JANE'S ISLAND

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BOOKS BY MARJORIE HILL ALLEE

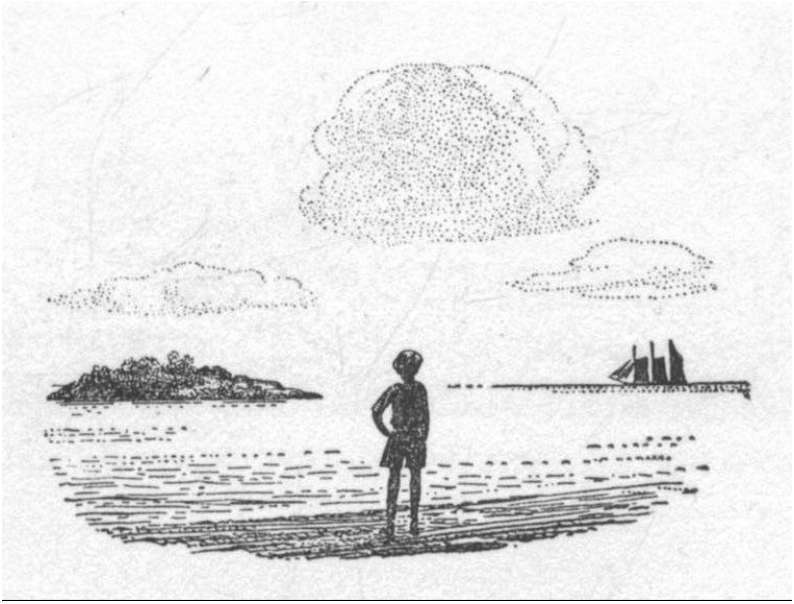
Susanna and Tristram
Judith Lankester
Jane's Island

'I'VE NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE,' JANE SAID DELIGHTEDLY

JANE'S ISLAND

BY
MARJORIE HILL ALLEE

With Illustrations by
MAITLAND DE GOGORZA



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TO
W. C. A.

NOTE

I had intended writing a little foreword to this story, saying that all the characters in it were imaginary, so that no one could possibly write to the author asking if Jane Thomas were her long-lost cousin, or Miss Wareham her beloved biology teacher. People do that sometimes, and the author finds it embarrassing, because she is never quite sure herself.

I meant to say that the Laboratory is a real place, just as Woods Hole is; and the planaria are real, and the starfish, and the toadfish, and the seals in the pool; but not the people.

But there was Captain Veeder. What could I do about him? Captain Veeder is very real indeed; everybody who has been to Woods Hole knows Captain Veeder. It would have been impossible to have palmed off Captain Jones or Robinson or Blow-Ye-Stormy-Winds-Blow in his place. None of these estimable but imaginary gentlemen could have run the Cayadetta about the Woods Hole rocks. No one but Captain Veeder ever has. And I needed the Cayadetta in the story.

You will see my problem and understand that it has baffled me. I can make no fine general statements. I can only give you advice. If you should be so fortunate as to visit Woods Hole, make friends with all the animals you can find in or out of this book, but do not feel that you are permitted to be intimate with Captain Veeder because you rode on his boat in these pages. That was my doing, not his. Admire his accomplishments from a respectful distance, but do not interrupt him when he is busy, and never, never tease him to take you out in a fog!

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Jane's Island

CHAPTER I

Introduction to Jane

Ellen McNeill, seventeen years old and a freshman at the university the winter before, was as little accustomed to long trips on a railway train as her own grandmother would have been at the same age. Chicago street-cars, buses, the 'L,' and the suburban trains that carried her down to the Loop for shopping or concerts, she knew very well; and she could drive a car herself expertly; but on all of those you could stop very easily and make a change if you got on the wrong line, which you sometimes did. These trains were different. All the two hours down from Boston she had checked the names on the stations against those on her time-table, and not even her first sight of the sea itself, widespread and blue beyond a low green marsh, was allowed to take her mind from this anxious occupation.

Woods Hole, her destination, was the end of the line. That was a relief, and also the fact that there was not likely to be more than one station to be concerned about. The night before, coming into Boston, she had asked the conductor, 'Does this train stop at the South Station?' and had been answered grimly, 'There'll be a terrible commotion in Dewey Square if it don't, ma'am.' At this Ellen had subsided back into her corner, very pink and too embarrassed to note how pleased the old conductor was to give this classic retort to a familiar question.

This morning she kept her own counsel and asked no questions. When the conductor called 'Woods Hole!' she collected her hatbox and handbag and waited patiently in her seat to see what the other passengers would do. There was no doubt as to the direction that the stream of people were taking; Ellen followed them out of the hot and dusty car and across the tracks under the train-shed, until, dodging a little motor-truck with a baggage trailer, she saw that the crowd was carrying her toward an unmistakable gangway leading into a gray-and-white steamer whose side bulked well above the roof of the train-shed, and she could see that the broad train-shed was also a wharf, though, thanks to the crowds and the steamer, little was to be seen of the water.

‘I’m not going on a boat,’ Ellen reproved herself. ‘Where am I going? This must be the right place, because the train would run right off into the ocean if it went any farther.’

Now that she was traveling on her own two feet, she felt much more confident; she stood still, breathing with enjoyment the clean cool air, until through the thinning crowd she saw a station quite on the other side of the train she had left, and in its direction she proceeded, around the nose of the resting engine.

Propped against a post on the farther platform waited with resigned patience a young person of some twelve years, but small for her age, and chiefly notable for an extremely curly dark crop of hair, brown skin, and faded khaki shorts and shirt. When she caught Ellen’s interested eye, she came warily forward.

‘Are you Miss McNeill?’ she asked. ‘Our Miss McNeill was coming on this train and Mother told me to meet her.’

‘I’m Ellen McNeill,’ the older girl answered. ‘Can you be Jane Thomas?’

‘I’m Jane,’ the other answered briefly, and to Ellen’s great surprise she dipped in a dancing-school curtsy and put out a limp sunburnt hand. Manners thus being disposed of, she picked up Ellen’s hatbox.

‘I suppose you want to go right home,’ she remarked, without enthusiasm. ‘Mother said you would.’

‘Is there something else you would rather do?’

‘Not if you want to go home,’ answered Jane with stern politeness. ‘Personally, I always stay to watch the boat off.’

‘Well, then, personally, I’d like to stay to watch the boat off, too,’ Ellen assured her. ‘I nearly walked onto the boat from the train. Where should I have gone?’

‘Nantucket,’ said Jane. ‘You wouldn’t have liked it.’ She dodged around the train, with Ellen following. ‘Let’s stand here and watch the freight loading.’ Her serious face was full of alert interest as she watched each little motor bring up its trailer of boxes and barrels, trundle them across the gangway into the broad hold of the ship, and leave them stowed tidily there while it traveled off for more freight.

‘I wouldn’t like Nantucket?’ Ellen exclaimed. ‘Why not?’

‘Oh, just between boats or overnight it’s all right,’ Jane explained loftily. ‘But it’s very dull; nobody but summer people go there. The Nantucketers don’t go whaling any more, you know.’

‘Oh!’ said Ellen. ‘Don’t you call yourselves summer people down here at Woods Hole?’ she inquired presently with some curiosity. ‘I thought that you lived at Jeffrey all the winter; that your father taught at Jeffrey College. Certainly I wrote to your mother there.’

Jane watched the last truck-load of mail-bags ride into the hold before she answered.

‘But we come down to work,’ she informed Ellen. ‘At the Laboratory. Summer people just play around. They don’t have any fun.’

A uniformed officer near them blew a shrill whistle, and, directly over their heads, the steamer gathered breath and answered in a fearful blast that startled even the experienced Jane. There was a final scurrying to pull in the gangways, close the railings, and loosen the thick ropes that held the steamer alongside the wharf; then the ship churned itself backward around the end of the wharf and slid off through the blue water, raising protesting wide-winged white gulls as it followed a curving channel out of the harbor.

Where it had been, Ellen looked out across the waves of its wake to low green islands not far distant.

‘It’s lovely,’ she said to Jane. ‘I never saw the sea before this morning. It’s not a bit like Lake Michigan. It doesn’t even smell the same.’

‘And you’ll be surprised to find that it tastes salty, too,’ Jane told her. ‘Jim Harrison was. He’s a friend of my brother’s and he comes from Chicago, too, but he doesn’t know you. I asked him.

‘Now, would you like to go over to the fish market? Personally, I always go there to see if they have anything new. Yesterday there was a Vineyard boat in with lobsters and one was more than two feet long. Honestly!’

‘Don’t you think,’ Ellen suggested, hardening her heart against Jane’s coaxing brown eyes, ‘that perhaps we ought to go home now? Your mother might be looking for us.’

‘She would be,’ Jane sighed. ‘And I suppose Walter is still waiting for us, unless he has got mad and gone on. Of course we don’t have to *stay* at home unless you are tired. Are you tired? Mother said you might be.’

‘I’m not,’ Ellen assured her hastily; ‘though I should like to wash my face.’

‘You’re pretty clean,’ Jane said kindly, ‘except for that smudge under your eye.’

She ran ahead across the busy little open square back of the station, jumped on the running-board of a battered old car parked there, and prodded the boy who was dozing over the wheel.

By the time Ellen came up, having removed the streak of coal dust as well as dry cleaning would do it, the boy was demanding indignantly of Jane: ‘What do you think I am? Your private chauffeur? I’ll bet fifty cents you went all over the fishing boats before you thought of me waiting here.’

‘Give me the fifty cents!’ said Jane. ‘I never went near the fishing boats, did I, Miss McNeill?’

Her brother, a sturdily built youth who might have been about Ellen’s age, but did not seem nearly so grown-up, left his place and came around the car to open the door for Ellen and stow her and her baggage on the worn back seat. He managed this without saying a word to Ellen, who, for her part, could hardly keep her fascinated gaze from his knees. His shapeless, grayish trousers had been adorned with a large red patch on the left knee and a green one on the right, and when his long legs moved, the patches twinkled merrily.

‘What did you say?’ she asked, suddenly aware that he was scowling impersonally across at her from under his thatch of curly, sun-bleached hair and asking a question.

‘Have you got a trunk?’ he repeated.

‘Oh, yes!’ Ellen said remorsefully. ‘Here is the check. I’m not used to trains and trunk checks. Whenever we have gone any place, we have always driven and taken our baggage with us.’

The boy took the check without comment and presently returned, carrying Ellen’s little steamer trunk, which could, by squeezing Ellen, occupy the back seat with her.

Jane had taken advantage of his absence to slip over behind the wheel. ‘Walter!’ she begged, ‘let me drive this animal home. Please!’

‘I will not,’ Walter replied with discouraging promptness.

‘I could do it just as well as you, and you wouldn’t have to go up with us.’

‘Shove over!’ her brother ordered. ‘All clear behind us?’

‘All clear,’ Jane reported. ‘Cut her!’

Ellen considered offering to drive, but thought better of it as the motor started with a great clatter, died, and then took fresh hope. The old car spun around the square, left the station behind, turned three corners in short order and then entered a narrow street that ran up hill and down under fine old trees shading low shingled cottages. The noise and the jolting were so considerable that they seemed to be going at racing speed, but when they struck a long hill the car slowed down helplessly and refused to respond to anything less than a change to low gear.

‘You had to shift!’ Jane cried triumphantly. ‘I could do better than that.’

‘We always have to go up the golf course hill in low with this animal, and you know it,’ Walter returned calmly. ‘Trouble with you, you want to do too many things a kid can’t. You’ve always been bad enough, but everybody says you’re worse than usual this summer. I should think getting stuck out by the lobster-pot would have taught you a lesson.’

‘I got the lobster first, anyhow,’ Jane defended herself. ‘All by myself. And Father says anybody can have trouble with an outboard motor.’

‘He told you not to take the boat out again by yourself,’ retorted the boy.

The conversation, though not addressed to Ellen, had an air of being intended for her information, and she listened to all that came her way above the noise of the car. It was important for her to know about Jane; taking care of Jane was her job for the summer, for which she had come all the way from Chicago to Cape Cod, and since it was her first real job she was anxious to acquit herself well at it. There was very little salary attached to it, but it promised her three months on the Cape, which she had never seen, and the hope of recommendations for another summer, when, older and more experienced, she might expect to earn checks that would dazzle her family, who had never taken their youngest daughter with the seriousness she sometimes desired. And she could already see that a summer with Jane would at least be full of variety.

Near the top of the hill the car turned into a woods road and recovered breath. A small, unpretentious house or two along the road under the trees left Ellen unprepared for the cottage before which they came to a halt. It was very new; like a city girl out for a country walk it stood in an opening on the forested slope, where its white paint and thin young grass, its little darkly green evergreens banked on either side of the front stoop, and its newly stocked flower borders contrasted oddly with the brown, leaf-covered floor

of the surrounding woods from which the low white palings of the fence separated it.

Jane and Walter looked much more as if they belonged to the woods beyond as they went up the flagged walk; Ellen herself, though feeling cindery along the back of her neck, was still sufficiently fresh and smart in her city clothes to appear in place on the steps before the gleaming brass knocker.

The pleasant, worried face of the woman who opened the door at the sound of their coming cleared at the sight of Ellen. Her eyes and her hair were dark like Jane's, and Ellen thought her very pretty and admired her immaculate cotton print.

'Come in, Miss McNeill,' she said cordially. 'I heard the train a long time ago and I began to be afraid you had not come. Walter, did you wipe your feet? Will you take Miss McNeill's things up to her room, then? Or would you like us to begin calling you Ellen right away?'

'Do call me Ellen!' the girl answered gratefully. 'When you call me Miss McNeill, I feel just like a scared freshman again!'

'—A scared freshman,' Mrs. Thomas echoed, her eyes on Walter's foot-scraping. 'Jane, have you wiped your feet? Sand is so hard on the floors.' Her attention shifted back again to Ellen. 'We don't want you to be scared. I could almost tell from looking at you, even if I didn't have Miss Wells's letter about you, that you are going to be just what Jane needs. Jane has always gone native in the summer, but never so thoroughly as this year, when she really ought to be thinking more about her appearance and behavior.'

She led the way up a shining waxed stairway into a dormered room with two narrow beds.

'I have put you and Jane together. That is mostly for Jane's good, but I don't think you will mind her. She sleeps like a top. The greatest difficulty is her untidiness and you will have to keep reminding her about that. She *will* leave her clothes around in heaps and she *will not* remember to shake the sand out of her sneakers into the waste-basket at night. Sand is almost my greatest trial this summer.'

'There must be a lot of sand around,' Ellen ventured.

'—A lot of sand around,' Mrs. Thomas echoed. Ellen was to discover that Mrs. Thomas had a way of keeping her finger on the conversation by repeating the last phrase addressed to her, while her own mind ran on quite

different matters. ‘What has Jane got here in this tumbler, I wonder? Whatever it is, it is smelly. I’ll take it down for Jane to put in the garage.’

She held the tumbler at a distance and lifted rueful eyebrows at Ellen. ‘I don’t know that the sand is much more of a difficulty than Jane’s animals are. I find them every place over my new house. I am going to make a rule that Jane cannot keep any of her collections indoors and you will help me enforce it, won’t you?

‘There is the bathroom, and when you are ready you may come down to lunch. I’ll send Jane up with a fresh tumbler and tell her that if she has put a dogfish in the bathtub she must remove it!’

Ellen did not take time to unpack her box entirely, but she was careful to close the lid and put it away in the closet, to shake out her oxfords over the waste-basket, and to leave the bathroom as spotless as she found it. She slipped into a fresh cotton frock that seemed suitable, twisted up her hair that had just grown out long enough to make a bun on the back of her neck, and surveyed herself in the glass, where she looked exactly as Ellen McNeill had looked in Chicago, two days before: brown hair, gray eyes, good straight nose, and a friendly mouth. She went downstairs feeling clean and glad to be alive and at the end of a journey which she had managed quite by herself.

Lunch was ready and waiting.

‘Dad not coming?’ Walter asked.

‘Jane says he told her that he would have to stay with his experiment through noon. The apparatus isn’t working well, and he wants to watch it until the experiment is ended. He asked her to bring his lunch down a little later, when he had time to eat it. Sit down, children. Ellen, you may sit opposite me.’

It was a most excellent meal, served by Mrs. Thomas with due regard that the food should be equally good to look at and to eat. Ellen would have been ashamed to eat so many fat brown baked mackerel, hot biscuits and strawberry preserves, and such a heaped plateful of green salad, if it had not been for Mrs. Thomas’s evident pleasure in her guest’s appetite. Not until the orange ice came from the refrigerator did it occur to her that Walter and Jane, aside from their keen interest in the food, did not seem to be enjoying the time spent at the table. Jane ate under pleasant but constant correction of her table manners, and their mother seemed also to be watching Walter, although she left him uncorrected for the time.

After lunch the boy disappeared at once. ‘You two had better rest for an hour,’ Mrs. Thomas said to the girls. ‘Then I’ll have the sandwiches ready for you to carry down to the Laboratory. Don’t forget to fold back your spread before you lie down, will you, Jane?’

Ellen was careful to turn down her own white spread, remembering guiltily certain times at home when she had plumped down on her bed just as it was. She wanted very much to be a good example to Jane, but she was not quite sure whether she herself was up to Mrs. Thomas’s standards.

Well filled and more tired than she had realized, she went to sleep almost at once, dimly grateful to Jane for lying so quietly across the room, her thin brown hands folded on her chest, her wide eyes fixed on the quaint flowered paper of the slanting wall opposite. Sometime later she awoke with a start, hearing a little stir in the room, and smiled sleepily at Jane, who was standing beside her bed, looking across at Ellen with some apprehension.

‘Time to go?’

Jane nodded. ‘I didn’t mean to wake you quite yet,’ she apologized as Ellen sat up and stretched.

‘That’s all right,’ Ellen assured her. She pulled the covers on her own bed taut and then kindly undertook to straighten Jane’s, and as she did so her toe struck something under the coverlid which promptly overturned and drenched her foot.

‘O-oh!’ Jane exclaimed despairingly, diving under the bed while with her left hand she fumbled for a near-by hooked rug. With her right she groped among the shadows, and recovered some tiny thing that clawed and struggled while she inspected it, mopping all the time with the rug at the puddle of water.

‘It’s my crab,’ she explained in a low voice. ‘I don’t think he’s hurt.’ She popped the creature back into the emptied tumbler and gave her attention to the wet floor. ‘It doesn’t mop up! It will leak through on the living-room ceiling, and then, oh, jiminy!’

Ellen forgot her wet foot and her duty to admonish Jane. She seized the nearest absorbent thing at hand, which happened to be her own new and most becoming coolie coat and mopped with the big soft bright-colored wad.

‘That rug is mostly wool,’ she told Jane. ‘Wool sheds water.’

‘Just as well, I guess,’ Jane remarked soberly, giving the rug a little shake so that drops of water flew. ‘Mother says her new rugs ought not to be washed.’ She looked unhappily at Ellen’s Chinese coat; the floor was almost dry and the coat was very wet. ‘Will you tell Mother?’

‘I will not,’ Ellen answered without hesitation.

‘I have a dollar,’ Jane volunteered. ‘We can take your thing, what-ever-it-is, to the cleaners.’

‘It will wash.’

‘I hope Mother won’t wonder about it.’ Jane looked at the tumbler in her hand, through whose side the agitated little crab was vainly trying to claw his way out. ‘I don’t suppose I can get this past Mother again. I’ll have to put him in my pocket and leave him out in the garage till night. Then I’ll see if I can smuggle him in again.’

This, Ellen felt, was serious. ‘Your mother told you not to bring it in?’

‘It was a sea-walnut she told me not to bring in again. I don’t mind so much about that; sea-walnuts *are* messy when they spill, like jelly. This is such a nice little crab I found under a rock this morning. He isn’t a bit messy and he has lost a claw that I want to watch grow back on again. I thought I would wake up and look at him in the night to see how he was getting along, just like Father does when he is running a twenty-four-hour experiment!’

Jane’s anxiety was touching; it was evident that the nervous little crab was dear to her, but Ellen felt obliged to shake her head.

‘You must tell your mother,’ she said firmly.

‘She wouldn’t let me,’ said Jane, kicking her bedpost. ‘I know she wouldn’t. I wish we lived in the old camp we used to have. Father and Walter built most of it, and there were cracks in the floor, so if you spilled anything it just ran down to the ground underneath and nobody minded——’

‘Girls!’ Mrs. Thomas called up the stairway.

‘Coming!’ Ellen answered, and then quickly to Jane: ‘Can you get a jar with a lid to keep your precious crab in? If you can, I’ll ask your mother myself if you may bring it up here and keep it through the night. And we’ll set it on a newspaper by your bed, and I’ll lend you my flashlight to look at it.’

‘Will you?’ Jane exclaimed. ‘Will you, really? That will be grand!’ Her face was charming when she smiled up at Ellen.

The two set out very comfortably together with the lunch for Jane’s father.

‘I told Mother we’d be gone most of the afternoon,’ Jane explained, ‘so we’d have plenty of time to fish.’

‘Fish?’ Ellen questioned.

‘Just in the Eel Pond,’ said Jane.

‘For eels?’ asked Ellen, still more surprised.

‘Well, personally,’ said Jane, ‘I just fish for whatever I get, and I never got an eel there; but I shouldn’t wonder if there might be eels. There’s nearly everything else.’

‘I should think that you would fish in the ocean,’ said Ellen. ‘Why do you fish in a pond?’

‘The Eel Pond is salt water,’ said Jane. ‘It has a channel to the harbor and the tides run in and out.’ Then, seeing that Ellen did not appear to be much more enlightened, she went on expansively: ‘The Eel Pond is right in the middle of Woods Hole; there is a street that runs around it and little streets running away from that like a starfish’s arms. You know!

‘The Laboratory is on the Eel Pond, and so is the schoolhouse, and most of the stores back right over it; and nothing else is very far away.’

Ellen looked down the long street before her, up which the car had painfully pulled in the morning. ‘Don’t you live in Woods Hole? The Eel Pond doesn’t seem to be very close.’

‘Oh, yes, we do,’ Jane answered hastily, ‘but usually we call our part of it Gansett. That’s what it used to be called when it was just woods. And this is Crow Hill where we are now. This is a good place to run!’

Her brown legs flew down the graveled path by the road, and Ellen caught the contagion and ran after her, regardless of the one or two amused people they passed; but the sun was hot in the clear June sky, although the breeze on the hill was fine and fresh, and Ellen was glad to halt soon under an apple tree where Jane had paused to greet a stately cat.

‘This is Mary Theresa,’ she introduced her. ‘See! She has six toes on each foot and so do most of her children. Mary Theresa, darling, do you

have any new babies? I've been so busy helping Father that I haven't had time to come see you or Mrs. Ryan.'

Mary Theresa looked up at Jane with great yellow eyes and politely removed from her hand the velvety gray paw with its six perfect toes that Jane had been proudly showing to Ellen. Then, with great composure, she walked on her way.

Jane looked after her longingly.

'She is a nice cat,' Ellen said with genuine admiration. Those she knew were either hungry, unwashed alley cats, or lazy, overfed indoor pets; this independent, healthy animal seemed to belong to another species.

'All Woods Hole cats are nice,' Jane sighed. 'I think it's the fish. They walk along the shore, you know, and find fish—— '

'Do you have a cat?'

'No. Mother wouldn't let me ask for one of Mary Theresa's kittens. She said she had enough to see to this summer. And I suppose it might have eaten things out of my aquarium. Father said it might.'

Down past a green slope of lawn, to their right, a stretch of water opened.

'That's the Eel Pond,' Jane announced. 'That big brick building on the other side is the Laboratory, where we're going; and those other buildings are Laboratory buildings, too. And there's the wharf where we're going to fish. Let's hurry! Father will be hungry for his lunch.'

JANE HAD PAUSED TO GREET A STATELY CAT

They were meeting more people now as they climbed the hill on which the schoolhouse stood. Ellen felt obliged to keep to a dignified rate of speed, so that Jane had time to run ahead and make a flying round of the Maypole swing while waiting for Ellen to come up. After that she confined her exercises chiefly to walking along the stone walls beside the path, which usually left her free to speak to the people who smiled at her, most of whom seemed to know her very well.

‘You always say “Doctor,” ’ Ellen remarked, steadying Jane over a rough stone.

‘Most of them are,’ Jane said. ‘Most of them are Ph.D. doctors, and some of them are medical doctors, and I suppose whatever other kinds of doctors there are. It’s always safest to say Doctor. When I was little, I used to call the Laboratory carpenter Doctor, too. He didn’t mind. He liked it.

‘Now,’ she directed, as they came past an ancient-looking building of rough pinkish granite to the new and business-like brick Laboratory, ‘I’ll take this lunch up to Father and get my fishing-lines from the drawer in his room where I keep them; and you go on down to the wharf back of the Stone House and see if there is anything for bait lying around loose. Squid is good and oysters will do!’

‘But I don’t know a squid when I see it,’ protested Ellen. ‘I never met a squid in my life. Let me wait out here and look at the water and try to get my directions straight. The sun isn’t in the right place.’

‘Well—— ’ Jane assented with some disappointment. She was back down the Laboratory steps in a jiffy, carrying a large spool wound with fishing-line and a tin can in which hooks rattled.

Ellen followed her around the Stone House and past a shingled building, both of which smelled extravagantly of preservants and very dead fish, to the wharf they had sighted from the other side of the Eel Pond. The strongly built outer section of this was floating on the waters of the pond and most of its surface was made up of a series of trapdoors. Jane began to haul these up, one by one, and peer under them. When Ellen went to help, she found the doors very heavy, covering box cages of strong wire netting let down into the water beneath, in which strangely shaped things moved about.

‘I thought some of the men might have left something out loose,’ Jane explained. ‘It doesn’t matter if it is a little dead. But there isn’t anything on top, so I must see what I can find down here.

‘I don’t want these lobsters, nor the horseshoe crabs, and they wouldn’t let me have any of these big fish. There’s a dead squid. I’ll ask up at the Supply House if we may have it.

‘Alfred says it’s all right with him,’ she reported after a flying trip to the near-by shingled building.

At the touch of her hand to the surface, the water was flooded with squid ink, but Jane had gauged the position of the dead squid accurately and brought it up out of the murk in triumph, its tentacles drooping limply over her fist.

‘It looks—it looks like a stalk of bleached asparagus bushed out at the end,’ said Ellen in fascinated dislike. ‘Look at its eyes! Think of a stick like that having eyes!’

‘It’s tough,’ Jane panted, sawing away with her pocket knife at a section small enough for bait. ‘Can you unwind the lines?’

‘Where are the rods?’ Ellen asked.

‘I don’t use a rod. Too much trouble. I just tie the end to something solid so it can’t be jerked out of my hands, and drop the hook into the water.’

Considerately, she baited Ellen’s hook along with her own, and the two sat on the edge of the wharf dangling their lines into the dark water below.

‘Why don’t we fish across the road from the Laboratory?’ Ellen asked. ‘It looked nice and clean.’ Along with the odd salty smell of the water, and sometimes overpowering it, the Eel Pond had other odors, not so pleasant and suggestive of garbage.

‘The Harbor’s too clean,’ Jane said firmly, jiggling her hook gently up and down. ‘Not half so much food for fish as there is here where everything is dumped. Folks do fish across there for cunners, but personally,’ said Jane, ‘I always fish here.’

Something was tugging at her line. She pulled it in hand over hand and brought up a small and active fish, which she viewed with pride.

‘Is that big enough to eat?’ Ellen asked doubtfully.

‘I’m not going to *eat* it,’ Jane replied scornfully. ‘You catch one, too, and we’ll go over and feed them to the seals.’

As if in obedience to her orders, Ellen’s line began also to quiver and she hauled up another small fish which flipped its dripping tail and sprinkled Ellen’s arm.

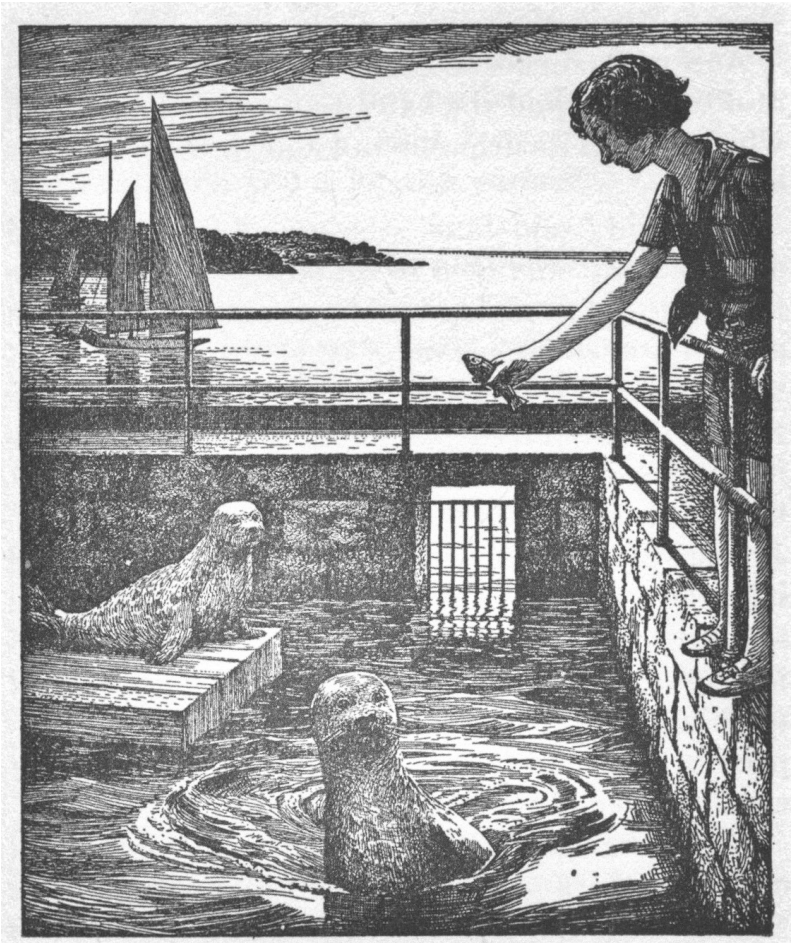
‘All right,’ said Jane. She scrambled up and led a roundabout way over to the sea-front. Here were two large old rambling buildings, and beyond them a stone-walled aquarium of good size, built just at the edge of the water, so that the tide could enter through iron-barred openings. Leaning over the iron railing, Ellen saw a sleek round dark head part the water and blank black eyes stare up at them. Jane worked her fish loose from the hook and tossed it to the seal, who caught it with perfect exactness; and Ellen’s went the same road. Another seal sleeping on a raft woke abruptly, raised his head and made a beautiful dive in their direction, ranging expectantly alongside the first, which had prudently swallowed each small fish at a gulp.

‘We’ll bring you some more,’ Jane promised comfortingly, and trotted back to the wharf.

‘Are those Laboratory seals?’ Ellen asked.

‘Fish Commission,’ Jane answered briefly, absorbed in sawing off another section of squid. ‘That’s Government, you know.’

‘I didn’t know,’ Ellen answered. ‘But seals aren’t fish, are they?’



ANOTHER SEAL SLEEPING ON A RAFT WOKE ABRUPTLY

Jane stopped short. ‘I thought you were in college,’ she said.

‘So I am,’ said Ellen. ‘But none of my courses have been about seals. Of course a seal doesn’t seem much like a fish, but neither does a squid.’

‘Neither *is* a squid,’ said Jane. ‘I guess I am going to teach you a lot this summer,’ she added thoughtfully.

‘I know you are,’ Ellen answered with conviction.

When their hooks were again baited, Jane began, ‘A seal is a mammal, just like a cow or a whale—— ’

‘A whale?’

‘I *said*, a whale,’ Jane repeated, with a little irritation creeping through her lecturing tone. ‘The Fish Commission people use that pool mostly for dogfish, but nearly every summer they put two harbor seals in there, too. They come from Maine. The Fish Commission isn’t our Laboratory because it belongs to the Government at Washington; but the Fish Commission people are nice and they never mind if we feed their seals. What is on your line?’

Ellen jerked it up hastily to confront a perfect gargoyle of a sea-creature. It was a curiously puffy brown-and-yellow striped beast with little brown ruffles around its protruding eyes and a neat fringe under its chin. Ellen dropped it back in a panic before it could do more than gape at her, but Jane grabbed the line and hauled it up again.

‘It’s just a toadfish,’ she assured Ellen.

‘A fish?’ Ellen demurred faintly.

‘Look at the fins back of its cheeks!’ Jane viewed it with enthusiasm. ‘They look just like fans. Keep it till I get one, too.’

Ellen watched its grim countenance, although it almost outfaced her, until Jane had caught another more ordinary fish from the apparently limitless supply along the wharf, and then they were off again to feed the seal that had missed its lunch before. Jane said she could tell them apart, though to Ellen they looked exactly alike in all their sleek wet length.

This was an occupation that Jane could enjoy for a long time; when a loud braying whistle broke loose in the village, Jane was surprised.

‘Half-past four,’ she said. ‘I didn’t think it was so late. We must hurry home if we want to go bathing.’

‘What was that?’ Ellen asked, with chills still running down her back.

‘Old Cow,’ Jane answered mischievously. ‘No, really, it was the fire whistle. There isn’t a fire now. The whistle always blows at noon and at half-past four. To keep in practice, I s’pose. It has to be loud, the Chief told me, to be heard all over this corner of the Cape. When there is a real fire, you can count up the number of whistles and tell what district it is in. I like the firemen; they have a monkey for a pet. I forgot to show it to you.’

Ellen was undeniably a little tired by this time, and when Jane suggested a short cut home she was glad to follow.

'We're nearly there,' said Jane, whose curly head had bobbed in front most of the way up the hill. 'The back yards of the houses on this side the street run up to the Gansett woods. You can't see our cottage for the trees, but it's close. There's a little path up through Mrs. Ryan's yard that we use once in a while when it's more convenient.'

She turned up a driveway that seemed to lead only to a garage at the back of the yard, but as they approached the garage Ellen could see a footpath leading on around the building to a small gate in the rambler-covered back fence. Jane was tugging at the latch of the gate when Ellen caught up with her.

'It's stuck,' she said impatiently. 'It won't work. We'll have to climb over.'

'I would not advise you to do that,' remarked a cold voice, carefully pronouncing each word. 'Will you kindly look at the placard, which says "No Trespassing"?'

Turning, the two girls made out dimly through the screened window of the garage the face of a man within it.

'There has never been any sign before this,' Jane flared. 'Mrs. Ryan has always let us come through and welcome.'

'How glad she must be that I have that trouble stopped,' the slow, disagreeable voice went on. 'Quiet for study andt for rest must I have; not a procession of noise-makers past my window.'

'Come on, Jane,' said Ellen, her cheeks burning. She was suddenly conscious that the wind had blown her hair about and that her dress was the worse for fish and bait; and she remembered also that she was in a strange place and not familiar with its ways.

Jane followed her sulkily, not even cheered by the sight of her friend, Mary Theresa, lying complacently on the sunny side of a huge tub of hydrangeas.

'I won't have any fun coming to see Mary Theresa's kittens this summer,' she mourned. 'Why did Mrs. Ryan have to rent her garage to such a person? Last year two boys from Johns Hopkins lived there and I liked them; they used to give me things for my aquarium.'

Her face set determinedly. ‘Tomorrow I’m going to save all the fish I can get and put them under his window to spoil. Will you help me catch lots?’

CHAPTER II

The Stranger

The Thomas family gathered in the dining-room promptly at half-past six, subdued and dressed for dinner. Ellen had helped Jane into a thin little frock with rows of beautiful smocking.

‘Mother made it,’ she answered Ellen’s admiring question without enthusiasm. ‘It buttons down the back of my neck, you see, and I never can reach the lowest button. Will you do it for me?’

Walter and his father, in fresh white, looked particularly well sunburnt; the elder was an easy, kindly man, who appeared to have forgotten that Ellen was expected until she was introduced, but to be very glad she was there.

‘We thought we were very lucky to find a guide, philosopher, and friend for Jane, so well recommended and so late in the season,’ he said, pleasing Ellen very much. ‘The fact is, I was instructed to inquire around earlier in the year, but it always slipped my mind whenever I wrote to my friends in colleges fortunate enough to have girl students. Jeffrey hasn’t.’

‘Father is just like that,’ Ellen said with a twinkle. ‘Not absent-minded, of course, but just occupied with more important matters.’

‘Ah, yes!’ said Dr. Thomas, twinkling back nicely. ‘And yet your father is not a college professor?’

‘No; Father’s a business man—insurance.’

‘I can see perfectly—always obliged to think about rates and liabilities and probabilities.’

Ellen nodded and smiled. ‘Mrs. Thomas,’ she ventured to say, ‘those pink roses are lovely in the blue-and-gray jar.’

Mrs. Thomas’s hot face lit with real pleasure. ‘—The blue-and-gray jar! John, will you take this platter? That is a ginger jar I bought in New Bedford, an old one; of course my Canton dishes are new, but they go well with the jar.’

‘And how well the chicken goes with the blue-and-white platter,’ her husband remarked cheerfully. ‘Sit down, Mother. If we need anything more, which hardly seems possible, Walter or Jane can hop up for it. I need your advice for dividing up this beautiful fowl.’

‘Just see that Ellen has a good slice of the breast,’ said Mrs. Thomas. ‘The rest of us as usual.’

She looked around in pleased approval. Every detail of the table was in perfect order, from the coarse linen mats to the firm yellow butter-balls on the blue-and-white plates; and all of it was set off by the background of pale gray walls and many small-paned windows, hung with brightly printed linen.

‘Did you have a good afternoon?’ she asked the girls. ‘It was a great comfort to have Jane in competent hands. There are so many things to be done about a new house!’

Ellen was inwardly a little doubtful whether Jane had been in her hands for the afternoon or she in Jane’s, but she answered in Jane’s silence, ‘We fished in the Eel Pond.’

‘In the *Eel* Pond! Jane might have found a less smelly spot for your first afternoon in Woods Hole.’

‘It was very interesting,’ Ellen hastened to say. ‘I caught a toadfish.’

Mrs. Thomas sighed. ‘A toadfish! I said that Jane went native in the summers; but that is a slander. No native in his right mind would fish in the Eel Pond for toadfish. Jane, why didn’t you try for a nice flounder off the pier? Father likes flounder; we could have had it for lunch tomorrow.’

For the first time Walter spoke up. ‘I’ll ask them to give us a flounder from the fish traps tomorrow, Mother, if they get any.’

‘Oh, don’t bother!’ his mother said hastily. ‘Thank you, Walter, but the mackerel are much easier to dress and we like them just as well.’

‘Then why——?’ the boy began impatiently.

‘Your mother was just trying to think of a more ladylike amusement for Jane,’ Dr. Thomas intervened, with a smile for Jane. ‘Now listen to me. Jane hasn’t gone native; Jane has gone scientific. I know the symptoms. She doesn’t mind what is ordinarily called dirt so long as she can find interesting things in it, and our soupy old Eel Pond certainly has a great many queer things thriving in it. I don’t know what the Laboratory would do without the Eel Pond; it’s almost as useful as the Hole.

‘I tell you, Jane’—he pointed a fork at her. ‘Why can’t you help me out in the morning and aid the cause of science? I need some more of those planaria we get on Nobska Beach. I’ll pay you a penny apiece for all you

bring in. Alfred says they are getting scarce and the Collecting Crew hates to bother looking for them.'

Jane lifted grateful brown eyes. 'I don't need to be paid,' she said. 'Ellen and I would love to look for them. Wouldn't you, Ellen?'

'Surely,' Ellen answered gallantly, wondering if these were anything like toadfishes. 'What do you say they are?'

'Planaria,' Jane said glibly.

'Planaria,' Ellen repeated. 'I wouldn't know one from a sea-serpent, but you could show me.'

Walter and Jane looked concerned, but their father smiled.

'Jane can tell you all about them. She's better at finding planaria than the whole Collecting Crew, Walter included.'

'They're tiny things,' Jane began eagerly, 'brown and sort of slimy——
'

'Jane!' cautioned her mother. 'Not at table!'

Jane subsided into silence, and began to cut her salad, with great pains to spill none of the dressing on the mat under her plate. It was a difficult operation for her; she grasped her fork hard and studied the lettuce before she attempted each new mouthful.

Ellen said, to make agreeable conversation, 'Jane swam very well this afternoon.'

'Indeed she does swim well,' agreed Dr. Thomas heartily.

'Jane has won prizes in the water sports for two years now,' said her mother with pride. 'And some of the children who go into those have had expensive swimming instructors. Jane's only trouble is that she sometimes takes risks too great for her strength. That was why we were particularly anxious to know if you swam. How did you like the water this afternoon?'

Ellen laughed. 'Very much; but Jane was right. She told me that I would think it was queer to find the water salty, and I did, for all that I've read about the salt sea. Swimming-tanks and Lake Michigan are all I've ever tried before, and when I got a good taste of the ocean today it seemed as if there must have been a mistake!'

'And next you'll be saying, "How funny the tides are!" ' Jane observed wisely. 'You'll say, "Why, yesterday there was water all over these stones!" '

‘I suppose I shall,’ Ellen said good-naturedly, but flushing a little. ‘I expect to know a lot of new things by the end of the summer. I like having so much water. It’s all around, isn’t it? Jane says we swam in Buzzard’s Bay this afternoon.’

‘That’s what you get for coming to the elbow of the Cape,’ said Dr. Thomas. ‘There’s all of Vineyard Sound on one side, and all of Buzzard’s Bay on the other. If you go up on the highest hill of the golf course you can see both. And then there’s the Hole in between the Sound and the Bay, not to mention the Eel Pond and the Mill Pond in the middle of the village—and the swamp where the skunks live! Jane, you must take Ellen rowing on the Mill Pond in a nice safe dory that can’t run out of gasoline.’

Jane made a face at him. ‘Now that Ellen is here, we can go out with the motor!’

Dr. Thomas did not commit himself to this proposition. ‘What do you know about boats, Ellen?’

‘Not very much,’ Ellen confessed. ‘I can row a boat in the lagoon at Jackson Park!’

‘Excellent!’ he said cheerfully. ‘There is nothing better than to know how to row back when the motor fails! But I suspect you had better learn both our outboard motor and these waters before you venture far. We might begin to teach you this evening. Mother, wouldn’t you like to go out with us for a little while before I have to look at my experiment again?’

‘Oh, I couldn’t possibly!’ said Mrs. Thomas. ‘Not tonight. I’m planning to finish the slip-cover for the big chair tonight. If I don’t keep at work, the house won’t be ready for my tea. But the girls may change their dresses and go.’

Jane ran upstairs with alacrity. ‘Put on something really old,’ she urged, and Ellen obediently dug a worn short skirt and a slipover sweater out of her trunk.

‘Your bathing-suit would have been better,’ Jane said critically, ‘but of course it is wet and would feel icky!’

Jane herself was comfortable again in her khaki shirt and shorts. She danced away down the flagstones beside Walter, whose knees were again illuminated with green and with red.

His father chuckled at the sight. ‘Walter’s very proud of those patches,’ he told Ellen. ‘Starboard and larboard lights, you know—green to the right,

red to the left! He actually sewed them on for himself. He is on the Laboratory Collecting Crew this summer and I wonder that he doesn't frighten the little fishes. Short cut, Jane?'

'No!' Jane called back emphatically. 'Mrs. Ryan has a detestable new summer renter in her garage and he has the gate nailed up. He has no manners, even if he is a foreigner!'

'Really? Well, Mrs. Ryan has been very kind to let us trespass as long as we have.'

'It's not Mrs. Ryan,' Jane answered emphatically. 'It's that man.'

'What do you think of Jane?' her father inquired in a lower voice as he and Ellen walked along behind the other two.

Ellen hesitated. 'I like Jane very much,' she said at last. 'But I would be a fraud if I let you think I could always manage her. Of course I could pull her out of the water if she needed that, and I hope I could see that she didn't get hurt, but I think that Jane will mostly manage me!'

'Good!' said Dr. Thomas surprisingly to this confession. 'That's just what I hoped of you, though I feared we couldn't get it. Of course the most important thing is for you to see that Jane doesn't get hurt. She's at a venturesome age and she needs to venture and try herself out. You go along with her, and if she gets into trouble, don't blame yourself; just help her out.'

Ellen thought about this. 'Mrs. Thomas,' she said, 'seemed to think that Jane needed to pay more attention to clothes and manners.'

'I never believed manners could be taught,' the other said. 'They have to be absorbed from the people with whom you live; I want Jane's manners to be pleasant, but I want them to be real.

'Of course, since we have a nice new house, Mrs. Thomas wants us to match. Our old khakis aren't as suitable to it as they were to the old camp; but she'll see to it that we dress up; you needn't worry about that!

'You see, if you can,' he added, 'that both Jane and her mother have an easier time this summer than they could without you. Jane realizes that her world is beginning to expect her to grow up, and she doesn't like the idea; she's setting her heels and hanging back as hard as she can against it; except when she wants to run the car or the outboard motor or swim out to the fish traps!'

His eye was caught by the figure of a man limping down the path ahead of them.

'New man,' he commented. 'I haven't had time to learn all the investigators this season.'

They had reached the railing along the Eel Pond before they came up with the man leaning there, a solitary figure, watching the violet and rose reflections of the sunset in the waters. The light was full on his face, showing with painful distinctness the premature gray of his closely cut hair and the deep scar across the left cheek bone of his thin, unhappy face.

The young people swerved to one side to pass him, but Dr. Thomas shot one astonished glance at him and stopped in full stride. He put one hand on the stranger's shoulder and there was no mistaking the recognition and the welcome in his voice.

'Fritz!' he cried. 'You here? Why didn't you send word that you were coming? How are you? What can you tell me about München?'

The man turned slowly, looking almost frightened; then the light of recognition came into his face as well; but he did not take Dr. Thomas's outstretched hand. He backed away a little and bowed from the hips.

'It is Dr. Thomas,' he said. 'How do you do?'

Jane crept back to nudge Ellen with a sharp little elbow and Ellen nodded. The voice was that of the man who had ordered them away from Mrs. Ryan's back gate.

'I couldn't think of another scientist I should rather see at Woods Hole this summer,' said Dr. Thomas. 'Not only on account of those good days at Munich when we were young, but also because your work and mine are so much in the same field that we ought to be able to help each other a great deal. The experiments I am working on this summer are the most critical I have undertaken. Do you keep up with my work? I have sent you accounts of mine whenever I knew where you were. There was a time after the war when I lost you; but I have read all your reports that I could find.'

'My address was a hospital for some years,' said the other. 'Yes, I have read what I could get, *natürlich*; perhaps I have missed something. In Germany we are not yet rich enough to subscribe to all the American journals; I shall try to repair that defect this summer.'

Contrasted with Dr. Thomas's generous welcome, his manner was distinctly dampening, but Ellen did not feel the same resentment toward him

that had struck her in the afternoon. She noticed that he felt for the railing behind him and braced himself against it, and that as he moved his lame leg the lines about his mouth tightened. Dr. Thomas seemed suddenly older and quieter again, though no less cordial.

'Wouldn't you like to go out with us in our boat for a little while?' he asked. 'You used to like that. The children and I are off for a half-hour's exploring. This is Miss McNeill and my daughter Jane and my son Walter, Dr. von Bergen. We were students together at the University of Munich when we were young, a long time ago.'

Again the man pulled himself erect and bowed from the hips. 'Thank you, no,' he said. 'I must go on to the Laboratory. I hope to be able to begin work in earnest in the morning. Time is short, and much of mine was wasted by the war.'

'Then,' said Dr. Thomas, 'let me go with you and see what I can do to help you. Children, I'm sorry, but we won't go out in the boat tonight. I'll try to make time for it tomorrow afternoon if Walter can go out.'

Jane dropped her father's hand and scowled at their new acquaintance, who did not even give her the pleasure of noticing her.

'Do not let me change your plans,' said von Bergen irritably. 'I did not come here to ask favors.'

'It is no favor,' the other answered. 'I shall learn as much as you do.'

Dr. von Bergen studied his face for a moment and then shrugged his shoulders. 'Perhaps you are right,' he rumbled. His voice, Ellen thought, was like the first warning growl of a cross dog. He braced himself on his cane and the two went off together.

'Couldn't you take us out, Walter?' asked Jane, with a threat of tears in her voice, but Walter yawned, stretched his long arms above his head, and turned back homeward.

'Long day tomorrow,' he answered. 'I've got to get up early to get some stuff for a man that wants to use it at eight.'

Jane picked up a stone beside the road and slung it viciously into the dying colors of the calm Eel Pond. 'All right!' she said. 'All right! But I *will* put dead fish under his window!'

Walter was too far ahead to hear and Ellen thought it best to disregard this outburst. 'Let's go home and see about the crab,' she proposed.

‘Did Mother say I might have it?’ Jane demanded.

‘She did. She was very sweet about it. I said I’d be responsible for his good behavior.’

‘Are-you-ever-nice!’ Jane exclaimed with grateful emphasis. She seized Ellen round the waist and hugged her with her thin strong arms until both were breathless, and then she trotted uncomplainingly up the hill.

In spite of her best intentions and the flashlight under her pillow, Jane forgot to wake in the night to inspect her crab.

‘Just as well,’ she admitted in the morning, examining the crab as he clattered around in his glass prison. ‘I can’t see that his claw has sprouted the slightest more. I’ll put him in the aquarium today.’

This proved to be a wooden bucket two thirds full of sea-water, standing under a shady wild grapevine in the back yard, and containing among its rocks and sea-plants red and purple starfishes and various other crusty animals.

‘We must carry it down to the beach this afternoon and get fresh water,’ Jane admonished herself, placing the little crab where he could conveniently scuttle under a stone.

‘Do you have any of the what-do-you-call-them, that we are going to get for your father this morning?’ Ellen asked.

‘Planaria? No. I like to get them for Father, but, personally, I don’t care much for them,’ said Jane. ‘They’re not a bit exciting.

‘Jiminy! We ought to hurry! Low tide is about nine this morning on the Vineyard side, and we have to eat our breakfasts and wash our dishes and straighten the room. Would you do the room? I can wash dishes pretty well, even if I do hate it, but Mother says I don’t have any feeling for pulling a sheet straight.’

It was not much later when they went off carrying an empty wooden bucket, twin to that in which Jane’s animals lived.

‘Hear that foghorn?’ said Jane. ‘That’s where we’re going, to the beach just this side of the Nobska Light.’ There was a certain grayness in the air that Ellen would not have thought of calling fog, until by devious ways they reached the Nobska Beach and saw their view across the water ending in haze, through which they could sometimes see the dim outlines of the islands and sometimes not. Across the deserted beach the mournful foghorn

hooted at regular intervals from its station on a low headland, and a white lighthouse kept guard above it.

The end of the white sand beach was piled with little rocks and big angular boulders among which flapped harmless little waves. Bucket in hand, Jane balanced her way out across the uneven rocks until she reached a little pool sheltered from the sea by a great red granite boulder. Here she settled herself on a smaller flat-topped rock with her feet tucked as much out of the way as possible and began fishing in the pool in front of her for small stones, such as she could comfortably lift with one hand.

'Come on,' she told Ellen, 'I'll show you how to find them. Get yourself a good rock to sit on. That one has too many sharp barnacles.'

The barnacled rock was, however, the only seat conveniently near, and Ellen heroically took it, finding that it was not too bad if she did not move suddenly. By the time she had selected two smaller rocks on which to brace her feet, Jane had made her first catch. She showed Ellen proudly a dozen tiny things like so many bits of gelatine, moving about very slowly on the underside of the rock she had last picked up.

'I'M GOING TO PUT THESE INTO THE BUCKET, ROCKS AND ALL'

‘I’m going to put these into the bucket, rocks and all,’ she said. ‘They need a few rocks to live on; I think it keeps them from being homesick. But mostly we’ll wash them off into the water in the bucket with this pipette,’ and she produced from her shirt pocket one of the glass and rubber combinations that Ellen had always called medicine droppers.

‘That was a good start,’ Jane bragged. ‘I can always find planaria better than anybody. Most of the Collecting Crew hate to bother with them, they are so tiny.’

‘What is the Collecting Crew?’ Ellen asked politely.

Jane paused in her careful inspection of a dripping green stone to regard Ellen with pity.

‘You know there is a Laboratory here?’ she asked, as one would remind a good but backward child. ‘And biologists work in it—lots of biologists, three or four hundred—and of course they have to have animals to work with, unless they are botanists, and then they have to have seaweed. Well! The Collecting Crew gets the animals for them.’

‘Oh!’ said Ellen. ‘What other animals do they collect besides planaria?’

‘They almost never collect planaria,’ Jane informed her, ‘and Father says it’s a very good thing, too, because there aren’t many planaria, not much more than a good supply for his work. They collect sea-urchins and starfish and Nereis and lots of things. I’ll take you out to see them do it sometime.’

‘Thank you,’ said Ellen, shifting uneasily on her rock and hoping that the collecting of starfishes was a more comfortable employment. Imitating Jane, she selected a rock from the pool before her and began to study the underside of it. She recognized the few snails that it carried, but the smaller animals flipping across the water film that clung to it she was not sure about; they might turn out to be planaria that had suddenly waked up and become active.

Jane was scornful at the suggestion. ‘Amphipods!’ She waved them aside. ‘Look! Here are some more planaria. See how tiny they are and how they clump together?’ With water from the pipette she gently washed the sluggish bits of life down into the water of the wooden bucket. ‘Put the rock back where you found it, so that some others can come there to live.’

A truck had stopped by the road that led past the beach. Ellen, looking back, saw familiar red and green patches coming toward them, above turned-down rubber boots. Walter, swinging one of the wooden collecting

buckets, and looking very tall as he balanced on the rocks, greeted them laconically and went on past.

'What are you getting, Walter?' Jane demanded, alert.

The boy was exploring the larger boulders beyond them where the long bleached timbers of an old wreck almost barred the way. Until he had found a sheltered pool somewhat similar to theirs and squatted down beside it, he did not reply. Then, 'Planaria,' he said, and began to examine the smaller half-submerged stones as they were doing.

'You don't need to,' Jane said indignantly. 'I'm going to get all that Father can use.'

Walter made no answer at first, and Jane had returned to her search when he spoke again.

'I'm not getting them for Dad. That von Bergen we met last night has ordered some and he wants them in a hurry.'

Jane stiffened. 'I hope you won't find any for him! What's more, I don't think you will! That's too far over.'

The boy went on deliberately with his work while Jane hurried nervously, with uncanny luck. Ellen had found only two rocks with the tiny creatures, but every other stone that Jane turned over seemed to carry a cluster of them.

Presently Walter, having found none at all, picked up his bucket and moved closer. Jane began to scold like an angry squirrel.

'Walter, you know that Father has to be careful if he has enough planaria to last all summer. He said so. You can hunt over there by the wreck, if you want to, but leave this for us.'

For answer Walter came over to the pool just next to their own sheltering boulder.

'Oh, Walter, don't!' Jane's voice was distressed. 'That's always the best place of all. I was saving it for next. Dibs on that rock!' she said sharply as Walter reached into the pool. 'Van dibs! Quadruple van dibs!'

'See here, Janey,' said her brother, 'you can't have dibs on all these rocks, and Dad can't have dibs on all the animals. If this man wants to work on planarians, he has as much right to them as Dad or any other worker in the Laboratory. And I've got to get them for him if I'm ordered to do it.

What kind of a member of the Collecting Crew would I be if I saved all the best things for my father? Dad would be ashamed of me!'

Jane went slowly back to her place, blinking tears.

'Never mind, Janey,' Walter said cheerfully. 'You can find more of these pesky little things than anybody we've got on the Crew; and if you want to side in with Dad, you can spend your mornings down here hunting them for him.'

'I will,' Jane declared huskily. 'But I think you might help. Father's experiments are very important this summer, and his apparatus is always breaking down, and he was tired when he came here—— '

'You don't hear him complaining, do you?' demanded her brother. 'Well, don't you complain for him! He can get better results from that old constant temperature box than most people could with a new one!'

'I know it!' Jane answered with fierce loyalty. She had begun to search among the rocks again when something else occurred to her.

'Walter!' she asked, straightening abruptly, 'do you think there is any chance of Father's getting that money from some Foundation or other for his experiments?'

'Who told you about that?'

'I heard him talking to a man down in his room.'

'Well, have the sense to keep still about it,' Walter advised, frowning. 'We don't know enough to talk about Dad's affairs, Janey. And he can manage them himself. He's all right.'

At this point Ellen felt obliged to shift to a smoother rock and at the movement the conversation broke off, although it had seemed to be understood that she was included in it.

'I'll take you back in the truck,' Walter said, very kindly, 'and I think I can get off to go out in the boat this afternoon. Ask Mother if we can have a beach supper, and if we can we'll get a lot of Mytilus to take.'

CHAPTER III

The Beach Party

About six o'clock that evening the Thomas car lumbered bravely forth, loaded with the essentials of a beach party. All the Thomas family and Ellen McNeill were stowed away in it, and, to the disgust of Jane, Dr. von Bergen had also been included in the party and Jane was obliged to sit on the edge of the front seat between him and her brother. In the laps of the three on the back seat were baskets of food and on the floor among their feet were bottles of milk, a tall blackened coffee-pot which splashed fresh water when the car bumped, and a big kettleful of Mytilus, blue-black sea-mussels, freshly gathered from a near-by rocky shore.

'We're driving to Racing Beach, where we are allowed to build a fire,' Mrs. Thomas explained to Ellen, who had been too busy helping to make sandwiches to learn many details of the party. 'It isn't very far up this nice back country road.'

To Ellen's surprise, Mrs. Thomas was enjoying the trip as much as any one. Once her beloved new house was left behind she shed its responsibilities and enjoyed unlimited sand and ragged thickets as much as her waxed floors and regular flower borders.

After them followed another car, much more full than their own. 'Some more Laboratory people,' Mrs. Thomas explained. 'They're bringing the lobsters. That's Jim Harrison's car, isn't it, Walter?'

When they reached the broad yellow beach, Ellen found that they were a party of fourteen, all very easy together, and comfortably dressed in old clothes to which bacon grease and charcoal could do little more damage. Ellen was introduced to two girls from Mount Holyoke, another from Kansas, and a fourth from New Orleans, and there were three men who were lumped as 'invertebrates' with no other explanation. The prize young man was the owner of the car, introduced as from Chicago and a graduate student in the university as well. This was Jim Harrison, and Ellen had never heard of him nor he of Ellen, though they had spent all the winter before on the same university campus.

He was a pleasant enough, big young man, quite as sunburnt as the others, and unconcernedly shabby. 'Dr. Thomas was sure we ought to know each other, since we came from Chicago,' he said apologetically, with a grin.

‘I guess he thought I might make you feel at home. He’s a thoughtful old scout. What’s your line?’

‘English and Physical Ed.,’ said Ellen, reflecting that she had never known a graduate student before. This one did not seem terrifyingly different from other students.

‘I see. You range south along the Midway and most of my work is in the north quadrangles.’

‘What are you doing down here?’ Ellen asked politely. ‘Are you an invertebrate, and what does it mean if you are?’

‘I’m on the Collecting Crew, same as Tom,’ he answered cheerfully. ‘We’re the humble sons of toil that collect animals for the invertebrate course and for all the other courses, and for all these high and mighty investigators like Dr. Thomas and Dr. Dubois here. Were those horseshoe crabs all right today, Miss Dubois?’

The prettiest of the girls shook her head. ‘I need mo’ *little* crabs,’ she said firmly, and her soft accent reminded Ellen that this was the girl from New Orleans. ‘It makes an awful difference in their metabolism!’ She was lowering a cheesecloth bag of coffee into the water that filled the big coffee-pot. ‘Take the othe’ end of this log, Jim,’ she commanded, when the bag had at last taken up enough water to sink to the bottom. ‘Let’s pull it up into the fire and make it balance the coffee-pot.’

The only strange figure of the party was Dr. von Bergen, who, having taken his introductions stiffly, stood well to one side propped against his cane, watching the activity on the beach. The many-colored flames of a driftwood fire were beginning to curl up around the veteran coffee-pot and the bucket of Mytilus set to boil. Some of the party were ranging down the beach after more wood to pile up in reserve; Mrs. Thomas was opening her baskets of sandwiches, cake, and fruit, and Jane had persuaded four or five of the crowd to skip flat stones over the still surface of the water. He looked so detached that Ellen, feeling a little strange herself, was inclined to pity him.

‘Wouldn’t you like to sit down by the fire?’ she asked him. ‘You see the boys took the seats out of the cars for us, but no one is using them.’

He seemed to be thinking various things, mostly unpleasant, to himself before he answered Ellen. ‘If it is the custom, yes. I thought I might be called upon to join the game with the little stones.’

It sounded rather like a sneer, but Ellen disregarded the tone. ‘Can I help you?’ she asked as he moved over to a cushion and lowered himself to it with a queer twist of his body.

It was an unfortunate question. ‘I am quite able to take care of myself,’ he answered, even while he winced, moving his knee.

After this Ellen left him alone. While the water was hesitating to boil, she went off to join in skipping stones and then in a game of handball that included every one except Dr. von Bergen and Mrs. Thomas.

It was an unhurried evening, with a late lingering sunset. Ellen loved it: the wide sky and expanse of bay, the good air, the murmur of the tide beginning to turn and slip out, the driftwood fire, which grew more beautiful as darkness gathered, and the simple fun of these people.

When the coffee and the mussels had at last boiled, the appetite with which she greeted supper was the last touch of enjoyment. There was bacon which each one broiled for himself on a two-pronged stick; the little bright-orange sea-mussels emerging from their opening shells, and very good with butter and salt; brilliantly red lobsters which Ellen privately thought were a little overrated, but which she conscientiously ate because they were such a luxury; innumerable sandwiches, as interesting as if she had not made them herself; fruit, cakes, and a large tin box of marshmallows for which no one seemed to have much room to spare after the rest of the supper had been eaten.

By the time the last papers had been burnt and the fire rebuilt, the sky was dark with only here and there a star.

‘That fire’s a little too spread out,’ some one said. ‘Pull it up together closer behind the rock, so some boat won’t take us for a harbor light.’

For a while they sat around the fire contentedly watching the flames, with nothing much to say, and then one of the invertebrates began to strum chords on his guitar and to sing a song that seemed familiar to them all, and one by one the others joined in.

This was the ballad of the Little Blastula, ‘no bigger than a germ,’ and as pathetic as it was scientific.

IT WAS AN UNHURRIED EVENING, WITH A LATE LINGERING SUNSET

His career began at the time when ‘his nascent cilia with joy began to squirm’ and carried on to the final tragedy when

‘He caught a tuft of spiculæ upon his blastopore,
And trying hard to free himself, his ectoderm he tore,
A great big ugly rent.’

Thenceforth he existed only as a little ghost, ‘lamenting to the annelids that burrow in the ground.’

It was sung with great feeling, and even Ellen, who had no idea what a Little Blastula might be, could soon join in the recurring chorus:

‘Oh, the joy of locomotion,
Down beneath the depths of ocean!
Oh, to feel the deep commotion
Within each blastomere!’

‘Anybody know “Sweet Marie”?’ asked Dr. Thomas, who was enjoying the singing, and the girl from New Orleans began to sing daintily,

‘ ‘Tis a question in my mind, sweet Marie,
What in annelids you find, sweet Marie.
Can you count and then confirm
All the segments of a worm?
Do you know the mesoderm, sweet Marie?’

‘My freshman class was full of sweet Maries this winter,’ she commented dreamily, and went on with the chorus in which Dr. Thomas joined her:

‘Sweet Marie, look and see!
Look and see, sweet Marie!
Do you think you’d better try
With your own unaided eye,
To distinguish nuclei, sweet Marie?’

‘Where did you learn that, Miss Dubois?’ Jim Harrison asked at the end. ‘This is your first summer here, isn’t it?’

‘Dr. Thomas wouldn’t have asked me that,’ the girl drawled. ‘I heard that first at the Cold Spring Ha’bo’ Lab. down on Long Island. Those songs get carried from labo’atory to labo’atory.’

‘Have a marshmallow.’ Mrs. Thomas offered a beautifully toasted puffy one to each of the singers. ‘And sing something nice and common and sentimental, known from Maine to California.’

Two of the men looked at each other and laughed. ‘That means us, Johnson,’ said one. ‘I’m from Maine and you’re from California. What do you know that I know?’

‘I can’t sing,’ said the other, ‘but I should think that “My Old Kentucky Home” would be a good compromise.’

‘Let’s go!’ said the first one.

‘The sun shines bright on my old Kentucky home——’

‘Let’s sing some of the old German songs for Dr. von Bergen,’ suggested his friend, when the song was softly finished. ‘We’ll be making him homesick for the German student clubs. What do you young people know? Not many, I’m afraid.’

‘No, no,’ said von Bergen, rousing hastily. ‘Do not attempt it. It would not be the same thing.’

‘I’m afraid it would not,’ Dr. Thomas said sadly. ‘Few of these youngsters know German as my generation learned it. They can struggle through a scientific article, but the *Lieder*—the old songs and the stories that make people feel akin, they have never heard.’

He hummed under his breath a little remembered tune, but no one joined in, least of all his old fellow student.

When the latter spoke, across a silence that threatened to become strained, it was with so much feeling that his careful English pronunciation suffered.

‘Believe me, zis: I am surprise’ zat you are so little serious! I come to work at a scien-tific problem at a great marine laboratory, and you insist to taking me out to sing songs and amuse myself! I do not vonder zat Doktor Thomas, expose’ to such an atmosphere, becomes senti-mental, and sinks he draws from his experiments zese peculiar conclusions which he publishes!’

‘My dear Fritz!’ his friend protested. ‘You sang in the old days as much as I did!’

‘Zose days are past,’ the other replied with an impatient gesture. ‘Zose days when we believe’ in brothership among all living sings and many ozzer foolish dreams!’

He struggled to his feet, biting his underlip and prodding hard with his cane in the sand. ‘Will some one drive me back to the Laboratory?’ he demanded urgently. ‘I have work that I must do tonight. I did not think you would remain so long.’

‘You can take him, Walter, can’t you?’ his father said quietly, and Walter made an ungracious sound of assent. There was a flurry of rescuing the seats of the car from the beach and packing the car with baskets and bottles for Walter to leave at home.

The incident left a disagreeable after-taste. No one wanted to sing, and it was a general relief when the man from California burst out, ‘What was eating him, anyway?’

‘Shell-shocked,’ answered his friend from Maine wisely, but Dr. Thomas spoke up hastily across the general murmur of approval.

‘No,’ he said. ‘Don’t underestimate him. Of course you can see for yourselves that he is often in pain; he won’t tell me the cause of it, but I imagine it comes from some old wound in that bad leg. And when I remember the athlete that he used to be, how he loved to tramp the mountain

roads and dance and swim, I know that being a cripple is particularly hard for him.

'Handicapped as he is physically, and poorer than poverty itself, he has pegged away on his scientific work. He has no family and he has given up outside interests and done this one thing. And it is work along my own line, so that I understand it, and I understand his passion for it.'

He paused for a moment, looking into the fire and tossing a pebble up and down absent-mindedly in the hollow of his hand. When he went on it was in a tone of apology for talking of himself.

'Most people know that birds move about in flocks and cattle go in herds, and that the human race gathers together in villages and cities; but when Fritz and I were students and sometimes talked the whole day long up in the mountains settling the affairs of the universe, we used to come back to the fact that all animals, even the smallest and simplest, group together also; and we used to wonder why they do it.

'I said, even then, that it must be because the different individuals in the group were of some use to each other, though of course I didn't know anything about it. Ever since, as I've had time, I've worked on that problem; and this summer I think I'm proving that even those little planarians on the underside of the rocks of Nobska Beach live longer in a group than singly.'

'Well, why not?' the man from California inquired. 'Why does our visitor fire up and object?'

Dr. Thomas put an arm around Jane, who was snuggling up against him.

'Well, Dr. von Bergen has done some similar work,' he answered cheerfully. 'He thinks his results and mine don't tally. He hasn't put his doubts about me into print yet, but from what he told me last night he thinks that I am a sentimental soul and get the results I want to get; that I like to think of the animal kingdom living in cooperation, whereas he believes the truth of it is that every animal lives at the expense of the others. And, of course, when there isn't enough food or air or space for all, that may be true.

'I asked him to come in with me this summer and let us check on each other's work. It isn't usual, but we are working with the same animals, on much the same type of experiment. But he didn't want to. He is anxious to prove me wrong independently before his money is used up and he has to go back to Germany.'

'You wouldn't mind if he proved you wrong?' Ellen ventured incredulously, so absorbed in this story of rivalry that she forgot she was

much too ignorant to be asking questions.

'I should mind like the dickens!' Dr. Thomas answered vigorously. 'All the evidence I have been building up for the last ten years would go in the waste-basket, and my scientific future would be a good deal of a problem. But I don't think I've been mistaken. Fritz has a good mind and he has worked hard, but I have worked hard, too. Very likely we'll meet on some middle ground, and each of us find that our work corrects the other's; and we'll be better able to see what it all means.'

Mrs. Thomas shivered. 'Let's build up the fire,' she said. 'Does any one want more marshmallows?' Just then the rattle of the returning car was heard down the road, and when some one discovered that it was ten o'clock, the coals were kicked apart and buried in the sand and every one went home.

Jane was very quiet in the car, as she had been ever since supper. Ellen expected to find her asleep when they reached home, but though the child's feet moved slowly her eyes were wide open, fixed on some unspoken problem.

Ellen went off with Mrs. Thomas to wash picnic cups and spoons and bottles, and the operation took some time, because sand shook out of everything they handled and had to be repeatedly wiped up. Half an hour later, when the kitchen was in its usual beautiful order, Ellen went upstairs expecting to find Jane sound asleep, but the bed was still smoothly made and there was no sign of Jane. She slipped downstairs to look out of the front door, and nearly ran over her charge on the front steps.

Jane offered no explanation, and Ellen did not ask for any. By common consent they went softly upstairs, where Jane washed herself with extra care, remembered to shake out her sneakers over the waste-basket, and even folded her khakis.

She was soon asleep, but Ellen did not go off so easily. She lay as quietly as she could and perversely remembered unpleasant things. She had eaten too much, and especially she wished that she had not attempted the lobster; it made her unhappy even to think of the taste of it now. The face of Dr. von Bergen danced before her, with its scar a dark gash in the firelight, and she shivered, as Mrs. Thomas had, at the memory of that weary, irritable voice.

Some unpleasant odor came to her faintly, so that at first she thought it must be only her imagination, stimulated by lobster, and she tried to put it out of mind by making a list of things she must do in the morning. She had not yet written a real letter home, and if she put it off much longer, she

would have to write a small book and a scientific book at that, to make her family understand this curious corner of the Cape; her coolie coat had not yet been washed out, and there were pairs and pairs of stockings to be done, too——

The odor came in clearly as a little breeze lifted; it seemed to be just outside her window, and it was unmistakably dead fish. The house was dark and quiet, and no one else seemed to have been disturbed by the odor, but Ellen felt that she could not stand it. She put on her slippers and the rumpled coolie coat and tiptoed downstairs again.

Outside the front door, which had opened with the quiet of well-oiled lock and hinges, she paused a moment to sniff and accustom her eyes to the night. The late-rising old moon gave a certain light, but showed nothing suspicious. However, the odor was much stronger here, and, as she moved out through the short damp grass, it centered in a little low-spreading evergreen close to the house. Ellen poked gingerly around it and pulled out a discarded tin can in which something slithered around as it was tilted; from the odor there was no doubt that this had held the dead fish.

The top was still partly attached. Ellen pushed it down as tightly as she could, but without effect on the smell. The garbage can lid would make a noise, if she carried it there, and she did not want to go to the trouble of burying it. In her sleepy state the best thing seemed to be to take the can across the road to the woods, and then go back to bed.

She had worked it well down into the fallen leaves before an idea occurred to her that jarred her fully awake. It connected Jane and dead fish.

At first she was not disposed to do anything about this possibility. Jane had good reason not to like Dr. von Bergen, and Ellen herself was a little afraid of him. If Jane had really carried out her threat and strewn dead fish under his window, Ellen felt that there was no reason why she should interfere. It might distract the man's mind from his work and be an advantage to Jane's father, whom she found herself liking very much.

Nevertheless, after a moment she gave the can a final stamp and started off down the path that she knew was the short cut past Mrs. Ryan's garage. Jane was young enough so that she might be forgiven for carrying on her wars with dead fish; but Ellen knew that Dr. Thomas would not tolerate such an annoyance to his rival for a minute. The path grew narrower and rocky under Ellen's thin slippers, but she kept on, glad that there were now no cottages near from which she might be heard brushing against the bushes.

The ground was unfamiliar, but it was not far before the bushes thinned again and Ellen found herself approaching the gate beside the garage. Once there, she realized that she had no plan of action. Jane had been generous with her fish, and the odor greeted Ellen so strongly that she felt the tenant could not be within the garage and unaware of it, and when she listened against the thin board wall, she was sure of it.

She might, she decided, climb the nailed-up gate and search for the fish, which Jane in her haste had probably not scattered very widely. Her eyes had become accustomed to the half-light of the moon, but she could not see distinctly anything so small as those fish. She would have to feel around for them. And she should have brought the can. Now she would have to bundle them into her handkerchief and sacrifice it with them.

She had one foot on the crossbar of the gate when she became aware that an animal had strolled out from under the barberry bushes along the garage, and was advancing toward her. Ellen thought of Mary Theresa, but it was not the big gray cat. This nonchalant animal wore a white stripe down either side of its dark back, and running into its plumy tail.

Ellen watched it until it had almost reached her gate, and then, filled with suspicion, she jumped down and fled up the path. She might be a city girl, strange to planarians and toadfish, but she had heard her farm-bred father tell about skunks. The fish would have to stay where they were.

With a lavish use of soap she washed her hands at the kitchen sink, and went back to bed, thankful that her errand had not been discovered. After so much exercise the lobster no longer troubled her, and now only the clean odor of the woods came on the breeze that stirred the white ruffled curtains.

‘Dead fish and a skunk!’ Ellen said to herself, trying to feel properly sorry for Dr. von Bergen, but it was no use. She went to sleep smiling.

CHAPTER IV

To the Hole

Jane stood on one foot by the laundry tubs whisking idly at the fine thick suds while Ellen washed out her things. When the washing was done, they planned to go down and take out the boat.

A question, left over from the night before, popped into Ellen's head, and she spoke it out before she thought, since she was not intending to mention Jane's escapade yet.

'Do skunks eat fish?' she asked; and Jane answered automatically:

'Maybe it *was* the skunks! It couldn't have been Mary Theresa, for she was fastened in the shed with the kittens—— '

She paused abruptly and looked with suspicion at Ellen.

'You knew!' she accused.

One corner of Ellen's mouth twitched, and Jane, observing it, went off and sat glumly on the basement steps while Ellen rinsed out.

Once she had betrayed herself, however, Jane could not help finishing the story.

'There wasn't one of them left,' she confided in a low voice, sidling up to Ellen as she was hanging up stockings neatly by their toes where the warm sunshine struck the clothes-horse. 'I got twelve little ones from the Supply House; Walter thought I wanted them for bait. And they ought to have made an awful smell, but there wasn't one of them left to do it this morning. Maybe a skunk did come and eat them. They used to come up here for garbage when we had the camp, and once a man down on Crow Hill caught one in a net over a strawberry bed. How did you know about it?'

Ellen smiled mysteriously. 'Maybe he picked them up himself!'

Jane shook her head. 'If he had, he would have complained to Mrs. Ryan and she would have told me this morning. I know him! It just didn't work. I'll have to try something else if he keeps on being such a trouble.'

She studied Ellen's face soberly. 'You know more than I thought you would,' she commented.

Ellen took advantage of this good opinion.

‘I don’t believe,’ she said, ‘that your father would want you to pay these little attentions to his friend.’

‘Friend!’ Jane retorted scornfully.

‘Would he?’ Ellen persisted. ‘They aren’t working out a difference of opinion on dead fish.’

‘It’s not just a difference of opinion,’ Jane replied hotly. ‘He’s not nice to my father.’

‘No,’ Ellen admitted. ‘He isn’t. But I don’t think he’s well,’ she suggested.

‘Then let him say so. Let him bawl and yell if it hurts; but he needn’t take it out in being nasty to other people!’

Ellen was so much in sympathy with this point of view that she did not try any further argument, and nothing more was said on the subject.

Jane’s spirits rose high as they went down the street; she ran in front of Ellen, climbing thick old trees that edged into the path, teetering along fence-tops and stone walls. In front of the school yard Ellen saw her sprint across the street and throw herself into the arms of an old lady as expansive in body and clothing as Jane was thin and abbreviated.

The two stood smiling at each other while Ellen waited across the narrow road. They were in the entrance to a garden so well concealed behind its stone wall and tall trees that Ellen had not seen before that a garden was there.

‘Who is your friend?’ the old lady asked Jane. ‘Tell her to come over here. Jane, I haven’t had a visit with you yet this summer. Aren’t you coming down to my house to row in my dory on the Mill Pond?

‘I’m Miss Wareham,’ she introduced herself to Ellen. ‘I know you. You’re the Scotch lass, Ellen McNeill, that my girls told me about this morning. They went to your beach party. How do you like our Woods Hole?’

Ellen found herself smiling into the wise old face as if she had known and loved Miss Wareham all her life.

‘I like it,’ she said eagerly, ‘but I feel as if I didn’t understand a thing about it! I’m not biological, you know, and I’d never heard of Woods Hole before the Thomases asked me to come down this summer. It doesn’t seem just what I thought New England would be!’

Miss Wareham nodded understandingly.

‘I don’t wonder. You’re from Chicago, aren’t you? A long time ago I studied at Chicago myself and discovered that the United States extended west of the Berkshires. Well, there’s quite a little of the Cape and even of Woods Hole that isn’t strictly biological. If Jane will bring you to call some day, I’ll tell you some stories.’

‘Tell us now.’ Jane was dancing up and down. ‘There’s a *good* flat rock, Miss Wareham. Sit down and tell us now!’

Miss Wareham seemed to possess a delightful leisure, with nothing pressing to be done; agreeably she sat down on the broad rock in the deep shade.

‘Keep the mosquitoes off me, child,’ she admonished Jane. ‘Ellen, sit down. What shall I tell about? Captain Bartholomew Gosnold’s visit to these waters in 1602?’

‘No,’ said Jane. ‘You told me yourself that maybe he never landed at Woods Hole.’

‘Did I?’ Miss Wareham twinkled. ‘Well, that was three hundred years ago, so I shouldn’t have been too positive. I wasn’t there. Shall I tell you about 1812, when the British threw up those earthworks over on the island?’

‘Were you here then?’ Jane asked hopefully, and then saw her mistake. ‘I thought maybe you were, you told me so much about it. Once you said you would tell me a story about this rose garden, but you never did.’

‘Didn’t I?’ said Miss Wareham briskly. ‘Well, that’s a good story.’

She looked back over the irregular, sunny garden, sheltered on all its borders by the great trees from the destructive sea-winds and already showing color in the first blossom clusters of the climbing roses that were its special pride.

‘I like this place,’ she said. ‘See, the ground is like a shallow cup to catch all the sun, and even in storms it is quiet here. And I like that plain fine old house. It was built by a man from Boston who wanted a summer home for his family, and more especially for his children; and he took a fancy for a strip of land down here on the elbow of Cape Cod, stretching all the way across from Vineyard Sound on one side to Buzzard’s Bay on the other. And not very far at that! But still it was a good deal of land considering how rocky it was and how useless everybody thought it.

‘There was a little village here when he came; for many years this had been used as a harbor and people have sold ships’ supplies, and made a few boats and fished; and once whale-oil candles were made in that stone building the Supply House uses for storage.’

‘The Candle Factory,’ said Jane.

‘I’m glad you know that. And this will amuse you: the men used to go South in the winter to work, just as I go to warm my old bones. They went down to the cypress swamps and chopped out cypress “knees”—the strong twisted roots that grow bent just right to brace the timbers of a ship’s hull. There wasn’t a thing biological here then, if that is any comfort to you, Ellen.

‘The family used to come down in the stagecoach every summer. It was not a fashionable place to come; and a man named Thoreau, of whom you may have heard, thought the Cape never would be. You ought to read of his travels on Cape Cod some day. But there was always shipping coming and going in the harbor to watch, and sunshine and water for wading and bathing, just as there is now. It was a good place for children.

‘But the father of the family missed trees. He liked them, but, strange as it may seem to you, there were almost no trees here then—just the low bushes of juniper and bayberry and sumach growing in the sheltered hollows as they do over on the islands.

‘So he started out on a tree campaign. Whenever he walked out over his estate, he carried his pockets full of nuts and stamped them in at convenient places. That’s where that group of hickories next your lot in Gansett came from, Jane. All that land used to belong to him. And he bought hundreds and thousands of little trees from nurseries.

‘Once he had a shipload of year-old seedlings brought from England. Some of these trees we’re sitting under now came from England. I love to bring a good botanist up here and get him to try to classify and name these trees,’ Miss Wareham said with cheerful maliciousness. ‘He doesn’t know where he is, for some of these have no business in an American handbook of trees.’

‘And the rose garden,’ prompted Jane.

‘Oh, yes, the rose garden! There isn’t so much to tell about that, though its ramblers are famous. Wait till you see them in full bloom and you’ll not wonder at the prizes they have taken. They say that the climate here is not so different from that of England; the air is moist and the weather is seldom

bitterly cold, however hard it may be freezing up in Boston. That's because there is water nearly all the way around us.'

'Plants are botany,' Jane commented, seeing the story was ended, 'and botany is part of biology. You were going to tell us something that wasn't biological. Tell us now!'

Miss Wareham wrinkled her nose and got up from her rock. 'I won't risk it,' she said. 'I might have known I couldn't get off of my favorite subject. Forgive me! And remember that I taught it and studied it for fifty years.'

'I liked the story,' Ellen assured her. 'Did the rose garden man start the Laboratory here?'

'Oh, no! No!' Miss Wareham said, moving off at a good pace. 'I must go down to see if they brought the fish in from the traps and get my mackerel. No! I ought not to begin to tell you about the Laboratory, for it would be hard to stop. You see, I was there, when it began in 1873, and there was nothing like it anywhere.'

Ellen drew a long breath at the thought of that stretch of time, but Jane, to whom 1873 was much the same as the date of the landing of Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, skipped along unimpressed.

'And I can remember it better than many things that happened yesterday,' Miss Wareham went on with energy.

'I mustn't leave you thinking that first laboratory was built here. It was over on one of the islands, Penikese. And the teacher was Louis Agassiz.'

'Agassiz,' Ellen repeated.

'You don't know about him? Dear, dear! You must know about Agassiz even if you can't tell an oyster from a shark! Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz. He was a very great Swiss naturalist, who had lived in America for nearly thirty years before he taught the summer school on Penikese the last year of his life.

'We had great fun that summer in the old laboratory made out of a barn. I have been coming to Woods Hole for a good many summers now, ever since the Laboratory was set up in the wooden building that was not much superior to Agassiz's barn; but there never has been another in which the whole world changed before my eyes, so that the commonest, dullest animal became an important part of a wonderful scheme of living things . . .'

She stopped at the path that led back to the Supply House. 'No use trying to tell you young things about it. You weren't there. But some day

you look up the books about Agassiz; read about the snake that got loose from his household menagerie and was found by his wife in her shoe in the morning; read about Dallas Sharp, who raced from the woods pond with turtle eggs, to reach Agassiz while they were fresh.'

She was smiling broadly. 'Good-bye. Come see me!'

Jane looked up at the brick Laboratory building. 'Let's go up and see Father a minute.'

'Won't we bother him?'

'He'll tell us if we do,' Jane rejoined confidently.

She led the way up into the square central hall of the building, in whose otherwise unornamented space there stood a massive figure of some Chinese sage. Ellen paused before it a moment in awe, but Jane reached up and felt with a slim forefinger in the space between the clasped metal hands.

'Nothing there,' she sighed.

'Why should anything be there?'

'I don't know any reason, but I heard that once a boy found a whole fifty-cent piece there. I don't *think* he was spoofing me. So, personally, I always look. There might be another one.'

She went up the steps beyond in mad haste. Ellen followed with more dignity, and took time to look out over the Eel Pond from the stairway windows and to cast a glance up and down the long bare halls of the second floor. There were tall, transomed doors regularly spaced along the hall, and each carried the name of its occupant, on a small card at the side. 'F. von Bergen' was scrawled hastily on the card by the door opposite to that where Jane was knocking.

'Come in,' said a voice, and Jane pulled Ellen in after her.

A big window, overlooking the waters of the harbor and the islands beyond, lit the room with sunshine. Under the window along the wall a black shelf-table was built, and there Jane's father was working. To the right, water trickled from one of many overhanging pipes down across a high cement water-table, which held glass aquaria and wooden buckets; its base was a half-filled water-trough in which, among stones and a glass vessel or two, Ellen saw brown starfish matted together like basketwork.

All along the table in the middle of the room, as well as the table under the window, stood orderly battalions of glass vessels, some of which were

the size of finger-bowls, and some were small like salt-cellars; and ranged beside them were thin glass flasks, large and small. Dr. Thomas bent over a square of the salt-cellars, studying the contents of each with minute care. He wore a long white laboratory coat, ragged with acid holes, and a green eyeshade; and fixed to one eye was a small cylindrical magnifying-glass that projected like the eyeball of some strange pop-eyed animal.

His appearance was altogether so professional that Ellen halted, dismayed; but Jane trotted over to her father and hung over the glass vessels with an interest as professional as his own.

'Are those the animals we got for you, Father? Are they ever nice and big!'

'Um-m,' agreed Dr. Thomas absent-mindedly. 'Number twenty-seven,' he said, writing the number down. 'Twenty-eight is in the fifth stage; twenty-nine—twenty-nine—twenty-nine is going strong, still in the first stage; thirty in the third stage.'

He had come to the end of that block of dishes and for the first time he looked up. 'Those were good planaria, Janey; and they are behaving beautifully. Those in the groups are still in good shape, but the single animals are already beginning to go fuzzy. I shall have to sit up with them tonight to catch the final stages. And will you bring down my lunch this noon, Jane?'

'Father,' Jane wheedled, 'couldn't Ellen and I take the motor out? Rowing is so slow.'

Dr. Thomas turned to Ellen, his watch in his hand. 'Have you tried the motor yet?'

'Oh, no!' Ellen said hastily. She had had no idea that Jane intended this attempt. 'I haven't even been out in the boat yet. I made sandwiches yesterday while Walter and Jane went after the Mytilus.'

'Then certainly not,' said Dr. Thomas. 'Rowing will be risky enough until you learn the currents. It's eleven o'clock this minute. Be good girls and put off your trip till afternoon, so you can bring me my lunch at twelve. I ought to have half an hour to spare then.'

Jane wasted no time over disappointment. 'Maybe if we hurry, Mother will let us bring down our lunches and eat here, too,' she said; and with this fortunate thought she was off as eagerly as she had come.

Thanks to the use of the family car, which Ellen found kindly disposed to her handling, they were back again at twelve. Dr. Thomas pushed his magnifying-glass high on his forehead like a third eye, and set out glass beakers for their milk; for himself he made tea over a gas flame and drank it from a finger-bowl, and they had sandwiches and cakes left over from the beach party of the night before. Ellen found it a very pleasant meal, with the final advantage of having only the two beakers and the finger-bowl to wash at the end.

'I like this place,' she said contentedly, when the three pieces of glassware had been polished and turned upside down on the table. 'Who owns it? Is it like a college?'

Dr. Thomas had risen and was anxiously inspecting a white box with curiously thick walls that stood on one end of the table.

'I don't feel easy about this constant temperature box,' he said half to himself. 'It's about time for the heat to begin going off and on again. What did you say? Who owns the Laboratory? Well—I do, for one! It's cooperatively owned by the workers. All of us have a share in its direction, though, of course, none of us could take that share off and sell it.'

He settled his magnifying-glass in place again. 'Time to read these experiments again. Good-bye, children. Have a good time and don't be rash.'

Jane hauled out a pair of oars from along the wall behind the water-table and she and Ellen carried them down to the Eel Pond. The Thomas dory, tied there with many other boats, was small and safely flat-bottomed. Ellen tried it out on the placid waters of the Eel Pond and found herself able to row in a fairly straight line. Under Jane's direction she rowed them out through the narrow channel connecting the Eel Pond with the harbor waters. They passed under the bridge with automobiles rolling over their heads, along the harborside buildings where coal and gasoline were sold, and out into the harbor itself, where Ellen lifted her oars and looked around while tiny waves rocked the dory.

The harbor had not looked very wide from any view of it that Ellen had had before, but now, flat on its surface in a little boat, Ellen suddenly felt that it was a considerable expanse, and that they might do well to cruise around the edges this first trip.

She said as much to Jane, who looked disgusted. 'If you are tired, I can row,' she said. 'It's a nice quiet day. I want to go around through the Hole to

the rocks on the other side of Penzance Point. I want to look for planaria there. If that man is going to have to have Father's planaria, we'll have to find some more for him!'

It was true that the day was pleasant and the water calm. Ellen thought she had probably been too timid.

'I'm not tired,' she answered. 'Where is it you want to go? Where is the Hole and what is it?'

'I'll show you the channel,' Jane said confidently. 'Keep this side of the red spar and head between the point and the island.'

'Where is the Hole?' Ellen asked again, following directions.

'The Hole? That's where I told you to go, between the point and the island.'

Ellen rowed sturdily. She was not very large, but her shoulders were strong and the boat was not hard to handle. Once in a while she turned her head to see where they were going, and the distances seemed to stretch out surprisingly, but for the most part she devoted herself to pulling a good stroke, and let Jane tell her how to steer.

It was impossible to tell how long this went on until they came to a stretch of water by a little island that was so close to Penzance Point that Ellen had not realized they were separate.

To her right the water had a curious appearance. Slick patches on its surface alternated with choppy little waves, without wind to stir them; and as she looked back over her shoulder in the direction they were heading, she found this surface continuing as far as she could easily see. Ellen studied it, puzzling over it, until Jane admonished her sharply.

'Pull harder! Pull away from the island! We're getting close to the rocks!'

Ellen could see this for herself, but it was not easy to pull harder. She was beginning to be tired, and the boat had turned stubborn and difficult to steer. It persisted in pushing over toward the rocks around the little island.

'You have got to pull *hard* in the Hole,' Jane said, lifting her voice. 'Do you want me to row?'

'No,' answered Ellen somewhat breathlessly. 'What is the matter?'

'It's the current in the Hole,' Jane informed her, pleasantly excited. 'The water is coming through from Buzzard's Bay, because the tide is higher

there than on this side. The islands are in the way over there for miles and miles, so a lot of the water has to come through here. After a while it will turn and pour from the Sound back into the Bay. It runs six hours one way and six hours the other. Isn't it grand?'

Ellen rowed hard. She could keep the boat headed out into the current, but there was no advancing against it; and now she could see that the water, in spite of its smooth patches that stayed always in the same spot, was boiling past at high speed. Ahead of them was a long stretch of the same swift current, which, she realized now, they could not even enter; they were doing well to maintain their position beside it.

'I can't do it, Jane,' she said. 'How do we go back?'

'Don't go back!' Jane cried in distress. 'Let me row!'

She started up, crouching with one hand on the side of the boat and edging over to Ellen, while the little vessel tipped and swung.

'Sit down!' Ellen said, horrified.

Jane paused, uncertain, looked at Ellen, and reluctantly crept back to her seat.

'I can swim,' she said. 'Even if the boat did turn over, I could swim out.'

'Suppose we don't try it,' suggested Ellen. She was letting the dory drift with the current, taking care only to keep its nose upstream, with an idea of reaching quiet water back of the little island.

'We're on the wrong side of the channel to be going in this direction,' Jane pointed out sulkily, 'and you might bump into a rock here.'

'I don't think we'll hurt anything by staying here,' Ellen answered, determined now to pick her own way. This was one of Jane's ventures, out of which she must take her safely. 'Look at the gulls on that high square boulder. What big things they are! Let's see if we can get closer.'

'Let's go over to the little island from this side,' proposed Jane, all eagerness again. 'There might be planaria under the rocks.'

Ellen looked doubtfully at the boulders scattered through the water between themselves and the tiny island, but since it seemed possible and not dangerous, she was willing to try a landing. Twice they stuck on the top of rocks just under the water and had to push the boat off, and innumerable times they scraped over other hidden boulders, but at last, by wading and

pulling the dory behind them, they found themselves at the edge of the close-growing juniper and bayberry that covered the island.

'I've never been here before,' Jane said delightedly. 'Wouldn't you like to have an island of your very own, Ellen? I would have a little house on it that I built myself, and live in it, and I would just love it when it stormed!'

The crested center of the island was too thickety to be explored in their bathing-suits. Jane climbed leisurely around the rocky margin, looking for the planaria in promising pools and exclaiming over a perfect scallop shell or a tiny red starfish.

On the other side of the island the current ran between the island and the point, moving much more plainly than in the greater volume of the waters of the Hole. Jane stood with arms akimbo, her eyes traveling with the water.

'I never did row through against that,' she admitted, as if she were trying to be perfectly fair, 'but I think I *could*. I'm *sure* I could. We might come back and practice, a little at a time.'

'Let's ask your father,' Ellen said quietly.

Jane looked up at her out of the corner of her eye.

'I guess we had better not,' she said. 'I guess we had better not speak to Father about being here at all,' she went on thoughtfully, 'unless we could find some planaria and I don't think we will. And I guess we had better see if the boat is still there. When the tide rises, it floats boats off. You did tie it, didn't you?'

Her reckless mood had gone, and when, after they had worked their way out into clear water again, she said, 'Ellen, may I row? It would be safe. Honestly it would. Even Walter lets me,' Ellen was glad to agree.

'Let's go over by the big rock to change,' she said, and the change was made. Jane rowed on competently; her stroke was short, but it was even, and she went ahead in business-like style.

She looked back at the island soberly. 'I would like just that little island to live on,' she said, after a while. 'I would live all by myself, just as I pleased. I would have just a little shack like our old camp, but smaller, just my size; and I would let the rain scrub it and the wind dust it.

'And I would have a little motor-boat that I could run myself, and I could come over to the mainland in it for provisions. And I would always cook my food out-of-doors over a camp-fire. I can cook bacon and eggs, and I could eat apples and pilot biscuit with them. And I could boil Mytilus;

there was lots of Mytilus on the other side of the island; and I think there were grapevines up near the top where we didn't go. I could have grapes.'

'It sounds wonderful,' Ellen said sympathetically.

'It would be,' Jane answered with heartfelt certainty.

'Do you know Mother is going to give a tea next week?' she asked suddenly. 'And I have got to help. She said so. It is a big tea; all the ladies Mother knows and some that she doesn't really know—people with lots of money that don't belong to the Laboratory. I have got to stand at the door and let them all in!'

Her face was so tragic that Ellen could not help smiling. 'I felt just like that at my first freshman tea,' she said, 'but I'm getting over it.'

Jane would not be cheered. 'I never get over it. I have to think about my looks and not muss my hair or stand on one foot. And everybody says, "This is Mrs. Thomas's dear little girl. How you have grown!" Nobody says that to me down at the Laboratory!'

Ellen regarded the very brown, very earnest figure before her, rowing away with indignant energy.

'You're pretty good at doing things you don't like, Jane,' she said. 'I think we'll get through this tea all right, especially with so much time ahead to think about it.'

The compliment appealed to Jane; nevertheless, she shook her head when she had thought it over.

'It's all right for you,' she said. 'You're nearly grown up, and you like to wear dresses. Maybe you even like to meet strange people. But for me, personally, I don't see the sense of teas,' and she fixed longing eyes on the little island.

CHAPTER V

Jane's Mother's Tea

'We haven't had but one good time this week,' Jane said in a suffering tone, standing stiffly in the middle of their room as Ellen buttoned her frail little embroidered dress for her.

'Which was that?' Ellen asked absently, looking around to see that the closet door had really been shut, as she remembered, and that no rug was kicked up or drawer left open.

'Hunting the wild strawberries, of course,' Jane answered. 'What else could it be? Every other minute you've been making those silly open-faced sandwiches!'

'Not quite every minute,' Ellen protested. 'We've gone swimming, and got planaria and tried the motor—— '

'Girls!' called Mrs. Thomas. 'Some one is coming!'

'I have got to stand at that door!' Jane groaned, and scuffed reluctantly down the speckless stairway.

Ellen waited a brief moment to look around the room and be sure for the third time that it was in perfect order to be a dressing-room for the guests; and then she followed Jane, smoothing down her own plain little silk and hoping she would be a credit to Mrs. Thomas.

This tea was evidently a very serious matter to the hostess. For the last week Ellen had given Mrs. Thomas so much time, polishing the small-paned windows, helping to make cushion-covers and cakes, and running errands with the old car, that Jane had felt neglected.

Mrs. Thomas had worked herself into a state of talkative excitement, in which she had given Ellen a description and history of nearly all the expected guests, which Ellen found interesting but a little confusing. It appeared that Mrs. Thomas had invited all her old friends of the Laboratory, whom she felt she had never been able to entertain properly at the old camp they had had up to this time; but that these were not so important for the occasion as the women she did not know so well. These last were rich summer people who were building the huge new houses down in this corner of the Cape, whom Mrs. Thomas had met casually here and there. One of

them, whom Ellen remembered easily because her name was Smith, Mrs. Thomas seemed particularly to wish to impress, because Mr. Smith had endowed a 'Foundation' that was showing an interest in biology and gave 'grants' to those biologists it might choose to favor.

Dr. Thomas had looked rather alarmed when Mrs. Thomas had reported at lunch meeting Mrs. Smith at the Harborside fish market.

'And she said, "Mrs. Thomas, I am coming to your tea!" She remembered my name!'

'I should feel a little more self-respecting not to cultivate the Smiths,' he said mildly. 'I have my application in with the Foundation, and I expect them to judge it on its merits.'

'It won't hurt for Mrs. Smith to know us,' Mrs. Thomas said, her cheeks still a pretty color from her elation. 'They say that both she and her husband are very much interested in biology.'

'He's a dumb old egg,' Walter said scornfully. 'Has a room at the Lab., as big as anybody, and orders supplies every day and thinks he does experiments. Last year once he ordered earthworms and Nereis the same day ____ '

'Walter!' warned his mother.

'Oh, I know that story,' Jane said. 'But I think it will be a good thing for Mrs. Smith to come to Mother's tea. She is so fat I am sure she will like our wild-strawberry jam and Mother's hot biscuits, and then she will tell Mr. Smith about Father and the Foundation will give him lots of money for his research!'

'Nobody will mention Father or his work to Mrs. Smith, unless she asks,' said Mrs. Thomas. 'You, or any one else, Jane!'

'Then why invite her to come?' said Jane.

Now, as Ellen came down the stairs, prepared to help Jane if she took stage-fright over this first arrival, she wondered if this might be Mrs. Smith in the long polished car that had stopped by their gate, but there came up the walk instead a uniformed black chauffeur, his arms full of flowers: pink tea roses, French blue delphiniums, and the white mist of baby's-breath.

'Mis' Berry say she sho' was sorry she indisposed today and could not come to the party; but she send this li'l' remembrance from her gyarden.'

‘I hope they’re not *all* going to back out,’ Jane remarked gloomily as the dignified chauffeur reached the gate again.

‘Jane!’ said her mother. ‘After Mrs. Berry sent these wonderful flowers! I must arrange them before any one comes.’

‘It might be easier for her to send them than to come,’ Jane persisted. ‘She’s got a gardener; she doesn’t have to weed and water her own flowers.’

Her gloomy prophecies of the failure of the tea fell on blank air. Her mother was busy for every minute of the first quarter of an hour after four, when nobody ever comes for fear she will be the first. She was giving this party without even a temporary maid. The little biscuits were to be taken from the refrigerator and slid into the hot oven at the last minute, and Ellen was made responsible for seeing that they were taken from the oven at the proper moment, browned, but not hard-baked, and for carrying in fresh supplies of tea and the sandwiches that so annoyed Jane: thin slices of bread cut in stars and crescents and oblongs, and decorated in patterns of cream cheese, currant jelly, crumbled egg yolk, sliced olives, and fish paste.

All of a sudden, as Jane was beginning to twirl on the toes of her slippers and chant, ‘They’re not goin’ to come! They’re not goin’ to come!’ the gate latch clicked and a party of six women appeared in fresh afternoon array. One of them, Miss Dubois, frankly paused to dust her shoes at the step.

‘Good afternoon, Jane!’ they said, with no offensive remarks as to how much she had grown. Miss Dubois said, ‘Hello, Jane! your road is dusty!’—but Jane did not trust herself to reply to even this innocent remark. She bobbed and said, according to instructions, ‘Would you like to go upstairs?’ and her tone was so formal that it was at once evident that this was no mere affair of pleasure.

‘Come in,’ Mrs. Thomas said cordially over Jane’s shoulder. They stood a little stiffly in the hallway and looked around at the shining order and perfection of detail.

‘I hadn’t seen your new house before, my dear,’ one of the older women said. ‘How lovely it is!’

‘Just finished, isn’t it?’ another asked. ‘I remember they were digging the basement last fall when we left.’

Mrs. Thomas was beaming, and in her pleasure she was very pretty.

‘I came down early this spring to see it finished,’ she said. ‘Don’t you want to see it before any one else comes? You can’t think how I love it! But

maybe you do, too, for most of you knew our old camp. After living in that shack in the summer and the old house at Jeffrey in the winter, with a bathroom that dates nearly back to colonial days and all the floors sloping in different directions, it seems heavenly to have this fresh new cottage, furnished just as I want it!'

'Tiled linoleum on the kitchen floor and an electric refrigerator,' one visitor observed as they took turns looking into the kitchen where Ellen was beginning to bake the biscuit. 'Well, my dear, I am glad you have it all, if you want it; but I could never live up to it. And I believe you actually wax your floors, in spite of all the sand we have to contend with!'

'Indeed I do,' said Mrs. Thomas stoutly. 'Don't they look well?'

'They look wonderful, but nothing looks as inviting to me in the summer as a plain board floor that I can sweep out and have done with. Um-m, I smell your biscuits, if it's manners to mention them! You could always cook the most wonderful things even on that funny half-sized range you had in the camp.'

Mrs. Thomas smiled at the compliment and went off to greet new callers. All the guests were coming now at once. Most of them walked up the hilly woods road, keeping near the side to avoid dust, but occasionally caught in a scurrying cloud from the wheels of a passing car. Most of them, even those who arrived in the chauffeur-driven cars, hesitated a moment at the gate as Ellen had done when she first came, contrasting the charming white cottage on its level lawn with the surrounding undisturbed wooded slope.

It seemed a good party, Ellen thought as she served. There were not the separate camps that might be expected when two crowds were invited to the same gathering. The women whom Jane had always lumped together scornfully as 'summer people,' meaning that they had no connection with the Laboratory, were pleasant and not overdressed, and they seemed to have a good supply of small topics of conversation to throw into the buzz of the tea-party voices. Most of them took their tea and sandwiches quickly and left very soon after these were disposed of, but a few were quite willing to stay on and be entertained.

One of these was Mrs. Smith, who seemed to be having a very satisfactory time. She sat in the easy-chair, quite filling it and hiding most of the slip-cover over which Mrs. Thomas had toiled in preparation for the party; and she allowed refreshments to be brought to her there, on the plea that the dining-room was crowded—as it was. By this time, since she came

late, some of the earlier visitors had left and she was not much in the way, and she sat comfortably in her corner and ate hot biscuits and jam and took three cups of tea.

When Ellen brought the plate of cakes, Mrs. Smith studied it earnestly, selecting a nut cooky, a slice of chocolate layer-cake, and an orange-iced cup-cake, so that Ellen would not have the trouble of bringing it in again, she said; but aside from the time necessary for eating all these, her flow of conversation was practically uninterrupted.

Miss Wareham on one side of her, wearing the smile of an amused Sphinx, and Miss Dubois on the other, sat and listened, to her perfect contentment. There seemed to be no further need for Jane's services by the door, and she drifted over to the corner and came to rest by Miss Dubois. Jane intended to get her doctor's degree in biology as young as Miss Dubois and to arrive at old age with as solid an accomplishment as Miss Wareham, who had retired from teaching that subject five years before, but was still called upon to lecture in it. Jane was prepared to be nice to Mrs. Smith for the sake of these friends of hers, as well as for her father's benefit.

'You can have a jar of that jam to take home with you,' she offered kindly, as Mrs. Smith took up her last biscuit. 'They have eaten a lot of it, but there is one little jar left, that Mother meant to take back to Jeffrey this year, but she won't care if you want it. The reason why it is so good,' Jane explained, eyeing the biscuit somewhat hungrily, 'is that the strawberries are wild. Ellen and I picked them over by the railway in a place that I don't think any one else knows.'

During this burst of information Mrs. Smith had paused with her mouth slightly ajar and her eyes fixed blankly on Jane's eager little face. When Jane came to a halt, she merely took the postponed bite and proceeded from the point where Jane had interrupted her, ignoring the child completely.

'Mr. Smith,' said she, 'is very much impressed with this new investigator, Dr. von Bergen. A very distinguished man, and of noble family, I am told, and struggling along under such odds! Nothing so much appeals to Mr. Smith as the opportunity to assist a brilliant man whom circumstances have hindered. He is coming to dinner with us tonight to tell Mr. Smith more about his research work.'

Miss Dubois, one arm around Jane, felt the child stiffen and draw a quick breath, and she felt it wise to steer the conversation at this point, taking advantage of Mrs. Smith's slight pause to finish her biscuit.

‘Dr. von Bergen’s work is on the same subject as Dr. Thomas’s,’ she said. ‘Though I understand that they do not come to the same conclusions. You should talk to them both and get their different opinions. It would be interesting.’

‘Mr. Smith will know about that,’ said his wife complacently. ‘I say to my husband, “Tell me the straight of this subject, because I know I can rely on your information and judgment.” And he tells me. It is really remarkable what a grasp he has of biology. Don’t you think so?’

She paused to receive compliments.

Miss Wareham said with a little smile: ‘I understand he has carried on experiments at the Laboratory very industriously for two seasons now. I dare say he has learned a great deal, considering he took up the subject so late in life.’

Jane’s hand in Miss Dubois’s was cold, and that young lady welcomed the arrival of Ellen with a plate of candy as a distraction, but it was too late to stop Jane.

‘Is—is Mr. Smith really going to help Dr. von Bergen?’ she demanded indignantly.

Mrs. Smith regarded her with disapproval over her pink mint wafer. ‘I hope he is,’ she said loftily, ‘but that is a matter for the officers of the Foundation to settle, and not to be discussed with little girls. Of course Mr. Smith’s judgment will be taken into account,’ and she looked to Miss Wareham for agreement.

‘But Mr. Smith doesn’t know anything about biology,’ Jane swept on in mounting distress. ‘Do you know what he did last summer? I don’t suppose he ever told you. One time he ordered earthworms and Nereis at the same time—— ’

‘Nereis?’ Mrs. Smith repeated, quite hypnotized by the spectacle of this rude child.

‘*Nereis!*’ said Jane emphatically. ‘It’s a nice fringy sea-worm.’ Jane held her elbows against her sides and waved her hands to indicate the fringes. ‘Everybody knows Nereis! And my brother Walter brought the two lots to him the same day, just as he had ordered, nice and fresh. But two days later, Mr. Smith complained to him that the worms he had brought were no good. They died.

‘So Walter asked him how he had treated them and Mr. Smith showed him. And what do you think?’ Jane demanded accusingly of Mrs. Smith. ‘What do you think? He had put those earthworms in jars of sea-water, and the Nereis he had covered up in pots of dirt! Of course they died.

‘So Walter told him. He said, “You must put earthworms in earth and Nereis in sea-water.” And Mr. Smith said, “How was I to know?” ’

She paused for breath, still holding the red-faced Mrs. Smith with flashing brown eyes. Ellen could see that Miss Wareham was hunting for something to say; as for Miss Dubois, she was trying not very successfully to keep her mouth straight.

Jane went on with a hint of tears in her voice: ‘So you can see that Mr. Smith wouldn’t know whether Dr. von Bergen should have money from the Foundation or not. My father—— ’

‘Jane!’ said her mother, laying a gentle hand on her shoulder. Jane turned, took one look at her mother’s sober face, and slid out of the room. It was plain that she would do well if she kept from weeping before she had reached a hiding-place.

‘I’m sorry if Jane has been rude,’ Mrs. Thomas said to her flushed guest.

Mrs. Smith set her tea-cup clattering on the floor, laid hold of the arms of her chair and pulled herself to her feet, shedding a little shower of crumbs.

‘I do not mind having Mr. Smith made fun of,’ she said. ‘His position is too secure to suffer. But this attitude toward our distinguished visiting scientist I cannot let pass without notice. Children do not make these comments unless they hear them first from their elders. I would advise you to tell Dr. Thomas to be more careful of his conversation before this little girl.’

At this the apologetic smile left Mrs. Thomas’s face. ‘I am sorry, Mrs. Smith,’ she repeated with dignity, ‘if Jane has been rude; but I can assure you that her father has spoken only with the greatest kindness of his old friend, Dr. von Bergen, to Jane or to any one else.

‘And as for Mr. Smith, my husband has very little occasion to speak of him at all. He is a busy man and he has little time for amateurs in science. Whatever the children may say comes from their own experience, and while they are not always tactful, I generally find that they are fairly accurate.’

She spoke in a controlled, pleasant voice, which Ellen admired greatly. When Mrs. Smith, speechless, turned out into the hall, Mrs. Thomas opened the door for her, said Good-bye and stood for a moment watching her as she barged down the walk to her waiting car.

'Oh, Janey, Janey!' she said to Miss Wareham, who sat smiling up at her with understanding old eyes.

'You were a brick, Mrs. Thomas,' said Miss Dubois. 'I glory in your independence.'

'I don't,' said Mrs. Thomas plaintively. 'I had hoped she would like us and we would like her. Just what was Jane telling her? Some story about Mr. Smith? There are so many stories about Mr. Smith, and Walter has had so much first-hand experience with him.'

'It was the story of the Nereis and the earthworms,' said Miss Dubois, chuckling. 'A very good story; quite what you would expect from a retired wholesale grocer, who had taken up biology in his later years. I am glad to have heard it. And it really was an awfully nice party. I must go now.'

'And so must I,' said Miss Wareham. 'Tell Jane she must come down to see me tomorrow and I'll show her the new little wild-cranberry bog I've discovered.'

The last guests were departing from the front door as Walter and his father came over the back fence to the kitchen door, peering through the screen door to see if they were interrupting. There was no one in the kitchen but Ellen, washing plates and cups. Walter was collecting an assortment of little cakes when his mother came back, looking tired, but curiously relieved from strain.

'Guests out of the way? Ready for us to dress?' asked Dr. Thomas.

'Dress? Let's take the remains of the tea out into the back yard and have a picnic. I'll bring out some milk and fruit.'

'Whee!' said Walter. He began deftly to slide all the remaining sandwiches onto one big plate; while his father, after one questioning look, took the largest tray and gathered up tumblers, milk, and paper napkins.

Mrs. Thomas's next directions were quite as astonishing. 'Don't bother to finish those dishes now, Ellen. We can wash them after supper when we are more rested. Go find Jane, if you can. I dare say she is in the garage. The party was too much for her.'

Jane was curled up on the back seat of the old car, a bundle of misery. Her curls were tousled, her party dress mussed, and her eyes were swollen, but no one commented on her appearance, and presently she was eating as heartily as Walter. Before long mosquitoes began to come out and settle on unprotected necks and ankles, but in spite of the slapping and brushing, it was a good restful picnic. The setting sun directed level rays across the clearing, changing the new grass to a strange unearthly green; the air was very still, and no one seemed to wish to talk, but from the neighboring woods there was the sunset song of a robin.

'We can all wash the dishes and put them away,' said Dr. Thomas. 'That will leave you free to straighten the house, my dear.'

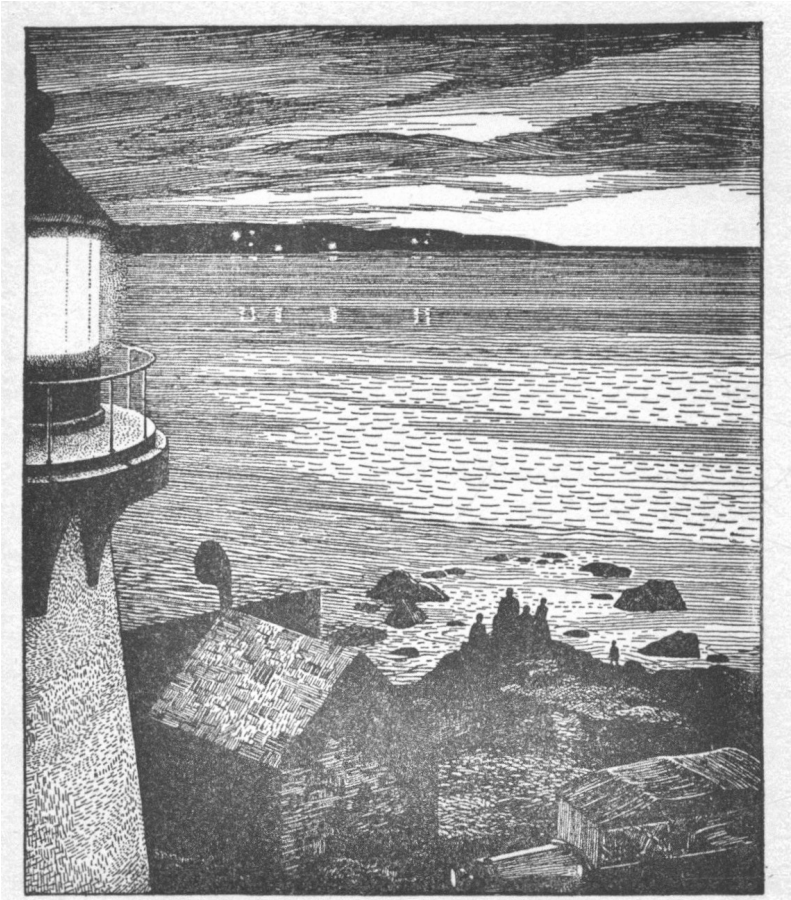
'I'm not going to straighten it tonight,' answered his wife. 'I'll do that in the morning. Let's wash the dishes and take a little drive and go to bed early. I know Jane and Ellen are tired.'

'You look tired yourself,' said Ellen.

'Well—I am,' admitted Mrs. Thomas cheerfully. 'That's why I wanted the ride.'

Nobska Light, with its one red sector, was burning clearly when the Thomas car climbed to the point in front of it. The five of them sat on the edge of the little cliff to watch the lights of the Sound grow brighter as the last sunset colors faded. The single lights of channel spars and buoys, the chains of lights along the waterfront of Falmouth on the mainland and Oak Bluffs across the Sound on Martha's Vineyard, the winking beams that gradually became plain over the dark waters from the lighthouses at Gay Head and Tarpaulin Cove, were all so fascinating to Ellen, as Dr. Thomas pointed them out, that she did not notice Jane had slipped away; and when it was time to leave the sight of these traffic lights of the sea, it was with difficulty that Jane was located.

'There she is, down by that big rock. What's the matter, kid? She's crying,' Walter reported in disgust.



TO WATCH THE LIGHTS OF THE SOUND GROW BRIGHTER
AS THE LAST SUNSET COLORS FADED

‘Come on, Janey,’ said her father gently, lifting her to her feet. ‘You’re tired, aren’t you?’

Jane buried her face against him. ‘I have been a bad girl to you, Father,’ she sobbed.

‘Forget it,’ her father advised. ‘Come along home and sleep it off.’

‘I wish Mother had told you,’ Jane said passionately. ‘Now I shall have to tell you myself.’

‘What is it all about?’

‘I *wanted* to be a help,’ Jane defended herself, ‘but I wasn’t. Mrs. Smith was talking about how wonderful Dr. von Bergen was. She talked and she

talked, till I knew the Smiths meant to see he had money from the Foundation. I told her that Mr. Smith didn't know anything about biology. And it was true. I told her about the Nereis and the earthworms to prove it, and that made her mad, and I didn't have any chance to tell her how good your work was, Father! And now Mr. Smith will be mad, too, and the Foundation won't give you any money to buy a new constant temperature box!'

Dr. Thomas stood quite still while Jane cried into his coat.

'Well, Janey, it's done,' he said finally, 'and I rather think I feel a little more self-respecting. I don't want a scientific grant as a personal favor from the Smiths. But don't you go around admonishing older people; it isn't polite. Did you spoil your mother's tea?'

'No,' her mother spoke up quickly. 'Only two or three people heard her and they are good friends of Jane's. And, John, I think I see your point of view about the Smiths.

'But Jane was rude to Mrs. Smith. She must understand that. Jane, you wouldn't think it was kind if people were to repeat to you ridiculous stories of what your father had done.'

'Father doesn't do ridiculous things. Mr. Smith does. That is what I was trying to tell her.'

'Don't be dumb, Jane,' Walter advised. In a lower tone he said to his father, 'You know, Mr. Smith isn't very touchy. Sometimes he laughs at himself, when he can see the point. He might not take this seriously.'

'I hope not,' said Dr. Thomas lightly. 'Don't worry, Walter. I've always got along so far without any outside assistance and the old constant temperature chamber is working better than usual this summer. I shouldn't be surprised if it held out for another year.'

'I would,' Walter growled. 'Some day it'll just lie down and die, same as this car will.'

He jerked the car around and sent it pounding off along a rough and hilly road. The jouncing, far from disturbing Jane, set her to sleep against Ellen's shoulder. When they reached home, Dr. Thomas carried her up and they put her to bed without fully waking her.

Ellen herself dropped into bed with a sleepy sense that a story had finished too soon and the ending was the wrong ending. The summer would go on, but Dr. Thomas's chance was already gone. The disagreeable Dr. von

Bergen and the stupid Smiths would unite on their common dislike of Dr. Thomas, and he would be left to struggle on alone. And, what was worse, she could not see that there was anything that she could do about it. Jane had made that very clear.

CHAPTER VI

Swimming in the Gutter

After all, Ellen found, there were advantages in having come early to the apparent climax of the summer, even if it was a disappointing climax. With the affairs of their elders no longer taking up their time, Ellen and Jane spent most of their days in their own way, swimming a great deal, searching for the ever-scarcer planaria, hunting for early blueberries in the more open spaces of the woods, fishing, and poking around with the boat inside certain recognized boundaries. The outboard motor was a temperamental new one, which Walter said would run more reliably when it was well broken in, a year from now; Ellen could not manage it even as well as the old car, and she was careful not to let it carry them outside rowing distance, even when it was running at its best. It behaved better for Walter than for any other member of the family; Ellen might imitate his frowning inspection of it, but the results never seemed to be the same, and Jane so invariably had difficulty with it that she was not supposed to leave the wharf with it.

Jane did not play much with children of her own age; she prized the greater range of activities she had with older people. Ellen was not surprised when she came home one noon after a morning supposed to have been spent with some children living in the Laboratory apartment house, to report only a long conversation with Jim Harrison who had been working in the Supply House.

'And he says,' she finished, 'that there is going to be a Gutter party tomorrow afternoon, and Ellen and I may go!'

'A Gutter party?' Ellen inquired, astonished.

Jane paid no attention. Her eyes were fixed beseechingly on her mother, who repeated absent-mindedly, '—A Gutter party. Jane, that is too big a bite.'

'A Gutter party,' Jane repeated, sizing her next bite carefully so that it should not again distract her mother's attention. 'May Ellen and I go?'

Her mother looked doubtfully at Walter. 'Do you know about this party? Would it be safe for the girls? What older people are going? I hadn't thought Jane was old enough to swim in the Gutter.'

‘Jane can swim like a fish,’ said her brother. ‘It’s mostly the usual crowd. Miss Dubois is going. I’m going.’

‘Well—— ’ Mrs. Thomas agreed, still a little uncertain. ‘If you’ll keep an eye on Jane. And Ellen will need it just as much, for she isn’t used to swimming in a strong current.’

‘*Why*,’ Ellen asked, ‘does any one want to swim in a gutter? I never heard of such a thing!’

Mrs. Thomas laughed. ‘It doesn’t sound very attractive, does it? Over between some of the nearer islands there are narrow channels, about as wide as creeks, and the tide runs through them strongly, first in one direction and then in the other, just as it does through the Hole. Around here these salt water creeks are called gutters, and the young people think it is great fun to swim in them. The channels are shallow and I suppose there isn’t much danger, except to people who don’t understand them. If you go, I think you had better watch the others for a while before you attempt swimming.’

There was no question in Jane’s mind about the desirability of going. She hustled Ellen down with their lunch to the wharf fully a half-hour before the party was supposed to assemble, and this was unfortunate for Jane, for she had to spend part of that time watching Dr. von Bergen paddling around the Eel Pond in a dingy red canoe. It was quite possible to criticize the canoe severely and Jane did. She knew just how old it was, and where it was patched, and how little it rented for, and all this she told to Ellen, who knew very well how badly Jane wanted a canoe for herself, even a dingy, patched canoe.

To Ellen it was surprising how well the man handled his canoe. When his first caution wore off, he showed the deftness of a person not only accustomed to the water, but naturally clever with boats.

Jane remarked at last, ‘He doesn’t look as if he were having a good time.’

‘No,’ Ellen agreed. ‘I wonder why he does it. He looks just as stern and unhappy as he does any other time.’

‘I’ll bet,’ Jane guessed hopefully, ‘that he has run out of planaria and doesn’t have anything else to do. Wouldn’t that be nice? Father hasn’t very many left from that last lot we got for him,’ she added, not so happily. ‘And they certainly are getting hard to find. I wish I knew where to look for some more.’

‘Going out to look for his own bugs,’ Jim Harrison told them, when he appeared at last, helping Walter to carry the motor. ‘He complained to me yesterday that he wasn’t getting enough. I said I’d speak to you about it, Walter, but that didn’t seem to be sufficient for him. He asked where they were to be found, and when I told him he said he would get a boat and go there himself. He manages a boat pretty well, doesn’t he? That game leg of his doesn’t seem to bother; I suppose it is easier for him than walking.’

They were out in the harbor, the motor running beautifully, before Jim made a confession. ‘I don’t know why I did it,’ he said, ‘but I asked the old duck if he would like to go on this trip with us to the Gutter.’

‘He isn’t coming, is he?’ Jane asked anxiously.

‘He was very upstage and hardly thanked me for the invitation, but I took it he didn’t care to come.’

‘Goody! he would have spoiled the whole party.’

‘I suppose so. Still, you can’t see a fellow so thoroughly miserable as he is without wanting to reform him. *I* can’t. It gives me a headache to look at him now.’

The canoe was following them out of the Eel Pond channel, but striking off in a different line.

‘I don’t believe he’ll find anything for himself,’ Walter said, with professional interest. ‘I wish he would, and save me the trouble; but he won’t. Some folks are good collectors and other folks aren’t. Jane’s as good as I know, and can you tell me why? I will say this for him: he’s clever at apparatus. Dad says he has had to make his own or he wouldn’t have got it. He goes down and blows glass for himself when he wants something special, and he can do fine work with carpenter’s tools.’

‘Walter,’ Jane interrupted, ‘take Ellen and me across to Sheep Pen Cove and let us walk across the island to the Gutter. You and Jim can go on around and meet us there.’

‘Sure you won’t get lost? You haven’t been on the island this summer.’

‘Lost!’ Jane said scornfully. ‘No, I won’t get lost on the island!’

‘All right,’ Walter said obligingly. ‘I don’t much care if you do get lost, anyway. You could just walk on around the edge and find us by the racket. Pretty nearly slack tide. We can make it easy.’

Ellen saw that the waves of the current coming across their path from the Hole were almost completely ironed out, and the boat cut across with full speed to a tiny cove in the island opposite them. Landed there, Jane wasted no time watching the boat swing around and leave them. Neither did she, as Ellen rather expected, turn over the stones along the beach to look for planaria; there was too much sand and seaweed here, packed around the rocks, to make it a suitable place for those tiny rock-dwellers.

Jane edged through an almost invisible path between the thick bushes up the slope before them, pausing only to disentangle some branch from her curls or her scanty clothing. An occasional tuft of gray wool on the lower bushes showed that sheep penetrated these paths; and as they went farther on, the paths became wider and beaten down by hard little hooves. Still farther the bushes gave way and grass covered the rolling moor; and sometimes in the long grass at one side of the sandy path there were hollowed-down places where sheep had lain; but they caught no sight of the flocks.

Ellen began to feel overwarm in the July sun, not to say a little lonesome. They were only slightly above the surface of the sea, and yet this wild meadow seemed to be on top of the world, where they might wander as long as they would and never meet a friend or find shelter.

‘Why did you want to come this way?’ she asked Jane, and the girl looked up in dismay.

‘Don’t you like it? I just came to be here.’

‘I suspect I don’t know enough about it,’ Ellen answered bravely. ‘What is the name of this island? Does it have a name?’

‘I’ve told you,’ Jane answered, horrified. ‘All of them have names, even the very little ones like the Weepeckets.’

‘Is this Naushon?’ Ellen asked, searching her memory.

‘This is Nonamesset; from our side it looks like part of Naushon, but it isn’t. Nonamesset is little and Naushon is big. You could learn this to remember them by:

‘ “Nonamesset, Uncatena,
Great Naushon and Nashawena,
Cutty Hunk and Penikese,
Little Weepeckets and Pasquinese.”

‘Only Pasquinese is really Pasque. They just changed it to rhyme. Those are the Elizabeth Islands. Say them after me:

‘ “Nonamesset, Uncatena——“ ’

Ellen repeated her lesson like a good child, rewarded occasionally by bits of information. The gutter toward which their path was leading them ran between Nonamesset island and the next island, and there were other gutters, but none so good for swimming. There were three islands, chiefly bare, called Weepecket, Weeweepecket, and Weeweeweepecket, according to their different sizes. Captain Bartholomew Gosnold was supposed to have landed on the island of Cutty Hunk in 1602; Penikese had been first the site of the summer school where Miss Wareham had studied under Agassiz, and after that the asylum of a pathetic little colony of lepers, but no one at all lived there now.

‘And there,’ Jane finished, losing interest in her lecture, ‘is the Enchanted Forest, and I love it!’

She began to run ahead so that Ellen was hard put to it to follow her along the deep sand of the wagon road into which their path had gradually developed; but when she came to the gateway in the low stone wall that enclosed this stretch of thick-trunked, low-topped trees, she paused, and when Ellen caught up she was looking ahead down the shady road with shining eyes.

‘Let’s go quietly,’ she said to Ellen, ‘so as not to scare the deer.’

It was easy for Ellen to see why this was Jane’s Enchanted Forest. Many years of driving sea-winds had bowed the trees and twisted their heavy gnarled trunks and limbs. There might have been a gnome from a child’s fairy-book peering out of each knot-hole or holding up tough little arms along the limbs. The sun-flecked ground beneath their low branches was fairly clear of undergrowth; it showed alternately great drifts of old brown leaves and lichen-covered boulders; and sometimes, close to a tree by the road, or even in the road itself, grew fragile, vividly red toadstools, like a warning message to humans from something which could not use their language.

In hollows here it was very still; even in storms the winds must rush by overhead, Ellen thought, without disturbing the little world beneath the branches. It was a world which seemed chiefly inhabited by little brown toads that sometimes hopped up the road banks on their surprisingly long legs, but quite as often kept their places, observing the visitors.

Jane saw something else. She stopped short and whispered to Ellen, ‘There they are!’

At first Ellen could see nothing on the slope ahead of them but shadows and sun across a well-cropped thicket. Then one of the shadows moved noiselessly, and with that movement Ellen made out a feeding deer, and then another deer beside it; and last, a lovely mottled faun.

The deer continued to feed on the thicket leaves as the girls stole closer in full sight. It was odd how difficult it was to hold them in view, even though they hardly moved. The little faun, especially, was like the play of light and shadow on the dead leaves; sometimes Ellen saw him, and sometimes he was mysteriously invisible in exactly the same spot. It was impossible to resist the temptation of attempting to come still closer, the better to admire them; and at last, as they had known must happen, the deer galloped gracefully away, without any effect of being frightened; and with the white linings of their short tails flaunted so that it was easier to follow them with the eye than to keep them in sight standing still.

‘I would have deer on *my* island,’ confided Jane, reluctantly following Ellen back to the road, ‘but mine would be just a little tamer.’

Ahead of them the sunshine showed bright again, and as they came out of the edge of the woods, Ellen saw that the road was becoming a causeway with a stout plank bridge leading across a narrow stretch of water. Half a dozen people in bright bathing-suits leaned on the high bridge railing, watching swimmers in the water below. Walter and Jim Harrison were already there; Miss Dubois lifted a hand in greeting, and Ellen recognized the two girls who lived with Miss Wareham, as well as one or two men from the beach party.

‘You missed slack tide,’ Jim Harrison said from his sunny seat on the stone wall by the bridge. ‘Want me to take you through, Jane? The current’s strong.’

Jane climbed up on the railing and bent over to see the performance in the Gutter. Walter had waded out knee-deep where the water widened above the bridge; another step and he threw himself forward into the current in an attempt to fight his way across it to the opposite bank. The distance was so short that at first it seemed impossible that he should not easily make it; but by the time he had reached mid-current, he was hardly making progress at all. For a few seconds he seemed about to be swept down under the bridge; then, with tremendous effort, he won through to the slacker current at the edge and pulled himself up on the bank, grinning a wide, triumphant grin.

There was great applause for his feat, but no one cared to imitate it. Three or four who had been watching him fight the current now dropped off the bridge railing and let the water carry them through to the other side. Below, the stream widened greatly and the current became slacker, and there they struck over to one side, swam to the bank and ran back to the bridge to repeat the performance. It looked to be fun.

Jane could wait no longer. ‘I don’t need help,’ she was careful to tell Jim Harrison, ‘but you can swim through with me if you want to.’

‘Thanks for the privilege,’ the young man said politely. ‘Would you like to come, too?’ he asked Ellen.

‘I’ll watch you do it first,’ Ellen decided, feeling a little shy of that quiet rush of water.

In no time at all the two had dropped off the upper side of the bridge, shot down as through a wavy chute and reached the bank.

‘YOU DIDN’T THINK I COULD DO IT!’

‘You didn’t think I could do it!’ Jane taunted Jim Harrison as she ranged herself by Ellen again, dripping wet and very happy.

‘I’ll have to worry about some one else,’ Jim grinned. ‘What about you, Miss McNeill? Are you too independent to go through under escort?’

‘I don’t feel independent at all,’ Ellen confessed. ‘This water scares me a little, I’m ashamed to say.’

‘Swim pretty well?’ he asked.

‘Ellen swims as well as I do,’ Jane put in. She scrambled up on the top rail. ‘Go ahead, Ellen! I’ll watch you.’

‘Don’t let yourself be hurried,’ the young man admonished. ‘Wait till you get your own mind made up to go and then you aren’t so likely to get into difficulty. A current as swift as this is never too safe.

‘If you had come in with us,’ he went on, ‘you would have been here just at slack. The tides are at balance then and the water is still; that would have been a good time for you to go in first. It’s fun to watch the change of tide here. First the water is flowing under the bridge fast from the direction of Hadley Harbor, up there where we came in; then there are these few minutes of still water; then you see it begin to flow in the opposite direction, very gently at first, but soon as rapidly as before.’

Ellen drew a deep breath. ‘I think I’m ready to go,’ she announced, ‘but I *should* like company.’

‘All right,’ said Jim. ‘How do you want to push off? You can dive off the bridge or this stone wall; or you can drop off the bridge; or you can wade out from the side!’

‘Wade out,’ Ellen decided promptly. ‘Nothing so reckless as diving for me.’

‘All right,’ said her escort. ‘Watch for the shells underfoot. You might get cut.’

They waded slowly out over rocks that were alternately slippery and covered by rough barnacles and sharp-edged mussels. Ellen paused as the current began to push down on her.

‘A little farther,’ Jim said. ‘Two or three steps. Now!’

He let himself go and Ellen blindly followed. The shadow of the bridge was past in an instant, and still she shot ahead, swimming instinctively.

‘Time to turn!’ sputtered a voice beside her, and the girl turned slowly, and struck across the outer edge of the current to come to her feet near the farther bank.

‘Good girl!’ said Jim. ‘You kept your head. Now do you want to swim up this back water nearer the bridge? It’s easier on the feet than walking, and it will give you confidence.’

‘All right,’ Ellen agreed obediently. She came back to the bridge quite pleased with herself; and presently she waded out again and went through alone; and after the first panicky half-second when the current seized her, she found it as much fun as it had looked.

The shadows lengthened and the air began to grow less warm, but she did not think of time until some one said, ‘When do we eat? Has anybody got the Mytilus yet?’ And then she realized that she was both hungry and tired, and that probably the others were, too.

There was a general scattering of the group; some to the rocks of the Gutter where the clusters of blue-black mussel shells grew thickest, others to the edge of the forest for dead limbs for a fire, and some to the canoes for provisions.

‘Don’t get your sandwiches out yet,’ Miss Dubois said to Ellen. ‘They won’t be needed for at least half an hour. Be lazy for a while.’

Ellen gave her a grateful smile, but Miss Dubois did not see. She shaded her eyes with her hand and looked up the channel.

‘Somebody comin’ in from Lackey’s Bay,’ she reported. ‘Does it look to you like the same person that it looks to me?’

‘It looks like Dr. von Bergen,’ Ellen faltered.

Miss Dubois brought down her pretty fist energetically on the railing. ‘It certainly is. Now why is that amiable gentleman coming here? I’m sure he wasn’t invited to this party.’

‘Yes, he was,’ Ellen said unhappily. ‘But I thought he had declined.’

‘Who was rash enough to ask him?’

‘Jim Harrison.’

‘Very well. On his head be it! Jim! Jim Harrison! Here comes your guest. Come take care of him and let some one else see to the Mytilus!’

By the time that Jim had climbed reluctantly up beside them, the canoe was so close that there was no doubt at all as to the man paddling it. He came down the salt water stream skillfully, and when Jim shouted to him as he neared the bridge, 'Pull over to the side. I'll help you,' he slid through under the bridge and made the turn cleverly.

Getting out of the canoe was a more difficult matter for the lame man, but he insisted on doing this by himself, only accepting Jim's help to pull the canoe up the bank.

'The swimming is over,' Jim was saying as they came back to the bridge. 'I wish you had come early enough to watch it. We enter the water up there and float down with the tide. It's great fun!'

'I should have thought so once,' said the other. His gaunt cheeks were flushed and his eyes alert. He did not look younger, Ellen thought, so much as more alive and somewhat excited.

Apparently he did not see Ellen at all. He braced himself with his cane against the railing and let his glance travel down the current, and Ellen felt free to slip away.

'Let's explore the forest on the other side,' Jane begged.

'Run along,' said Miss Dubois. 'I'll whistle you up when it is time.'

Once out of sight of the bridge and the crowd, Jane was content to rest on a sloping bank, looking up at the roof of branches. Ellen lay beside her, trying to twist into shape certain vague impressions that appeared to wish to be made into verse. These ideas were badly mixed with the rhyme of the names of the Elizabeth Islands that Jane had taught her, so that Ellen doubted if she would ever be able to reduce them to sense; but they would not let her alone. She was familiar with these seizures, which she never took very seriously, and she knew that they generally held on until she had worked out something resembling a poem. This was the first she had had since coming down to the Cape, and it was more absorbing than usual. She was deeply involved with its difficulties when Jane sat up.

'There are the deer,' she whispered. 'They must have swum across.'

On the crest of a slope before them, between them and the water, the two deer and the faun were silhouetted as they browsed.

Very carefully the two girls drew closer to the lovely things, until, just as before, the deer took mild alarm, skirted round them and made off for the deeper woods.

‘Let’s go back,’ Jane proposed, sniffing wood smoke from the picnic fire. ‘Surely they have supper ready by this time.’

She edged out toward the water to get a clearer view of the supper-getting.

‘*What* is he doing now?’ she asked curiously.

‘What is who doing?’ Ellen replied lazily.

‘The von Bergen man. Look at him!’

To her amazement, Ellen saw a figure in a bathing-suit limp out along the nearer side of the bridge, hook a cane over the lower panel of the railing, hesitate, and then dive: the dive of a handicapped person who has once known how to swim correctly.

‘He oughtn’t to dive from that side,’ Jane said fiercely. ‘He’ll get his face scraped on the rocks.’

As they watched they saw him come to the surface, borne along by the water, swimming queerly and ineffectively.

‘He’s coming too far down,’ said Jane, her voice growing shrill. ‘See, he’s trying to turn, and he can’t get across the current. Of course he can’t! He’s just swimming with his arms, and you have to kick hard to come across there! I don’t believe he can kick at all.’

Before Ellen understood what she had in mind, the child was running for the near-by bank, and with one compelling shriek she took to the water and splashed frantically out in the direction of the swimmer.

Ellen had time to see Miss Dubois’s head appear over the bridge railing before she followed her charge, horrified at the thought of what might happen before she reached her. After that she had no more time for what might be going on along the banks of the Gutter. Once away from the bushes of the bank and the rocks at the edge of the water, it was only a matter of seconds going with the tide to reach the two drifting down on the widening stream.

Von Bergen was still persisting in a feeble breast stroke; Jane was working warily around behind him.

‘Stay *away*, Jane!’ Ellen beseeched her.

‘Going to duck him,’ Jane answered with gusto.

‘Stay *away*!’ Ellen repeated.

She ranged closer to von Bergen. ‘Put your *hand* on my *shoulder*,’ she said to him as clearly as she could. ‘I’ll take you in!’

Without giving any sign of having heard her, he continued his almost useless motions. Ellen was afraid to delay longer. The distance from shore was widening every moment and he was a heavy body to tow in. She came in beside him, took him under the arm, and set out swimming as strongly as she could.

The results were disastrous. The man quite automatically thrashed around with the arm she grasped, with no apparent intelligence of what was happening to him. He managed to grip Ellen’s shoulder with a grasp she could not elude, and with the weight she felt her head going under water. There was only one thing to do, but when she felt desperately to draw von Bergen’s head under water until he should relax and loosen his hold, some strange activity seemed to have seized him. There was a turmoil of movement about her, and arms and legs seemed to be everywhere. Ellen held her breath until it seemed certain her lungs would burst, but quiet came only with unconsciousness.

When she woke, she lay flat on her back on good dry land with a bumpy tree root under her head; and astride of her knelt Jane alternately pushing down on Ellen’s diaphragm with her palms and poking sharp finger-tips into the small of her back, while she repeated enthusiastically, ‘*Out* goes the bad air! *In* comes the good!’

‘Never—mind, Jane!’ Ellen gasped, not feeling at all drowned; and Jane, who had been enjoying this life-saving, ceased somewhat reluctantly.

‘Are you sure you can breathe?’ she asked.

‘Let her alone, Jane. She’s all right!’ commanded Jim Harrison’s voice. ‘Didn’t I tell you she only needed rest? She was breathing all right when I got her in.’

Jane took herself off of Ellen, who was glad to lie undisturbed and rest. She did not even feel the need of the sweaters that Miss Dubois brought up.

‘Let’s have them over here,’ said Jim; and at that Ellen sat up, steadying her wet, dizzy head with one hand and looked across. Not far from her on a bed of dead leaves Dr. von Bergen lay face down, his eyes closed, and his head on one side. Walter knelt astride of him, going through the resuscitation movements, while Jim rubbed his feet.

‘How is he?’ she asked.

‘Not so good,’ Walter answered briefly.

‘Let me do it,’ Jane offered eagerly.

‘You stay out,’ her brother growled. ‘Whatever made you mix up in this? It’s a wonder you weren’t drowned.’

‘I ducked him so he was all limp when you got there,’ Jane retorted cockily.

Ellen took the sweater that Miss Dubois had insisted on putting around her shoulders. ‘Put this over him,’ she said. ‘I can go over by the fire.’

Jim Harrison hesitated, looked at his patient, and took it. ‘He ought to be there, too,’ he said, ‘but of course we don’t dare stop. See if there is any warm water yet, somebody.’

As Ellen struggled to her feet, she saw von Bergen draw a faint shivering breath and move his head. She stood where she was, clutching Miss Dubois, while Walter continued his regular monotonous motions, but it was not long before the boy stood up and stepped aside, and it was plain that breathing had been established again.

‘Some of you help carry him over by the fire,’ Jim Harrison directed. ‘Gently!’

They went ahead through the woods and over the bridge carrying their awkward burden, and Ellen followed. She was very tired and one shin hurt; it turned out, on inspection, to have been badly skinned, though she could not remember when it had happened. She found it very good to sit by the fire and drink hot coffee.

Dr. von Bergen lay on the other side of the fire, covered with all the garments the party had been able to spare—a miscellaneous, ridiculous collection of coats, sweaters, and skirts. Miss Dubois fed him hot coffee, a spoonful at a time, carefully and patiently, until he refused to take more.

‘We’ll have to get him home,’ said Jim Harrison. ‘Johnson and I could manage him, Walter, if you would let us take your boat. The canoes aren’t steady enough.’

‘We’ll all come,’ Miss Dubois said quickly. ‘The tide is with us through the Hole and it ought to be an easy trip, but if anything should happen to you, we’d be there to help. Ellen needs to get home, too.’

It was agreed, and in a little while von Bergen was arranged as comfortably as possible in the Thomas dory, and the boat set off down the

Gutter for Hadley Harbor and the Hole, its motor chugging industriously. The canoe in which Ellen rode as passenger followed at a more leisurely rate.

‘How does it feel to be a heroine?’ Miss Dubois asked, smiling.

‘I don’t know,’ said Ellen. ‘I’m not.’

‘Well, I wouldn’t like to be praised up either,’ the other said thoughtfully.

‘What happened?’ Ellen asked. ‘I didn’t last very long, I’m afraid.’

‘I heard Jane yell that one fearful war-whoop; but by the time I really made out what was happening, you were having trouble with your man; and that minute Jane landed right on his back and you were all mixed up for a while. I just stood there pa’alyzed, and then I saw Walter and Jim coming up the other bank with firewood, and I got breath enough to yell to them. It seemed a million ages before they got to the place where you were all thrashing around. Jane always managed to stay on top, but I hadn’t seen your head for a long time. By the time they arrived, our guest was fairly well lost to the world, and they really had more trouble getting Jane out of the way than they had with him. They brought you both in very nicely and there wasn’t much worry over you; but when the rest of us first got there, Dr. von Bergen didn’t look very hopeful.

‘I wonder why on earth he tried it. In the first place, why did he come to visit our party when he thinks parties are so frivolous? And he should have known that swimming was pure madness for a man with a bad leg, and tired from that long canoe trip.’

CHAPTER VII

Mopping for Starfish

It is not so hard to recover from the effects of a little too long a time spent under the water, Ellen learned, but an infected cut may be more serious. Ellen had tried to be very quiet about her experience in the Gutter; far from feeling heroic, she was relieved that the Thomas family had not been inclined to scold her for her failure to keep Jane out of danger; and she did not mention her own scraped shin or give it any care.

On the second night after the Gutter party, therefore, she woke to find it painfully throbbing, and Mrs. Thomas exclaimed at the sight of the red and swollen area around the long scar when Ellen limped down in the morning. Walter was sent straightway to find a real medical doctor, who consigned Ellen to a steamer chair and ordered hot applications kept on her poor shin, that day and thereafter, until the infection was conquered.

'You must have been dragged in over the barnacles,' he said. 'Your fellow sufferer is sitting up today. I thought yesterday he might be intending to sneak in a case of pneumonia on me, but he seems past that danger. I'll report on your injuries to him.'

'To Dr. von Bergen? Oh, no!' Ellen protested.

'Do him good. Give him something to think about,' the doctor maintained. 'He's worried to death for fear all his bugs will die while he's away from the Laboratory recovering.'

Jane, who had been looking very forlorn at Ellen's sentence to quiet, cheered up at this information, but a glance at her father kept back an exclamation on the tip of her tongue.

'That's too bad,' said Dr. Thomas. 'I'll see what I can do to help him until he can get back to work.'

Before he and Walter left, they moved Ellen's chair into the sunshine of the back yard, where she could look across the border of nasturtiums up into the woods beyond, and there she spent a pleasant morning in spite of pain and the necessity of continually wringing fresh packs out of hot water. Mrs. Thomas was as conscientious a nurse as she was a careful housekeeper, and she did not once forget Ellen or slacken her sympathetic, intelligent attentions.

Ellen was almost tearfully grateful. ‘I am so sorry to make you all this trouble,’ she apologized. ‘You have to bother to take care of me, and Dr. Thomas has to see to Dr. von Bergen’s work.’

‘I’m not so sure he’ll be allowed to see to it,’ said Mrs. Thomas, and it proved that she was right.

‘Old Fritz was down at the Laboratory when I got there,’ reported her husband at noon. ‘He was so shaky and white I was afraid he might collapse, but he was still there this noon. I could smell coffee boiling in his room when I left; I hope he has some other food there, for I don’t think he is strong enough to risk going out for it, and I don’t dare take him any. He is suspicious of me, and more so since I have offered to help him.’

Jane stayed faithfully beside Ellen through the afternoon, warning off chance insects, and stitching from time to time on a half-finished sampler which Ellen saw now for the first time. Its design was faint from much handling, and Jane was obliged to smooth it out well over her bare knee before Ellen could make out what it was.

‘Mother drew it. It’s this house,’ Jane explained. ‘She thought it would be nice for my room in Jeffrey. Which corner do I begin the next cross-stitch on?’ She turned the square of linen completely around while she held the tip of her tongue between her teeth and thought.

‘On my island,’ she said, ‘in my house, there aren’t going to be any samplers. When I want to look at my house, I’ll just go outside and *look* at it.’

Something clicked in Ellen’s mind as if the last piece of a puzzle had dropped into place, and the verses that had been worrying her since the afternoon before on the island fell into form without further effort.

‘Listen, Jane,’ she said. ‘This is for you.’ And she began to recite, a little unevenly, but confidently,

Nonamesset, Uncatena,
Great Naushon and Nashawena,
Cutty Hunk and Penikese,
Little Weepeckets and Pasquinese.

I should like to have an island,
Just for me;
Low and green and narrow, running
Out to sea.

I should comfort it in storms, and
It would shelter me
In its twisted windblown forests.
Which one shall it be?

Nonamesset, Uncatena,
Great Naushon or Nashawena,
Cutty Hunk or Penikese,
Little Weepeckets or Pasquinese?

Jane gazed at her companion. 'Did you do that by yourself?' she inquired at last. 'Of course I taught you the names of the Elizabeth Islands.'

'I'm not sure you didn't give me the rest of it,' Ellen smiled, glad to have her mind free of the verses.

'Then you did like the island,' Jane said, laying a warm hand on Ellen's arm. 'Let's go back there! When you're well, let's go back and stay overnight!'

'I'm afraid I can't go right away,' Ellen temporized. 'Will you give me the hot water, Jane? Ouch!'

By morning the swelling, thanks to constant care, was somewhat reduced, though Ellen's leg was lobster-red from heat, but the doctor was not so much impressed as she had hoped. 'You stay right where you are, young lady,' he warned. 'You aren't out of the woods until that raw place has healed.'

'Not out of hot water, you mean,' Ellen corrected ruefully; but the doctor's only reply was a laugh.

'I expect you'll have a visitor today,' he called over his shoulder as he hastily left, and while Ellen was still wondering whom he had meant, the question was settled by the appearance of Dr. von Bergen, limping around the house, escorted by Mrs. Thomas.

'Dr. von Bergen came to inquire after you, Ellen,' she said. 'Will you have a chair?'

The visitor bowed from the waist and declined. ‘I came only to say,’ he began, ‘that I am very sorry to have been the cause of the young lady’s illness. It was an indiscretion for me to attempt to swim at all and certainly not in that current. I wonder at myself.’

‘My husband says you used to swim very well,’ said Mrs. Thomas.

‘Of course,’ he answered impatiently. ‘That was the trouble. One forgets one is old and crippled and only remembers that once one could run and swim with the best. But that is no excuse. And now please be so kind to permit me to pay your physician’s bill. I have already said this to him when he told me of your unfortunate infection, for which I feel myself responsible.’

‘Oh, no!’ Ellen and Mrs. Thomas exclaimed together.

‘I must insist,’ he returned. ‘If I must make myself plain, I do not wish to be under obligation to this family or its dependents.’

‘I don’t see how you can help it,’ Ellen remarked, quite unexpectedly to herself. ‘Walter and Jane did a lot more to pull you in than I did. How are you going to get out of your obligation to them?’

He looked at her oddly, and then past her to Mrs. Thomas. ‘What would you consider the extent of my obligation to your son and daughter?’ he inquired.

‘To act with friendliness to their family,’ she answered with spirit.

He continued to direct that odd gaze at her as if he were seeing something entirely strange, and when he spoke again, it was with great seriousness, and in a little less correct English.

‘Mrs. Thomas,’ he said, ‘do you understand zis situation? Doktor Thomas and I were once *sehr gemütlich*. As a student I had no better friend. Even now I couldt findt him a comfort in my loneliness if I should allow myself, since zere is no ozzer man in all zis uni-que village who understand from what I haf grown. But, tell me, wouldt it be ze part of a man of *h*onor now to act, as you say, “wiz friendliness”?

‘Consider what I have come here to do. My research has ledt me to believe that your husbandt is wrong, completely wrong, in the conclusions he has drawn from his own work. I intendt to prove it, zis summer, in ze same Laboratory, using ze same material. Ze results will be of gr-reat importance to ze science of biology, but I do not blind myself to ze fact zat

zey will discredit ze work of Doktor Thomas. It is better to separate myself from him entirely, so zat I may work wizout pre-judice.'

'It seems to me,' said Mrs. Thomas, quite reasonably, 'that you would show less prejudice if you were to consult with him about your work, and find where you differ and the reasons for your differences.'

He shrugged his shoulders, apparently dropping his effort to make his position plain. 'I cannot agree with you. My work must stand on its own feet, especially when I am in Dr. Thomas's own country, where his position among scientists is naturally so much stronger than mine. I regret that I should appear to be under personal obli-gation to his family; it is my misfortune.'

He bowed to them both and limped off abruptly. Jane burst out of the door as soon as he had disappeared around the corner of the house.

'That man has spoiled nearly all the morning,' she said plaintively. 'I never saw anybody like him. I like foreigners. The last German I knew gave me lots of nice stamps; and the man from Ceylon could draw pictures and knew all about snakes; and the man from Norway told me stories; but Dr. von Bergen—— Do you think he will come to call any more?'

'I hope not,' said Ellen, 'and I don't think so. What are you going to do this morning?'

'I can't think. It's very stupid just to sit; at least, it's stupid to sit at home. When you get a little better, Ellen, could you run the car with one foot? Or maybe,' she proposed, not very hopefully, 'you could watch me while I ran it; and we could go down and visit Father or Miss Wareham, or go out on the Sagitta to the fish traps, or with the Cayadetta wherever she happens to be going. You could sit down most of the time, but still we could be seeing something.'

This, Ellen thought, was quite possible; and though she was obliged to use crutches for a while, even after the infection was under control, she could soon manage the old car for short runs; and the Thomases kindly gave it over chiefly to her use.

These days were less active than those they had spent earlier, but no less entertaining. They spent foggy mornings riding out to the Laboratory fish traps in the big motor-boat, the Sagitta, towing home a dory with a load of mackerel, and behind that a smaller, submarine-shaped trailer with less edible animals that were highly useful for Laboratory work. They spent hours on the big wharf by the railway station, watching the steamers come

in, load and leave for the islands or New Bedford; and once, to Jane's great envy, they saw a young man fishing from the window of his stateroom on the steamer, gleefully hauling up small cunners, which he lodged in his washbasin.

'What will he do with them?' Ellen asked sensibly.

'I don't know,' sighed Jane. 'But wouldn't it be fun? I never thought of fishing from a stateroom.'

This was the season when fishing boats began to bring in great swordfish, harpooned off No Man's Land, to the Harborside market; and once Jane was given a sword three feet long by an impressionable fisherman who had intended to take it home, polish it, shellac it, and put it in state on the mantel, but could not resist Jane's pleading eyes when he showed it to her.

Jane kept a hopeful eye out for the comings and goings of the Laboratory launch, the Cayadetta, but for a good while the climb down the side of the high pier to its deck was too much for Ellen. One morning, however, she discovered that the launch had spent the night in the Eel Pond, where it was easily enough boarded from the low wharf, and in spite of the discouraging remarks of the captain on the fog, and the likelihood that they would not go out at all, she insisted on settling Ellen on deck and waiting with unusual patience for clearing weather.

For this she was rewarded. Other prospective passengers gave up in despair, and they were left to themselves, when the captain remarked to no one in particular, 'It'll clear before long; we'll go out.'

'Whoops!' said Jane, and seeing Miss Wareham's ample form advancing down the wharf, she ran to greet her with a hug even more energetic than usual.

'We're going out starfish mopping,' she announced breathlessly. 'Won't you come along? The fog's going to clear; Cap'n Veeder says so.'

'Then it will,' said her friend. 'Rest assured of that.

' "If ever anybody wanted to go out to sea,
The Lord and Cap'n Veeder and the weather must agree."

'Ever hear that?'

'Come along!' Jane coaxed.

'Well, why not? Captain, do you need an extra deckhand?'

‘Glad to ship you for ballast,’ the captain returned with a twinkle that matched Miss Wareham’s.

He helped her aboard with a solicitude seldom displayed toward the ordinary run of passengers, and if this were not sufficient evidence of her importance, invited her to sit forward in his own room with the beautiful steering wheel and polished instruments.

This offer she refused. ‘No, thank you, captain. I’ll sit back on one of these benches with the girls. The sun is going to be hot enough to keep my bones warm. It’s coming out now!’

‘Bring you up a cushion from below, then,’ the old captain said.

Miss Wareham settled herself on the cushioned bench and patted down her suitable full long skirts until only her ankles and her good stout shoes were visible below them, and with a humorously wry face she looked first at Jane’s shorts on one side of her and Ellen’s brief little dress on the other.

‘You girls have much the advantage of me,’ she said. ‘If we should have to swim ashore, I don’t know what I should do.’

‘There are lots of life preservers,’ Jane assured her seriously, ‘and Ellen and I would both help you.’

‘I hear you are good at that,’ Miss Wareham said, ‘but still I think we had better arrange not to have to swim at all. Long skirts are like swimming in seaweed.’

The launch had approached the bridge over the Eel Pond channel to the harbor; there, in response to its tooting, the bridge lifted from one side, like the cover of a book, and the launch swept briskly through, while traffic on Main Street waited. Jane waved to a friend watching them from the street above, and kept her eyes on the bridge until it had closed again, but when she spoke it was plain that she had been wrestling with a problem.

‘What I don’t see,’ she said, ‘is how you ever collected any animals wearing those things! Did some man go out always and get them for you? But Father says that there wasn’t even any Collecting Crew at the beginning of the Laboratory. What did you do?’

‘Maybe they wore bathing-suits,’ Ellen suggested.

Miss Wareham chuckled. ‘No, bathing-suits were not the answer. I don’t suppose you ever saw a girl’s bathing-suit of those days. They were made of heavy flannel and had long full bloomers and a skirt nearly as long as this one I’m wearing.

‘I’ll tell you! We girls made ourselves harnesses of tape that had long ends like suspenders, and when we waded out, collecting, we pinned our skirts up to those ends, out of the water. I dare say we looked very peculiar, but our plan worked. We got our animals and kept our skirts dry.’

Ellen laughed, but Jane remained serious. ‘Personally,’ she said, ‘I don’t think I would have liked it.’

‘Probably you do dress more sensibly, Jane,’ Miss Wareham agreed comfortably. ‘I’ll tell you this, though, and maybe you’ll think better of the girls of my time: I used to wear my hair cut short! For two whole blissful years my hair was shingled and out of my way; and then I grew timid and let it grow out again, just as Ellen is doing.’

‘I know,’ Ellen smiled. ‘All the rest of the girls were doing it last winter, and so I did.’

‘Exactly,’ nodded Miss Wareham. ‘Just wait. I may live to see you wading around with long skirts pinned up.’

Jane continued her frowning consideration of the subject while her eyes studied the plain gray bun in which Miss Wareham’s hair was twisted on top of her head.

‘I wouldn’t like you with short hair, and I wouldn’t like you in short skirts,’ she stated. ‘It would look funny for you. And I guess I like Ellen with long hair, too. Ellen is so old; she will be a sophomore in college next winter.’

‘Jane,’ Miss Wareham answered solemnly, ‘I suspect you have hit upon a great truth: different clothes and hair and behavior are suitable to different ages and different times. Did your mother ever try to tell you that a dress was more suitable for an afternoon tea than this very comfortable suit which you have been wearing most of the summer?’

For answer Jane flashed a wide, understanding smile.

‘You remember this, next time you try to dodge putting on your best dress,’ admonished Miss Wareham, ‘and I’ll try not to shock you by cutting my hair or wearing short skirts. And this is the end of this lecture!’

While they were chattering, the launch had been steaming out into the Hole, where the current was boiling through from the Bay. The fog, completely scattered, had left a beautiful hot August morning, under whose sun Ellen relaxed.

She leaned over the back of the bench and studied the shore line of the island opposite. She had bought the beautifully drawn Coast Survey maps of the region and studied them carefully, in order to become letter-perfect on every little cove and point, and every buoy and spar of the region, but the landscape refused to look like the map, even from the top of the Laboratory building, and still less from water level.

She had grown up in a city and country of straight roads, running nearly always at right angles to each other, and each road as nearly east and west or north and south as it was possible to make it. The Cape roads and many of the streets wandered first in one direction and then in another, to avoid a pond or follow a shore line, or for no apparent reason at all. Ellen found that it was hard to fix directions in her mind as she walked these roads; instead, it seemed to her that the sun set now in the west and now in the south, and that the reliable North Star shifted right or left according to the spot from which she saw it.

Just now she was trying to puzzle out for herself the name of the island opposite to the spot in the Hole where the Cayadetta was about to hunt for starfish. She was not sure whether it was Nonamesset or Naushon, or perhaps Uncatena; and she decided to look it up on the map.

From where she sat at the back of the launch she could see that, while the boat was held nearly still in the current, the young deckhand and the engineer were sending over the side something like a great floor mop, whose soft cotton strands were fastened to a heavy iron bar let down into the water with a rope. When a mop was over each side, the launch began to back up through the Hole. She went slowly a short distance, dragging the mops on the bottom, and then returned over much the same course. When she was back where she had started, with much ringing of engine-room bells, the engines were set to hold her in place and the creaking and complaining steam winch began to wind the ropes in.

Presently the mops, heavy with water and the weight of the iron bar, appeared above the sea and were hauled over the railing and laid, sopping wet, on deck. Their cotton strands were thickly entangled with brown starfish of all sizes; Jane could hardly keep her hands off of them, and when she was gruffly invited to come ahead and help put the starfish into the wooden tubs waiting for them, she was completely happy.

‘Let’s go forward, too,’ Miss Wareham suggested. From the captain’s windows they could see the harvest of starfishes gathered in. When the mops had been cleaned and put over the sides to be dragged again, Jane

brought Ellen one tiny, bright-red creature of the most delicate, five-pointed perfection.

‘Funny place, the Hole,’ said the captain companionably, but keeping his eyes on his course. ‘They tell that in the old days a man could roll up his pants and wade across at low tide. It’s not so deep now as some would like, in spite of all the dredging, but it does well enough for us.’

‘The Hole has been a great thing for the Laboratory,’ Miss Wareham answered tranquilly.

‘Why?’ Ellen ventured to ask.

‘These strong tides keep food and oxygen in circulation; that’s especially important for the animals that are sessile—fastened to one spot.’

‘I know what sessile means,’ Ellen said proudly. ‘I found that out when I learned the Ballad of the Little Blastula:

> ‘ “‘Oh, mother dear,’ he quickly cried, ‘come hither now and try
> To cure my little ectoderm or I shall have to die.’
> But his mother dear was *sessile* and could only sit and cry
> Through her excurrent pore!”

You would be surprised at what I have learned this summer!’

‘Probably I should,’ said Miss Wareham. ‘Are you good at hunting planarians? Jane tells me that she collects them for her father, and I suppose she has taken you into partnership.’

‘There aren’t many to find any more,’ Ellen said, somewhat troubled. ‘Dr. Thomas is trying to make his supply last out the summer.’

Miss Wareham was at once interested. ‘I haven’t been in to call on him this year. What is he doing with them?’

‘I don’t know whether I can tell you,’ Ellen said, ‘though I think I understand. But I’m not biological. You know they live under stones in little groups?’

‘Oh, yes,’ the other said briskly. ‘I know planarians pretty well.’

‘Dr. Thomas thought that perhaps they lived in these little groups because they were of some benefit to each other, though that was hard to tell with such simple animals.’

Miss Wareham chuckled. ‘No, they don’t play games together, nor wash each other’s dishes, nor start Improvement Clubs. What, then?’

‘Well—— ’ Ellen hesitated. ‘Dr. Thomas wanted to be sure, in the first place, that they were really of some benefit to each other; and in the second place, what kind of a benefit it might be. So, all summer long, he has been comparing lots of animals under the same conditions, in the same kind of water, at the same temperature, and of the same size, to see if planaria in groups live longer than single planarians.’

‘And do the groups live longer?’

‘Yes, he’s sure of that. He says he’s just piling up evidence now to convince other people.’

‘That is news of importance. Does he know why they do?’

Ellen shook her head. ‘He’s working on that, too. Do you know, Miss Wareham, he says he may never find out, and yet he keeps right on working!’

‘Well, the answer isn’t in the back of the book,’ said Miss Wareham. ‘You have to take that risk when you set yourself a brand-new problem. I’ve worked on a good many problems to which I never found an answer; but some one may be able to use my work some day, even if it only shows them what not to do!’

‘It seems tragic,’ Ellen said, wistfully.

‘Nonsense!’ Miss Wareham exclaimed. ‘It’s the greatest fun in the world. Besides, you have no choice; the thing keeps after you and you have to work on it to be happy. Haven’t you ever had that experience?’

‘Yes,’ Ellen confessed, somewhat shamefaced. ‘When a poem gets started in my head, it keeps on until I get it more or less finished.’

‘What did I tell you?’ said Miss Wareham triumphantly. ‘So you write poetry! Well, I should think there might be something in Dr. Thomas’s work that would appeal to a person of poetical tastes. What about it?’

Ellen nodded. ‘But I hadn’t thought that it had anything to do with poetry. I thought it was a moral. Like this: If even those tiny brown bits of planarians are better off for living together, perhaps we can be more certain that great elaborate things like people ought to get along together; that quarrels and wars aren’t exactly natural things to expect.’

‘Bless you!’ said Miss Wareham. ‘That *is* poetry! No scientist would jump that far at one leap.’

‘It was a scientist who set me leaping,’ Ellen maintained bravely.

‘What about the naturalness of quarreling with Dr. von Bergen?’ Miss Wareham questioned; but seeing Ellen grow grave, she put one hand over the girl’s fingers. ‘Never mind!’ she said hastily. ‘I oughtn’t to have said that. An old woman like me sometimes takes too many privileges.’

‘He is certainly easy to quarrel with,’ Ellen answered. ‘No, I don’t mind your asking, Miss Wareham; but I think he’s an exception to the rule. He isn’t well and he has had a hard time, and can’t be expected to behave like other people. Don’t you think so?’

‘I like *you* for thinking so,’ said her old friend.

She sat intent on her own thoughts for a while. Outside the screech of the winch winding up the ropes made conversation hard; presently the wet mops were again on the deck, as full of starfish as if none had been taken before. Jane brought over a big, six-armed star. ‘Don’t you think it’s lucky, like a four-leafed clover?’

‘Surely,’ said Miss Wareham. ‘It means that we are going to get our tubs full of starfish and come safely home again.’

‘Ellen,’ she went on, after Jane had returned to her industrious starfishing, ‘I think I may have a good idea. You said Dr. Thomas was running short of planarians?’

‘Yes,’ said Ellen. ‘There’s only the one place we know to get them—over on Nobska Beach—and with Dr. von Bergen using at least half of them, I’m afraid they won’t last through the season.’

‘In the days when we used to go collecting with our skirts pinned up,’ Miss Wareham said slowly, ‘there used to be some of those little things at the other end of the Gutter, on the edge of Lackey’s Bay. You know where that is?’

‘Yes, I do,’ Ellen said eagerly. ‘Which side?’

‘I don’t remember,’ Miss Wareham shook her head. ‘No, it has been too long ago. There may not be any there now, but once there were. You get somebody on the Collecting Crew to run over and see if any can be found.’

‘Oh, no!’ Ellen protested. ‘We won’t tell anybody about them; not even Walter. *Especially* not Walter! Jane and I will go first and look for them.’

‘It’s a long trip,’ said Miss Wareham, ‘and your scraped shin isn’t well yet. I can understand that you would want the glory of locating a new collecting ground, but hadn’t you better arrange for some help?’

‘I don’t want glory at all,’ protested Ellen. ‘What I want is those animals for Dr. Thomas. If the Collecting Crew get them, half of them will go to Dr. von Bergen. Please don’t tell anybody until Jane and I have tried for them!’

Miss Wareham started to speak and thought the better of it. Instead she studied Ellen’s face for a long moment, until the girl grew uncomfortable.

‘You don’t know how good the Thomases have been to me, Miss Wareham. This is my first job, and you know it isn’t very easy for a seventeen-year-old freshman to get a job. None of my family thought I could. But they took me and they have been awfully kind to me. Mrs. Thomas stayed up most of one night putting hot cloths on my leg! I want to do something really nice for them.’

‘Very well,’ Miss Wareham agreed obligingly. ‘This shall be your own treasure-hunt. I shan’t tell a soul.’

‘Thank you,’ said Ellen, from her heart. She resolved that she would not even tell Jane of her plan until they were ready to go out some afternoon. Then, in all secrecy, they would reach the collecting ground and come home laden with booty for Jane’s father.

CHAPTER VIII

A Treasure-Hunt for Two

Next day, quite contrary to the usual run of August weather, came a steady downpour of rain. A trip in the boat was out of the question. All day there was a low fire of driftwood in the fireplace and Ellen sat near it, mending, reading, writing letters, and turning the Thomas family's best shoes before the warmth, so that they would escape the mould that attacked leather and wool in this damp weather.

Jane had been allowed to put on her bathing-suit and paddle around in the rain, so that Ellen had time to herself for thinking. She did not write all the letters she had planned; suddenly she felt that the end of the summer was near, and that it would be better to wait and tell her friends about her summer. This was the third week in August; the Thomases would be leaving in less than a month and Ellen, too. She watched the sky anxiously for signs of clearing, hoping that the expedition for planaria would not be so long delayed that it would be of no use to Dr. Thomas.

Next day was still gray, but the heavy rain had ceased and no one objected when Ellen proposed that she and Jane take the boat out in the afternoon with sandwiches for supper to make it a party. Her conscience was not quite easy on this point. The Thomases would expect that she and Jane would, as usual, cruise around cautiously and return to one of the near-by beaches for a leisurely supper; instead, she wished to gain time for an extra long trip. However, she assured herself, it was not dangerous, and their small deception would be forgiven when they returned with the planaria.

Jane came along very happily. Ellen said to her, 'Jane, do you think you could borrow two collecting buckets from the Supply House? If you can, I'll tell you a secret.'

'Oh, boy!' said Jane.

She came back very promptly with the buckets to the Eel Pond wharf, followed by Walter with the outboard motor for the boat. He oiled it, checked on the gasoline and found a full supply, and then started it himself to see how it behaved.

'Sounds all right,' he said, frowning, 'but don't you depend on it. It's been missing lately a good deal, even for me. Got the oars?'

Jane had not brought them, and was sternly dispatched to bring them down from her father's room, in spite of her impatience.

For his pains she made a face at him as they spun gayly off.

'And look out for *fog*!' he called after them.

'He thinks he has to tell us everything,' said Jane. 'Now what is the secret?'

The motor was putt-putting regularly, and Ellen, who had been a little disturbed at the warnings, felt quite reassured.

'We're going to look in a new place for planaria,' she said.

Jane was not immediately impressed. 'There aren't any new places. We've looked in them all.'

'Miss Wareham told me.'

'Oh!' said Jane.

'And I kept it a secret,' Ellen went on, 'so that you and I could go get them ourselves and bring them back to your father.'

'And not let old Pain-in-the-Neck know about them,' finished Jane. 'Where are they?'

'Miss Wareham said there used to be some at Lackey's Bay, around the other side of the big Gutter.'

Jane considered this. 'Yes, there might be, at the point this side of the Bay. I know a place where there are the right kind of rocks for them to live under.' Jane was quite respectful. 'Which way are you going?'

The boat was out in the harbor. Ellen looked right and left. 'Which way do you think?'

'Well, personally,' said Jane, 'I think it would be better to go around the island. It's a longer way, but the tide isn't so strong.'

'All right,' Ellen agreed. They were well out into the current before either spoke again. 'I don't like the sound of that motor,' Ellen said. She gave it a little shake.

'Let me give it more oil,' Jane said helpfully.

'Sit right where you are,' Ellen commanded. 'I'll oil it myself. There, that's better. No, it isn't!'

‘Walter ought to have seen to it,’ Jane said disgustedly. ‘Watch out! The boat is slipping around.’

Ellen did what experience had taught her. She slipped forward, took up the oars from the bottom of the boat and began to row.

‘Going back?’ Jane asked sadly.

‘No!’ said Ellen. ‘We’re going over to Sheep Pen Cove and see if we can make the motor go again.’

Jane cheered at once. She got out a canoe paddle which she had picked up in the course of the summer and began to use it. The paddle was broken, but it helped more than it hindered, and the use of it distracted Jane’s mind from her longing to tinker with the motor. It was not an easy pull across the current, but it was quite possible, and they made the little cove.

For a long twenty minutes they worked over the motor, oiling it where oil was already oozing, attempting to start it, to be met once or twice with a brief response that promptly died down, leaving them more disappointed than before, but never getting any lasting results.

‘Sometimes,’ Jane suggested, wiping her forehead with the back of her arm, ‘sometimes if you just go off and leave the thing, it will start all right when you come back to it. I don’t know why. Let’s go off and look for the planaria and maybe when we get back, it will work all right.’

‘It’s a long way to row,’ Ellen demurred.

‘I don’t mean to row. Let’s take the buckets and walk across the island, the way we went when we swam in the Gutter.’

‘We oughtn’t to leave the motor.’

‘Take it off and put it under the bushes. There are lots of safe places that not even the sheep can reach.’

‘I suppose we had better,’ Ellen agreed reluctantly. It was not the most pleasant of days. The clouds were low, and the water somewhat ruffled. ‘I suppose we had better,’ she repeated, ‘now that we have come so far as this.’

Without wasting more words they tugged at the boat until it was safely out of reach of the tides, stowed the heavy motor in an anxiously selected thicket, with their lunch and sweaters beside it, and pushed through the bushes until they had found a sheep-path.

Once they had left behind the small murmur of the water and the distant screaming of the gulls, they found the island a singularly quiet place. Across

the moor, from a thicket which had grown up in a hollow protecting it from winds, two or three great hawk-like birds continually ascended into the air, surveyed the island for prey and settled silently back into the thicket. Ellen found herself dreading the twisted branches and shadows of the Enchanted Forest; on a day like this her imagination made its eerie suggestions too real.

Jane was not in the least depressed. She trotted along, humming a tuneless hum under her breath:

'*I* should *like* to *have* an island
Just—for—me——'

and when they came again to the gate of the forest, she turned to give Ellen one of her rare smiles of pure happiness.

'In the summer,' she said, 'I could live under one of these trees. I wouldn't need any house at all then.

'I should comfort it in storms and
It would shelter me——

'I think you are nice, Ellen!'

Under such approval it was impossible for Ellen to remain low in her mind. She and Jane followed the winding road among the twisted trees, singing, until they came within sight of the bridge over the Gutter.

'Do you think we would have time to swim?' Jane asked longingly, but Ellen shook her head.

'It's three o'clock now,' she reported, consulting her wrist watch, 'and we must get our animals, if there are any, and hurry back.'

'Wouldn't it be terrible if we didn't find any!' Jane exclaimed, horror-struck, and she began to run along the edge of the woods toward the widening bay, bumping her bucket impartially against her bare legs and the rocks.

Ellen did not catch up with her until she had reached a hopefully stony stretch along the shore, where the bay joined the sand, and there the two girls began to turn over the small stones that stood half-exposed in tide pools.

Jane was too excited to sit down; she bent over and dug among the rocks until she was out of breath, and then she straightened and told Ellen reproachfully, 'There's none here!'

'Try that next place,' said Ellen.

Jane moved over, while Ellen continued to turn over the little rocks and examine them. She had to be more careful in looking than Jane did, because she had never come to recognize the planaria so easily.

She was still searching in the same place when Jane gave up her second pool. 'There aren't any here, either!'

'Come over here,' Ellen said slowly, turning the rock she held so as to get the best light of the dull afternoon on its glistening surface.

'Have you got some? Have you?' Jane demanded, tumbling over by Ellen.

'Are they?' Ellen asked in her turn.

'Oh, they are, Ellen, they are!' Jane danced up and down. 'Where did you find that stone? Let me see if there are any more!'

The buried gold of pirate's treasure would not have been half so welcome to the girls just then as the little clump of brown bits of life on that stone, all of which could have been covered with a silver dollar.

'That stone was over on the far edge,' said Ellen. 'It must be about half tide now and we usually find them at low tide. We'll have to hunt as far out as we can.'

Now that she was assured that the animals were really there, Jane settled down to work with her usual thoroughness, and it was well for the success of their hunt that she did, for the animals were not abundant along the part of the shore to which the tide limited them.

Jane grew tired of turning over two dozen rocks to find one that was inhabited, and waded farther out to sit down in water up to her armpits while she scrabbled around under water, but this was not satisfactory either. It was hard holding up stones to examine them, impossible to keep them separated from those already looked over, and there was no place to set her collecting bucket. She gave up that venture without having added any more planaria to her collection, and waded back to the water's edge.

'I think that will have to be all,' Ellen said, after a while. 'The tide has come in too far.'

'We haven't got more than two hundred.'

'Two hundred is two hundred. Besides, we know now that they are here, and we can come back again at low tide and find more.'

'All right,' Jane sighed, 'and I *am* hungry. What time is it?'

‘Why, Jane, it’s a quarter past five!’

It was all very well for them to know that they must hurry, because it was late and the wind was rising with a suspicion of mist; but they were both tired and the collecting buckets were half-filled with water and rocks. Ellen saw soon that Jane’s load was too much for her and took it over; both buckets were too heavy a load for Ellen, but that was a different matter.

When the road narrowed at last to the sheep-path again, Ellen transferred most of the rocks to one bucket and gave the other to Jane, so that she could make her way between the bushes. Descending the bank she missed the path and came out farther down the cove, and for a sickening moment thought the boat had got away, but only for a moment. Farther to her right she saw it securely tied as they had left it; she put down her buckets and exercised her aching shoulders while Jane brought out the lunch.

‘Am-I-ever-hungry! There is your half of the sandwiches, Ellen, and your orange. And a chocolate bar.’

Ellen was hungry, too. ‘Your mother makes good brown bread,’ she said to Jane and Jane nodded in hearty agreement.

‘I think I shall have Mother make bread for me once a week, when I live on my island,’ she said, through a large bite. ‘Once I made bread and it was not good at all. Funny little hard loaves!’

When they had finished, Ellen went to get the motor. ‘It looks just like it did,’ Jane remarked critically, ‘but maybe it will start anyway. Sometimes it does.’

This, however, was not one of the times. No amount of coaxing had the slightest effect.

‘It’s getting darker,’ Ellen said, after some time spent in vain effort. ‘We’ll have to row back.’

‘It’s getting *foggy*!’ Jane exclaimed, with a quaver of excitement in her voice. ‘Which way is the Laboratory? I can’t see across to the mainland.’

Ellen looked out quickly across the water; she had been too much absorbed in tinkering with the motor to notice how the mist had thickened, and now beyond their island there was nothing to be seen but the pale fog, through which the Nobska foghorn blared its regular, melancholy warning.

For a moment she was seized with the senseless panic of a lost person; then slowly she fought it down. Surely when her eyes grew accustomed to the mist, she could make out the breakwater and lights of the opposite shore

that were plainly enough visible even on a dull day. It was not yet dark. But the mist was in no sense like darkness, which lights can pierce. It fell like a curtain between the island and the village.

'I don't know where the Laboratory is,' Ellen said, quite cheerfully. 'In this fog my directions swing around worse than usual. We'll have to stay here till it clears. The foghorn sounds plain enough, but we don't want to row to Nobska, and all I know about the harbor is that it is somewhere to the left of the foghorn.'

'I think I know which way to go,' Jane said, with her usual confidence, and for a moment Ellen was tempted to rely on her. Then the whistle of an unseen steamer, blowing steadily as it felt its way across the harbor, came to her and she shook her head.

'No. Even if we knew where we were going, the other boats wouldn't, and we might get run down in the fog. We shall just have to wait a while. Let's pretend we are living on your island, Jane.'

'I don't *think*,' Jane said slowly, 'I don't *think* that I want *this* island. I want a nice *little* island.'

'Not even for deer?'

'Well, personally, I would rather play Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday tonight. If I had an island it would have my little house on it and a fire for us. We don't have any matches, do we? So we can't have a fire. That will keep the savages from seeing us.'

A sniffing in the bushes above them, soft but distinct, interrupted Jane, and both girls froze to attention. The tops of the junipers moved, but nothing could be seen in the twilight until Jane took one nervous step and stumbled over a rock. Then the sniffing gave way to a snort and the patter of small hard hooves, the bushes moved convulsively and Ellen sighted three broad woolly backs making off over the top of the bank, one after the other for the interior of the island.

'Sheep!' Jane exclaimed. 'I was scared for a minute,' she confessed.

'So was I,' Ellen said frankly. 'I thought it was Moby Dick at the least, snorting at us. But I think now it was really Robinson Crusoe's flock of pet goats.'

Jane giggled. 'Let's wrap ourselves up in this dry seaweed,' she proposed. 'My legs are cold. Then you can tell me a story.'

Thrown up around the cove, out of reach of the ordinary tides, was a line of seaweed six inches thick and cushiony to sit upon. It was full of sand and well inhabited by harmless but ticklish beach fleas; still, if banked up over their legs high enough, it broke the wind that drove in, damp and chilling from the Sound.

'Now,' said Jane, when she looked in the dimness like nothing so much as a curly-headed haystack, 'tell me a story.'

'You tell one first,' Ellen suggested.

'I don't know any,' Jane said flatly.

'I haven't eaten my chocolate bar,' said Ellen. 'When you tell your story, we'll divide it between us.'

Jane looked down at the chocolate bar. 'Walter told me one the other day. I could tell you that. You know Mr. Smith?'

'I know who he is, certainly.'

'He's Mrs. Smith's husband,' Jane explained. 'Mostly he rides around in their big car, so I don't suppose you've seen him yet. He's a funny fat little man, and I wouldn't mind him if he didn't think he knew so much; of course you can't make an awful lot of money in groceries all your life and then learn biology in two summers, but he thinks he has.

'The other night Walter was coming up late from the Supply House. He had been helping to get a rush order off to some college. He was coming up the hill to Gansett, and he said there weren't any cars on the road to blind him and so he could see pretty well, even if there wasn't but a little thin moon. There was a man ahead of him, and when Walter got a little nearer, he could tell it was Dr. von Bergen limping along, and Walter slowed down so as not to catch up with him. Then all of a sudden Walter saw him bump into something and nearly lose his balance, so Walter hurried.

'When he caught up with him, Dr. von Bergen was saying things in German, and down on the ground before him on the side of the road was a man on his knees, patting around over the grass and weeds with his hands, and he was saying, "I'm looking for my goldfish."

'Walter knew his voice that minute, but Dr. von Bergen didn't. He said, "Goldtfish! Here? Is the man drunk? He drops down before me so that he nearly makes me to fall, and then he says he is looking for goldtfish! Undoubtedly he is mad!" He said all that to Walter, expecting him to

sympathize; of course he didn't know Walter any more than he knew Mr. Smith.

'Mr. Smith didn't pay any attention to him. He said, "Have either of you got a flashlight?" Walter was about as puzzled as Dr. von Bergen, but not so angry. He pulled his flashlight out of his pocket and turned it on where Mr. Smith was patting the grass, and sure enough there was a goldfish flipping around, and farther to the side there was another one. And Mr. Smith grabbed them quick and rolled them up in a wet handkerchief he had and Walter helped him get up on his feet again.

'Walter said he couldn't help turning his flashlight accidentally on Dr. von Bergen's face, and he was still angry, but a good deal more surprised than angry.

' "But goldtfish! But goldtfish!" he said.

'Mr. Smith was quite calm about it. He said, "Just been to a dinner party. Hostess had rare goldfish not feeling quite up to par. Said I'd wrap them in a wet handkerchief and take them down to the Laboratory for a week of observation. No trouble. Walk do me good. Got to thinking over a problem, put my hand on something wet in my pocket and jerked it out before I thought. Got to get these down to the Laboratory now before they suffocate."

'Dr. von Bergen just bowed and went away; but Walter was sorry for the goldfish. It would be just like Mr. Smith to put them in salt water. He said, "You know, Mr. Smith, I'm on the Collecting Crew. I bring you animals sometimes. Don't you want me to take care of your fish till morning?"

'And Mr. Smith said, "Oh, yes! Boy with the green and red patches! Very well! Very well!" And Walter brought them home and kept them overnight. Next day he took them up to Mr. Smith, and Mr. Smith told him to take care of them and bring them up every day for observation. So Walter does. He carries up the goldfish every day and Mr. Smith asks questions about them and tells him to bring them back next day.'

'How are they getting on?' Ellen stopped chuckling to ask.

'All right. Walter says they were just overfed.'

'Does Mr. Smith know who Walter's father is?' Ellen inquired, struck with a sudden possibility.

'Oh, no! Just that he is the boy with the red and green patches. And Walter and I aren't going to tell the story to anybody else,' Jane finished

very virtuously. ‘It’s too good a story. “I’m looking for my goldfish!” “But goldtfish! But goldtfish!” ’

She giggled again and then shivered uncontrollably. ‘I’m cold. Father or Walter ought to come get us pretty soon.’

‘Nobody knows where we are,’ Ellen was obliged to answer. It was quite dark now and the curtain of fog was impenetrably lowered between them and the mainland. ‘Come over by me, Jane. We’ll keep each other warm. Here is your chocolate bar. Eat it all. I’m not hungry.’

‘You must tell your story now,’ Jane reminded her, cuddling close.

‘There once was a lady named Jane,’ improvised Ellen, ‘Who stayed out all night in the rain; For since the planaria Had grown so much warier—Lane, feign, cane, pain—They were found at the cost of much pain! Yes, Jane?’

‘That is grand,’ Jane shivered. ‘Do another poem!’

‘I didn’t do it,’ Ellen disclaimed. ‘It did itself. And it isn’t poetry. I’m afraid it’s fact—contemporary history. What is that noise?’

There were more sounds than one would have thought in the wet night. The waves lapped incessantly around the cove and there was a faint whisper of wind in the bushes above them. The foghorn continued to blow monotonously, and out in the Sound a bell-buoy rang with the waves, slowly, as if it turned with difficulty.

Besides all these Ellen seemed to hear another sound in the cove, softly and regularly. She did not dare to wait for it to become more distinct; she lifted her voice and called, ‘Yoo-hoo!’ to Jane’s astonishment.

When she stopped to listen, the noise that had been like the sound of a paddle had ceased. She called despairingly, ‘Come here! Come here!’

Then she heard the sound again and knew she had recognized it in the first place; it was plainly the dip of a canoe paddle, and a voice unexpectedly near remarked in none too good a temper, ‘Vell? Do you vant somesing?’

The voice was familiar enough, and for a moment Ellen would have preferred staying here to being rescued by Dr. von Bergen, but she was sensible enough to pocket her dislike.

‘We are stuck here in the fog,’ she said. ‘Don’t run into our boat.’

‘It’s him!’ Jane said under her breath. ‘It would be!’

‘Who is it?’ the voice inquired. ‘I cannot come closer. My canoe is touching the rocks now.’

‘Jane Thomas and Ellen McNeill.’

‘So? Vell—I hope I do not break my canoe.’

The canoe grated on the shingle and Ellen felt, rather than saw, the man pull himself out of it.

‘Yes? What can I do for you?’

‘Our motor wouldn’t work,’ Ellen explained, ‘and so we were delayed until the fog came down and we couldn’t get home. Could you help us? How did you expect to get back?’

After the irritating fashion of some grown-ups, Dr. von Bergen ignored her questions. He said, ‘Where is your motor?’ and, turning on a flashlight, began to examine it. Presently he tilted it down in place again at the bow of the dory, taking care that it did not strike a rock.

‘It won’t work,’ Jane said; but the familiar putt-putt began almost at once, continued until the man turned off the motor and began again as easily when he tried it again.

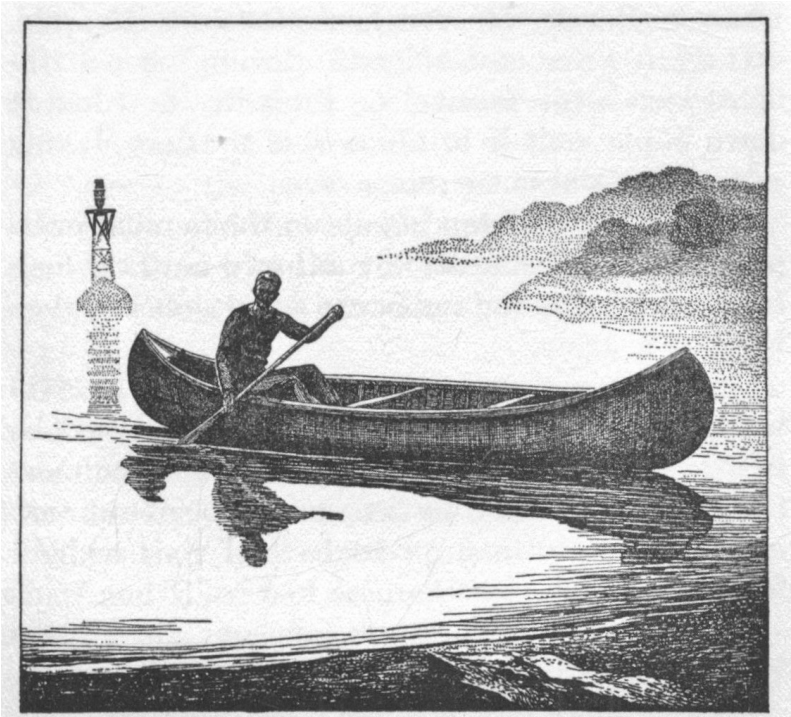
‘You do not understand machinery,’ he said briskly, somewhat pleased with himself. ‘It will be best if I take charge of this. My own canoe must be beached over here for the night. The young lady may sit forward in the boat to hold my flashlight for a lantern.’

‘I have to put these buckets on board,’ said Ellen.

‘Buckets?’

‘Collecting buckets.’ She held one in each hand, considerably impeded by Jane, who wished to help.

‘Very well. Let me first put my canoe in safety and then enter the boat. I cannot risk my neck stumbling over buckets. Are you ready?’



'SO! VELL — I HOPE I DO NOT BREAK MY CANOE'

Ellen set the precious wooden buckets in the dory and untied the rope which held the boat. On the higher tide it was much easier to push off than it had been when they came in the afternoon, and after sharp pushing with an oar, they were out in water so deep there was little danger of injuring the propeller on a rock.

The fog was as thick as ever. The flashlight made only a small ghostly illumination, and though she turned it on all sides no familiar signs appeared. Ellen thought it was doubtful if they could even get back to the cove again, in case their motor should stop and they should need to row to refuge. She wondered why Dr. von Bergen had chosen this foggy evening to go canoeing; but she did not ask him.

There could hardly have been a less companionable rescuer; his only merit was the very considerable one that he did bring them home with little fumbling for direction and no other difficulties.

When they had edged up gently by the outer wharf and Ellen had secured their dory and lifted out the two buckets, she said, as politely as she

could, ‘I am sorry to have been a trouble to you; but I am sure the Thomases will thank you for bringing us home.’

‘Ask them not to speak of it,’ he answered quickly. ‘I do not wish to be thanked. It is of no importance except that it may cancel my obligation to you for pulling me out of the water once.’ Seeing that Ellen still stood in his path, he added impatiently, ‘Consider, then, if you prefer, that I am in your debt. I also was caught in the fog, and if I had not felt it necessary to bring you home and had your motor to do it, I should have spent the night on the island, too.’

Jane was pulling at Ellen’s arm. ‘I see Father’s light in his room. Come along! Let me carry one of the buckets.’

Under the excitement of getting home, Jane seemed little the worse for wear, but Ellen was stiff and tired. Her only spur was the thought of the planaria. She hoped that the animals in the buckets were still in good enough condition to be useful. For the best results they should have been placed in running salt water as soon as possible after they were taken from their native tide pools.

On the front steps of the Laboratory stood a small group of men in earnest discussion. As the girls came up, Ellen heard one of them say, ‘I don’t see much that you can do to look for them on a night like this, Dr. Thomas, but we’ll stay up and when the fog lifts, we’ll go out at once.’

‘Father!’ Jane called joyfully, and dived through the group, straight for Dr. Thomas’s ragged laboratory coat.

The men turned, caught sight of Ellen, too, and grinned at Jane, her curls tangled with dry seaweed, her wooden bucket held to one side while with the other arm she hugged her father.

‘Well, Jane!’ said her father, and then again, ‘Well, Jane!’

‘Where’ve you been, Janey?’ said her brother threateningly. ‘Just wait till I catch you by yourself!’

‘Where have you been?’ the others joined in with interest.

‘We were about to get up a search party for you,’ said Jim Harrison. ‘Where were you, anyway?’

‘It’s a secret,’ said Jane. ‘I’m not going to tell anybody but Father!’

CHAPTER IX

Plans Astray

Ellen woke the next morning with a determination to spend the rest of the summer as tamely as possible. So long as she must share her adventures with Jane, it was risky to have any adventures at all even in a good cause. Last night Dr. Thomas had barely noticed the planaria they brought; Walter had scolded them soundly for putting any confidence in the motor after his warning; and Mrs. Thomas had stolen into their room twice in the night to see if Jane was really there.

Jane was, however, very well pleased with herself; and announced as soon as her breakfast dishes were washed that she intended to go down to visit her father and the planaria.

'Hello, Jane! Heard you were lost,' said the first person they met.

'I wasn't lost; I knew where I was all the time,' said Jane, and ran on. Presently she ceased to answer inquiries, and Ellen was obliged to stop and tell their story to more people than she supposed had ever heard of her. It seemed that it was not a rare occurrence to be marooned by fog on the islands; Ellen heard tales of other less fortunate stranded sailors who had spent the whole night away from the mainland. Before she had reached the Laboratory, Ellen was beginning to think that it was fun to have been lost in the fog just once, and to be now a character of public interest; and it was amusing to recall that their ungracious rescuer had helped to bring in the collection of animals he coveted for his own work.

She threw a triumphant glance at the 'F. von Bergen' label on the closed door opposite Dr. Thomas's room, and when she and Jane had gone in, she followed her to the water-table rather proudly. Jane picked up rocks delicately, turned them over as she did in the field and looked in the little depression for the tiny creatures flattening themselves there.

'These are the old ones,' she said in disappointment. 'I know these rocks. Where did you put the new ones, Father?'

'Over at the back in that big round glass dish,' said Dr. Thomas, going on with his interminable inspection of the regiment of little dishes before him on the table.

'Where are the rest?'

‘Wait a minute, Jane. Number twenty-seven to the fifth stage—— ’ he continued to mutter numbers under his breath and write them down while Jane drifted around the water-table, looking in everything there.

‘Where are the rest of the stones we brought in?’ she asked as soon as he lifted his head and pushed up the magnifying-glass.

‘I asked Walter to carry about half of them over to old Fritz,’ said her father. ‘It was very clever of you, Ellen and Jane, to find those bugs. We were about to finish the season short and it was hard on my morale. I’m tired, anyway, and I was tempted to take a vacation and let the whole thing go. Now I’d be ashamed to stop. I’ll keep on working and maybe I’ll clinch my point by the end of the summer.’

He lifted his long arms, stretched and yawned and smiled at Jane, but the child was near tears.

‘Father, we brought those in for *you*! We didn’t tell a soul, so we could go back and get more for you. I think it’s mean to give them away!’

‘Listen to me, Janey,’ said her father patiently. ‘Come along over and sit in my lap a minute. Here’s a handkerchief.

‘Dr. von Bergen is just as hard up for material as I am. Walter tells me that he has rented this old canoe to go out to look for them, but he hasn’t found any yet. He is so crippled that it must be punishment for him to go poking around among the stones. I know it hurts my old joints and I’m not crippled. And he doesn’t have any nice girls to help him hunt. I’m sure Walter has done his best for him, but planaria-hunting is slow work and Walter hasn’t much time. Walter thinks that old Fritz was out looking along Nonamesset for planaria last evening when the fog came down and caught him as it did you.’

‘He ought to have known better,’ Jane said scornfully. ‘It was around high tide, and you can’t find any then.’

‘See what I told you,’ said her father. ‘He needs help, doesn’t he? Of course I had to divide with him. Now, if you will tell Walter just where you found these, he can go out and bring in enough for both of us.’

Jane drew a long breath and wiped her eyes for the last time. ‘All right,’ she said. ‘Only it really was Ellen’s secret. We found them in Lackey’s Bay.’

‘Was it you who thought of looking there?’ Dr. Thomas asked Ellen in pleased surprise, and Ellen was sorry to have to say, ‘No. That was a tip from Miss Wareham.’

‘From Miss Wareham? She didn’t encourage you to go off there collecting by yourselves, did she?’

‘No, she wanted us to tell the Collecting Crew.’

‘That would have been much better,’ said Dr. Thomas. ‘There! It’s not so bad as all that. I apologize! I never found any other collectors who can bring in as many of the little beasts as you two can. Maybe the Collecting Crew would have missed them altogether. You’ll have to let Walter take you over there sometime soon at low tide and show him just where they are. Now that we’re fairly sure of a good supply, I mean to end the season in a burst of hard work,’ and he yawned again.

‘You made me lose too much sleep last night, Jane. I have to count everything twice this morning to be sure I haven’t missed something. Time to begin again now.’

He moved his chair down the long table to one end of the array of finger-bowls, stuck his magnifying-glass in place, and bent down to work.

‘Would you like to act as secretary, Ellen?’ he suggested, as a sudden happy thought; and when Ellen eagerly agreed, ‘Here we are on the first page. Write the numbers I give you in these columns in order.’

Jane was very quiet while the counting and writing went on; she stood looking out of the window at a little catboat tacking back and forth in the harbor. Jane was usually contemptuous of people who rowed or walked or sailed just for the fun of it; she liked to be going to some definite place; but just now she hardly saw the catboat, even to feel superior to it.

When all the dishes had been inspected she said slowly, ‘Father—I wish I could do something for you that you would really like!’

‘Why, Jane!’ her father said, astonished.

‘I do, really!’ Jane quavered.

Dr. Thomas regarded her quizzically with one gray eye and one bulging magnifying-glass.

‘Well, I shan’t ask you to bring me a golden apple from the Garden of Hesperides, for fear you might try to do it. What shall I say? See here, Janey! My birthday comes day after tomorrow. Why don’t you and Ellen get my birthday dinner that night?’

‘Mother wouldn’t let me!’

‘I’ll see that she does if you’d like me to. She needs a vacation. She’s played with her new house long enough. Do you know, your mother was one of the best laboratory assistants I ever had? She can come down here for the afternoon and write numbers for me, if she must be doing something, and I’ll see she doesn’t escape even if we smell your biscuits burning down here!’

‘Let’s do it, Ellen,’ said Jane, and the older girl agreed.

‘But wouldn’t you like me to stay here the rest of the morning and play secretary?’ she asked. It seemed to her that the summer’s work was wearing him too fine. He looked thin, and in spite of the sunburn his color was not good. A night of worrying over Jane would not account for all the difference between his face now and as it had appeared at the first of the season.

‘I should like it very much,’ he answered gratefully. ‘Your writing is a great deal plainer than mine, especially when I am trying to write and look at an animal at the same time.

‘Jane, how would you like to go over those old rocks in the corner of the water-table and see if you can find anything more on them? Put the animals you find in that big glass dish and I’ll use them to start a fresh set of experiments this afternoon.’

Jane perched herself on a high stool, twisting her feet about the rungs, went over all the stones painstakingly, and when that was done, she, who hated dishwashing, made a beautiful suds and washed and polished glassware until the noon whistle blew.

Ellen was glad for a recess. Numbers were not her strong point, and she had concentrated on these to be sure they were written down carefully and accurately. These particular figures, however little she understood them, interested her for the sake of the Thomas family. All of them were watching the results of the summer’s work. They mourned when the old constant temperature box in which a long experiment was being carried on suddenly and without warning refused to obey its thermostat and cooked everything inside it, so that the whole experiment had to be started again. And they rejoiced as other experiments came to a successful conclusion and their particular problems could be dismissed.

There was no talk about the Smith Foundation from the Thomases, but Ellen found her thoughts going back to it. The great impersonal Foundations, with millions to give away, could not be approached with small requests. They gave tremendous laboratory buildings like this one at Woods

Hole, or endowed hospitals or medical schools. But the Smith Foundation was comparatively a very small affair beside these giants, with only a few thousands to distribute annually. Ellen could not help thinking that Mr. Smith would enjoy distributing his gifts himself, no matter how he might pretend that a secretary had sole charge of the funds.

If Mr. Smith's attention *could* be delicately directed toward Dr. Thomas's needs——

Walter joined them for their walk up the hill to lunch. Jane went ahead with her father and Ellen walked with Walter, fascinated as usual with the play of red and green on his knees. Walter was not a person with whom she found it easy to carry on a conversation, and now she felt his disapproval of her share in the excursion of the day before. The silence grew embarrassing. She found herself wondering just where on this roadside the affair of the goldfish had taken place, but of course she could not speak of that, since Jane had been warned not to tell it. She might, she thought, ask Walter where to find the wild raspberries he had mentioned seeing along the road; they would be useful for dessert at the birthday dinner, but what she really said was:

'Where are those goldfish you were speaking about?'

It was only after Walter's grimly astonished gaze had rested on her for half a minute that she realized her tongue had slipped, and blushed and stammered, 'I mean raspberries. Those raspberries you spoke about yesterday.'

'You said goldfish. What do you know about goldfish? What has Jane been telling?'

'What I wanted to ask about,' Ellen repeated determinedly, 'was raspberries. Were those black raspberries or red, and where did you see them?'

Walter did not condescend to answer. He said to himself, 'When I get Jane away from Father—— '

'Don't!' Ellen begged. 'She told me that story last night when we were trying to cheer up and amuse each other.'

'That kid,' Walter said firmly, 'has got to be taught a lesson, and for that matter I ought to be kicked for telling her. If Mrs. Smith finds that any more good stories are going around this place about her dear husband, she'll yank him off to some other Lab. where they'll appreciate him more. And that

would be a shame. He's a good scout, even if he is dumb, and he has a good time here.'

'I won't tell,' Ellen said earnestly. 'Indeed, I won't, Walter. Even if I go around absent-mindedly talking about goldfish, no one will know what I mean. And I don't think Jane will tell any one else; her story at the tea was enough for her.'

'I'll keep an eye out for her,' Walter said threateningly, but not so fiercely that Ellen was alarmed.

Instead, she plucked up courage for a desperate suggestion.

'Walter,' she said, and then could not think how to put her idea so that it would sound perfectly proper. She began again.

'Jane says Mr. Smith doesn't know who you are.'

'Oh, yes, he does!' Walter said comfortably. 'He knows I'm the fellow with the la'b'rd and sta'b'rd patches. Every time he sees my knees coming, he thinks of a new animal he wants me to bring in!'

'I mean,' said Ellen, 'he doesn't know you're Dr. Thomas's son.'

'Well, what could you expect of him? I don't present my calling card when I bring in his bugs.'

'You've done a lot of work for him, haven't you? I should think it would be a very good thing if he knew who you were.'

'What's the fuss about?' Walter inquired suspiciously. 'I don't get introductions to these men. A lot of them have known me ever since I was a kid, and some of the new ones find out for themselves who I am, and the rest don't know or care. Why should they? I work for them all just the same and they keep on my trail as hard as if they were my own father. Harder! Dad can be reasonable, but Mr. Smith wants pond snails one day and squid the next and Limulus the next; and then he says that what he wants is Limulus and I've brought him horseshoe crabs!'

Ellen was silent for so long that Walter looked over at her and explained, 'I suppose you know that Limulus is the scientific name for the horseshoe crab?'

'Oh, yes,' said Ellen. 'Jane taught me that.' They had slowed down, and Jane and her father had already turned off down the side road through the woods.

‘What I was trying to say was this,’ she said. ‘You have done a lot of hard work for Mr. Smith all season, and just now you are taking care of those goldfish for him extra. He ought to appreciate it. Don’t you think that if he knew Dr. Thomas was your father, he would pay more attention to your father’s request from the Foundation?’

‘See here—— ’ Walter began angrily; then he checked himself and Ellen was still less pleased to see the look of pity on his face.

‘Forget it,’ he admonished, not unkindly. ‘We don’t do that sort of thing. I don’t pretend I wouldn’t be glad for Dad to get that money for apparatus and for a trained assistant. This has been a heck of a summer for him, at it all day long and part of the nights. When I get farther along, I’m going to help him myself, if I’m good enough, but I can’t now. People might question his results if they knew I’d been fooling with his experiments.’

‘You didn’t want the story of the goldfish to get out,’ Ellen defended herself.

‘Why should I want Mr. Smith’s good time spoiled? Look here! I’ve seen men going around this Laboratory being sweet to people of importance, because they thought they were going to get something out of it, and those men aren’t much good; it takes their mind off their real work. Maybe it’s all right to be a politician, but you can’t be a politician and a scientist at the same time. I don’t see how you could be a good writer or artist either if you put your attention on toadying to higher-ups. I’m going to be decent to Mr. Smith, but I can’t go around to him and say, “Don’t you think because I picked up your goldfish, you ought to give my father a few hundreds?” ’

‘No,’ Ellen admitted. ‘I guess I didn’t really think you could. I just wanted your father to have some help. He looks tired.’

Walter held the gate open for her, and, to her relief, he spoke quite cheerfully. ‘That’s all right. Mother didn’t really mean to beg of Mrs. Smith either when she asked her to tea; she just wanted to appear deserving in case Mrs. Smith was looking around for deserving biologists. And I will say luck was ag’in’ her. Don’t you worry. Father’s work is all right, and if he can hold out, he can prove it. You leave him to manage it.’

‘But it takes so long! And Dr. von Bergen may get done first!’

‘What do you think this is? A race, with a silver cup to the man that gets the most experiments done first? Think again!’

Ellen had no time to answer this, for Jane had flung herself out of the door upon her.

‘Mother says we may get Father’s birthday dinner! Plan it all ourselves and market for it, and cook it with nobody else in the house! Let’s have a grand dinner and invite Miss Wareham! Father says he would like that.’

CHAPTER X

The Birthday Dinner

Dr. Thomas had made his promise good; after lunch on his birthday he had taken Mrs. Thomas away with him to spend the afternoon at the Laboratory, and she had left the girls without a single direction for the birthday dinner, or even a hinted warning that anything might go wrong.

Nevertheless, the first thing Ellen did was to take up a pack of old newspapers and cover the kitchen linoleum with them, as well as a path in to the dining-table.

'There!' she said. 'If we spill anything, the *New York Times* can be responsible for the damage. Stick up the menu above the sink, Jane, and let's see what we ought to work on first.'

From her pocket Jane produced a smudgy bit of paper that had gone to market with her more than once, and tucked one corner under the window-casing. The two studied the list earnestly.

'Mytilus soup,' said Jane. 'It takes an awful long time to open enough. Maybe I'd better begin now.'

'But not very long to heat the milk and cook the Mytilus. Let's read on.'

'I don't think Mytilus soup is very grand,' Jane objected suddenly. 'Especially for a birthday dinner. I think maybe we ought to have bought consommé instead.'

'But,' said Ellen, 'your father likes it. And since we gathered them ourselves, they don't cost anything and we can spend more money on something else.' She took up the next item. 'Filet of sole. That sounds grand enough, much grander than flounder.'

'But it *is* flounder,' Jane was prepared to argue.

'Restaurants always call it sole,' Ellen insisted. 'And it's awfully good. And it doesn't take long to broil or to cut the lemon to go with it. Creamed potatoes; creamed *new* potatoes! Aren't they nice little pink things? I'm going to scrape them instead of peeling them. It will take longer, but I can do that any time.'

'Peas,' Jane read in her turn. 'I could shell those. Don't you think we ought to have bought the green beans instead?' Jane had devoted a great deal

of thought to this menu, wearing down the proprietors of the fruit and vegetable store, the A and P, and the general grocery, by inspecting their stocks several times over.

'We got those peas,' Ellen said firmly, 'because Miss Wareham was looking at them and thought they would be delicious. We're sure of having one thing she likes. I think you could cook them as well as shell them, Jane. You can hardly spoil them.'

Jane did not resent this somewhat uncomplimentary remark. Neither of them was very certain as to her cooking ability.

'All right, I can try them. Lettuce and salad dressing. You have got to make the salad dressing, Ellen.'

'It *looks* simple,' said Ellen. 'Cake and ice-cream and red raspberries. Jane, I think we'd better whip the cream first and put it to freeze in the refrigerator, and then make our cake. And the raspberries are all ready. Aren't you glad we found those? I think there are just enough to go around, if you and I don't take too many.'

The cream was soon whipped, flavored, and put away to freeze.

'Mousse,' said Ellen thoughtfully. 'Mousse. That's the word I've been trying to think of. It's a much finer word than ice-cream. Any dinner ought to be a success with filet of sole and vanilla mousse.'

'Um-m,' agreed Jane, licking the creamy egg-beater.

'Now cake,' Ellen went on. 'Will you wash that bowl, Jane, so we can use it for beating the eggs?'

'Dibs on making the cake! Please!' Jane begged. 'I'll wash up all the dishes after it.'

'We don't know much about this recipe that we cut out of the paper except that it doesn't call for too many eggs and too much butter,' Ellen returned doubtfully. 'But I can watch you.'

Jane shook her head. 'No, I want to tell Father I made his birthday cake all by myself.'

Ellen could not quite take herself out of the kitchen altogether, but she sat in one corner scraping the new potatoes and trying not to watch; and the cake batter left in the bowl at the end tasted very good, even if a little lumpy. When it was in the oven, they took up most of the papers, by this time rather

floury, and put fresh ones down, so as not to make white footprints in the rest of the house.

‘It’s rising and it’s turning brown!’ Jane reported happily.

‘I think it will fall if you look at it too often,’ Ellen warned. ‘Don’t you want to get some flowers for the center of the table?’

‘But we want the cake in the center. With the pink candles!’

‘Surely. Flowers on the serving-table then.’

She came back presently with a handful of daisies and pink yarrow. ‘I didn’t want to cut any of Mother’s flowers. She likes to do that herself. These grew along the road and nobody cares if I did pick them. How is my cake? These will be pink and white to match it.’

Neither of them was quite sure how to tell when a cake was done, but when the top was the proper color, Jane took it out and set it on the table, where it smelt better than a whole bakery shop.

‘You turn it upside down to come out of the pan. I know that,’ said Ellen. ‘Then, when it is cool, you ice it with confectioner’s sugar moistened with cream. That is easy.’

The round pan was turned upside down on a large plate and left there while the peas were shelled.

‘Peas are fun,’ said Jane, pressing her thumb along the ridge of a fat pod and watching it pop open to show its cozy row of round green peas within. ‘I think maybe I am going to cook a good many things on my island. And I will always come home and cook Father’s birthday dinner. I wonder if my cake has come away from the pan yet? Does it fall with a thud?’

But when the peas were finished and the cake pan was lifted for inspection, the cake was still where it had been and showed no signs of leaving the pan. Ellen took a knife and ran it around the edge of the cake.

‘Did you grease the pan before you put the batter in?’ she asked Jane.

‘The recipe didn’t say to do it!’ Jane answered indignantly.

‘I suppose the recipe thought we would know that! We shall just have to leave it in the pan and ice it there. If we try to take it out, it will come in chunks.’

‘The old pan will look horrid on the table’—Jane’s voice broke.

Ellen thought hard. ‘I have some white tissue paper upstairs that my best scarf is wrapped in. We’ll take that and make a frill for the pan so it won’t show. It will really look as if it were intended to go with the filet of sole and the mousse. And after the first bite nobody will care how it looks, because it is so good!’

Jane was willing to try this; and when the cake had been covered with a thick white icing and the pink candles and scalloped tissue paper frill were in place, she was ready to admit that it looked even more festive than she had expected in the first place.

‘Let’s set the table now,’ proposed Ellen, ‘and then when we get tired we can rest ourselves by going in to look at it. Let’s put Miss Wareham on my side of the table next to your father.’

‘I want to sit by Miss Wareham,’ Jane said jealously.

‘I don’t blame you; but you want to sit by your father and so does she. You can look across at her. Doesn’t the table look pretty set for six?’

‘Six is a nice number,’ Jane said interestedly. ‘Mother has six of everything in her very best silver, and six of her blue dinner plates. Aren’t we having a good time?’

It was well that they took up their next task in a fine glow of past achievement, for it was discouragingly tedious. Jane brought in the sooty picnic kettle, full nearly to the top with the Mytilus.

‘Does it take so many?’ Ellen asked uneasily.

‘That’s not very many,’ Jane replied, hoisting them over the flame. ‘That’s hardly enough to taste.’

The water in the kettle was very slow to boil; by the end of twenty minutes, Ellen could still bear a testing finger in it. But when she had almost given up hope and had begun wondering how to make tomato soup, the water began to steam and Jane reported that the shells farther down were beginning to open.

They were still fishing out the little orange-colored morsels and detaching the queer, rootlike part when a knock came at the kitchen door and Miss Wareham walked comfortably in.

‘Is it that late?’ Ellen exclaimed in horror.

‘No, of course it’s not,’ Miss Wareham reassured her. ‘I just came up for the fun of seeing you work. If I bother you I can go into the living-room and

sniff the delicious odors from a distance.'

Ellen looked up anxiously at the kitchen clock. 'Half-past five, and we haven't these things done yet.' She waved her hands despairingly over the pile of shells that heaped one side of the sink.

'What time did you intend to have dinner?' Miss Wareham inquired conversationally. 'I forgot to ask. That was another reason why I came early.'

'Six o'clock,' Ellen answered, diving at the mussels again. 'Oh—won't you sit down, Miss Wareham? We'd love to have you out here in the kitchen if you don't mind our chasing around you.'

'Thank you,' said that lady. 'What's this? New potatoes, as I live! Shall I put them on to cook for you?'

'Oh, if you would!' exclaimed Ellen. She could feel Miss Wareham's calmness communicating itself to her flurried nerves. 'I'll put the peas on a little later. They don't take so long to cook.'

'I see you're an experienced chef,' Miss Wareham approved. She lit the flame under the potatoes and strolled on into the dining-room, where she paused to commend the appearance of the table. When she came out again, a dish of pink and white mints had been added to the serving-table, where Jane found them with delight when, the Mytilus finished and the great kettleful of empty shells removed outside, she was free to refresh herself a moment by the sight of the birthday cake.

'It looks very pretty, Jane,' Miss Wareham said, 'but not quite what I would have expected from you. I thought that at the least you would have a centerpiece of an aquarium with a few minnows and a crab or two and some seaweed.'

Jane smiled. She did not mind being teased by Miss Wareham. 'A birthday is different,' she said. 'For a birthday you always have pink candles and flowers and your best things.'

Miss Wareham nodded. 'That is what I have observed for a good many years. My most professional students still want pretty dresses, and pink candles on their birthday cakes.'

Jane looked down at her own khaki outfit, which, in spite of an apron, had been decorated in the course of the afternoon with streaks of egg yolk, cake batter, and icing.

‘I haven’t changed!’ she said. ‘And, oh! it’s a quarter of six! Miss Wareham, will you help Ellen a minute while I get my dress on?’

‘Certainly,’ said Miss Wareham, her eyes twinkling. ‘Run along, Jane. I’m glad you thought about your dress without any reminder.’

She found a big apron for herself and went leisurely about the kitchen, knowing where to find the bread, without being told, and slicing it into thin beautiful slices; cutting the butter into accurate cubes with a warmed knife; appearing at the stove at just the right moment to turn the strips of filet, which happened to be at the exact time that Ellen was measuring out the tea. Her unruffled serenity was even more helpful than her expert service. In the last ten minutes everything needed to be finished at once; the potatoes must be creamed, the peas buttered, and Jane buttoned, and everything must be done, but not too done. It was very calming to Ellen that Miss Wareham did not appear in the least flustered.

‘Are you sure you weren’t a professor of domestic science?’ Ellen asked saucily.

‘No, I was professor of biology right enough,’ said Miss Wareham, ‘but I practiced domestic science at the same time. It was good for me and I liked it, and I couldn’t afford not to!’

For the first time that summer, Jane appeared to enjoy wearing one of her little dresses. ‘See! I chose this print because it has pink in it to match the candles and the flowers. Aren’t you going to put on your best dress, Ellen?’

‘I haven’t time,’ Ellen demurred, but Miss Wareham said:

‘Nearly everything is finished. Run along, and Jane and I will keep an eye on the fish to see it doesn’t burn.’

When Ellen came down, hastily freshened, Jane was hopping up and down by the front door.

‘It’s time they were here. It’s two minutes after six.’

‘There comes a car. Did they drive down?’

‘No, Father would always rather walk. It’s Jim Harrison’s car.’

‘I wonder if they have invited him to dinner,’ Ellen thought, dismayed. ‘I don’t believe the raspberries will stretch over seven people!’

Jane was running down the path to greet them, and Ellen retired to the kitchen, but not until she had seen that Jim Harrison appeared to be coming

up the path with the others. Miss Wareham had taken off her apron and was waiting in the living-room, as if she had not just been assisting the cook in the kitchen. Ellen felt deserted at first, but she soon reconsidered.

'She wants Jane and me to get all the credit for this dinner. She doesn't want the family to think she has been helping. I like Miss Wareham!'

Jim Harrison's voice outside sounded unexpectedly: 'No! No, thank you! I can't stay to dinner. I just want to see Ellen a minute. Chicago people ought to keep track of each other.'

There was a vague laughing protest that Ellen did not understand and then Jim Harrison stepped in unceremoniously at the kitchen door, confronting Ellen at her task of taking up the filet and placing it unbroken on the hot platter.

'I just wanted you to know,' he said rapidly and in a low voice, 'that I don't think Dr. Thomas is well. I found him out in the hall this afternoon leaning up against the wall perfectly white, with his eyes shut. He wouldn't let me help him nor tell Mrs. Thomas, and pretty soon he said he was all right and I was not to worry. I made an excuse to be around this evening and drive him home, but of course I can't stay. You keep an eye on him, will you? I don't want to alarm any of the family, if there isn't any need, but I'm worried. You seem to keep your head in an emergency. If you need help, send Walter after me. I'll be in my room all evening.'

Ellen stood taking this in. 'Do you think we ought to get a doctor?' she asked, as Jim was about to slip out. Automatically she began to pick up slices of lemon and bits of curly green parsley to arrange on the platter.

'I don't dare. It's not exactly my business. But you keep an eye on him.' Without a good-bye he was out of the house and around the corner.

Ellen stared at the door, trying to collect herself, but there seemed nothing more important to do than to take in the plate of bread that Miss Wareham had cut and left covered with a towel. Once in the cooler room, distributing the bread on the bread-and-butter plates, the world swung back to normal again. The dainty table, the cheerful voices from the living-room, where Dr. Thomas was evidently telling a funny experience, made it seem impossible that there should be any threatening danger.

'Jane!' she called.

'Oh, I forgot!' Jane answered remorsefully. 'Please save that story till supper-time, Father.'

It was a happy birthday party, and Jane and Ellen were praised until their faces were fixed in pleased smiles. The soup, so laboriously prepared, was hot and good; the filet of sole and the new potatoes went excellently together; and if Jane had forgotten to salt the peas, that could be easily remedied. Walter helped to clear the table between courses, and Mrs. Thomas ended Ellen's uncertainties over the French dressing for the lettuce by offering to mix it herself.

It struck Ellen that Dr. Thomas was not taking a second helping of the fish he praised highly, but when the raspberries and the ice-cream appeared and the candles on the cake were lit, no one could have been more interested and appreciative, or have smiled more complacently when the family sang in chorus:

'Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday, dear Father,
Happy birthday to you!'

'It's like home,' Ellen thought, with her throat tightening. This summer she had not thought much about home. It had been as much as she could do to find her way about in this odd corner of the world, where a whole village lived to study the sea and its plants and animals, and where, even if one did not actually become a mermaid, the change was almost as great as if she had.

Now, with the familiar song in her ears, and the pink candles burning before her, the picture in her mind was not of this fresh summer cottage, but of the dining-room in an old Chicago house, where a pink-candled cake appeared for each McNeill on successive birthdays. Her mother would carry in the cake and her father would be sitting at the table, and both would be intent on the delight of the honored child. When her father had a birthday, he would never blow out the candles on his cake; Ellen had that privilege because she was the youngest. And now Dr. Thomas was saying:

'You blow them out for me, Jane. No, that's all right. I have a stitch in my side and I'd really rather you did.'

Ellen looked at him uneasily. A stitch in his side! Did he really mean that something hurt him? But no one else appeared to notice, and Dr. Thomas was leaning forward to watch Jane puffing like the north wind, and there was even more color than usual in his face.

When the candles were out and the cake was cut, the white-frilled pan was ceremoniously passed around the table. No one would listen to apologies; they all professed to believe that birthday cakes were much more impressive in a decorated pan than served in any other way.

‘Personally,’ said Jane, looking down hungrily into her empty plate, ‘I think it was quite good cake. Father, do you want some more ice-cream?’

‘There isn’t any more,’ Ellen was obliged to confess.

‘No-o,’ said Dr. Thomas thoughtfully; ‘I haven’t eaten what I have here, I’ve been so carried away by this very superior cake. You’d better eat it for me, Jane. I haven’t been cooking, and so I’m not as hungry as you are, perhaps.’

‘If you don’t want it—— ’ Jane said, trying very hard to be polite and restrained.

‘I couldn’t possibly,’ said her father. He pushed his chair a little back from the table and watched Jane eat his plate of raspberries and cream with the same smile that Ellen’s father wore when he had just persuaded some member of the family that he did not really care for the breast of chicken.

When the last raspberry had been pursued around the plate and sent home, he said: ‘It was a wonderful birthday party, Ellen and Jane. I’m sorry to have to run away from it. Mother and I had planned to wash the dishes and let the cooks have a rest.’

‘We can wash the dishes,’ Ellen protested.

‘What are you doing?’ Jane asked, disappointed.

‘The constant temperature box is acting up. I must tinker with it and watch it until it gets to running evenly again. There’s a good experiment running in it now.’

He put out a hand to Jane as he rose from his chair, and then quickly took it back and stood there holding his right side. Ellen was on her feet and around the table, but Miss Wareham was already standing beside him.

‘Sit down,’ she said in her pleasant, normal voice. She put one plump, steady hand under his arm. ‘There!’

In a moment he was able to straighten his twisted features into a smile.

‘It’s all right, Jane,’ he said. ‘Just that stitch in my side.’ But when he attempted it again, he could not rise, for the pain.

Ellen said in a low aside to Miss Wareham, ‘Jim Harrison said he would get a doctor if one were needed.’

Miss Wareham nodded in complete understanding. ‘I thought he hadn’t looked well, myself.’

To Dr. Thomas she said: ‘Better let us get a doctor. And as soon as you can, go into the other room and lie down. Man, you have fever!’

‘I knew that,’ he confessed. ‘Well, go along, Walter. Perhaps I can be fixed up with a powder or a pill. I’ve got to watch that experiment tonight!’

‘Tut!’ Miss Wareham said vigorously. ‘Your experiment will be all right! No, Mrs. Thomas, I wouldn’t give him any medicine till the doctor comes. Jane, don’t you want to sit by your father and read him something very interesting? And Ellen and I will clear the table and wash the dishes.’

CHAPTER XI

A Journey in the Night

‘It feels so funny to be out on the Cayadetta after night,’ Jane said in a low, wondering voice to Ellen. There was no especial need to lower her voice; her father, lying well wrapped on the long bench opposite, spoke occasionally to Mrs. Thomas, or to the doctor, whom the boys had succeeded in finding in good time, and seemed to enjoy listening to their conversation; but Ellen had, nevertheless, the same hushed feeling as Jane.

‘Drive him up to a Boston hospital? I wouldn’t think of it!’ the doctor had said vigorously. ‘We’ll warn out Cap’n Veeder and the Cayadetta. It’s a calm night and he can have a very comfortable ride to New Bedford, without a single unnecessary jolt.’

‘I hadn’t said I was going to any hospital,’ Dr. Thomas had protested at this point. ‘Can’t you give me something to tide me over this attack, and let me get my work wound up before I take time off for an operation?’

‘Both of you boys had better go down,’ the doctor said by way of answer. ‘Cap’n Veeder may need you for deckhands or stokers, getting off this time of the evening.’

And then to his patient: ‘I’m going down to telephone over to the hospital to get ready for you and then I’ll come back and drive you to the wharf myself. We’ll have that appendix out by midnight.’

At that Dr. Thomas shut his eyes and set his lips hard. Ellen, sitting bolt upright on the edge of her chair in a corner out of the way, found it hard to look at this expression of disappointment and pain; but presently she stole another glance and it was gone.

‘Well,’ he said, calmly enough, ‘the long-time experiment in the constant temperature box will have to go. I don’t believe any one else could nurse that along for me. But you saw all the others on the table today, my dear. If you could look at them and take notes on them once a day so long as they last, it would save a good deal from the wreck.’

‘I’ll want to stay with you at the hospital,’ said Mrs. Thomas.

‘I’ll be all right,’ said her husband. ‘We seem to be going to have a special excursion on the Cayadetta, and so I invite you all to go over with

me, but there's no need to keep you there.'

There was no arguing the question; apparently it was taken for granted that the two girls were to go along. Ellen found their warm coats and berets and helped Mrs. Thomas carry down blankets to the old car; and later drove down the car and carried the blankets over to the wharf where the Cayadetta lay with steam up. Jane scrambled down into the launch immediately; Miss Wareham, who had come down with them, too, stood beside Ellen on the wharf waiting for the doctor's car to arrive with the older Thomases. Ellen caught her breath as she saw Dr. Thomas come slowly down the wharf, halting abruptly to put his hand to his side, but Miss Wareham's cheerful expression was undisturbed. She stood at one side with calm, reassuring little speeches until the boat was actually untied and off and the last Ellen saw of Woods Hole was her solid, generous figure tramping away up the pier as steadily as if the evening had been only an ordinary incident in her seventy-odd years.

More than anything else this picture served to steady Ellen as the Cayadetta steamed away across the dark water.

'Miss Wareham isn't frightened,' she told herself. 'She must have seen bad times like this before, and perhaps they came out all right. At any rate, things did go on again afterward.'

The launch ploughed steadily along, but it seemed to Ellen to move very slowly and to be a very small thing in the vast darkness. The channel lights hung for a long, long time in the same position, and the yellow windows of the houses along the point would not be left behind. Perhaps, Ellen thought, the tide in the Hole was against them, and once they left the strong current behind, they would find it easier going in the Bay; but however she strained her eyes over the ship's side she could not tell the direction of the tide, and she did not like to ask questions even of Jim Harrison, the most approachable of the crew. He waited alertly, all his attention directed toward possible orders, and when orders came, he executed them as quickly and carefully as possible.

Jane huddled down in her coat with her hands in her pockets. Her head nodded and drooped and soon she was sound asleep. With great pains Ellen shifted her around until she lay full length on their bench, with her head in Ellen's lap and one raspberry-scratched hand in Ellen's hand.

Ellen herself felt as if she would never be sleepy again. Her body was tired enough, but her mind raced ahead, fetching up odd lines of poetry with their accompanying pictures, often both appropriate and unwelcome; and

ahead of them the lights of New Bedford lay low on the horizon, and would not come nearer.

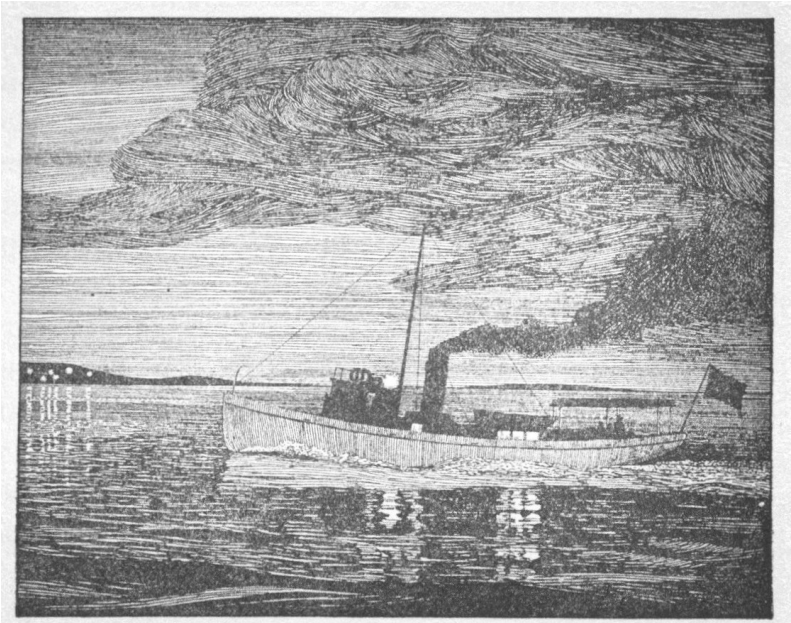
‘For though from out this bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far——’

That was not at all a useful verse for this time, nor was the next that flitted by, of

‘—a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern.’

on which the dying King Arthur was embarking for the island-valley

‘Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow.’



THE CAYADETTA STEAMED AWAY ACROSS THE DARK WATER

She felt her eyes stinging with tears, and deliberately set her mind in search of something more bracing. The winter before, for her own pleasure, she had memorized Wordsworth’s ‘Ode on Intimations of Immortality,’ and though she had kept the accomplishment well hidden, not to risk teasing, it had sometimes stood her in good stead, as it did now.

‘Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.’

When Ellen had reached these stately lines, she felt as if she were coming to the clean wide sea again after an evening spent far in the dusty inland; and she could finish the anxious voyage with something of the ‘philosophic mind’ of which the poem spoke.

‘We’re getting in, Ellen,’ Jim Harrison paused beside her to say. ‘Better rouse the infant and let her get waked up. They’ll want to rush him, once we dock.’

Jane woke heavily, with no interest in the harbor lighthouse, or the big boats and docks. She let herself be lifted from the launch and put into a taxi waiting there, but she hardly seemed to know where they were until they were sitting in the brightly lighted waiting-room of the hospital and the older people had disappeared in the wake of a white uniform.

‘I don’t like the way it smells,’ was her first remark. ‘Ugh!’

The other three sniffed together, and none of them could find anything to praise in the hospital odor, compounded of ether and carbolic acid and stray medicinal whiffs; but Walter felt obliged to say sternly:

‘You ought to be glad we could get Dad here, Janey!’

‘I’m not going to have any hospital on my island,’ Jane announced, blinking rapidly.

‘Your island?’ Jim Harrison inquired politely. ‘Where have you got an island, Jane?’

Jane glanced appealingly at Ellen, and Ellen knew that she did not want to answer. Ellen had never heard her speak of the island to any one else before this.

She explained gravely: ‘Jane wants to have an island of her own some day, where she can have everything just as she likes it best.’

At this Walter gave a brotherly snort, but Jim Harrison nodded.

‘When I was about your size, Jane, I wanted a house in a tree where I could climb up and be by myself when things didn’t suit me down below. I built one, too, in a big old willow tree in our back yard, and it was a lot of comfort to me.’

‘What kind of a house was it?’ Jane asked, entranced at the thought.

‘The floor space was about four by five and on one side it was about five feet high and on the other a good deal less. I built it out of old pieces of board from a lumber pile in the basement, and that was the best I could do with the short lengths. But I had a real window that had been a basement storm window, and a door on hinges that I could lock; and I made a rope ladder that I could pull up, and there I was! Sometimes I would take my lunch or my supper up there, and it was my favorite place to read or work on some fool thing the other fellows would laugh at.’

‘Do you still have it?’ Jane wanted to know.

‘No, I don’t, Jane. You can’t work on biology up in a tree-house very well. It’s better to have a laboratory and some other people around to check up on you every once in a while. My kid brother took it down and made it into a house for his pup!’

‘Oh!’ said Jane; and Ellen guessed from her far-away look that she was planning a house for a dog on her island.

At that moment a white-suited interne came to the door so smiling and reassuring that Ellen’s hopes rose at once. He beckoned the oldest of them, Jim Harrison, to the door and spoke to him quickly in a low voice, and then turned and disappeared again.

‘Does he think they may not need to operate after all?’ Walter asked hoarsely, as soon as he was gone.

‘They expect the operation to be over before midnight,’ Jim answered cheerfully. ‘They’re getting him ready for it now. Let’s go down and tell Cap’n Veeder. He said he would wait for us all night if necessary, but he will want to know when we will be ready.

‘Let’s make a wild evening of it,’ he said to Ellen aside, as they went out. ‘It will be a lot better for Walter and Jane if we can keep them away from the hospital most of the time.’

‘Better for me, too,’ Ellen answered frankly, and the other grinned and replied as frankly:

‘Me, too. That hospital smell gets me. Makes me think of tonsils and broken arms!’

The lights were bright along the closely built-up, sloping streets of the old town.

Ellen said, looking around wide-eyed, ‘I’ve never been here before.’

‘Haven’t we brought you over?’ Walter asked, surprised. ‘We ought to have brought you over to the whaling museum. We come every year.’

‘There’s a whole whaling-vessel, half-sized, in the museum,’ Jane said eagerly. ‘You can go down inside it! Let’s go visit it.’

‘It’s not open this time of night, of course,’ Walter told her with superior scorn.

‘Then let’s look in the windows of the antique shops,’ Jane proposed.

‘That’s a good idea,’ Jim approved. ‘They are close to the wharves. We’ll walk past on our way back.’

They found their way down narrow, uneven streets to the waterfront, left their message with the captain, who had made himself comfortable to spend a sleepless night, and came back again along old warehouses with faded sign of ships’ supplies for sale painted on their sides. The antique shops were delightfully rickety and unfashionable-looking, with dusty windows filled with a miscellany of china, furniture, and bric-à-brac. Jane chose a jagging-wheel of ivory in her window-shopping. Some sailor had carved it with a spirited horse’s head at one end to hold the fluted wheel intended to crimp the edges of pies, and the two prongs of the delicate fork at the other end were the horse’s two hind hooves. Ellen coveted a cracked china bowl with maidens and fawns in a quaint green pattern round it. Walter and Jim united in their desire for a wicked-looking knife that might have been brought back home by some adventurous whaler after a brush with South Sea island cannibals. It was perfectly safe to make a choice, for the shops were well locked and there was no possibility of their having to find the money for purchases.

When they tired of this, Jim looked secretly at his watch and proposed that they find a movie.

‘I don’t want to,’ Jane said. ‘I want to go back and see how Father is.’

‘I think I do, too,’ Walter said uneasily.

There was nothing else to do; but Jim made the journey last as long as possible by taking a roundabout way past handsome houses, whose ‘captain’s walk’ on the roof he took pains to explain to Ellen in detail.

‘It must have seemed a long time to them, waiting for the ships to come in sight,’ Jane said wistfully. ‘I think waiting is hard work.’

‘We won’t have to wait much longer,’ Ellen told her, but when they came back to the empty waiting-room, just as they had left it, she found the time stretching quite beyond the ordinary measuring of clocks and watches.

She tried to tell a story to Jane, but could not always remember what she was saying; and the palms of her hands were damp and cold. Across the room the two boys were talking. Walter was giving a list of names, some of them vaguely familiar to Ellen, as belonging to biologists around the Laboratory.

‘And Ericson and Simms and von Bergen,’ Walter was saying. ‘And that’s all.’

‘Your father?’ Jim asked in a low voice.

Walter shook his head. ‘Not on the list.’

‘But it hasn’t been published yet,’ Jim suggested.

‘It’s the official list all right. Mr. Smith gave it to me to be typed by the stenographer. Maybe I oughtn’t to have read it, but it wasn’t in an envelope or folded. I could hardly help seeing. I expect we’ll find that the older men know all about it. Maybe Dad does. He keeps such a stiff upper lip you can’t tell. I did hope they would be able to see his work.’

He dug his hands deep into his pockets and frowned at his shoes.

Ellen felt a flame of indignation rising; apparently the grants from the Smith Foundation had been assigned for the year and Dr. Thomas was not among those fortunate enough to receive aid for his work. Then she forgot all about it, for the interne was standing in the doorway. His white cap was awry on his short hair and there was a dreadful smear of blood across the cuff of his white gown, but on his face there was a broad, boyish smile.

‘All done,’ he said. ‘He’s fine. Got the appendix just in time. Now all he has to do is to get well.’

‘I want to see him,’ said Jane, with determination. They were all on their feet, crowding around the interne, who was as pleased as if he had performed the operation single-handed.

‘No, sister. We’ll let him sleep the rest of the night. The doctor said to tell you he’d be down in a minute and go home with you. Of course your mother is going to stay.

‘Gosh, I’ve got to get back up there! I just wanted to have the fun of telling you. Your father is a good scout. He went under the anæsthetic like a lamb.’

Ellen found it hard to collect her thoughts sufficiently to get herself and Jane into their wraps for the trip back home, so great was the shock of relief, and she had only just discovered Jane’s béret safely stored away in her pocket when the doctor came down and shooed them all into the street.

Ellen said to him breathlessly as she tried to keep pace with his long strides, ‘Did Mrs. Thomas send any directions for me?’

‘What about?’

‘Why—about the house, or Jane, or the food.’

‘Lord, no! No woman thinks about housekeeping when she’s just got her husband back after a major operation.’

‘Will she be home tomorrow?’ Ellen asked.

‘Tomorrow!’

‘Dr. Thomas said he wanted her to watch his experiments every day.’

‘He’ll be glad enough to have her right there tomorrow,’ the doctor said. ‘Well, Cap’n, it wasn’t much more than an hour later than I predicted! Can I get set for a nap somewhere?’

Ellen and Jane were stowed away below decks where it was warm, and though Ellen dreamed so incessantly and vividly that it hardly seemed she slept, it was difficult for her to rouse at the end of the trip and realize that they were again tied up at the Laboratory pier.

It was three o’clock in the morning. The street lamps burnt lonesomely and not a soul was stirring. The doctor was off in his car at once.

‘You take the girls home,’ Jim Harrison said to Walter. ‘I’ll stay around the boat as long as I’m needed.’

The old car was standing where Ellen had parked it in the evening, and it seemed to have no idea of leaving the spot. The starter buzzed like a swarm of bees under Walter’s heel, but no answering beat came from the engine. If

Jane had been less sleepy she would have been full of advice as to where the trouble lay, but she only climbed up into the back seat.

'Want me to try awhile?' Ellen offered.

'No. Thanks,' Walter answered gruffly. 'Where's the flashlight? I guess there's no gas in the tank. There's not,' he repeated in tragic tones, as soon as he could focus his sleepy eyes on the gauge. 'Well, I'll go down to the garage and see if I can wake up anybody there. We'd never get Jane home on foot, or I'd leave the old thing down here overnight.'

'I'm as much awake as you are,' Jane retorted with a yawn. 'Look! Isn't that light up in Father's laboratory?'

'You're right, it is,' Walter answered. 'Dad must have forgotten it.' He drew a long, tired breath. 'I ought to go up and turn it off.'

'I will,' said Ellen. She picked herself up slowly from the running-board where she had slumped.

'I'll go with you'—Jane began to stir.

'Run along by yourself, Janey,' said her brother. 'You know the way. You'll have to go in by the far door and turn on the hall lights as you go.'

'All right.' Jane was climbing out.

'And don't you bother any of Dad's things,' her brother admonished sharply. 'We'll look after them tomorrow the best we can and maybe we can do something with them.'

'Of course I won't,' Jane threw back indignantly over her shoulder, and trotted off across the road and around the corner of the big dim bulk of the Laboratory to the door that was never locked even at this time of night.

Ellen watched her as far as she could see her, and then, closing her tired eyes, she went off into an uneasy doze with her head against the side of the car. She roused with a start at the tramp of Walter's returning feet.

'Think I was never coming?' he asked. 'I had a time finding a man and getting him waked up.'

'I must have been asleep,' said Ellen, still half-dazed. 'Jane! Where is Jane?'

Walter looked up at the building. 'Light's still on,' he said. 'She must have found something there to play with. Trust Jane!'

‘I’ll go and get her while you put in the gas,’ said Ellen. ‘We won’t be long.’

CHAPTER XII

An Unexpected Encounter

The wall switches clicked briskly as Jane threw on the hallway lights. This was good fun, for there was a considerable choice of switches, and Jane threw them all on and then turned off again all those that she did not need. The leather heels of her best slippers made an unaccustomed clatter on the stone stairs of the empty building; halfway up, the stair turned and Jane was in half-darkness again. When, at the top, she felt for the wall switches again, she could not find the right one to illuminate the darkness of the long hall, but this did not hinder her long.

A light came over the high transom of her father's door, and, strangely enough, one was also burning in the room of Dr. von Bergen opposite. Jane considered turning it off for him, as a kindly act, and at once decided against it. In the first place, she did not wish to be kind to him, and in the second place, she knew that he had a habit, almost alone of the many people who worked in this building, of locking the door of his room. Let his light burn! It would help to guide her down the hall again after her errand had been accomplished.

It was not until Jane had come quite to her father's door that it occurred to her that she was not alone in the building. A noise of some one's shuffling walk became audible then above the patter of her own feet. She looked toward von Bergen's room to see if it came from that direction, but plainly it did not. The steps were moving around in her own father's room, and when she held herself perfectly still, as she was doing now, she could hear from within a man's voice, muttering. Apparently he was talking to himself, for there was no answer.

It was all very well for Jane to be told later, as she was many times, that at this point she should have retreated to find some older person. Such a thought never occurred to her. No one had any right in her father's laboratory; the trespasser must be dealt with. She opened the door and slipped inside, narrowing her eyes against the strong light of the table lamp, and amazed and angry beyond any caution at the scene which she gradually made out.

At the long table under the window stood a tall one-sided figure in a laboratory coat, his back to her. To the left of him on the table a kettle boiled

over a gas flame; to the right was a glass flask of water whose temperature he was taking with great pains.

What this meant, Jane had no idea, although she was sure it should not be allowed; but the shocking thing was the door of the thick-walled constant temperature box was wide open, and none of the little glass dishes of her father's experiment remained within. Nor, when she ran her eyes around, was anything to be seen of them.

'Wh-what are you doing?' Jane stammered, and for the first time von Bergen turned around.

An older person might have noted, whatever his exasperation, that the man's thin face was colorless and lined with fatigue. Jane saw only his thick eyebrows, terrifyingly drawn together, and the sinister scar on his cheek; and she was frightened, but not so frightened that she yielded ground.

'What have you done to my father's c-constant temperature box?' she demanded.

'So-o, it is you?' commented Dr. von Bergen. 'I did not recognize the clothes.'

For some reason this added to Jane's fury. She stood holding to the knob of the door while the other added a little hot water to that in the flask and read the thermometer very deliberately again.

'Th-that was an awfully important experiment,' Jane began, struggling for words. 'I think you are mean to spoil it.'

Dr. von Bergen laid down the thermometer and limped over to her. 'I cannot have you bothering,' he told her with great finality. He put a large strong hand on her shoulder, turned her around, and pushed her into the hall before she had time to brace herself.

'Go home!' he told her, blocking the gap in the door. 'Why you should at this time of night be here, I cannot imagine. Go home before I think you are some annoying dream and de-molish you!'

Outside the door Jane caught her breath in a sob of helpless rage. She was well aware that she was no match for this man's strength, cripple though he was. He could put her outside the room any time that he chose to do so, and even if she should struggle, it would probably only result in the overturning of some precious bowl of planarians. He was so well aware of this that he had not even bothered to lock her out. An idea came to her. She

tiptoed across the hall and tried the door of von Bergen's room, and to her joy, neither was it locked.

Jane wiped her eyes on her coat-sleeve and stood in the doorway, looking around. Except that it faced the Eel Pond, the room was almost a duplicate of her father's across the hall. There was the water-table with its aquaria and some of the stones, Jane was sure, that she and Ellen had brought in from Lackey's Bay. There was the long shelf-table under the window, with its neat rows of glass dishes and its piles of laboratory notes. And there was also a little electric table stove, with a small coffee-pot near by, and on the window-sill a tin cracker box and a can or two.

Jane moved slowly over to the table and inspected the tidy rank and file of finger-bowls and watch crystals, each holding its tiny brown animals, each neatly marked in order with a blue-penciled number. What should she do by way of revenge?

At first she thought of pouring them all down the sink drain, but that was too simple, and a waste of good animals. A more clever idea would be to take a towel end dipped in xylol, wash the numbers off the glass and mix the dishes around. Jane picked up a dish—and set it down again.

She had too often helped her father to wash glassware sparkling clean and set it in these same beautiful rows, easily looked over and read, even when one was tired at the end of a long day. She found that she could not spoil this experiment without one more effort on the man across the hall.

Very quietly she edged inside the door again. Von Bergen was bending over a curious mound composed of another large kettle swathed in a heap of laboratory towels and coats. He took the temperature in it, put on the kettle lid, and covered it with the coat of his own dark suit before he turned or Jane spoke.

He was working with the air of knowing so exactly what he was doing that Jane, in spite of herself, felt curiosity dull the edge of her indignation. He was not only a wicked man, as she had felt convinced all along; but he must also be the clever person that her father had insisted he was.

He had begun to mutter to himself again, words that Jane could not understand, and, if she had known it, phrases that had no particular meaning, only the repetitions of a tired mind, but to Jane it sounded like a witch's incantation.

'*Und so weiter, und so weiter, und so weiter*,' he was repeating as he straightened himself and limped over to the open constant temperature box,

unaware that Jane had returned.

'If you touch that,' Jane spoke up, 'if you *touch* that, I shall go back into your room and pour out all your experiments.'

He stopped short and uttered a sharp exclamation. 'Go anywhere!' he said furiously. 'Do what you like! Only do not interrupt me now! *Aus!*'

And seeing that Jane still stood there, rather taken aback by this reception of her threat, he swept a long arm back to the table, seized a tall flask standing there and sent it crashing against the wall near Jane's head, from which it flew in sharp tinkling fragments over half the room. Jane stepped back through the door, crunching bits of glass underfoot. Her face and hair were spattered from the drops of water in the flask. She was too dumbfounded to wipe it off or to know that her cheek had been grazed by the flying glass until it bled lightly in a long streak.

The hall light over her head went on, and Ellen found her there by the closed door.

'What is the matter, Jane?' she asked, shocked out of her sleepiness. 'How did you get hurt?'

'Dr. von Bergen is in there,' Jane answered desolately. 'He's doing something to Father's experiments. I don't know what.'

'I'll go in and see,' Ellen said at once. 'Jane, what is the matter with your cheek? Here, wipe it with my handkerchief.'

'You can't,' Jane said. 'I heard him lock the door. And I told him that I would empty out his own experiments if he didn't stop; and he said to do it if I wanted to. So I don't think I will. My cheek? I don't know. Water from the flask he threw at me, I guess.'

'Threw a flask at you! It's blood. You must have been hit. What is the matter with the man?' she asked, looking up at the door apprehensively before she knocked.

There was no answer, though she knocked urgently three times, and within the room they could hear him moving about busily.

'We'll have to find help,' said Ellen. 'Come along, Jane.'

Jane was loath to leave her post, but she went reluctantly with Ellen back to the car, where they told Walter a story he found hard to believe.

'Jane's walking in her sleep,' he said to Ellen. 'Did *you* see the man?'

‘She has a cut on her face from a flask he threw at her,’ Ellen said hotly, and the sight of the scratch was more convincing.

He whistled under his breath, looking up at the lighted window. ‘I’d better see if Jim will come, too. Gosh, I don’t know how to handle this!’

‘How did he know Dr. Thomas was away?’ Jim Harrison asked as the four walked slowly back to the Laboratory door. ‘There have been lots of nights when he could have walked in and gummed up the works, if that was all he was after; but somehow he manages to find out when the boss is going to be away for quite a while, and maybe he can work undisturbed. We hadn’t told anybody down at the Lab.; we didn’t have time!’

‘It beats me!’ Walter said. ‘He’s not content with getting that money he wanted from the Smith Foundation, but he has to see personally that Dad’s work is wrecked, and then he goes and throws things at Janey. There’s something funny about it. I wonder if the man is crazy.’

He turned and looked back at the pale line beginning to creep along the eastern horizon. ‘What a night!’ he said.

Entering the long hall, Jim Harrison paused. ‘You girls stay here,’ he said. ‘Let Walter and me see what we can do. If he starts throwing the furniture, you’d better be at a safe distance. I hope he’ll listen to reason.’

Jane clung to Ellen, shivering with excitement, and they watched the two down the hall conferring outside the door of Dr. Thomas’s room. Presently Jim Harrison knocked loudly on the door, and turned the knob.

He said, ‘Dr. von Bergen, may I come in and speak to you a minute?’ and over the transom came an explosive ‘*Nein!*’

At this they made no more attempts at conversation. Walter brought out a chair from the next room and Jim Harrison, the taller of the two, climbed up on it, clung to the transom and peered through it.

Jane could not be restrained. She pulled away from Ellen and ran down the hall.

‘Are you going to climb in?’ she whispered eagerly, but neither answered her.

‘What’s he doing?’ Walter asked, as Jim climbed down.

‘Fooling with the constant temperature box. He seems to know his way about well enough.’

‘I could squeeze in over the transom,’ Jane proposed hopefully, ‘and then I could unlock the door for you and you could rush him.’

For a moment the boys appeared to consider this scheme, and then Jim Harrison shook his head.

‘Too dangerous for you, Jane; and we’d have the place looking as if an earthquake had struck it. The damage he is doing now is nothing to the damage a free-for-all fight would make. We have to use sense.’

At his elbow Ellen said softly: ‘Maybe we had better find one of the older men? He might listen to him.’

‘Let me try one thing first,’ said Jim. He knocked at the door again.

‘Dr. von Bergen,’ he said, slowly and distinctly, ‘will you let us in? Otherwise we shall have to ask the Director of the Laboratory or some other responsible person to come down here. I do not think you would like that.’

From within came what could best be described as a snarl, and no other response.

Jim Harrison shrugged his shoulders. ‘All right,’ he said. ‘You take the car, will you, Ellen, and run up the hill to find Dr. Morris. Wake him up and get him off, and then you and Jane go to bed. Walter and I can manage the rest.’

‘I don’t want to go,’ Jane protested, but to no avail.

Ellen and Jane were down in the lower hall when the sound of deliberate footsteps caught their attention, and around the turn came a familiar figure, for which Jane ran with open arms.

‘Careful, Jane,’ cautioned a cheerful, matter-of-fact voice. ‘This pail has hot coffee in it. Don’t make it splash!’

‘Miss Wareham, what are *you* doing here?’ Ellen asked joyfully.

‘Rising with the early bird. Don’t you know it’s morning? What are *you* doing here? Are you just in from New Bedford? How’s Dr. Thomas? How’s your father, Jane?’

‘They said he came through the operation nicely,’ Ellen answered automatically. She found herself and Jane climbing the stairway again, one each side of Miss Wareham.

‘I knew he would,’ said Miss Wareham. ‘He has a fine constitution.’

‘But, Miss Wareham,’ said Ellen, ‘the most awful thing—— ’

‘Complications, were there? What was the matter?’

‘No,’ Ellen said. ‘No. Dr. Thomas is all right, but his experiments! Do you know, Dr. von Bergen is in his room—— ’

‘In whose room?’ Miss Wareham’s tone expressed cheerful curiosity.

‘In Dr. Thomas’s room! And he won’t let us in, and we know that he is doing something to the constant temperature box.’

‘H’m!’ commented Miss Wareham interestedly. ‘Let’s have a look at him.’

They had reached the door. ‘Well, Walter and Jim, you look tired,’ she said. She knocked on the door, only to receive the snarl that had greeted Jim Harrison’s last attempt.

‘You’d better not bother with him, Miss Wareham,’ Walter said, distressed. ‘Jane, why did you bring her up?’

‘I brought myself,’ Miss Wareham replied, unruffled. ‘Be still a minute, will you? Dr. von Bergen, here is hot coffee for you. It will do you good,’ she called.

For a long minute those outside the door listened, and the young people studied Miss Wareham, who had only added to the puzzle. When they began to stir again, Miss Wareham lifted a finger and they waited again. And then they heard shuffling steps coming across the room to them, and the key turned in the door.

Miss Wareham walked in and set her pail down on the table, while the young people hovered around the door and watched suspiciously.

‘I see you broke something,’ she said casually, crunching through the fragments of glass, ‘but the constant temperature apparatus seems to be running again.’ She was pouring out the hot coffee into a clean finger-bowl as she spoke. ‘The cream and sugar are already in it, like that you had at midnight.’

Dr. von Bergen dropped down into a chair and bent over the coffee. He drank half the bowlful before he spoke.

‘It runs well enough. *Ach!* How good that coffee is! It runs well enough. This time I think I have discovered the real difficulty and we shall not have another breakdown. Another bowl of coffee, please.’

‘Two breakdowns in one night is enough,’ said Miss Wareham. ‘I hope you won’t have another, for you’d be too tired to repair it, I’m sure. More

coffee? Don't you think you had better have a nap, instead?'

'When I have the oppor-tunity I am sure I can sleep at any time,' he answered. 'Now I must stay awake until I have looked over these animals and returned them to the constant temperature chamber.'

'Come in here, children,' Miss Wareham invited. 'Come inside where you can hear me, but stay out of Dr. von Bergen's way. Jane, you may sit in my lap.'

Jane did as she was told, looking a little frightened. The other three ranged themselves along the wall by the door, where, after a while, Ellen found herself clinging to the sleeve of Jim Harrison's sweater, from sheer weariness.

At the table Dr. von Bergen was at work again, taking the temperature of the water in the big kettle, and then taking out of it the small glass dishes of animals, which, after inspection, he set back in the constant temperature box.

'After you were off with your father to New Bedford last night,' said Miss Wareham, 'I climbed up here and told Dr. von Bergen how his old friend had been obliged to leave without warning, so that his whole summer's work was in danger. I was intending to ask him to help me find some one who could carry on that work in Dr. Thomas's absence, but I didn't have to do that. Dr. von Bergen offered at once to be responsible for it himself; and of course I was very much pleased to have him suggest it, because he knows more about the animals and the experiments than any other man in the world except your father, Jane.'

'But—— ' said Jane.

'Don't interrupt yet, child. Of course we didn't know it was going to be such a steady job; but almost as soon as we came in to reconnoiter, Dr. von Bergen found that the constant temperature box was not regulating properly. He's very clever with apparatus and machinery, you know, and he tinkered at it, and it went along again; but when I dropped in about eleven to see how he was getting along, I found him working at it then.

'You see'—she waved a hand toward the kettle in its wrappings—'we had to invent a constant temperature kettle for the animals to live in while their apartment was undergoing repairs. I collected towels for insulation all up and down the hall. Then I went along to bed, just as you ought to be going; but poor Dr. von Bergen has been carrying on ever since.'

‘It is in fair condition now.’ He spoke up with a tinge of pride. ‘I do not sink zere will be more trouble.’ He slid the last dish into the box and closed the door.

Walter straightened himself, hesitated, and said: ‘Father will be pleased to hear what you have done for him. And—I’m sorry I didn’t understand what you were doing.’

The other threw back his hands in a great gesture of weariness. ‘Zis is not done for your father; not for one minute!’ he answered stubbornly. ‘You are not a stupid. After all you have seen zis summer, how could you sink so?’

‘Then what on earth—— ’ Walter began.

‘It is because all my summer’s work drive me to the con-clusion that your father’s scientific theories are correct,’ burst out von Bergen. ‘I do not like it. I fight against it. But I cannot escape it. And so of course the work which confirms these theories must not be left unfinished. No scientist could permit it. Not even if I must break forty flasks!’ he finished fiercely.

Jane put up her fingers to her cheek; over her shoulder Miss Wareham winked broadly at Walter.

‘Time we were all getting home,’ she said, gently pushing Jane off her knee. ‘Here, Walter, take your sister. Dr. von Bergen, can’t things be left now as they are for a while? I’ll come back later in the morning and see if I can arrange for some help for you.’

‘Yes, I can go,’ said the other, all the fighting fire gone from his voice. He found his cane, and Ellen noticed that his lame leg was dragging much worse than usual. He paused at the door which Jim Harrison was holding open for him, and peered down the hall, where Walter and Jane were going off with Miss Wareham. No one but Jim and Ellen heard his lowered tones.

‘And Dr. Thomas—*wie geht’s mit ihm?* How is he?’

Jim did not show a flicker of surprise. ‘He’s doing very well, they think.’

Von Bergen nodded with an unsmiling satisfaction. ‘He has a good body,’ he sighed, almost to himself. ‘He will last to carry on this work. For me, I am too worn out.’

He took one limping step onward before Jim Harrison made up his mind to speak again. ‘I want to congratulate you, Dr. von Bergen, on the grant which I hear that the Smith Foundation is about to make for your work. That ought to make it easier.’

Von Bergen stopped short and turned his deep-set eyes on the young man.

‘So? I had not heard of that. One must think about it,’ he said as he went off.

‘No,’ said Miss Wareham, in response to Jim’s inquiry, ‘no, I’d rather walk home. Take that poor man if you want a passenger. One thing I want to know before you leave; how did that glass get broken?’

‘Jane says he threw it at her,’ Ellen answered. ‘Miss Wareham, do you suppose I shall wake up and find that this night never happened? I feel very queer.’

Miss Wareham chuckled. ‘No, Ellen, this is real enough. It isn’t a dream and it isn’t poetry. I rather think it is human nature and science at its best. Good-night, child.’

CHAPTER XIII

Home Again

Suddenly, while Dr. Thomas was making his excellent recovery in the hospital, and Jane and Ellen were much occupied with housekeeping, Labor Day was upon them; and over that week-end half the summer people of the village took boat or train back to school. There were still left numerous bachelors and a few families without school-sized children, or with children whose schools opened later in the month; but by contrast the streets and the bathing-beaches were empty.

'Just when it is nicest!' Jane mourned her own coming departure. They had a fire on the hearth nearly every evening now. Jane hunted under the leaves of the wild grapevines for grapes that were beginning to turn, and she brought home a handful of faintly rose-streaked wild cranberries from the bog Miss Wareham had showed her—a tiny bog like a fairy evergreen forest.

She and Ellen boiled them and made a quarter of a cup of cranberry sauce which the family solemnly shared, a spoonful each. It gave Ellen a curiously homesick feeling of Thanksgiving.

Ellen herself would not be obliged to return to the university until the first of October, and she would stay with the Thomases through as much of September as they needed her. Every Woods Hole garden showed marigolds and zinnias, nasturtiums and pansies and sweet alyssum at high tide of bloom; and when they could find time for a walk in the open country the sumac was dark red, leaf and seed-crest, and low-growing blue asters and goldenrod painted the ground; and overhead the sky was always deep blue.

Nevertheless Ellen was ready to go home. She felt dimly that she had had enough of this unfamiliar summer, and would be happier back in her ordinary routine soon. It would be comfortable to sit in her old place at the table at home, to go shopping in the Loop for school clothes, to hear what the other girls had been doing, and to tell them about her own summer.

This last presented a problem. 'I don't see how I'm ever going to tell anybody about this place,' she said to Jim Harrison one evening, as they were pushing off from the Eel Pond wharf on an expedition planned some time before.

‘Suppose Betty Lou asks me what I did this summer, and I tell her that I went to see Nereis swarm. And she says what is Nereis and why do I want to see it swarm? What do I tell her?’

The young man laughed. ‘You can’t. When you want to talk about Nereis this winter, you take a walk with me, and talk all you like!’

He had rowed out a little way into the quiet Eel Pond, and rested his oars. Now he lifted a lighted lantern over the side and held it so that it illuminated a circle on the surface of the dark water, and in the light Ellen could see that the water was alive with small arrowy creatures darting in and out, the smaller ones white with a touch of bright red at their heads, the larger ones an easily distinguished brown.

Ellen leaned over the side of the boat to watch their wild circling.

‘And they come out like this at only one time in the month?’

‘The dark of the moon, in June, July, August, and September.’

‘But why?’

‘Ask me something easier. They are mating now, of course, but why they should choose this time of the moon nobody knows.’

‘Where do they live between times?’

‘In wharf pilings and the like, where the tide washes them. They stow themselves away very snugly. It’s difficult digging them out.’

More Nereis were appearing every moment in the lighted circle; their swift activity never faltered, and the two watched them intently, wondering at the mysterious pattern they wove.

‘They’re leaving,’ Jim said at last. ‘The show is generally over in an hour or so. It’s a queer sight. I wanted you to see it before you left.’

He tied the boat up at the floating wharf again and helped Ellen out with a care that she found a little difficult to accept after her past weeks of scrambling in and out of boats with Jane.

‘I was thinking’—she volunteered—‘I was thinking of taking biology this winter. There’s so much I don’t know and hadn’t even imagined.’

‘Come back next summer and let Jane and me teach you some more.’ Jim looked down at her serious face with a smile. ‘How did that infant happen to stay at home tonight?’

Ellen shook her head. ‘I hardly know Jane at times, she is so thoughtful and responsible. Tonight she is working on a sampler she wants to give her father when she gets home. And, besides, she told me that, personally, she thought the September swarm of Nereis was generally the poorest of the summer!’

The two laughed, but Ellen went on more seriously, ‘Jane won’t need me next summer; I can see that.’

‘Maybe it will wear off,’ Jim suggested hopefully. ‘Maybe it was the effect of our wild night. That was enough to tame any one. I liked Jane the way she was.’

Ellen shook her head. ‘She’s growing up, and that won’t wear off. Won’t you come in?’

Jim had stopped his car at the Thomases’ low gate. The grass had grown and thickened over the lawn; the tidy flower borders reached out in pleasant, irregular splashes; the house no longer looked new and unlived in; the light over the front door even showed a sweater of Jane’s thrown down carelessly on the steps. Ellen liked it much better than in its first painful orderliness; she was not afraid to repeat her invitation nor to hope it would be accepted.

‘Won’t you come in? Jane made a cake today for her mother’s supper. She’d like to give you some. Mrs. Thomas was in New Bedford nearly all day.’

‘Surely. I’ll try Jane’s cake, if she’ll give me a piece.’ But he still sat where he was, looking down at Ellen.

‘You won’t forget about our walks this winter, will you?’ he said. ‘That’s a promise, isn’t it?’

‘Whenever I want to talk about Nereis,’ Ellen quoted, a little more lightly than she felt. She knew that she would have been sorry to see the graduate laboratories swallow up Jim Harrison out of her sight this winter. They had had too many tumultuous experiences in common the past weeks.

‘There’ll be other things to talk about besides Nereis,’ the young man said confidently. ‘I’m driving back home the last week in September. I’ll call you as soon as I reach Chicago.’

This was, Ellen felt happily, the way that things ought to be arranged, so that you never left one pleasant experience completely behind you, but carried something on from it to the next; but a sudden and unaccountable shyness left her silent.

‘If you don’t mind—— ’ Jim said, more formally. ‘I—perhaps I’m taking too much for granted? I thought—— ’

‘Oh, no!’ Ellen answered hastily. ‘I—I’d *like* you to call!’

‘Then it *is* a promise. Well—now for Jane’s cake!’

They were back again among comfortable commonplaces, but there was elation in Jim’s voice and he helped Ellen out of the car and through the gate as if she might come to harm without his especial care.

No lamps were lit in the living-room, but Mrs. Thomas was sitting before the low fire, with Jane beside her on the floor, and most surprisingly, Dr. von Bergen sat in the chair on the other side of the hearth.

‘How do you do, Jim? Come in, children.’ Mrs. Thomas greeted them cordially. ‘Yes, Dr. Thomas is getting well very fast. He might have left today, they said, if it weren’t for the long trip. In two or three days they think he may attempt it safely. Then we’ll be going back to Jeffrey as soon as I can get the house closed for the winter. Sit down, both of you.’

‘I’ll be glad to help you off if I can,’ Jim offered.

The visitor gave them a gruff ‘How-do-you-do’ and said nothing more. There was silence, broken only by the faint noises of the burning driftwood. Mrs. Thomas was evidently off on some day-dream of her own, and Ellen began to feel the responsibility of a hostess.

‘I’ve been telling Jim about your cake, Jane,’ she said, and Mrs. Thomas roused herself to echo:

‘—Your cake, Jane. That was a very good cake. Let us have a slice all around.’

Jane rose slowly from the shadows by her mother’s chair. She slipped around behind the others and put down in Ellen’s lap something that seemed, itself, to be a furry shadow.

‘It’s one of Mary Theresa’s kittens,’ Jane told her in a voice of hushed delight. ‘See, it has six toes on every one of its darling feet! Will you hold it for me while I get the cake, Ellen? I don’t want it to feel lonesome.’

‘And be sure to wash your hands,’ Mrs. Thomas added automatically, but she leaned over and patted the friendly kitten herself. Curiously, for a woman who had been so busy all summer, she had no work in her hands. Perhaps, Ellen thought, Mrs. Thomas was taking a rest from her summer vacation.

‘My landlady felt that she must dispose of her cat’s too large family,’ Dr. von Bergen explained in a voice that was at once melancholy and peaceful. ‘They were amusing little cats, and I asked if I might bring one to this little girl.’

Ellen was too surprised to comment on this thoughtfulness, but Mrs. Thomas said, with real feeling, ‘You have been very kind to us, Dr. von Bergen.’

‘And Mother is going to let me take it back to Jeffrey with me,’ Jane said happily, passing a plate of generous, if somewhat irregular sections of cake. ‘It will be like having a part of Woods Hole there.’

She sat on the hearth and fed crumbs to the kitten while the rest of the company ate their cake appreciatively. She accepted compliments on it gravely and in good faith. It was a good cake and she knew it. It contained everything a cake should have, and it had not stuck to the pan. She was going to make another just like it when her father came home.

‘And what I should like to know,’ said Dr. von Bergen presently, bending stiffly to lay a large crumb down before the kitten’s greedy pink nose, ‘is the best technique for carrying a little cat like this home with me when I return to Germany next month. Does any one know if a cat suffers from sea-sickness?’

The question of the sea-sickness of cats passed quite unnoticed.

‘—Return to Germany?’ Mrs. Thomas repeated.

‘To Germany. I have taken passage for the middle of October.’

The others stared at him, and he read what was in their minds.

‘It is quite true that I had planned to stay here for a year, perhaps for the rest of my life; but, after all, I find that I wish to be at home, and it is better that I should return.

‘I wish to return to the sight of my mountains, and to the language I know best. When I am tired the English comes hard for me. I wish to see my old aunt, who takes care of me as much as I will let her; and my friends. I am a terrible old man, but at home I have some friends who have known me for a long time, not just as the boy—the young student; and still they are friendly. Do you think it strange? I wish to see them.

‘And if I can, I shall carry with me one of these little cats to my aunt, and it shall be, as the little girl says, like taking a part of America with me; all that I wish to take.’

‘But your work—— ’ Mrs. Thomas protested.

He went on in his even, melancholy tone as if he had not been interrupted:

‘Today I went to Mr. Schmidt, who is so generous and so—I must say it —lacking in critical ability; and I told him that his grant would be far better spent in helping Dr. Thomas, who had been able to see from the beginning, as I did not, where this work was leading. He was kind enough to accept my recommen-dation, and the transfer of the money will be made.’

‘But, Dr. von Bergen,’ Mrs. Thomas protested in honest dismay, ‘this is more than kind of you but my husband will be distressed. What will you do?’

‘No, no, no!’ he cried. ‘It is not kindness. It is only justice. And I must tell you that Mr. Schmidt says that if he can persuade his wife to do so, he will visit me in Germany in the spring and perhaps decide to aid me there, if I am successful in starting some new work. The behavior of ants’—he said thoughtfully—‘that has always interested me. It is slow, quiet work for a cripple like me. I must not allow myself to forget that I am not a well man in body, and perhaps not in mind.’

‘I think you are a very good man,’ Mrs. Thomas said; but at that Dr. von Bergen pulled himself out of his chair.

‘I must be going on,’ he said hastily. ‘Where is my cane? When your husband is at home, Mrs. Thomas, I shall come up again to see how he would like his experiments concluded for the summer. And I shall show him the results of my own work, which support his at every point. They are, of course, the more convincing, since they were obtained independently.’

Jane found his cane, where it had slipped to the floor, and he limped to the door intent on escaping further thanks.

‘I’ll drive you down to the Laboratory,’ Jim Harrison offered.

‘That will be very kind of you.’ He moved off ahead down the path by himself, but when he had gone a few steps, he turned and spoke again to Jane, who was cuddling her kitten under her chin.

‘And when you find the proper diet for a seagoing cat, let me know. Good-night!’

‘We’ll have to go down to boats and ask in the morning,’ Jane said seriously. ‘Lots of the boats have cats. I don’t believe they get sea-sick. Were the Nereis good?’

‘I never saw anything like them,’ said Ellen.

‘No, I don’t suppose you did. There isn’t anything like them. I got my sampler nearly done.’ She proudly displayed her square of embroidery complete except for the maker’s name in the corner. ‘I couldn’t honestly put that in until it was all done.’

‘Better go to bed,’ Ellen recommended, as Jane yawned widely; but when she went upstairs there was no sign of her.

Ellen, feeling a little cross, went to look for her. She was more than a little tired. For the last ten days she had had most of the responsibility of housekeeping, for Mrs. Thomas had spent a great deal of time in New Bedford. Walter had been busy with his work on the Collecting Crew, for although most of the investigators had gone from the Laboratory, the Supply House was hard at work preserving laboratory material for colleges that were beginning to open all over the country. Jane had been unusually good and responsible; but Ellen had also done her best to keep her happy, and had swam and walked and hunted early grapes with her, even when she herself was tired from cooking and cleaning. She did not think it was considerate of Jane to run away in her old fashion at nine o’clock in the evening.

The child was not at her aquarium in the garage, seeing if her animals were safe for the night. She had not yet picked up her sweater from the steps in front, and Ellen carried it down with her to the road, looking in both directions in the moonlight, but seeing no sign of Jane.

Possibly, she thought, the kitten might have decided to find Mary Theresa again, and, as she had done one night earlier in the summer, she pushed on down the path that led to Mrs. Ryan’s gate and the ‘No Trespassing’ sign. For lack of use the bushes had grown closer together across the path and it was not easy going, but, having started, Ellen persisted. When she came to the gate, she found it swinging open, held only by the long arm of a rose vine that had grown along it while it was fastened shut, and Jane was coming back through the gate.

‘I didn’t open it,’ she said in defense. ‘I think Dr. von Bergen did it himself. He came up this way tonight.’

‘But what were you doing down here, Jane? You weren’t taking your kitten back?’

‘Oh, no! I’ve got my kitten right here. I’m going to name it Fritz after Dr. von Bergen.’

‘Jane!’ her mother called as they came in at the door. ‘Jane! Where did you put your cake? I can’t find it.’

Jane hesitated, and Ellen had her suspicions.

‘I can’t find your cake anywhere. There must have been a third of it left. I want to put it away in the cake-box.’

‘I don’t think there was *quite* a third of it left,’ said Jane. ‘And I took it down and put it in Dr. von Bergen’s house for a present. He liked it!’

Tears were gathering in her eyes as she looked up at her astonished mother.

‘That was very kind of you, Jane,’ said her mother, and forbore to make any other comment. ‘Now you had better run along to bed, both of you.’

Ellen unbuttoned the difficult buttons at the back of Jane’s neck, but in spite of this help Jane was still sitting on the edge of her bed, looking at the sand on her slipper and dreaming, when Ellen had her pajamas on.

When Ellen moved the waste-basket invitingly nearer, she looked up.

‘I was just thinking,’ she said. ‘Pretty soon you will go away, and so will Miss Wareham and Jim Harrison and Dr. von Bergen. All the people I like. To different places. And maybe they won’t come back. When I get my island, I shall invite my friends to stay there in the winter-time, so that I can find them when I come back in the summer.’

‘I’d rather be invited in the summer when you’re there,’ Ellen objected.

Jane considered this, and presently she nodded, and emptied her slipper.

‘I’d rather have you then,’ she said. She began, very lingeringly, to unbutton the other slipper. When the sand was emptied from it, too, she looked up at Ellen and sighed, though not unhappily.

‘I can see it is going to take a very large island for me and all my friends,’ she said. ‘Next summer I think I shall just build a tree-house for the kitten and me.’

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Page numbers have been removed due to a non-page layout.

[The end of *Jane's Island* by Marjorie Hill Allee]