggins explained.

“Well, well,” he said, “since my old friend Peter isn’t home I’m rather at a loose end today. Guess I’ll enter your tournament. Nothing I like as much as a good fight.” And he unsheathed his long claws and made a lightning-like swipe at a daisy.

“This isn’t a fight,” said Mrs. Wiggins. “And I think you’d better go along about your business. We know all about wildcats, though there aren’t any around here, thank goodness. You may be all right, but until we know more about you—”

“Now, look, sister,” interrupted the wildcat, “I’m not looking for trouble, and don’t you try to wish it on me. I’ve got nothing to do this afternoon and I’d like to join your game. I’ll play it any way you say, and if anybody breaks the rules, it won’t be me.”

They knew that if they refused to let him play he would be angry, and wildcats have bad tempers. You have to be pretty careful with them. But they can be pleasant enough when they want to be; and evidently this one was laying himself out to be



pleasant. It seemed to the animals that it would be all right to let him play, if they were careful not to offend him. So Mrs. Wiggins asked him his name.

“Eh?” he said. “Oh, just call me Mac.” So she introduced him to the others, and the tournament started.

Jinx counted out, and the first pair chosen were Jimmy Witherspoon and Weedly. Mounted on their warhorses—Mrs. Wogus and Hank—they cantered to their places on either side of the shallow end of the pond. As they sat there erect in their saddles, with shields on their arms and lances raised, they were indeed an impressive sight. They would have perhaps been more impressive if Mrs. Wogus hadn’t thrown herself quite so enthusiastically into the part of warhorse. She shook her head and pawed the ground, and then reared up—and Weedly slipped right off over her tail and fell on his back in the grass. Everybody thought it was very nice of Jimmy that in the general shout of laughter he kept a sober face.

When Weedly had remounted, Jinx gave a loud meouw, which was as like a trumpet as he could make it. It wasn’t much like one. And he shouted: “Ladeees and gentlemen! In this corner we have Lord William de Weedly, known as Wild Weedly, the Terror of the Tournaments. In the opposite corner, Sir James Witherspoon, otherwise Jumping Jimmy, the Human Hurricane. Now fall on, and may the best man win!” And the contestants lowered their lances as their steeds trotted down into the water.

As the water was knee deep, the pace of the warhorses was pretty slow. Lord William had hooked his short hind legs under the strap that had been fastened around Mrs. Wogus’s middle. He rested his lance on the cow’s head between her horns, and pointed it at Jimmy. He saw the pillow on the end of Jimmy’s lance approaching him, but just as it was about to touch his nose he ducked aside, and it went beyond him. At the same moment the padded point of his own lance struck Jimmy on the chest.

According to all the laws of knightly warfare, Jimmy should then have been smitten from the saddle. But the boy gripped Hank tight with his knees, and hung on to his mane with both hands. And as the pressure increased, it was Weedly who gave way. His feet slipped out from under the strap and he was pushed right off Mrs. Wogus’s back, and for the second time he landed on his back—only this time, in the water.

“Man overboard!” shouted Jinx. “Call the rescue squad!” But Weedly caught hold of the cow’s tail and was towed safely ashore.

There was some argument as to whether Jimmy had really won or not. Some felt that since Weedly’s lance had hit the mark, and Jimmy’s had not, the pig should be

counted the winner. But Jinx ruled that since Weedly had been pushed off his warhorse, even though it was plain that he had pushed himself off, he had lost the course. And he then called on the second pair of contestants, giving them the noblest names he could think of.

These were Robert, mounted on Mrs. Wurzburger, and Bill, mounted on Mrs. Wiggins. These two were evenly matched, and they ran four courses. In the first, they both missed; in the second, both lances hit fair and they were both knocked into the water. In the third they missed again, but as they passed each other, Bill leaned out and hooked one of his horns under Robert's hind leg and flipped him into the pond. Bill tried to claim a victory on this, but Jinx ruled that they would have to run again, so they did, and this time Robert got a square hit on Bill's nose and sent him flying.

There was some delay in starting the third bout, between Freddy and Mac, because none of the warhorses wanted to be ridden by a wildcat. Mac however was so polite and so reassuring, and promised so faithfully not to put out his claws under any circumstances, that Mrs. Wiggins finally agreed. But the fight was a short one. Freddy's lance hit Mac on the shoulder and slipped off, but the padded end of Mac's weapon struck fairly. The pig swung the clothes prop like a club, trying to knock the cat off sideways, but before he could get his blow in he was falling through the air, over Hank's hind quarters.

"Ladies and gentlemen," announced Jinx, "the winners of the preliminaries will now take their places for the final trial of strength. And since there are three of them, it is the judgment of this court that they shall all enter the water at the same time and fight a free-for-all, and he shall be declared the winner who keeps his seat when the others have been defeated. On the north side of the pond, Sir James Witherspoon, the Human Hurricane, mounted on Hank; on the west, Lord Robert de Bean, hero of many battles, Hereditary Guardian of the Lands of Bean; on the south, that fierce fighter, Mac the Merciless, mounted on Mrs. Wiggins. Let all keep silence until the issue is decided." And he gave the word to go.

The knights dropped their lances into position and the warhorses trotted down into the water. As they came closer together, it was plain that Mac and Jimmy had both had the same idea—to put Robert out of the contest first, and then go after each other. But as he saw both lances converging upon him, Robert got the idea too, and just before they would have struck him he whispered in Mrs. Wurzburger's ear, and the cow plunged off sharply to the right.

This brought the two others together, almost head on, and it also brought Robert alongside Jimmy, but facing in the opposite direction. Jimmy and Mac were too close

together to try for a straight push with their lances, and they began swinging wildly at each other. And that gave Robert his chance. As he passed Jimmy he dropped his lance horizontally across Hank's shoulders in front of the boy, and it scooped Jimmy off the horse's back and into the water.

There was loud cheering at this, and Mac, who like all of the cat family had nice manners when he wanted to use them, saluted Robert with a congratulatory wave of the paw. He waited until the collie had turned, then pointed his lance and moved towards him.

Robert knew that he was no match for the wildcat. He hadn't the weight, and he couldn't hold his lance as steady. But he came very close to winning. As the pillow tied to the end of Mac's lance passed over Mrs. Wurzburger's head on its way to strike Robert, she raised her head a little, and one of her pointed horns ripped through the cloth. Immediately a great cloud of feathers puffed out, hiding the contestants from the shore, and even from each other. Both of them missed, but the cows, breathing in the feathers, began to sneeze and, instead of going on, stopped where they were in order to sneeze more comfortably. All that could be seen from the shore were the legs of two cows, going down into the water, and above, a cloud of what looked like white bees that swirled and boiled as the contestants swung at each other and the sneezes blew the feathers out in all directions. And then there was a splash, and no one was greatly surprised when Mac came riding up out of the water, so plastered with feathers that he looked as if he had fallen into a snowdrift.

Then Mac dismounted and knelt down before Emma, and she put a wreath of daisies on his head and presented him with the cake. Emma trembled a good deal, particularly when the wildcat got to his feet and looked at her with his fierce yellow eyes and licked his chops delicately. But he thanked her in a very polished way, and was so courtly and refined that the animals began to lose their fear of him, and some of the rabbits came out of hiding and joined the crowd.

Then Emma distributed the other prizes. Robert got the shoes, and Jimmy the suit of clothes, and Freddy and Weedly and Bill divided up the books and games. Jimmy was delighted with his prize and tried it on at once.

"Fits you as if it had been made for you," said Robert. "I wish I could say the same for these things," he added, looking down at the shoes. "If my prize had been a nice bone, now—that would have been something!"

"You could probably get a dozen bones for them, down in Centerboro," said Jimmy.

"I'd never get out of that town with even one bone, let alone a dozen," Robert said. "The way those town dogs gang up on you if you've got something. No, I

guess I'll just have to put 'em away and forget about 'em." Then he looked at the boy hopefully. "Unless you've got a bone or two about you? You'd be doing me a great favor."

Jimmy looked down at his bare feet, which seemed sort of out of place coming out of the legs of his fine trousers. Obviously he couldn't wear the suit unless he had shoes to go with it. "Would I?" he said. "I expect I could get you a couple of bones. I don't carry any around with me."

"Oh, that's all right," said Robert. "If you can bring me a couple in the next day or two, you can have the shoes now, and good riddance to them. They're no use to me." And so the trade was made.

Wildcats as a rule aren't very generous, but Mac seemed to want to make a good impression. He divided up the cake among the other animals, keeping only a small piece for himself. His generosity was much applauded, and a good many of the animals began to feel that he was really a pretty good fellow, and to hope that he might stay around for a while. "He sort of livens things up," they said.

As the spectators streamed away from the pond, Charles fell in beside Freddy. "Pretty dull show," he said.

"Oh, I don't know," Freddy said. "We had lots of fun. Anyway, it wasn't held for your amusement, Charles. We wanted Jimmy to have those clothes."

"Well, it's not my idea of a tournament," said Charles. "It would have been more fun if it had been bloodier. Pshaw! Pillows on the lance points, and being pushed off a cow's back like a turtle off a log! Where's your danger, where's your glory? I guess your old King Arthur would have laughed himself sick over it."

"Well, he's been dead for a thousand years, so I don't see why you should worry about that," Freddy observed.

"I guess that wildcat's alive, and I bet he laughs at us," said Charles. "Now there's a fighter! He comes down out of the woods, like a knight-errant, looking for adventure, and there isn't one of us that has the gumption to give him a real fight."

Freddy grinned. "If you want to fight him, rooster, I expect he'd be willing to oblige." He walked along thoughtfully for a minute. "You know," he said, "I don't quite like the way he acts. He's too darned genial. And what does he want with Peter? I've a good mind to send a messenger to Peter—tell him about it. He'll be back in another week, and maybe he ought to be warned before he gets here."

"Now that you speak about it," Charles said, "he did seem a little sinister, in spite of his good manners. And I didn't at all like the way he looked at Henrietta."

"I know what you mean," said Freddy. "I saw him looking at you the same way. Sort of wondering if you'd be better fricasseed, or roasted with sage and onions."

My experience is, when anybody looks at you like that it's time to get your coat and hat and tell your hostess what a nice time you've had."

Charles shivered. "I guess I'd better turn on the burglar alarm in the henhouse tonight. Where's Mac going to stay?"

"He said something about waiting until Peter came back, so he'll be around for a few days. I suppose he'll sleep up in Peter's den. I told him that I'd like to offer him that empty box stall, but that I knew Mr. Bean wouldn't like to have a wildcat in the barn, and he seemed to understand. He was quite nice about it, really. I have an idea he doesn't want to cause any trouble before Peter gets back."

"Well, don't forget to send off that messenger," said Charles.

## Chapter 13

In spite of Freddy's misgivings, the wildcat gave them no trouble. After the tournament he went up into the woods, and for a day or two the farm animals didn't see him again, though Freddy learned that he had moved into Peter's den. He was living there very quietly. He spent a good deal of his time in long solitary walks, or lying out on a limb with his eyes shut, purring harshly. Occasionally he would come down and pay a short formal call on one or another of the farm animals. It all seemed very harmless, but Freddy sent his messenger off anyway. This messenger—one of the more reliable of the barn swallows—was to find Peter and tell him the news, and then report back to Freddy.

Freddy had a good deal on his mind these days. There was the wildcat, and there was Jimmy—who hadn't been seen since the tournament, so that no one knew whether he was wearing his new clothes or not. And there was the wedding of Mrs. Church's niece. Of course Freddy was going to the wedding, and there was nothing special to worry him in that, since he had often attended social functions in Centerboro, and so was quite at home in any society. But he wanted to make a proper appearance, and of course you can't do that unless you have the proper clothes.

Fortunately among the costumes which he kept in a closet off his study, for use as disguises in his detective work, there were a pair of striped trousers, a black coat, and a tall silk hat, which were quite suitable for a formal wedding. But unfortunately the former owner of these garments—if he can be called the owner—was a scarecrow, and scarecrows are pretty hard on their clothes. So the things were in bad shape. They were crumpled and stained, the trouser cuffs were frayed, one sleeve was nearly out of the coat, and the hat had several serious dents in it.

Freddy borrowed some cleaning fluid from Mrs. Bean and sat up nearly all night for two nights getting the spots out, and then he borrowed a needle and some black thread and tried to make the necessary repairs. He wasn't very handy with a needle. He got his friend, Randolph, a large beetle who lived up by the brook, to help him thread it, but even when he got it threaded his problems were only beginning. For not only were his stitches much too large and too uneven, but at nearly every other stitch he stuck the needle into himself, and when he did that he squealed. The squeals were so continuous that the animals who passed the pig pen when he was sewing thought he was singing to himself as he worked.

"I wouldn't have taken all this trouble for anybody but Mrs. Church," he said to Randolph. "Ouch! I put the needle in, and I never can tell where it is coming out.

Ow! But I don't see how it always manages to come through the cloth—ow-wow!—just where some of me happens to be.”

When at last he had the mending done he went up to the house and got Mrs. Bean to press the suit for him, and then he tried it on. It really looked very nice if you didn't stand too close. I can't say as much for the hat. He had brushed it until it shone like a freshly painted stovepipe, and then he had tried to push out the dents from the inside. He was working at the last one when he pushed too hard, and the brim came right away from the crown. He fastened them together again as well as he could with some adhesive tape, and then thought he'd better not work on it any more.

On the day of the wedding he dressed with great care, then went up to the house for Mrs. Bean to put on the finishing touches. She lent him Mr. Bean's best necktie—a red velvet one, with hand-painted calla lilies on it, which had been a wedding present from Mr. Bean's sister. Mr. Bean had only worn it once or twice, because he didn't wear a tie when he was working, and when he dressed up he usually didn't bother either, because nobody could see whether he had a tie on or not, on account of his beard. So it was practically brand new. Mrs. Bean tied it for Freddy, and then she picked a rose and put it in his buttonhole. It was pink, and made a nice contrast with the tie.

None of the other animals were going to the wedding, although they had all been invited. Mrs. Wiggins said she didn't like weddings: they always made her cry. “And when I cry,” she said, “there's no use trying to go on with the ceremony until I stop.” Which of course was true; when Mrs. Wiggins cried she made a terrible lot of noise. Hank said if he was the one that was being married he guessed he'd probably go, but otherwise he didn't see any point in it. And the others all made one excuse or another. The truth was that they didn't like being stared at and asked questions by strangers, and there would of course be a good many out-of-town people at a big wedding like this. They wouldn't have minded if it had been just the Centerboro people, who knew and liked them, and indeed often invited one or more of them to parties and teas. But strangers would be surprised to see cows and pigs and chickens at a formal wedding, and wouldn't, perhaps, be polite enough not to show it.

Freddy had at first intended to walk into town, but he decided that he might as well do the thing in style, so he persuaded Hank to get hitched up to the phaeton and drive him in. When he got to Mrs. Church's he was glad that he had done so. There was a long line of limousines and handsome cars moving slowly up the drive, and as each one came to the steps leading up to the front door, it stopped and a group of

people in their best clothes got out and went into the house. Hank fell into line and in spite of the rheumatic stiffness in his off hind leg, managed to give Freddy's entrance some style by prancing a little as he drew up at the steps. Then Freddy got out, and with the silk hat tipped at a jaunty angle, bustled up the steps.

A maid in a little white cap and apron took his hat and showed him into the drawing room. He was so well dressed that I don't think she even noticed that he was a pig. A large crowd of guests was moving about, talking and laughing and looking at the wedding presents, which were displayed on several long tables. The Bean animals didn't of course have much money to buy presents with, but they had sent a handsome wreath of field flowers which was prominently displayed. Freddy was admiring this when someone slapped his shoulder and a jovial voice behind him said: "Well, ambassador, I see you got here."

Freddy turned. A stout man with a large cigar was smiling down at him. He was holding the cigar in his fingers, but as he saw Freddy's face the smile vanished, the half-shut eyes popped wide open, and as he continued to stare he slowly raised his hand and deliberately put the lighted end of the cigar in his mouth. There was a gasp and a splutter, and he turned and elbowed his way frantically from the room.

Freddy was still looking after him when Mrs. Church came up. "Well, Freddy, I'm glad you got here. But what have you been doing to Mr. Pontoon?"

"Mr. Pontoon?"

"He's the groom's father. He just left you in such a hurry—"

"Oh, that big man!" Freddy said, and explained.

Mrs. Church laughed and laughed. "I didn't tell him about you," she said, "and of course he took you for Ambassador Dunkle—you've much the same figure from the rear—and when he saw you were a pig. . . . Well, I must find him and explain."

Freddy looked up at Mr. Pomeroy, who was sitting on Mrs. Church's head, his beak over her left eye, his wings spread. The robin winked at him, but didn't move. Of course he didn't have his glasses on.

Freddy said: "I must compliment you, ma'am, upon a very handsome hat."

"I may tell you that half the women in this room are green with envy," Mrs. Church said. "But I leave it to you what color they'll be when they find out he's alive."

She laughed and went on, but presently came back with Mr. Pontoon, to whom she introduced Freddy.

"Well, sir," Mr. Pontoon said, "you gave me quite a shock. The ambassador had promised me that he would come, and—" He broke off. "Why, there he is now," he said, looking over Freddy's head towards the door. "Just wait here, will you? You



must meet him.” And he brought the newcomer over.

Ambassador Dunkle was small and chubby, he had on a black coat and striped trousers with a red necktie, and he did look a lot like Freddy, only his clothes were newer. And his face of course was different. He noticed the likeness even before Mr. Pontoon spoke of it, and they laughed together over it. He and Freddy had a very pleasant talk.

One end of the drawing room was banked with flowers, and in the center of that wall was a large shield on which was painted the Church coat of arms. But above, where the bird that Freddy had called a popinjay should have been, there was just an empty space. The ceremony took place in front of this shield. Mrs. Church blew a whistle, and all the guests took their places, and the ceremony was performed. And when the minister had pronounced the couple man and wife, J. J. Popinjay flew up and perched on the shield and began to sing. I have called him Popinjay instead of Pomeroy, because that was now his name. The day before he had flown down to Centerboro and seen Judge Arnett and had his name changed by law. So now he really was J. J. Popinjay, and his wife was Mrs. Popinjay, and his children were little Popinjays, and anybody that called him Pomeroy any more was against the law.

Well of course, whatever he called himself, J. J. was a robin, and he was singing the only song a robin can sing, which all of the guests had heard thousands of times. But because he was all dressed up in a lot of elegant and fancy feathers, they expected to hear an elegant and fancy song; and because they expected to hear it, they did hear it. It was certainly true, Freddy thought, that fine feathers make fine birds. Why he himself had been taken for an ambassador, just because of his fine clothes.

After the ceremony everybody went out into the garden where long tables were set for the wedding breakfast. Freddy didn't look so much like an ambassador out of doors, because the bright sunshine showed up all his unskilful mending and the spots he hadn't quite got out. But he stayed in the shade as much as possible, and I guess he ate as much as anybody. Afterwards he had Hank take him down to Mr. Dimsey's, where he started to write an account of the wedding for *The Bean Home News*.

“Yesterday,” Freddy wrote, “at the residence of her aunt, Mrs. Winfield Church, one of Centerboro's fairest daughters was led to the hymeneal altar by Mr. Elmer G. Pontoon of Albany. The lovely bride was accompanied by her sister, Miss Jerusha Awfly, also of this place, and the happy groom was supported by Mr. J. F. Drear of Watertown. Evidences of the high esteem on the part of friends were seen in the many elegant presents, among them a silver tea service from Mrs. Church, and a

handsome floral wreath from the animals of the Bean Farm. After the ceremony a sumptuous collation was served, and a fine time was enjoyed by all. Among those present were Ambassador Dunkle, Mr. George Pontoon, father of the groom, Miss Harriet Peebles, Frederick Bean, Esq., and others.”

He was chewing his pencil and wondering how to describe the bride’s dress when there was a twittering outside the window. He opened it, and the swallow he had sent to find Peter flew in.

“Well, did you see Peter?” Freddy asked.

“Oh, Freddy, such a trip as I’ve had—such a trip!” said the swallow. “Asking directions, and being sent to the wrong places, and then asking again, and—”

“But did you find him?” Freddy interrupted.

“Let me get my breath, can’t you?” demanded the swallow crossly.

“O.K., O.K.,” said Freddy. “Perhaps you’d better go home and rest for an hour or two before you tell me. I’ll see you later.”

But this wasn’t what the swallow wanted at all. He came very quickly to the point. He had found Peter, who was spending a few weeks with his brother Joseph, up in Herkimer County. Joseph had a large comfortable den on the side of a wooded hill where he lived with his wife and two children. They lived very quietly and didn’t go out much. Joseph was very anxious for his children to get a good education, and as there wasn’t a school handy he had started teaching them himself.

“I know all this,” Freddy said. “Peter has told me all about Joseph’s school, and how a lot of the rabbits and squirrels got him to take their children too, so that he has now quite a big school. It’s very interesting, but what has it got to do with this wildcat?”

“I’m coming to that, if you’ll give me a chance,” said the swallow. “The trouble all started at the school.” And he went on to say that some wildcats, who lived on the other side of the hill, asked Joseph to take their children too. Joseph hadn’t wanted to at first, for these cats were really wild—they hadn’t even any names. But at last he agreed. Everything went well at first. The little wildcats were well behaved and did their homework, and even helped some of the smaller animals with theirs, which is rather unusual in wildcats. And then one morning, when Joseph’s pupils came back from playing hide and seek during recess, two rabbits were missing.

Well, Joseph didn’t know what to think. He was sure the rabbits wouldn’t just have run off home, because they liked school. The last anybody had seen of them, they had gone off to hide with one of the little wildcats, but the wildcat said he didn’t know what had become of them: he had climbed a tree to hide, and they had gone on out of sight. Joseph just went on with the regular lessons. Even when lunch time

came, and the wildcats didn't seem to have much appetite, he didn't say anything. But when during the afternoon recess two more rabbits disappeared, he decided he would have to do something about it. So he kept the wildcats after school and questioned them.

Well, it just shows you how wild they were that they didn't even bother to deny that they had eaten the rabbits. "Sure," they said; "we ate them. They were good, too." Joseph tried to show them that it wasn't the thing to do, to eat your schoolmates, and he explained to them how inconsiderate they had been. But they just said: "Well, we were hungry, and it was a long time until lunch. Goodness' sake, why all the fuss about a few rabbits?"

So Joseph gave them a good whaling and sent them home and told them they couldn't come to his school any more.

But the next day the wildcat parents came to see him. They were polite at first, but when Joseph was firm in his refusal to take their children back, they flew into a rage. A wildcat is no match for a bear, so they didn't pitch into him, but they said some pretty mean things. After this there was a feud between the two families, and Joseph would never let the children go out into the woods unless he or his wife went with them, for he knew from certain signs that the wildcats were just lying in wait in the hope of picking a few of them off. But they picked them off anyway. He had to give up teaching, because nearly every day one of his pupils would disappear and never be heard of again, and of course this was not good for the reputation of the school. The parents were quite upset about it, and it was at a last stormy meeting of the Parent Teachers Association that he finally handed in his resignation.

Of course Joseph could have gone on teaching his own cubs, but he liked having a school, and he was pretty unhappy. And so at last he decided to move away from Herkimer County and start a school somewhere else. Things were in this state when Peter arrived for his visit. As soon as Joseph heard what a nice place the Bean farm was, with lots of animals just aching to be taught things, and no prospect of wildcat trouble, he decided to move down there and start again. Peter was delighted. There was a place he knew just above his own home which, with a little digging and rearrangement, would make a fine combination den and schoolroom. The swallow told Freddy all this, and added that Peter and Joseph planned to come down in a day or two and get things ready.

"But what do they think of the wildcat showing up down here?" Freddy asked.

"They know who it is. It's the father wildcat. They think he must have heard of the new scheme—after all, it's no secret—and must have come down here to cause some trouble—try to break up the school, maybe. I don't know."

“But he can’t break it up before it’s started.”

“No,” said the swallow. “But the bears are pretty worried about it all the same. They think maybe the wildcat is going to move his family down here and start that same business all over again as soon as school opens. Peter wants you to try to find out what he’s up to.”

“I’ll get my spies to work,” said Freddy. “But I don’t think we’ll find out much. And there isn’t anything we can do as long as he behaves himself, and he seems to be trying to be nice.” He thanked the swallow and dismissed him, and then went on with his writing.

When he had finished he went out into the street, where Hank was waiting with the phaeton. The horse nodded towards a knot of people who seemed to be surrounding something that was going on on the opposite sidewalk. “Better go over and see what’s wrong with your friend, Mrs. Church,” he said. “She’s having an argument with somebody.”

Freddy dashed across the street. He pushed through the crowd and saw Mrs. Church facing a lanky man with a long moustache and a silver star pinned on his vest. It was another friend of Freddy’s, the sheriff. “Well, ma’am,” he was saying, “the law’s the law, and it says that birds as hat trimmin’ is out. And it also says there’s a fine for wearin’ such. And it further says, ma’am, that it is my duty to seize and confiscate the same. We bein’ good friends, I ain’t going to arrest you, as is within my power, but I’ll have to ask you for that hat.”

“Oh, look here, sheriff,” Freddy began. But Mrs. Church shook her head at him with a smile. She put her hands up and lifted J. J. Popinjay carefully off her head and handed him over. “I will never stand in the way of your duty, sheriff,” she said.

J. J. never moved a feather as the sheriff carried him across and put him carefully in the back seat of his ramshackle car. But the minute the sheriff turned to get in behind the wheel, he flew back and perched again on Mrs. Church’s head.

The sheriff started his engine, then looked around and was about to say something further to Mrs. Church, when he saw J. J. back again on her head. His jaw dropped. “You got *two* of ’em?” he demanded. He looked over his shoulder into the back seat, saw that the hat was not there, then got out again and went up to Mrs. Church, holding out his hand. “You hadn’t ought to have done that, ma’am,” he said reproachfully. “You hadn’t ought to snatched it back the minute my back was turned. I don’t know how you did it so quick, though, unless you had a string tied onto it.” And again Mrs. Church handed him the bird.

This time the sheriff put J. J. on the seat beside him, and kept one hand on him as he drove away. But halfway down the block he raised his hand to salute a friend,

and J. J. slipped out without being noticed and flew back and perched on Mrs. Church's head again. And when the sheriff noticed he was gone and glanced back, there was Mrs. Church with the hat on her head.

This time the sheriff didn't come back. He didn't even look around again. He steered into the curb and shut off his engine, and then he just sat there with his eyes shut and his hands clasped tight together as if he was trying to keep from flying to pieces. He didn't move for quite a long time.

Mrs. Church, and the little crowd around her who had seen what had happened, laughed and laughed, but at last, as the sheriff didn't move, she and Freddy walked down the street and stopped opposite him. And Mrs. Church said: "Well, sheriff, I thought you wanted my hat?"

The sheriff didn't even open his eyes. "Kindly go away, ma'am," he said between his teeth.

"But I want to show you my hat," Mrs. Church insisted. "You see, it's not what you think it is."

"I know that, ma'am. I know that."

"But look at it, sheriff," said Freddy. "It was all just a joke."

They had a hard time persuading the sheriff to open his eyes, but at last he did, and Mrs. Church showed him what the hat really was, and J. J. stood up and flapped his wings and sang for him. And at last, after a long time, the sheriff smiled weakly and said: "Well, ma'am and Freddy, the joke's on me, I guess. But you like to scare the daylights out of me, just the same. And don't get the idea, young pig," he said, glaring at Freddy, "that *you* can start playing jokes on the law. A joke's a joke, but two jokes is something else again. These here comic characters who go round pulling chairs out from under folks—they end up in my jail."

"And a very nice place to be, too," Freddy said. "Remember, I've been to a lot of parties there." He was not at all afraid of the sheriff, who was an old friend. He grinned at him, and the sheriff grinned back and said: "Well, you'd better come down there now, then, and have some ice cream. I told the prisoners to make a freezer full for supper." And turning to Mrs. Church, he said: "They'd be proud and happy to have you join us, too, ma'am. Show 'em your hat and have him sing for them. Kind of brightens up the day for them. It's little entertainments like that that make my jail one of the most popular in the state."

Mrs. Church said she'd be glad to come. Now that the wedding was over there was nothing to do but wash the dishes, and dishes could always wait. So they got into the sheriff's car and drove off.

## Chapter 14

Freddy woke up three times the next morning. The first time was when he dreamed that a pack of wildcats with red eyes was chasing him through an empty house. He hid in a closet to get away from them, but there was one in the closet too. He woke up with a yell. Then he sat up in bed for a while, thinking. At last he decided that it was the ice cream. He had eaten seven helpings at the jail. Or was it eight? He got up and took a little bicarbonate and went back to bed.

The second time was when Charles crowed, and Freddy merely turned over and went to sleep again. But the third time it was because of the sound of angry voices—Mr. Bean’s and somebody else’s. At first he thought it was the ice cream again, but after a minute he noticed that he was listening with his eyes open, so that it couldn’t be a dream. He jumped up and ran outdoors.

In the barnyard was a dilapidated old buggy, and between the thills stood Zenas Witherspoon’s horse, Jerry, wearing an old straw hat of Mrs. Witherspoon’s. And in the buggy were Mr. Witherspoon and Jimmy.

“Well, I ain’t going to have you giving my boy any of your old castoff clothes, William Bean, and I tell you that straight,” Mr. Witherspoon was saying, and he tossed a bundle at Mr. Bean’s feet. It fell apart as it struck the ground, and Freddy saw that it was the suit and the shoes that Jimmy had won at the tournament.

“I keep tellin’ you, Zenas, you old numbskull, that I didn’t give those duds to your boy,” said Mr. Bean.

“I suppose you won’t deny that they came from your house?” said Mr. Witherspoon.

“Certainly I won’t. Mrs. B., she gave ’em to the animals, to have as prizes in some contest or other. And accordin’ to your boy’s say-so, he won ’em.”

“I did; I won ’em all fair and square,” put in Jimmy sullenly.

“Well, won ’em or not, he ain’t going to wear anybody’s hand-me-downs, not my boy,” shouted Mr. Witherspoon angrily.

“Then I guess he’ll go naked,” drawled Mr. Bean, “for you ain’t ever bought him as much as a toothpick.”

“He don’t wear toothpicks!”

“Well, if he did, you wouldn’t buy him one. You’d make him go out and whittle him one off the fence. My side of the fence, too, I wager. And as for hand-me-downs—what’s he wearing now but some of your old overalls you bought back in nineteen-four? Sure, I can recognize ’em—I bought me some just like that the same year.”

“Well, what of it?” demanded Mr. Witherspoon. “They’re mine, ain’t they? They ain’t charity. I can afford to buy him what he needs.”

“You can,” Mr. Bean retorted, “but you don’t. You’ve got enough money to buy him fifty suits of gold plush, with socks and neckties to match. But you won’t even buy him enough to dress like a human being. You know what the other boys in school call him? The scarecrow. Old Zenas’s scarecrow.”

“Bah!” Mr. Witherspoon sneered. “You’re gettin’ awful enthusiastic about spendin’ somebody else’s money, William. What’s it to you, anyway? He ain’t your boy.”

“It’s nothing to me if you want to starve yourself and go round looking like something that’s been stomped on by elephants,” said Mr. Bean. “It’s nothing to me if, like folks say, you won’t ever stir your coffee with a spoon because you’re afraid of wearing out the cup. But by gravy, when it comes to makin’ a monkey and a hoot-nanny out of your own son, I’m going to tell you what I think of you!”

“And I’ll thank you to tend to your own affairs!” Mr. Witherspoon shouted. “Giddap, Jerry.” And as the old horse started to clump towards the gate: “Fancy suits and shiny shoes!” he sneered. “You put ’em back where they came from. My boy don’t need fallals and fripperies.”

“And you don’t need to holler,” said Mr. Bean. “I ain’t deaf.” He shook his head hopelessly and stooped to pick up the clothes.

But just then Mrs. Bean came out of the door. She was a small round comfortable woman with snapping black eyes, and she walked quickly over to the buggy and said pleasantly: “Good morning, Zenas.”

Mr. Witherspoon had either to stop or run over her, so he pulled up. “Good morning, ma’am,” he said.

She came up to the side of the buggy and said quietly: “Zenas, what are you going to do with all your money?”

Mr. Witherspoon stared at her. “Eh?” he said. “What?”

“You’re a rich man, aren’t you, Zenas?”

“Why . . .” He paused, then said defiantly: “Yes, ma’am, I am. Is there anything wrong about that?”

“No. Nothing at all. It’s nice to be rich. It’s nice to have people look at you and say: ‘There goes the rich Mr. Witherspoon.’ But there’s one thing you’ve forgotten. You don’t look like a rich man, Zenas. You look like a tramp. And so when people see you, they don’t say: ‘There goes the rich Mr. Witherspoon.’ They say: ‘There goes old Witherspoon. Look at him! I guess he hasn’t got as much money as he makes out.’”

Mr. Witherspoon's mouth squeezed out a tight smile. "I guess the folks in this part of the country know whether I'm rich or not."

"Some of them do," Mrs. Bean said. "Mr. Weezer, at the bank, probably does. But even if Mr. Weezer tells everybody around here that you're rich, how many of them believe it? 'Rich!' they say. 'Don't make me laugh! A man that can't afford even shoes for his family!'"

Mr. Witherspoon flew into a rage. "Can't afford—can't afford! Just because I'm smart enough to save my money and not go throwing it around like a lunatic, you think . . . Why, how do you suppose I made my money? 'Twasn't by runnin' out and buyin' gewgaws with every penny I made."

"Yes, but it's *made* now, Zenas," Mrs. Bean said. "You're like a man who starts out to build a house. He lays the foundation and runs up the frame, and he puts in the windows and doors, and he shingles the roof. But when he's finished, he goes right on. He builds it higher and wider, he adds more rooms and more doors and windows than he could use in a hundred years, and yet he goes right on building. He forgets what he started out to do. A house is a place to live in and enjoy. Well, that's what money is, too. You don't just go on making it."

"Oh, I suppose you'd have me stop, then?" Mr. Witherspoon enquired.

Mr. Bean turned his back on him and walked away. But Mrs. Bean stayed. "Well, Zenas," she said, "you haven't answered my question. What are you going to do with all your money?"

Mr. Witherspoon began to look rather upset. "Buildin' houses, and putting in doors and windows," he grumbled. "I don't know what you're all talking about."

"You won't answer," Mrs. Bean said, "because you aren't going to do anything with it. Sacks and sacks of it you've put away in the bank, and it's no more use to you than so many sacks of last year's maple leaves." She bent down and picked up Adoniram's suit, which Mr. Bean had left lying there. "I went to school with your wife, Zenas," she said, shaking the dust off the suit. "Netty Trimble she was then, always gay and full of spirits. I haven't seen her in ten years. Even after she stopped coming over here, because she didn't have decent clothes to wear, I used to go over to see her. But I stopped that. She was too ashamed to have me come, ashamed of how poor she had to live. But it wasn't for herself that she was ashamed, Zenas; it was you she was ashamed of. Had you ever thought of that?"

Mr. Witherspoon shook his head angrily. "I've got nothing to be ashamed of. I don't know why you and William act so mad at me. I've always lived on good terms with you as neighbors, haven't I?"

"You haven't lived on any terms with us. You've been so busy piling up the



pennies that you haven't even known you had neighbors. Well, well; there's no sense arguing. I don't expect to change you. I was only hoping you'd let your boy have these clothes. It's fun for boys to win things. And even though you keep him from having most of the things other boys have, I didn't suppose you'd be mean enough to keep him from having as cheap a thing as fun."

Mr. Witherspoon looked glum. "Good land," he said, "if you make such a point of it as that! . . . Well, I don't hold with it, I don't hold with it at all, but . . . take those things, boy, if you want 'em," he growled.

Jimmy jumped out of the buggy. He took the suit from Mrs. Bean, wrapped the shoes in it, and climbed back in.

"Thank you, Zenas." Mrs. Bean smiled cordially and held out her hand and Mr. Witherspoon took it gingerly. Then she waved to them as they drove off.

"That Zenas!" said Mr. Bean, coming back from the corner of the porch where he had been puffing angrily on his pipe. "If he ever comes into this yard again—!"

"It's not Zenas I'm worried about," Mrs. Bean said. "It's Netty, and that boy. Did you see the boy's face when he took the things? Trying to hide his happiness from his father. Zenas is always suspicious when any of his folks look happy: he thinks maybe it's costing him money."

"Pity about the boy," Mr. Bean said. "But I don't know what we can do. I guess I'll go think it over for a while. Maybe something'll come to me." And he started off towards the thinking hole, which he now used quite often.

Freddy, who had listened to the conversation from the corner of the fence, went on into the cow barn, to tell the cows the news the swallow had brought him. They listened to him in silence, and then Mrs. Wiggins said: "Yes, I expect Peter's right about that wildcat. We'll have to drive him off. And yet—I'm sorry, in a way. I'd taken rather a fancy to him. You see, Freddy, he dropped in to call yesterday. While you were knocking them flat with your fine clothes at that high society wedding."

"He called *here*?" Freddy exclaimed.

"He waited until Mr. Bean was out of the way," Mrs. Wogus said. "Of course that was only common sense; no farmer wants wildcats around his barns. But as Mac said to us—there are wildcats and wildcats, and he was sure that in time he could break down any foolish prejudice Mr. Bean might have against him. He was really very nice, Freddy. He told us all about his children—he said he was sorry he didn't have any photographs of them to show us—and really he seems quite a home-loving person—a real family wildcat, if I may use the expression."

"I guess you may," said Freddy, "if you don't ask me to believe it."

"He likes our neighborhood, too," said Mrs. Wurzburger. "He said the woods

were too remote for bringing up a family. He thought a cultured community like this would be much better for them, and he wondered what we'd think about his coming down here to live."

"He certainly got the old charm to work on you, didn't he?" said Freddy. "And I suppose you told him you'd just love it."

"We didn't go quite as far as that," said Mrs. Wiggins. "But I will say we didn't exactly discourage him. Remember, we hadn't heard your news about Peter and Joseph then."

"Who else did he call on?" Freddy asked.

"Alice and Emma," said Mrs. Wiggins. "And I believe he stopped in to see Henrietta. She wasn't very cordial—though perhaps that's only natural. She talked to him from the henhouse roof. But he told us—and her too—that he wants to give a little talk tomorrow afternoon to anybody that cares to come, on 'The Wildcat as Citizen,' or 'The Home Life of the Wildcat,' or something like that. We thought it might be interesting, since as he said, we farm animals don't know much about wildcats. He said we've got the wrong idea about them; whoever named them 'wild' in the first place had done them a great injustice."

"Quite the gentleman of the old school, isn't he?" said Freddy. "Well, I guess you can see what he's up to. Trying to make us think he'd be a good neighbor, so that we won't object to his bringing his family here to live. And then, when Joseph opens his school, and the pupils begin disappearing, we'll all say: 'Oh, it can't be that nice wildcat who's making the trouble! Why, he was in here to tea only yesterday afternoon, and such a nice, mild-mannered animal you never saw!'"

"I guess you're right; he'll have to go," said Mrs. Wiggins. "But—" she looked hard at Freddy—"you didn't intend to ask *us* to drive him away, did you?"

"I don't know who else could tackle the job," Freddy said.

Mrs. Wiggins shook her head. "We wouldn't mind tackling him in the open, where we can swing our horns. But to go into the woods after him—thank you kindly!" And Mrs. Wogus and Mrs. Wurzburger shook their heads too. "Stumbling around, getting hooked in vines and creepers, and him on a limb overhead, like as not, just waiting to spring until we get stuck tight."

"How about Jacob?" said Mrs. Wiggins. "He's helped us before."

"Jacob!" Freddy perked up. "By George, I think you're right. I'll go see him right away."

Jacob was a wasp who lived in one of a row of wasp apartments under the eaves of the barn. When Freddy called to him he flew down and lit on the pig's nose. He said: "I'd be delighted to help you, Freddy, but there's the State Wasps'

Convention this week down at Binghamton and—well, you know how it is; maybe they won't call on me for a speech at all, but after all I'm pretty prominent in a way—I mean I've won all those cross-country racing prizes and so on, and if they did call on me for a few words, I ought to have something ready. I've been throwing a few ideas together and I've got to whip them into shape. But if you can wait until Monday, I'll rout out some of the boys and we'll take care of that wildcat for you."

There seemed to be nothing to do but to wait. Freddy went back to the pig pen but he was just going in the door when he noticed a very strange looking bird sitting on the roof. It had a sort of ruff around its neck of stiff white feathers, and its tail was a red, white and blue fan. It was certainly very striking looking, and Freddy was about to call to it when it flew down and lit beside him, and he saw that it was Mrs. Popinjay.

"My goodness," he said, "you've certainly been out spending J. J.'s hard earned money, Mrs. P. Not that it isn't very becoming—very fetching, in fact."

Mrs. Popinjay cocked her head coquettishly. "Oh, Freddy! What things you say! But you ought to see some of the others. A lot of us have been down to Centerboro and Miss Peebles has been dressing us up. Then she puts us in the window, just as she did J. J., and sells us as hats. She got the idea from Mrs. Church. So many people admired Mrs. Church's live popinjay hat at the wedding, and they all came to Miss Peebles to see if they couldn't get one like it. So Miss Peebles spoke to J. J. and told him to bring some of his friends in to be trimmed. Of course she doesn't really sell us; we're just hired out. For instance, I'm Mrs. Weezer's hat now, and when she's going somewhere special, like a church supper or a card party, I go down so she can wear me."

"Miss Peebles hasn't wasted much time," Freddy said. "The wedding was only yesterday."

"Her store has been crowded all day long," said Mrs. Popinjay. "I'll bet she's trimmed twenty bird hats today."

"But what does she get out of it?"

"We give her half of what we make," said the robin. "I get fifty cents for every appearance, and half of that goes to Miss Peebles."

Freddy thought that was fair enough. "But that's big money for a bird," he said. "Of course you'll want to spend some of it on a good time, but do put some aside for a rainy day. Come down to the First Animal Bank when you get the time and let me explain our Savings and Loan Service to you."

Mrs. Popinjay chirped with amusement. "You're getting as bad as Mr. Weezer," she said. "Every nickel you see you want to roll it right into your bank. Well, I'll be

seeing you!” And with a flirt of her feathers she flew off.

“My goodness,” said Freddy, talking things over with Jinx a little later, “I don’t know whether all these fine clothes are such a good thing after all. That Mrs. Popinjay used to be such a quiet, modest little bird, but since she’s got all trimmed up she’s—well, she kind of poses all the time, as if she thought everybody was looking at her.”

“Yeah, I know,” said Jinx. “Kind of silly. It’s the same with her husband. When he was just plain Mr. Pomeroy I had nothing to say, for or against him, and that’s the way folks you don’t know very well ought to be. But since he got those fancy tail feathers it’s all strut and waggle. I’ve watched him. If a strange bird comes along, up he goes. ‘I’m J. J. Popinjay; maybe you’ve heard of me.’ Then he looks at ’em down his beak through those little spectacles, and the stranger kind of wilts. ‘Yes, sir; no, sir.’” Jinx held a paw up and examined his claws thoughtfully. “Some day I’m going to catch that bird on the ground, and then we’ll see what he’s like when he’s trimmed down to size again.”

“I’m just wondering,” said Freddy, “if we made a mistake in getting those new clothes for Jimmy.”

“You mean you wonder if they’ll make him into a popinjay too? I wouldn’t worry. Old Zenas will take care of that.”

Freddy shook his head. “They say fine feathers make fine birds. But I’m afraid they just make stuck-up ones. Well, we’ll have to wait and see.”

## Chapter 15

Centerboro Main Street, as Freddy looked out at it the next afternoon through the window of Miss Peebles' store, seemed more like a tropical jungle than the business section of a New York State town. Birds in brilliant plumage flashed to and fro among the lower branches of the trees, robins crested and plumed like birds of Paradise, sparrows in red and blue and green, woodpeckers and wrens and phoebes with long floating tails of every color of the rainbow. Half the population of Centerboro stood around the window watching the display, which Miss Peebles changed every ten minutes, as a different lot of birds took their places on the little hat stands.

"It's the biggest day I've ever had, Freddy," said Miss Peebles, as she stopped in her rush from one customer to another to speak to the pig. "I've sold twenty hats this morning, and I've had phone orders from as far away as Rochester. There's no delivery problem, you see; the hats deliver themselves. I really believe we've started a fashion that will sweep the country. Popinjay Hats. Birds always make the prettiest hats, and this is a way to use them without breaking the law."

"They're better than regular hats in many ways," said Freddy. "You don't have to hang them up, and if somebody behind you in the movies leans forward and says: 'Will you kindly remove your hat, madam?' why off it flies—instantly. And waits for you in the lobby.

"And another thing you can do," he said, "you can train them for tea parties. Train them to say 'How do you do?' and 'How is your dear husband?' and 'Thank you for a lovely time,' and such things, so that the one who wears the hat can really get somewhere with the refreshments while the hat takes care of the polite conversation."

Miss Peebles thought this was a wonderful idea, but she was much too busy to discuss it then, and after congratulating her on her success Freddy was about to leave, when through the window he saw Mr. Witherspoon's buggy, drawn by Jerry, come creaking along the street. In it were Mr. Witherspoon and Jimmy, and Jimmy had on the suit he had won at the tournament.

Freddy stayed where he was and watched. The buggy stopped in front of Jamberson's hardware store across the street, and Mr. Witherspoon got out. A lot of the people who had been staring into Miss Peebles' window now turned right around and stared at the Witherspools, for to see Jimmy in a decent suit was almost as remarkable as to see a sparrow in red and green plumes. Mr. Witherspoon glowered at them for a moment, then turned into the store.

Aware that he was being stared at, Jimmy slid as far down as he could in the seat. A minute later two boys came along. They stared too, then they grinned and went up to the buggy and one of them said: "Hello, Jimmy. Going to the ball game?"

"Hullo," Jimmy grunted. "No."

"Better come along. Centerboro's playing Gomorrah Center." They hesitated a minute, then: "Well, be seeing you," they said, and went on.

Jimmy was puzzled. Those boys had never paid any attention to him before. Of course he'd always been pretty surly to them. So why had they spoken to him now? It couldn't be just the suit; boys didn't care what kind of clothes you wore. Freddy could almost watch these thoughts going through Jimmy's mind, but he was glad to see him straighten up a little in the seat.

A boy named Jason Brewer went past and took off his cap to Freddy. The pig ran after him. "Jason," he said, "are you going to the ball game today?"

"Nope," said Jason. "Can't afford it."

"Well, look," said Freddy. "You know I always get two tickets to the games, so I can report them for *The Bean Home News*. I'll give them to you—you can stop for them at Mr. Dimsey's—if you'll ask Jimmy Witherspoon to go with you."

"Jimmy Witherspoon!" Jason exclaimed. "You can't give Jimmy anything. And I don't know that I'd want to go with him. We don't like Jimmy much."

"I know you don't. But I don't think that's really Jimmy's fault. And I have a special reason for asking you. Can you keep a secret?"

Jason grinned. "I can if I have lots of help."

"I think you can," said Freddy. "It's a little too long to explain now, but I want Jimmy to go to that game. I'd ask him myself, but maybe he wouldn't want to go with a pig—"

"With a pig!" said Jason. "Why I've seen you at ball games with Mr. Weezer and Judge Arnett. I guess if they can go with you, he needn't be so high and mighty." He sniffed angrily. "He's so proud and stuck-up—and what's he got to be stuck-up about anyway?"

"Nothing," said Freddy; "and that's really why he's proud. His father won't give him any spending money, or even decent clothes, and he's ashamed not to have what other boys have. If people try to be nice to him, he thinks it's because he's poor, and he snubs them. You'd be the same way, Jason."

"I never thought about it that way before," Jason said, "but I expect I would. I suppose I'd be ashamed of my father, and then I'd be ashamed of being ashamed, and then—well, I'm getting all mixed up, I guess."

"Jimmy is all mixed up," said Freddy. "That's the trouble. But I thought maybe

you'd like to help him. He's got a new suit today, and I think—well, I sort of think he'll go with you. If you ask him in the right way—sort of offhand.”

“O.K.,” said Jason. He grinned. “I'm not a Boy Scout for nothing. And I sure do want to see that game.”

Freddy went back into Miss Peebles' and watched. Jason did it pretty well. He walked past the buggy with a “Hi, Jimmy!” and then turned as if an idea had struck him and came back. “Got a couple tickets to the game,” he said. “Want to go?”

The question surprised a “Yes!” out of Jimmy before he had time to think. Then he started to make some objection, but Jason didn't wait. “O.K.,” he said. “Meet you at the gate at two sharp.” And went on.

Jimmy sat scowling at nothing for a minute or two, then he shrugged his shoulders and sat up still straighter in the seat.

Pretty soon Mr. Witherspoon came out of the hardware store. Several people nodded coldly to him as he stowed some parcels under the seat of the buggy. But as he was getting in, Mr. Weezer came along.

“Good morning, Zenas, good morning,” he said. He looked at Jimmy, frowned, then looked again. “This your son, Zenas? Fine looking boy. Don't remember to have seen him around before.”

“You ain't seen him in those fancy duds, I guess,” said Mr. Witherspoon. “Well, they didn't cost anything, so I guess there's no harm. As long as folks don't get the idea I'm throwing away *my* money on such foolishness. Anybody that asks, I hope you'll tell 'em, Mr. Weezer. It would hurt my standing in the town if it got round that I was chucking my money away on such frippery.”

Mr. Weezer put his glasses firmly astride his nose and looked at Mr. Witherspoon. “Frippery?” He took hold of the lapel of his well-pressed coat and pulled it out. “Do you call this frippery, Zenas?”

“It ain't the same thing,” Mr. Witherspoon said. “You're a banker. You have to wear fine clothes or people wouldn't trust you with their money.”

“There is something in that,” said Mr. Weezer. “But let's put it that I feel it my duty to dress as well as the people I do business with. Whether I am a banker or a farmer, I should feel that. In short, Zenas . . .”

“In short” was a phrase that Mr. Weezer always used when he was about to explain things at great length, and Mr. Witherspoon leaned against the buggy wheel and made himself comfortable while Mr. Weezer went on to develop his argument. It was a good argument, but since it did not convince Mr. Witherspoon that he should go right into the Busy Bee and buy several fine suits of clothes, I won't repeat it.

But when the argument was over, and the last point had been tapped home with

Mr. Weezer's glasses on the palm of his hand, and Mr. Weezer had gone into the bank, Mr. Witherspoon did seem rather thoughtful. Like any other father, he wanted to be proud of his son. But nobody had ever told him that Jimmy was a fine looking boy before. He eyed the boy cautiously. Certainly there was a difference. Was it the clothes? No, it was something that the clothes gave him, perhaps—but it was something in the boy himself.

He said suddenly: "You ought to have had your mother trim that shirt collar. It's all frayed."

"It's been trimmed so often there's hardly any collar left," Jimmy grumbled.

Mr. Witherspoon grunted. "Well, it don't matter; we're going right home."

"I'm not," said Jimmy. "Jason asked me to go to the ball game. I'll walk home after."

"Who's paying for the tickets?"

"I don't know. Jason said he had some."

Mr. Witherspoon grunted again. Then he grunted again. Then he made a face as if he had a terrible stomach-ache and put his hand in his pocket and brought out fifty cents. "Go get your hair cut. I'll wait."

When Jimmy had gone he waited until everybody was again looking at the new display in Miss Peebles' window, and then he walked slowly past the Busy Bee, and when nobody was on the sidewalk he ducked quickly in. He came out a few minutes later with a parcel under his arm, and when Jimmy came back he gave it to him.

"What's this?" Jimmy asked.

"Shirt," Mr. Witherspoon mumbled. "Change somewhere before you go to the game. But wrap up the old one and bring it home. Your mother can patch it up for everyday."

Freddy had watched the whole performance, and he was pretty pleased with it. Of course it was only a start, but as his old friend, Mr. Camphor, used to say: "It's the first steps that count." He was so pleased that he didn't even mind having given away his tickets to the ball game. Of course he could afford to buy a ticket if he wanted to, but he decided that he wouldn't. "My mood is poetic rather than sporting today," he said, "and I shall give way to it. I shall go home and write a poem."

Now one of the great difficulties of writing a poem—and I have mentioned several, but this is perhaps the greatest—is that poets feel like writing poems much oftener than they have anything to write about. Some poets don't realize this, and they go on and write very nice poems which don't say much of anything. But Freddy knew that today he had nothing to write about, and so he thought he'd see if he couldn't write one that just didn't mean anything at all. And this is what he wrote:



*Let others sing of fall and spring,  
Of love and dove, of eyes and sighs;  
My song is not of anything;  
It tells no whats, it gives no whys.*

*And is it sad? Or is it gay?  
I do not know. I cannot say.*

*It seeks no meaning to convey,  
It has no subject, point or plot.  
It must mean something, you will say;—  
But I assure you it does not.*

*No scowls across my features creep,  
No tears bedew my handkerchief;  
I do not try to make you weep,  
To moan with anguish, sob with grief.*

*Contrariwise, no smiles contort  
My face; I wish to give no cause  
For anyone to roar and snort  
With uncontrollable guffaws.*

*And if you ask me: is this so?  
I cannot say. I do not know.*

## Chapter 16

One afternoon several days later, Freddy was sitting in his study working, when he was awakened by a tap on the window. He hadn't washed the window in two years so he couldn't see who it was, and he went to the door. Jacob flew down and lit on his nose.

"Hi, Freddy," said the wasp. "Well, I'm back. Boy, did we have a time at that convention! Did we turn Binghamton over on its other ear!"

"How did your speech go?" Freddy asked.

"Oh, the speech," said Jacob. "All right, I guess. Though I don't think anybody heard it. The boys were having such a good time singing and yelling that they didn't pay much attention to the speeches. You know what conventions are, Freddy. Not that I'm kicking. They elected me Supreme Commander. Supreme Commander and Worthy Exalted Stinger-in-Chief of the L.O.W.—that's what I am now."

"L.O.W.?" Freddy asked.

"Loyal Order of Wasps. Some honor, eh?"

"It is indeed. I don't suppose your high exalted mightiness would stoop to do a little wildcat chasing, would it?"

"Sure. That's what I came down for. I brought the boys along—they're up in that tree. Well, what are we waiting for?" And he took out his sting and tried the point on Freddy's nose.

"Hey! Quit that!" said Freddy nervously.

Jacob laughed. "Just want to be sure everything's in working order," he said. "Wildcats are tough. You don't mind if I just try it out a little—?"

"No! Put that away!" said Freddy.

"Just one teentsy-weentsy little jab?"

*No!*

"O.K.," said Jacob resignedly. "Well, you lead the way. We'll follow along." And he flew up into the tree.

"Don't go for him until I give the signal," said Freddy. "I want to talk to him first."

He went over to the boundary wall, and up along it past the thinking hole, out of which came little regular puffs of smoke, so that he knew that Mr. Bean was sitting down there on the old mattress, thinking. He smiled to himself. If you were doing some heavy thinking a pipe was a pretty good thing: it kept you from going to sleep. And Mr. Bean seemed to be doing a lot of thinking, now that haying was over. He was down there a good deal.

A little farther on he ran into Jimmy. The boy had on his old overalls, but he also had on shoes, and the new shirt his father had given him, and with a proper haircut, he looked pretty nice. Freddy knew better than to say anything about it though. He just said “Hello,” and Jimmy said “Hello,” and then Freddy said: “I’m going up with the wasps to chase that wildcat away. Want to come along?”

“I thought you didn’t believe in hurting people?” Jimmy said.

“I don’t, if they’re friendly. But this wildcat isn’t.” And he told Jimmy about Joseph’s school.

“Well, maybe you’re right about him,” Jimmy said, “though he seemed nice enough to me.”

“I know,” Freddy said. “Everybody says the same thing. He’s been laying himself out to be nice; he gave that talk the other day, and he’s been around paying formal calls, and doing things for people—carrying bundles and so on. Sure, maybe I’m wrong. But I’m thinking of Joseph and his school. You can’t keep up attendance in a school if your pupils act like little cannibals and eat one another up.”

They went on up into the woods and had nearly reached Peter’s den when they caught sight of someone moving quickly along through the trees ahead.

“Good gracious, it’s Miss Peebles!” said Freddy.

She had seen them too, and turned down towards them. Freddy introduced Jimmy, and then said: “I didn’t suppose you’d be able to take enough time off from your store to get out into the woods, Miss Peebles. You’re so busy nowadays.”

“Much too busy,” she said. “In fact, I’m thinking of giving up the store. It doesn’t give me time any more to do the things I want to do. Oh yes, I know, I’ve been making more money than I ever did in my life, but I’m having a lot less fun, too. I can’t see that the money is doing me any special good. I’d rather make barely enough to live on, as I used to, and have a little pleasure.”

This was not the kind of talk Jimmy was used to at home, and he stared open-mouthed. If Miss Peebles felt that way, Freddy thought, the more Jimmy saw of her the better. So he told Jimmy that she knew all about the woods, and that if there was anything he wanted to know, he’d better ask her.

Jimmy looked at Miss Peebles skeptically. Then he looked around at the woods, which were pretty wet from a heavy rain the night before. “Yeah?” he said. “You know everything about getting around in the woods, ma’am? Well, could you build a fire with that?” And he held out a match.

Miss Peebles smiled at him. “Come over to this flat rock; we don’t want to burn Mr. Bean’s woods down.” She took a big jackknife out of her pocket and stripped some of the wet outer bark off a birch tree, then rolled up a sheet of the dry inner

bark and handed it to Jimmy to hold. Then she gathered twigs. She didn't pick them up off the ground, where they would be wet, but broke the dead twigs off the under side of limbs and from sheltered places. She laid the roll of bark on the rock and built a little crib of twigs over it, and then some larger twigs above that. And when it was all ready she touched a match to it. In two minutes she had her fire.

Jimmy was much impressed, but Jacob was getting impatient at the delay. He dropped down to Freddy's nose. "Hey, look," he said, "we ought to get going. Shall I chase this party away?" He waved a feeler towards Miss Peebles.

"No, no!" said Freddy. "She's a friend of mine. Miss Peebles," he said, "I'd like you to meet Jacob. I don't suppose you've ever met a wasp before."

"Well, not formally," Miss Peebles said. She smiled at Jacob, and the wasp stood up on his hind legs and bowed from the waist.

Freddy explained to her where they were going, and Miss Peebles said she'd like to come along. "I've never seen a wildcat in his native haunts," she said.

"These aren't going to be his native haunts much longer," Freddy said.

They started along, and pretty soon they came to a little clearing in the woods. At the far side the ground rose steeply to a sort of rock shelf, under which was the cave where Peter lived. And in the mouth of the cave lay the wildcat, stretched out with his head on his forepaws and his eyes closed.

When he heard them he opened his eyes. Then he sat up and yawned, covering his mouth politely with his paw. "Excuse me," he said. "Well, this is very nice. Won't you come sit down? That log there will be comfortable for the lady, I think. I've been working all morning, and I just knocked off to take a little cat nap—a wildcat nap, I suppose you might call it."

"We won't sit down," Freddy said. "This isn't a social call. You see, we've just heard from Peter, and we've found out who you are. Oh, we don't want to argue about it. We know why you're here, and we've come to ask you to go back where you came from."

"I see," said the wildcat. He looked at Freddy thoughtfully. "Well, I knew of course that you'd find out when Peter got back, but I had hoped that by that time I would have convinced you that I didn't want to cause any trouble. I've done everything I could to show you that I'd be a good neighbor, haven't I?"

"You've got a bad record, and we don't trust you," said Freddy. "We think that when Joseph starts his school you'll do the same thing right over again. We want you to go."

The wildcat started to protest, but Jacob, who with thirty or forty members of his immediate family had lit on a limb that overhung the cave door, began to get

bored with the slowness of the proceedings. Wasps are no diplomats. They don't try to be tactful and persuasive when they want something done; they like to get out their stings and get to work. And so Jacob gave the signal and all the wasps took off from the branch with an angry buzz and came whirling down upon the wildcat.

If there is one sound in the world that means "Run for your life!" to an animal, that sound is the vicious snarling drone of a swarm of wasps or hornets. The wildcat put his ears back and crouched, then made a leap that carried him half across the clearing, and with the wasps pouring after him, went tearing down through the woods. And Freddy and Jimmy and Miss Peebles ran after them.

They could follow easily enough by the series of crashes, and the occasional screech the wildcat gave as one or another of the wasps got home a thrust. Oddly enough it was Miss Peebles who took the lead. Neither Jimmy nor Freddy could keep up with her. She looked more like a crane than ever as she hopped over logs, and from rock to rock, seeming to know instinctively which way to turn to avoid getting entangled in the bushes and briars that held the others back. And then they came out of the woods into the upper pasture.

They could see the wildcat streaking down alongside the wall, with the wasps streaming out above and behind him. As they watched, they saw him reach the path through the gap in the wall where the thinking hole had been dug. He checked, and evidently thinking to throw off his pursuers for a minute, leaped sideways into the path—and vanished. There was a loud screech, and a big puff of smoke went up into the windless air.

"Well, I never did!" Miss Peebles exclaimed, and Jimmy said: "Golly!" They didn't know about the thinking hole, and evidently thought that he had just exploded. But Freddy, who had stopped to catch his breath, started on down the hill at a run. "Come on!" he shouted. "He's fallen into our elephant trap—and Mr. Bean is in there, thinking. Oh, dear! He'll claw Mr. Bean to ribbons!"

It was Freddy who led this time, but Jimmy grabbed up a broken fence pole, and Miss Peebles had got out her jackknife. They tried to listen as they ran, but they heard no sounds of a struggle. They could see the wasps, circling above the hole, out of which came a good deal of smoke.

As they approached the edge of the pit they saw a few wasps climb out over the edge and stagger off into the grass. And then they reached it and looked down. Mr. Bean was sitting cross-legged on the mattress, puffing on his pipe, and beside him the wildcat lay on his back with all four paws in the air. The cat's eyes were closed, and his face wore the silly smile of one who dreams happy and foolish dreams.

"Gosh!" said Freddy.

Mr. Bean heard him and looked up. "Consarn it!" he said crossly. "Wildcats and wasps—and now you! I might have known *you'd* be along! Can't a body ever have a minute's peace and quiet without you stirrin' it up?"

"L-look out, he's trying to get up!" said Freddy, for the wildcat had opened one eye and was raising his head. Mr. Bean turned slowly and looked down at him, then he took the pipe from his mouth and blew a big puff of smoke into his face. And the wildcat's head dropped back, and his eyes closed again, and he smiled more sillily than ever.

Mr. Bean got up. "You'd think," he said, "that if there was one place in the world where you could sit kind of calm and collected and listen to your own thoughts, this would be it. But evidently it ain't. If you'll give me a hand up, boy—you too, ma'am, please—I'll go do a little work. I guess I ain't fated to be a thinker."

When they had pulled him up, he turned to Miss Peebles. "Well, Harriet, what are you doing way up here? Used to see you walking around this part of the country quite often, but I expected you'd be too busy to find the time nowadays. I've been hearing great stories about those hats of yours."

"I guess I've been trying to get a little thinking done too," said Miss Peebles.

"Better come over to the house and have a cup of tea with Mrs. B., and sample that new batch of cookies she's just taken out of the oven." He sniffed the air. "No matter what part of the farm I'm working," he said, "I can always smell a fresh batch. I thought I noticed 'em a minute or two before that critter landed on me."

How Mr. Bean could have smelt fresh cookies over at the farmhouse through the thick fog of tobacco smoke was a mystery to Freddy, but of course he didn't say so.

"Why, I'd like to," said Miss Peebles. "Perhaps I can make Mrs. Bean a hat."

Mr. Bean made the creaking noise behind his whiskers which meant that he was amused. "How about a nice rooster?" he said. "She can pay you out of her egg money."

"Rooster, indeed!" said a voice behind them, and they turned to see Mrs. Bean, who had walked across to see what all the excitement was about. With her were Mr. Popinjay and his wife who from their nest in the elm by the gate had also seen something going on, and had flown over.

"I'm not having any rooster hat," said Mrs. Bean. "With everybody else coming out in such fine feathers, I certainly shan't be satisfied with anything less than an eagle."

"Great land of Canaan!" Mr. Bean exclaimed suddenly. He had just caught sight of the Popinjays, and although he had heard about the new hats, he had never yet

seen any examples of Miss Peebles' workmanship. "Where did those critters come from?"

Miss Peebles explained. "And I'm afraid," she said, "that they are making me rather unpopular with some people. You know Miss Crispie, don't you, Mrs. Bean? She teaches the fifth grade in Centerboro, and sometimes takes groups of children out for bird study. Well, you can imagine what happens to one of these bird classes when they've correctly identified several birds, and then a green robin with a long white tail feather flies out in front of them. The children want to know what it is, and of course Miss Crispie can't name it, and there isn't any picture of it in her book, and then the children think she doesn't know anything about birds, and she gets mad at them. . . . Well!" Miss Peebles laughed. "You can't blame her for complaining."

Mr. Bean creaked some more; then he said: "Well, better come along. Those cookies are best when they're just hot out of the oven."

Miss Peebles turned to Freddy. "Can you manage this wildcat all right now?"

Freddy said yes, he could. "He can't get out of the hole unless we help him. And the wasps will stand by."

So Miss Peebles went on with the Beans.

Freddy still didn't understand what had happened when the wildcat fell in on top of Mr. Bean. But as soon as the others had gone, Jacob flew down and lit on the pig's nose and explained. "The old boy gassed him," he said. "I saw the whole thing. When your friend Mac came tumbling in on top of him, Mr. Bean just took a big puff on his pipe and then blew the smoke right into Mac's mouth, as he opened it to get breath for a second screech. And Mac just folded up like a wet towel. Trouble is, two of my aunts and one of my third cousins got gassed too. They were on Mac's back just getting ready to give him the old zip-zowie when he fell in. They crawled back up over the edge, but they passed out and are lying over there in the grass. Boy, what tobacco! And what a man, to smoke such stuff! I wonder where he buys it."

The wildcat was beginning to recover from the effects of Mr. Bean's pipe. He stirred, opened his eyes, then sat up groggily, still smiling his foolish smile. And the first thing he saw was the Popinjays, sitting on the edge of the hole and looking down at him.

"Moses!" he exclaimed. "Where am I? Have I been transported to some tropical isle? Are these gay plumaged tropical birds I see? Is this—" he sniffed—"is this the perfume of the spice islands that greets my nostrils?" He shook himself, and sneezed twice. "Moses! I hope not!" he said more energetically. Then he saw Freddy. "I've seen you before," he said.

“Pull yourself together,” said Freddy. “You’re not on any isle, tropical or otherwise. You’re just on your way back to your home in Herkimer County.”

“Ah, yes, I remember now,” said the wildcat. “Well, as I was saying when those wasps attacked me—” he evidently didn’t connect Freddy with the attack “—I don’t want to go back to Herkimer County.”

“You’re going back just the same.”

“Now, listen,” said Mac. “I don’t blame you for being suspicious of me. It’s all true, what Peter said. We ate those school children; we ate ’em and enjoyed ’em. But when the school broke up, and our children had to be home all the time—well, their mother and I realized what a mistake we’d made. We remembered how peaceful it had been around the house when the children were off at school all day long. But when they’re at home—well, how’d you like to have three young wildcats around the house all day long? We’d have given anything to have the school back.

“And another thing we realized: the children were missing a great opportunity. Neither their mother nor I had any education, and we realized that we’d been pretty foolish to break up a school that gave them advantages that we’d never had ourselves. When we heard that Joseph was coming here to reopen the school, I decided to come down and look the ground over. I liked it here. I tried to make friends with everybody, to make a good impression. You think I’m doing it just so we can get in here and do the same thing over again. But why should I take all that trouble? I could just hide up in the Big Woods, and then when school opened, just sneak down and pick off a fat student every now and then.”

“Yes, I see that,” Freddy said. “I really haven’t been able to figure out why you bothered to make yourself so pleasant. Unless you really do want to move into this neighborhood. But even if that is so, how do we know that you won’t change your mind after a while? And what do you think Joseph will feel about having your children as pupils again? No, we can’t take a chance on it. You’ll have to go.”

“Oh, now look,” said the wildcat. “You’re being pretty tough. If anybody says he’s turned over a new leaf, you ought to give him a chance. I know the bears will be tough. But if you believe me, I think you could use your influence with them. You’ve got more influence around here than anybody.”

“You won’t get anywhere by flattering me,” said Freddy.

Jimmy had been listening to the argument without saying anything. Now he cut in. “Look, Freddy,” he said; “I’ve quit throwing stones and picking on you animals, haven’t I?”

“Why yes, I guess you have.”

“Well, that’s turning over a new leaf, isn’t it? And if you can believe I have, why



can't you believe this fellow has?"

"You didn't eat any of us up, for one thing," Freddy said. "It's a little different. Oh, all right, all right!" he said crossly. "So I believe him! And so what?"

"Say, listen," said Mac. "I've got an idea. If I can prove to you that I mean what I say, will you help me get my kids into the school?"

"If you can prove it—sure," said Freddy. "Only I don't see—"

"You don't have to. If this boy will help me," the wildcat said, "I can prove it all right."

Jimmy said: "Sure, I'll help you. I don't know why you shouldn't get a break."

As he reached down to help the wildcat out of the pit, Jacob flew down again. "Shall we let him have it when he comes out, boss?"

"No. Let him go. And thanks for your trouble, Jacob."

"Shucks!" said Jacob disgustedly. "I love to hear that guy screech. And there's a place just under his chin. . . . He's playing you for a sucker, Freddy."

"If he is, you'll get your chance later," said the pig. He watched the boy and the wildcat go up across the pasture together, then turned back towards home.

## Chapter 17

Two days later Peter came back. With him were Joseph, and Joseph's wife, and his two children, Orson and Brunnhilde. They set to work at once preparing the cave above Peter's den for the school, and Freddy spent a good deal of time up in the woods watching them.

The bears agreed that he had done just right about the wildcat, of whom nothing had been seen since their arrival. "We couldn't take the chance," Joseph said. "I remember thinking he was quite a nice fellow when I first met him, and the children were very bright and quick in their studies—I'll say that for them. But you never can tell about people, can you?"

"Well, I never did like him," said Joseph's wife. "You remember, Joseph, I told you the first time he came to see us—"

"Yes, dear," said Joseph. "So you did. Yet you know," he continued to Freddy, "I thought that he even might like to join the faculty of the school. He's the athletic type; he could do some quite remarkable acrobatic stunts—"

"Very bad taste, I always thought," put in Mrs. Joseph, "showing off that way before the children."

"Indeed, dear, you're perfectly right," said Joseph. "I thought he would perhaps like to be put in charge of sports. Our school has been rather weak on that side."

There was a queer flash of color in the trees overhead and they all looked up. "Good grief!" Mrs. Joseph exclaimed. "What's that?"

"That's—oh, that's just J. J. and his wife," said Freddy. "Hello, J. J."

The two birds flew down beside him. "Afternoon, Freddy," said the robin. "And Peter; good old Peter. And this is Joseph, and Mrs. Joseph, I presume? I'm J. J. Popinjay—formerly J. J. Pomeroy. You may have heard of me. And this is Mrs. P. I just came up to welcome you to the Bean farm."

"Such a pretty place you have here!" chirped Mrs. Popinjay.

"Why, that's—er, very kind of you," said Joseph.

"Not at all," said J. J. grandly. "We feel it our duty to welcome newcomers."

Freddy grinned. "J. J. is thinking of taking over the management of the farm from Mr. Bean," he said. "Perhaps he'll buy Mr. Bean out. How about it, J. J.—have you made him an offer yet?"

"Ha, ha!" said J. J. "You will have your joke with me, won't you, Freddy? And by the way, if you aren't doing anything tomorrow evening, why don't you all come down to the movies in Centerboro? I'm going to sing."

"You're going to what?"

“Sing! Sing!” said J. J. irritably. “You know I’ve sung at parties at several people’s houses this last week—people who heard me at the wedding, and wanted me to give little song recitals at their homes. Mr. Muszkiski, who runs the movie theatre, heard me, and I think I may say he was very much impressed. He has a picture called *The Bird of Paradise* coming, and he thought it would add something if he had a real bird singing during some of the scenes. So he hired me. Haven’t you seen the posters outside the theatre? ‘Musical effects by J. J. Popinjay?’”

“What’s the scene you sing in?” Freddy asked. “Where the hero has a fit?”

“I’m to sing,” J. J. replied with dignity, “before the show. And then during the scene where the hero sails away on a ship, and the heroine stands on the shore and weeps.”

“Such a sad little song!” said Mrs. Popinjay. “But beautiful, too.”

“Sounds sad to me all right,” Freddy said. “Look, J. J., I’m getting worried about you. After all, you’re just a robin dressed up. When Mrs. Church had you sing at the wedding, she thought it was just a good joke. And we thought you thought that too. But you’re beginning to take the whole thing too seriously. You fooled ’em into thinking your robin’s song was something pretty special. But now *you’re* beginning to think it really is wonderful.”

Peter, who had been digging in the new schoolroom, now came out and sat down, dusting his paws. “I don’t have to go down to Centerboro to hear a robin sing,” he said. “I can hear a dozen, any hour of the day, right up here.”

“I’m sorry you feel that way about it,” said J. J. huffily, and he looked down his beak at them indignantly through his little glasses.

Mrs. Popinjay flirted her feathers angrily. “Come along, J. J.,” she said. “How true it is that the great artist never gets anything but ridicule from his own friends.” And they flew off.

The bears went back to their digging, but they had hardly begun again when Freddy called them, and they came out to see Mac, the wildcat, standing in front of the cave. The bears drew together and moved slowly towards the wildcat, growling angrily. But Mac stood his ground, and then they saw that he had on a sort of muzzle, sewed together, of pieces of leather straps, and buckled around his neck.

“Hello, Joseph,” he said. “You needn’t growl. I couldn’t fight if I wanted to.” He went over to Freddy. “You said you’d help me get my kids into Joseph’s new school, if I could prove that I had turned over a new leaf, didn’t you? Well, I’m proving it.” He raised his voice. “Mother, bring the children up here.”

The mother wildcat, followed by three little wildcats, came out from behind a bush and sat down in a row in front of Freddy and the bears. They all had muzzles

on.

“Hold up your paws, children,” said Mac. And the little wildcats held out their paws. Freddy could see that their claws had all been clipped off short. And when Mac and his wife held out their paws, their claws were clipped too.

“Well, Freddy?” said Mac.

Freddy nodded. “I guess you meant what you said. You certainly couldn’t do much harm now if you wanted to. What do you say, Joseph?”

“Why, with their claws clipped, and if they’re willing to wear those muzzles,” Joseph said, “I guess we have to believe they mean what they say. Eh, mother?”

“I say a wildcat is always a wildcat,” returned Mrs. Joseph firmly, “and the less I have to do with them—”

“Quite right, dear,” Joseph interrupted mildly. “Well then,” he said, “let’s consider it settled. We’ll take the children back. But they’ll have to wear their muzzles, and so will you, until we’re entirely sure of you.”

“Who made the muzzles?” Freddy asked.

“Jimmy,” said Mac. “His father gave him some old straps—”

“His father?” Freddy exclaimed.

Mac grinned. “I guess Mr. Witherspoon has begun to wake up. The way I look at it, he always thought that people admired him for being stingy and saving his money. If they bawled him out, he thought they were just envious. When the boy blossomed out in that good suit, he thought everybody would criticize him for being extravagant, but instead, they complimented him on Jimmy’s appearance. That’s how Jimmy figures it. He’s talked to me quite a lot about it.”

Yes, Freddy thought, Jimmy would talk freely about his troubles to Mac. Because he felt that Mac was in the same boat. People had disliked and distrusted them both.

“Jimmy figures that probably nobody had ever complimented his father on anything he had done before,” Mac went on. “Well, you work it out for yourselves. Anyway, they’ve gone to town together today, and I understand it’s to be a big spending spree.”

A big spending spree for Mr. Witherspoon would probably run to about ten cents, Freddy thought. Still, maybe Mac was right. Maybe the leopard could change his spots. In that case he’d have to revise the poem he’d written about it.

Well of course when a man has been stingy for forty years he doesn’t turn into a spendthrift overnight, and Mr. Witherspoon didn’t just untie his purse strings and invite his family to help themselves. But he did change a little. For after he had bought Jimmy that shirt, and the haircut, he found that he felt different. Paying out the

money for them had been pretty painful; it had been a lot worse than having a tooth pulled. But after it was done and he saw how nice Jimmy looked, and then people came up and congratulated him on having such a fine looking son, he couldn't help feeling pleased with himself.

He got quite angry with himself for feeling pleased. Here he had gone and spent money he wasn't obliged to spend, and he felt good about it. What was the matter with him? He was worried, too. Maybe he'd go and do it again, and maybe he'd like it still better, and goodness only knew where it would stop. What would become of all the money he had saved if he began spending it like that?

He thought and he thought about it. He thought about it this way and that way and crossways. But always he ended up by thinking about what the Beans had said to him—that nobody, except perhaps Mr. Weezer, knew he was a rich man. What was the good of being rich, if nobody knew it? He got so worried about it that finally he talked to Mrs. Witherspoon about it, although he knew she wouldn't agree with him.

She didn't. She said: "What good is all your money, Zenas? If you stuffed it all into the stove and burned it up, nothing would be a bit different. You'd work just as hard, and we'd all dress in the same old things, and have as little to eat."

"But I'd be a poor man!" said Mr. Witherspoon.

"You're a poor man now. Your money is just like that cake of soap there." She pointed towards the sink. "You're always fussing about my washing my hands too often, because it will wear the soap out. What's a cake of soap for—to look at?"

"I bought the boy a shirt," said Mr. Witherspoon.

"But you wouldn't buy him a tie to go with it."

"I've got a necktie upstairs somewhere," said Mr. Witherspoon. "He can wear that."

"The mice chewed that tie up in 1912," she replied. "That was before they all left the house because they couldn't find enough to eat here." She looked out of the window. "There comes Jimmy now," she said. "He looks nice, don't he? Looks like a rich man's son. But you can't take any credit for that. And nobody's giving you any either. It was William Bean that outfitted your boy."

Mr. Witherspoon scowled angrily. "I guess I can afford to outfit my own boy," he growled. "I don't need old Bean's help—him and his animals!"

Mrs. Witherspoon got mad. "You say you can afford it, and then when he really needs something you say you can't afford it. Now which is it? Make up your mind, Zenas. And don't go shouting down the Beans. Why, even their pig dresses better than we do!"

I guess maybe it was this last remark about the pig that decided Mr. Witherspoon. Anyway, he didn't say any more, but went out and hitched up Jerry and drove down to Centerboro and bought Jimmy a necktie.

And the next day he drove down again and bought him a hat and another shirt.

And the third day—which was the day the bears came back home—he really did go on a spending spree. He took Jimmy into the Busy Bee and got him a complete new outfit. And when they came out with their packages under their arms he stopped as he was climbing into the buggy. He had a sort of dazed expression on his face. He tried to think how terrible it was that he had spent so much money, but somehow the thought just pleased him. He felt in his pocket and he had just two quarters left. He pulled them out and handed them to Jimmy. “Here, boy,” he said gruffly. “You might as well have the rest of it.”

Jimmy took it, but instead of climbing in beside his father he looked across the street at the drugstore. “Ice cream soda,” he said. “I never had one. Say let's go over and have one on me.”

And then a queer thing happened to Mr. Witherspoon. Nobody had ever asked him to have an ice cream soda before. At least not since he was ten years old. He forgot that it was really his own money that was buying the soda. He didn't even stop to consider that a boy who could suggest such unheard of extravagance would probably grow up into a waster and a spendthrift. He opened his mouth to refuse, and to his amazement heard himself say: “Why, thanks. Nothing I should like better.”

## Chapter 18

For the first showing of *The Bird of Paradise*, Mr. Muszkiski, the owner of the Centerboro theatre, had planned quite a gala evening. The hall was trimmed up to represent a tropical jungle, with festoons of colored paper and a lot of Christmas tree decorations, and two small trees had been cut and set up, one on each side of the screen. After the newsreel had been shown, the lights went up, and Mr. and Mrs. Popinjay flitted about, in and out of the strands and loops of paper, and then flew up into the trees and J. J. sang.

Everything went well up to this point. The Bean animals were all there, and all had seats together, and nearly everybody in Centerboro was there too. After J. J.'s song, Mr. Muszkiski had planned to start the main picture, during which J. J. was to sing some more. But J. J. had just started to sing when back in the rear of the hall somebody laughed. It wasn't really a loud laugh, but it was a shrill, tight little sarcastic ripple, that cut sharply across J. J.'s warblings and stopped them dead.

The first time everybody was very indignant. People turned around and said: "Ssssh!" and there were cries of "Throw him out!" And then after a second or two J. J. went on.

And again he was interrupted by that nasty laugh.

This time several people giggled, and I am sorry to say that Jinx was one of them. He leaned over and whispered to Freddy: "That's Uncle Solomon, the old rip! He just came down here to crab J. J.'s act."

"Well, it's pretty mean of him," Freddy said.

"Oh, I don't know," said the cat. "J. J.'s got it coming to him. It won't hurt him to be taken down a peg."

J. J. had his glasses on, and the third time the laugh interrupted him, he stared so indignantly through them in the direction from which the sound had come that practically everybody in the audience began to giggle, and then when he glared at them they laughed right out, and pretty soon the whole crowd was just rocking and roaring with laughter. Even Freddy joined in, for when everybody is laughing it is pretty hard to keep a sober face.

"Look at him!" Jinx exclaimed. "Why doesn't the idiot laugh too? Then he'd have the crowd with him. Talk about a stuffed shirt!"

But J. J. had become so conceited during the past few weeks, and had got to taking himself so seriously, that it was impossible for him to see it as a joke. He ruffled his feathers and even stamped angrily, and then he and Mrs. Popinjay flew right back over the heads of the audience into the shadows at the back of the hall.

Everybody turned around but they couldn't see anything. They could hear a lot, though—flappings and flutterings, and sharp chirps and twitters, and then the robins chased Uncle Solomon back towards the front of the house. He dodged in and out among the decorations, diving on the Popinjays to tweak out a feather, then darting off as they twisted to corner him. The feathers floated down—now a white plume from J. J.'s tail, now a red or blue one from Mrs. Popinjay's fan—and the audience reached up eagerly to catch them, as souvenirs of the most unusual evening they had ever spent.

But at last Uncle Solomon had had enough of it. He gave his tight little laugh and then darted out of an open window into the night, and the Popinjays lit on one of the trees and set about smoothing down their ruffled feathers.

But they weren't popinjays any more. "Why, they're nothing but robins!" said someone in a loud voice. And the audience began whispering: "You mean to say Muszkiski made all these elaborate preparations to have a robin sing?" And they laughed some more. So the Popinjays sat there for a minute looking very crestfallen, and rather dilapidated, too, with half their trimming missing, and then they too flew out of the window into the night.

Freddy felt sorry for them, and he left his seat and went outside. He didn't see them anywhere, but by the light of a street lamp he saw Uncle Solomon sitting on a telephone wire. "Well," he said, "you spoiled J. J.'s show for him. I expect you're pretty pleased with yourself."

"My good pig," said Uncle Solomon, "you cannot *expect* something which you believe has already happened. You can no more *expect* that I am pleased today, than you can remember that I will be pleased tomorrow. You must have had very bad marks in English at school."

"I expect I did," said Freddy, and grinned at him.

Uncle Solomon shook his head disapprovingly. "It is hardly worth while attempting to converse with an animal who cannot talk plain English."

Freddy looked gloomy. "I expect not," he said.

The owl began to get angry. "Stop it!" he said. "Stop using that word! After I have explained to you that you cannot use it in that way, it is sheer insolence for you to continue."

Freddy nodded. "I expect it is," he said.

And at that Uncle Solomon flew into a rage. "Stop it—stop it—stop it," he shrieked angrily, and he jumped up and down on the telephone wire. "I won't have it! You can't argue like that—it's against all the rules."

"But I'm not arguing with you," said Freddy. "I've agreed with everything you



say. I guess that's the way to win arguments with you, Uncle Solomon—to agree with you, and then to use the wrong words. And then when you show me they're wrong, to agree, and keep right on using them.”

The owl just muttered something into his feathers. Freddy had indeed agreed with everything he had said. Yet at the same time he had certainly disagreed with him about the word “expect.” And nobody had ever succeeded in both agreeing and disagreeing with him in the same argument. He couldn't seem to think of anything to say next.

Freddy was pretty pleased. Nobody had ever managed to silence Uncle Solomon before. And so he changed the subject. “All I meant,” he said, “was that I didn't think you were very nice to J. J.”

The owl recovered himself. “You must understand, young pig,” he said, “that there are two effects of every action. There is an immediate effect, and a long range effect. If you spank your little boy for being bad, the immediate effect is to hurt him, but the long range effect is to do him good. In the same way, the immediate effect of what I did tonight was to make J. J. look like a fool. But the long range effect I sincerely hope will be to cure him of his foolishness. You see that, I trust?”

“Perhaps you're right,” Freddy said. “They've both been putting on airs lately. They've got pretty puffed up, what with being probably the richest robins in the whole country, and then all these fine feathers! Yes, I expect you're right. . . . No, no; I'm sorry,” he exclaimed, as Uncle Solomon with an angry titter spread his wings for flight. “I didn't mean to use the word again, honestly I didn't.”

But the owl had flown off.

It wasn't until the next afternoon that Freddy saw the Popinjays again. They came down to the pig pen and tapped on the door, and when he opened it he wouldn't have recognized them if J. J. hadn't had on his glasses. For the colored feathers were all gone—they were just two robins.

“For goodness' sake!” said Freddy. “What's all this? Where are all your fine feathers?”

“Oh, we threw those away,” J. J. said. “We're just plain Mr. and Mrs. Pomeroy, Freddy. We've been thinking it all over, and I guess we have been pretty silly. We were getting so blown up with our own importance that I guess we'd have ended up by just exploding if Uncle Solomon hadn't sort of stuck a pin in us last night.”

Freddy nodded. “Well, that's true, J. J. Your money and your fine clothes did kind of go to your heads for a while. But you're sensible birds; you'd have come out of it sooner or later.”

“We have Uncle Solomon to thank for it that it's sooner, rather than later,” J. J.

said. "And you too, Freddy. You know that poem you wrote about not trying to be that which you ain't, or something? Well, that made us see our mistake too, and I wish you'd copy it off for us. We'd like to tack it up over our nest, where we can see it every day. I'm going to make the children learn it by heart."

So Freddy went in and copied out the poem on his typewriter, and when they had thanked him they said they were going to see Uncle Solomon and thank him too. "We were pretty mad at him at first," J. J. said, "but now we see that he did us a real service. If he hadn't laughed, I expect we'd have gone right on that way the rest of our lives."

"Good gracious," said Freddy, "don't use the word 'expect' when you talk to him." And he told them of his argument with the owl.

After they had gone, Freddy went back into the study. He was pretty pleased at what J. J. had said about his poem. As far as he knew, nobody had ever been influenced by one of his poems before. His friends had read them and said 'Very nice' and they had even sung those that Freddy had written as songs. But they had never said that anything he had written had had any effect on them.

"Maybe," he thought, "if this one poem has been such a good influence in J. J.'s life, maybe some of the others might be helpful to other animals. Perhaps they ought to have a wider public. Perhaps I owe it to the American people to see that it has the opportunity to read my poems."

I guess it didn't occur to Freddy that he was doing just what he had been lecturing the Pomeroy's for doing: taking himself too seriously. Poets are always inclined to do that. On the other hand, pigs, as a rule, seldom take themselves seriously enough. And it is perfectly true that if you don't take yourself seriously, nobody else will. It's hard to know just where to draw the line.

Anyhow, Freddy got all his poems together, and then he sat down at his typewriter and typed out several different titles for the collected edition of his Works. Here they are, with Freddy's comments.

POEMS  
by  
Freddy  
(Simple, but perhaps lacking in dignity.)

COLLECTED POEMS  
of  
Frederick Bean, Esq.

(No, has too much dignity.)

COMPLETE WORKS OF FREDDY  
(Sounds as if I was a clock.)

F. BEAN  
WORKS  
(Same objection.)

POEMS & BALLADS  
OF RURAL LIFE  
by  
Freddy  
(Not so bad. But I still don't like it.)

He also tried some more fanciful names, such as: RURAL RHYMES, FARM FANCIES, BARNYARD BALLADS, FROM MY STUDY WINDOW, and so on. Altogether, before he finished, he had more than two hundred possible titles to choose from. And the trouble was, not that he didn't like any of them, but that he liked nearly all. It was almost impossible to choose just one, and you couldn't publish a book with two hundred titles. It would look funny.

I don't know what one he finally chose, although I understand that he did finally make up his mind. And I suppose he must have, for the book is being printed now, and Freddy tells me that Uncle Solomon, of all people, is giving a sort of coming-out party for it. Uncle Solomon is going to give a speech about it—a sort of critical review. I don't think Freddy looks forward to that with much pleasure. My goodness, I'd hate to have Uncle Solomon review one of my books.



## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Because of copyright considerations, the illustrations by Kurt Wiese (1887-1974) have been omitted from this etext.

[The end of *Freddy and the Popinjay* by Walter Rollin Brooks]