

A PROMISE IS TO KEEP



Patricia Topp

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by

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Chapter 1 The Good News and the Bad News

Barbara bounded up the back steps at Nancy's house, skidded across the icy porch and banged on the door. Nancy opened the door, an accusing look on her face. "You're late again. I've had my coat on forever."

"I can go," Barbara yelled. "I can go to camp!"

A radiant smile erased the anger from Nancy's face. "You can go, Barb. Oh, great! I didn't want to go alone."

"And I brought some of my baby-sitting money today, so I can start buying my camp clothes."

"We'd better get going right now, Barb. We're going to have to run to catch the bus."

"You're lucky you were born rich instead of beautiful like me." Barbara teased Nancy as they entered Willamette Mall. She dodged a jab to her ribs. "I have to really work for **my** money. Mom says taking care of Tammy is good mother-training for me, but she doesn't know Tammy."

"Fifteen dollars a week's not too shabby, Barb. That's more than I get for allowance, and I have chores at home, too."

"Yeah, but I bet you don't have to earn half the money for camp, Nance."

"Too true," Nancy admitted. "No Jordache jeans for either one of us though."

"C'mon, let's go down to the basement store. Prices aren't so painful there."

They rode down the escalator and roamed the basement store until they found the junior department.

"Oh." Nancy groaned. "Will you just look at that red dress!"

"Don't make me look." Barbara wailed, shielding her eyes. "You know I have to get a heavy sweater and the blue skirt and white blouse for camp assemblies. That's all I can afford."

"Well, it doesn't cost anything to look and drool a little," Nancy joked.

On a rack of winter mark-downs, they found a thick navy sweater that just suited Barbara. The price tag said \$19.95.

"It's marked acrylic. That means that you can wash it, so you won't have to pay for dry cleaning." said Nancy.

“Cleaning reminds me. Do you have any idea how many clean-up jobs I did on Tammy to be able to afford this sweater? Her favorite trick is to dump her Pablum on the top of her head.”

Nancy giggled. “Yeah, I have a baby sister, remember?”

They found a pleated, navy skirt marked \$14.95. Barbara went into the fitting room to try it on. Nancy searched the racks for a plain white shirt. She found two for herself and one for Barbara to try on.

Barbara studied her new outfit in the dressing room mirror. It looked just like the uniforms they wore at Dominican. **It did!** Without warning, tears started streaming down her face.

“Hey, they don’t cost **that** much,” Nancy said. “They don’t want an arm and a leg.”

Barbara gulped, mopped her face, and tried to grin. “All together, it’s going to cost me three weeks of baby-sitting money. But that’s not it. Nance, I couldn’t bear to tell you before, but I don’t think I’ll be going to East Point with you this fall.”

“Oh, Barb, why not?”

“Mom and Dad want me to go to Dominican, yuck!”

“Oh, gosh, that’s awful. Barb, I can’t go to a new school without my best friend in all the world. I’d be scared witless.”

“You’ll do all right at East Point. **Everybody** will be going there, everybody but me. I don’t know why I have to be the one to go to Dominican.”

Nancy looked thoughtful. “C’mon. Let’s pay the clerk,” she said, “and I’ll treat you to a Coke. Maybe I can think of why.”

When they were settled with their Cokes, Nancy began in a serious voice, “Barb, you know you’re my best ever friend. Promise me that you won’t get mad at me if I tell you something?”

Barbara felt a little pang in the pit of her stomach. Nancy made **something** sound like something she wouldn’t want to hear. But she smiled weakly and nodded.

“The problem is...” Nancy paused and swallowed hard. “The problem is that I can’t always count on you, Barb. Look at today, how late you were for shopping. Dominican’s a lot stricter school than East Point. Maybe your Mom and Dad feel they can’t really count on you either. And I’m not just saying that to hurt your feelings.”

Barbara’s face flushed angrily. But when she saw how troubled Nancy was, she simmered down and began to think. *Was that really how other people saw her, as someone who couldn’t be counted on?*

Chapter II “There’s a Sucker Born Every Minute.” –P.T. Barnum

Nancy’s mother drove Nancy and Barbara to the clinic to get their physical exams for camp. Nancy went into Dr. Verdonck’s office first. She came out with a foolish grin and a big sucker in her mouth.

“Mrs. Norris,” the doctor said, “Nancy’s just as A-okay as she can be, clean bill of health.”

“That’s always good to hear,” Mrs. Norris replied. “She’s been a healthy one ever since those tonsils came out.”

“You’re next, Barbara Kay.” Dr. Verdonck beckoned her into his office.

“Mrs. Lynn, the office nurse, weighed and measured her, then took her temperature. Next, she wound a wide band around Barbara’s arm. She pumped it up and let the air out slowly, so that she could read Barbara’s blood pressure. “The doctor will be with you in a few minutes, Barbara. Just relax.”

Did anyone ever really relax in a doctor’s office? Barbara wondered.

Dr. Verdonck finally came in. He asked her about a million questions. He poked here and prodded there. He made her shiver by putting a cold metal thing on her chest to listen to her heart. He had her say, “Ahhh,” and peered down her throat. At last all the tests were completed.

“I wish all the people I check were as healthy as you two girls,” he commented.

Mrs. Lynn offered her a sucker as she left the office. She told herself, *Thirteen’s too old for this nonsense.* But she took the sucker.

Mrs. Norris paid the fees for both girls.

“All right, girls,” she said, “you’re on your own for shopping. What bus do you take home?”

“Oh, Mom!”

“What bus?”

“Evergreen City #94,” the girls recited together.

“Okay, stay out of trouble, and be home by dinnertime. Bye.”

“Bye,” they chorused, and then they were really on their own.

At the mall, they had a surprise. “Look, Nance, a carnival. Let’s go see.”

“Listen, Barb, we only have enough money for my flashlight, your thermos, and the treats.”

“Oh, come on. Don’t be a drag,” Barbara coaxed.

Nancy still looked doubtful. "Oh, okay, but just for a little."

They walked around the little carnival circle figuring that they could afford one ride if they skimmed a bit on the camp treats. They chose the Ferris-wheel.

There wasn't much activity at the carnival at midday. They were seated and lofted a quarter turn of the wheel while the Ferris-wheel-man shouted to the few people who were around, trying to drum up business.

Finally he decided to start the ride.

Slowly the big wheel began to turn. As they rose in the air, they could look over the parking lot and the tops of the stores.

"Look, there's the gravel pit and the river."

Evergreen City looks like a toy city from up here, Barbara thought.

Nancy looked at the cliff above the city. "Wouldn't it be neat to be above upper town in a plane and look down."

"Or over Mt. Hood in..." Barbara began. And then with a whoosh the wheel swooped down and around and around. The girls screamed and then giggled at themselves. It wasn't really all that scary.

They were only a little wobbly when they got back on the ground.

"Business now," Nancy said. "The hardware store first."

But something else had caught Barbara's attention. There in the booth next to the exit was the cuddliest toy panda that she had ever seen.

The sign over the booth advertised:

THREE TOSSES-ONLY A QUARTER-WIN-WIN-WIN

"I'm going to take a chance on that panda, Nance."

"Are you crazy? Nancy demanded. "Those games are rigged. I bet those rings won't even fit over the bottles. Anyway, you've got all those Teddy bears."

"But not a panda," Barbara said. And she plunked down a quarter. "I'm not the best pitcher on our team for nothing, you know."

Barbara tossed the first ring. It bounced off a bottle. She was a bit more careful with the second, and it almost caught. On the third throw, she pretended to be pitching a perfect strike-out ball, and it was a ringer.

"There you go, Little Lady. That's five points. With an arm like that, you could win anything in the house.

Barbara didn't want "anything in the house." She wanted that panda.

"Barb, that panda costs fifty points," Nancy wailed.

"Just a few more tries," Barbara said. And she bought more rings.

With the pitchman shouting encouragement and Nancy scolding, Barbara kept at it

until she had only enough money left to buy her thermos. Only a few more points would have done it. She felt like crying.

“Better luck next time, Little Lady,” said the pitchman as he pocketed her quarters.

Nancy didn't say anything. She didn't have to. Barbara could just see the scene at camp when it came her turn to treat, and she didn't have anything to share. *I can't even count on myself*, she thought.

Chapter III Disappearing Act

All that spring Barbara Kay had worked to earn her camp money. Several neighborhood families had hired her to do small jobs. She had been paid to feed and run the Jarman's dogs while they visited Hawaii. She had enjoyed that.

Old Mrs. Hewlitt had hired her to plant her garden. That had been a hard job. The tiny seeds kept slipping through her fingers. Mrs. Hewlitt had been persnickity, and hadn't had much patience with Barbara. And even though Barbara had understood that it was her arthritis that made her be that way, she had almost quit that job.

With those jobs, and with her baby-sitting job, Barbara thought that by spring vacation she could prove to her folks that she would lack only a few dollars of half the camp money by June. And now because she had acted like a sucker at that carnival, she wouldn't quite make it. At the last moment, her folks came through with another job offer. The pay was good, but take Cousin Teddy to a magic show! She'd seen that infernal magic show every year since third grade, and Teddy was as slippery as an eel. Yet she needed the money.

The first Saturday of spring vacation, Redfern Elementary stayed open to host the magic show. It was raining, usual in the Willamette Valley in the spring. As Barbara and Teddy sloshed their way toward the school, Teddy stomped carefully in each puddle, aiming the splash at Barbara. When she ignored him, he quit. Then he produced a chocolate bar from his pocket and started munching.

“You might share that,” Barbara suggested politely.

“Okay, but I get the lion's share.”

“Fair enough,” she agreed.

But when he didn't give her any, she asked, “Well, where's my piece?”

“Lions don't have to share anything, ha, ha, ha,” he chortled, as he ran down the street, staying just beyond her reach.

A lightning bolt hit close by. Barbara remembered that she was being paid to take

care of Teddy. She nabbed him and towed him into the school and down the hall to the multi-purpose room. Teddy got a front seat on the floor. Barbara took a chair farther back. Other kids came piling in. Soon it was time for the magic. Redfern's principal, Mr. Wilson, introduced the guest.

Professor Maladroit, in black tuxedo, high hat, and scarlet cape, entered twirling a cane. When the clapping had stopped, he announced, "This is a magic cane. Watch me wrap it in paper, snip it in pieces with the scissors, shake the handle, and..." The magic cane, whole again, reappeared in his hand. At its tip perched a parrot with blue and yellow feathers. "Meet Captain Jack, who reads my magic book."

The children applauded wildly as the professor sat the parrot on a music stand upon which a large book lay open. Then Maladroit tossed six ping pong balls into his hat, stirred with the magic cane, and pulled out one **large** ball. The kids giggled and clapped.

"Magic rule 224," squawked Captain Jack, "A cinch!"

Barbara wished that just once she could catch the professor's lips moving when he threw his voice.

The magician next rummaged around in his hat. Out came a rabbit.

The children breathed, "Aaahhh."

The professor then asked for a helper. All hands went up. Teddy was chosen. On stage, Teddy looked sort of scared, but soon he was smiling because the magic-man was pulling dimes out of his ears.

"This next trick always makes me nervous," the professor confessed. "Tell you what; I'll eat my cane if it doesn't work."

"Bring on the mustard!" screeched Captain Jack. Everyone laughed delightedly.

"The conjurer cast his cape over Teddy. Just as he waved his magic cane, a blue lightning flash lit the room, and all the lights went out. By the time the custodian got them back on again, Teddy, cape and all, had disappeared. The magician blinked as if not believing his eyes. But he was an old trouper, so he pretended that this was part of his act. He twitched his cane back and forth to bring Teddy back. No luck.

"Try rule 304," advised Captain Jack.

No Teddy.

"Eat your cane!" screamed the children.

Professor Maladroit nibbled off a few inches of his magic cane. Then he ended the show by announcing that he would make Teddy reappear at the evening performance. "Come back then and bring your parents," he told them as he shoed them out. But Barbara wouldn't go. She explained that she was Teddy's cousin and was responsible for him.

Professor Maladroit slumped into a chair and held his head, “Kids!”

Barbara could just see the scene when she returned home without her cousin. Mom would scream, “**Barbara Kay Turner, where’s Teddy?**”

The next stroke of lightning was in Barbara’s head. “The kitchen! The school kitchen is behind the stage. That’s where he’ll be.”

And there he was.

“Say this school has the neatest kitchen—cakes, cookies, mmm...”

“**Oh!**” screamed Barbara furiously.

“No violence now,” squawked the professor, pretending to be Captain Jack.

That made Barbara giggle; that, and remembering that she had only through Sunday to go on this last job. She thought, *Being responsible is sure no fun sometimes.*

As she walked home with Teddy, she daydreamed that, after Sunday, perhaps she could hire the professor to do another little disappearing act on Teddy.

Chapter IV And Away We Go

They started east just as the sun was clearing the Cascade Mountains. Mr. and Mrs. Turner had to put down their sun-shields because the sun shining on the black asphalt was almost blinding. They drove for miles up the twisty road which followed the Santiam River toward the Willamette National Forest. When they reached the Detroit Reservoir, Nancy and Barbara put on their sweaters.

“I always forget how cold it gets up here even in summer,” Mrs. Turner said.

“Barbara, are you sure we packed your parka?”

“Sure, Mom. I checked everything on the camp list.”

“Only thing my mom didn’t put in mine was the kitchen sink,” Nancy joked. “She would have put it in too, but it didn’t quite fit.”

“It will be colder still at Marion Forks,” Dad said.

“Oh Fred, are we stopping at Marion Forks?” Barbara’s mother asked.

“Sure are. My favorite eating place up here. Look up ahead, girls. There’s Mt. Jefferson. A lot of snow on it still, and it’s June”.

Mt. Jefferson was quickly hidden by the foothills as the road twisted and turned. They made a large turn toward the south and another snow-capped peak appeared, its jagged top making it unmistakable.

“There’s Three Fingered Jack,” Nancy said. “We must be almost to the Forks.”

At Marion Forks, a large stone cairn marked the site of the log home of an early settler. On the river side of the road was a restaurant.

“The sun will be shining on the balcony,” Mr. Turner said. “Even so, it’ll be nippy, so put your jackets on.”

The tables on the balcony overlooked the forest and the river. This early in the season, the water was still high from the melting snow in the mountains, and it roared over the boulders.

“I can’t imagine a more lovely setting for lunch,” Mrs. Turner said. “I wouldn’t mind coming up here every year.”

“I’ll buy that!” Barbara exclaimed. “Then I could go to camp every year.”

“Slow down, Barbara Kay,” Dad cautioned. “Enjoy one year at a time, one day at a time.”

Soon after the pleasant lunch-stop, they began to see along the way the tall orange stakes which marked the road when the winter snows were deep. It was hard to imagine in June that the snow might lie ten to twelve feet deep in January.

“There’s the pass. Four thousand, eight hundred seventeen feet,” Barbara read from the marker.

“Downhill all the way from here, girls,” Dad said.

They both knew that mountains weren’t like that, so they laughed with him.

“We’ll be a Cass Lake Camp by about two o’clock.”

Barbara and Nancy squeezed hands. It was hard to tell which girl was the more excited.

“There are the first Ponderosa Pines,” Mrs. Turner said.

“Why is it mostly pines on this side of the mountains?” Barbara asked.

“Well, the weather blows in from the west over the Pacific,” Dad explained. “When the air rises to get over the mountains, it gets cold, just like you did. Then it can’t hold so much moisture, and it dumps its load of water on the west side of the mountains. Over here it’s drier.”

“And the farther you go, the drier it gets,” Barbara’s mother added. “The pines like this climate better. In our valley, we have mostly Douglas Fir because they like it wet.”

The pines, looking like tall, telephone poles, grew farther and farther apart as they went eastward. Soon there was very little underbrush in the forest. Below the trees was sand covered with by pine needles and the last year’s crop of pine cones.

Then there was the marker, CASS LAKE CAMP.

They drove up the sandy road, which curved back toward the mountains. As the track rose toward the foothills, the snow-covered peaks of the Three Sisters loomed above them. Then through the pines, Cass Lake sparkled in the sunlight. The camp buildings, built of native stone and cedar shakes, blended into the forest scene.

Mr. Turner drove up to the lodge and stopped at the sign which marked the office. "All out," he ordered.

Soon the girls were shaking hands with the camp director, Mrs. Johnson. She told them to check the bulletin board for their cabin while Mr. and Mrs. Turner got them registered and paid their fees.

There were lists of girls assigned to each of six cabins.

"Here we are," Nancy said. "Maple cabin."

They read:

Lee, Tran Duc

Peterson, Denise

Messenger, Elaine

Stapleton, Karen

Norris, Nancy

Turner, Barbara Kay

Counselor: Ms. Pearl

"Ms. Pearl," Barbara said. "I hope she's as nice as her name."

"You'll soon find out," her dad said. "Back into the car. We have permission to drive you to the cabin with your blanket rolls."

They drove about a half mile to Maple cabin.

"You're the first arrivals," Ms. Pearl greeted them.

Mr. Turner introduced himself and Mrs. Turner.

"I'm pleased to meet you. And the girls? Which one is which?"

"I'm Nancy."

"I'm Barbara." She was staring at Ms. Pearl in astonishment. Curly brown hair, blue eyes, tall and slim. It was like looking in a mirror.

Mrs. Turner had noticed it, too. "Remarkable. Barbara Kay could be your younger sister."

"And I'll take care of her as if she were," Ms. Pearl promised graciously.

The girls said their good-byes to Mr. and Mrs. Turner. Then they hauled their gear into the cabin. The cabin was furnished only with four bunk beds, a few open shelves, and some wooden clothes-hanging pegs. A black pot-bellied stove stood in the center of the floor.

"Choose your bunks, girls."

"Let's take the one on the east, so we can watch the sun come up," suggested Nancy.

"Flip you for top or bottom." Barbara won the bottom bunk. It didn't take them long

to unpack and make up their bunks.

“Why don’t you girls run along now and look over the camp. Come back in an hour. Our girls should be here by then. I’m sure you’ll want to meet them right away.” So Barbara and Nancy rushed out to inspect the camp which was to be their home for two whole glorious weeks.

Three of the girls had arrived by the time they returned. Elaine proved to be a big, athletic looking, girl already sporting grass stains on the knees of her jeans. The girl with the horn-rimmed glasses was Karen, who was promptly nicknamed wise-old-owl. Denise was already out looking over the camp. The girl with the odd name, Tran Duc Lee, was to arrive the next morning.

Chapter V Do You Laugh When You Don’t Understand?

Ms. Pearl introduced Tran Duc to the girls the next morning. “Tran Duc is from Cambodia. She is going to live in the United States now. She doesn’t know English very well, so you must all help her and make her feel welcome.”

“Cambodia?” Nancy asked.

“That’s in southeast Asia,” Ms. Pearl explained. “Many of the countries there were at war for a very long time.”

The girls knew where Asia was.

Barbara thought, *Oh, she’s pretty and sweet looking. It won’t be hard to be nice to her.*

Tran Duc smiled, lowered her eyes and murmured, “Pleased to meet you.”

“Nancy and Barbara Kay, will you be special hostesses for Tran Duc and show her around camp?” Ms. Pearl asked.

“Okay!” both girls exclaimed at once, and then, giggling at one another, they linked little fingers, “Great minds...”

They showed Tran Duc through the mess hall and the kitchen, explaining that everyone had to take a turn at KP. “You’ll probably have to peel potatoes,” Nancy told her.

“Potato, I eaten potato.” Tran Duc smiled.

The horses in the corral, which frightened Barbara, fascinated Tran Duc. Nancy explained, “Farmers used to use them to plow their fields, but now mostly people just ride them. We’re going to learn if we want to.”

“Cambodia, where I come,” Tran Duc said, “farmer have water buffalo on plow. My brother ride on back, show where to go.”

As she spoke of this, it seemed to Barbara that a shadow moved across her face.

The thing Tran Duc seemed to find oddest of all was the outhouse. “In my country, would be over rice paddy. Good, make rice grow very fast.”

Barbara and Nancy gave one another unbelieving stares.

At lunchtime, the girls from Beech cabin challenged Maple cabin to a baseball game, to be played during the afternoon free time.

This was another new experience for Tran Duc.

The newcomer was a good sport; Barbara could see that Tran Duc had never handled a bat before, but she was willing to try.

“Pitch her an easy one, Mary,” Barbara called, and the Beech cabin pitcher lobbed in a slow one.

“No, no, not like you’re killing a snake.” Barbara took the bat and showed Tran Duc how to swing through about waist height. “Here, give it another go.”

Tran Duc missed one; then she connected. The ball sailed into center field. “Run, run!” screamed the Maple cabin girls.

Tran Duc screamed, too. She ran, but not to first base. She ran around the backstop and kept on going.

The girls all hooted with laughter. Anyone should know where first base was.

When they saw Tran Duc keep on running off toward the stables, they looked at one another in bewilderment.

They found Tran Duc huddled in the corner of a stall in the stable, arms wrapped around her head, sobbing wildly. Karen and Nancy put their arms around her shivering body and stroked her silky, black hair.

Barbara thought, *No one could get that upset just because we laughed.* She turned and ran toward Maple cabin to get Ms. Pearl.

She reached Maple cabin puffing so hard that she could only get out, “Tran Duc...stables...crying.”

Ms. Pearl took off at a run, Barbara trailing behind her.

The girls were relieved to see their counselor. They were mystified. Between sobs, Tran Duc kept saying, “Enemy...guns...my brother.”

Ms. Pearl seemed to understand at once. After she had soothed Tran Duc, she assured her that she did not have to worry about things like that in this country. “When the girls screamed ‘run,’ it was just part of a game. We’re all very sorry about your brother. We didn’t know.”

Tran Duc nodded. Between hiccups, she told them, “In my country, someone scream, ‘run!’ it mean airplane...run...hide.”

“We’re sorry we laughed at you,” apologized Nancy. “It was just funny when you didn’t run to first base.”

“First base?” asked Tran Duc.

Barbara could see that helping Tran Duc was going to be a bigger project than she and Nancy had expected. “Tell you what, Tran Duc,” she said, speaking for both of them, “Nancy and I will adopt you for two weeks. We’ll tell you all about the United States, and you can tell us all about Cambodia.”

Tran Duc grinned.

“Okay by me,” Nancy said. “What do you want to know first, Tran Duc?”

Tran Duc asked, “Where first base?” And they all laughed.

Then Ms. Pearl said, “Barbara Kay, I’m proud of you for being responsible enough to run for help when a situation could be serious.”

And Barbara felt a warm, glowing feeling in her heart.

Chapter VI More Than One Thing to Learn

The odor of mess hall eggs made Barbara’s stomach feel queasy. She wished that her puppy, Poncho, was there, so that she could slip him some of them. Maybe Ms. Pearl wouldn’t notice if she hid the last of the eggs under the edge of her plate.

Barbara had been shaking inside ever since the day before when Ms. Pearl had explained the camp rule about canoes. “All of you Maple cabin girls will have to be able to swim, or no one from our cabin can use the canoes,” she had said.

Cass Lake looked so inviting that most of the girls had been looking forward to swimming and to using the shiny, green canoes.

But swimming test time was coming all too soon to suit Barbara.

As the girls were on their way back to Maple cabin, Nancy asked, “What are you looking so barfy about, Barb?”

“You know I can’t swim,” Barbara wailed.

“Shhh!” warned Denise. “Don’t let Ms. Pearl hear you, or we’ll never get to go in the canoes. Listen, you only have to swim twenty-five feet. **Anybody** can swim twenty-five feet.

The other girls gathered around. They agreed with Denise that Barbara could do it if she really tried.

That afternoon after handicraft period, the girls all put on their swimsuits and trooped out onto the boardwalk which surrounded the beginner's swim course.

Elaine was the first to be tested. Her dive took her almost all of the way to the end of the course. She did a fancy crawl stroke on the return, and climbed out with a proud grin.

Then it was Barbara's turn. That wasn't twenty-five feet; it was one hundred miles. Her teeth were chattering, and she was thinking about telling Ms. Pearl the truth, when Denise gave her a little shove.

Barbara lost her scream when she belly-flopped on the water. She waved her arms wildly and kicked her legs, but she didn't go anywhere.

"Go, Barb!" all the girls were screaming.

But she didn't go. She panicked and fought the water. Gasping for air, she thought, *I'll never make it, never.* Then a splash caught her just as she inhaled—disaster! She doubled up, sputtering, and promptly sank.

Ms. Georgia, the lifeguard, held out a long pole for her to grab, and Barbara held on desperately until she was hauled out.

"Nice try," Ms. Georgia said.

But Barbara flushed crimson. *Bet she thinks I'm nuts. She could tell I don't know how to swim.*

On the way back to the cabin, the girls tried to comfort her. "I think you were very brave to try," Nancy told her. The other Maple cabin girls said that they thought so, too. They didn't even mention the canoes, which was nice of them. Barbara knew they had to be disappointed.

At rest time that afternoon, Barbara lay on her bunk and thought about failing the swimming test. *I'll have to go into the beginning swimmer's class, ugh! But I learned something even if it wasn't about swimming. I'd better watch out for that Denise; she's bad business. It was all her fault.*

The next day, after Barbara had snapped at Denise for not much cause, Ms. Pearl called her aside. "What's troubling you, Barbara Kay?"

"Denise," said Barbara. And she told Ms. Pearl what Denise had done at the swimming test.

"It isn't really Denise that's bothering you is it? Would the shove have bothered you if you had known how to swim?"

Barbara swallowed hard as she thought that one over.

"Look at it this way," Ms. Pearl continued, "every person and every situation we get into has something to teach us. We can choose to learn and change and grow, so that

pretty soon we can become responsible within ourselves. Or we can choose to stay stuck, and someone else will always be telling us what to do, or what to think, or giving us a shove. It's that simple."

Ms. Pearl smiled, "Denise just showed you yourself. And it's not always comfortable to look inside ourselves. But I think you're the learning and growing type, Ms. Barbara Kay."

Barbara felt grateful that Ms. Pearl had confidence in her, that at least **someone** had. She sighed and asked, "Do you still have to keep on learning and growing when you're already grown up?"

Ms. Pearl grinned at her. "Never a day goes by that I don't learn something new about myself."

If Ms. Pearl can do it; I can do it, and I will. Then she clapped both hands to her forehead. "I think I'm growing already," she joked. "My brain is getting so big, it's trying to break out of my head." And it really felt better to be laughing about having to keep on practicing how to be responsible.

Chapter VII Another Point of View

Elaine's troubles had started the previous evening. It was an hour after lights-out, but Denise, Elaine's upper bunk mate, had had to go out. She had picked up her flashlight, but hadn't turned it on because she hadn't wanted to wake the others. She had climbed down from her bunk and landed both bare feet on Elaine's wet bathing suit. "Yetch! Elaine Messenger, you slob. Your name ought to be Elaine Messy," she hissed. "I'm going to hang your suit outside, but tomorrow I'm going to tell Ms. Pearl."

Ms. Pearl was not too rough on Elaine, but the girls were. "We got ten demerits last inspection because of you," Elaine said.

"You never get your bed made on time, and you just cram stuff on your shelf," Denise accused.

Even Nancy had her say. "At least, you could keep from scattering candy wrappers around."

"We never go town, get ice cream," Tran Duc complained.

Barbara bit back her own angry remark. By this time poor Elaine was sitting her bunk sobbing.

That afternoon the girls were all hard at work on their handicraft projects. Karen was showing Barbara how to string the loom for her beaded headband. Elaine was painting tiger lilies on a small wooden box. Denise was banging away with a hammer on her copper letter opener. She stopped hammering long enough to say, "Ms. Messy's using paint. You guys better keep out of her range."

"Oh, Denise, cut it..." Elaine gestured at Denise with her hand. The orange paint flew. Barbara's white tennis shoes blossomed orange polka dots.

"Oh, my shoes!" she wailed.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't mean to do it." Elaine, crying hard ran for the door and all the way back to Maple cabin.

Barbara ran after her.

"Elaine. Elaine, it doesn't matter that much. That's water color paint, so it will wash out. I know you didn't mean to do it."

"I can't do anything right. Everybody hates me. And I am a slob." And Elaine continued weeping.

"Listen, Elaine, it's not you they don't like. They just don't like some of the things you do, and you can always change what you do."

Elaine stopped crying and began to listen.

"And you do lots of things right. Why, you can swim circles around me. I felt bad when I failed the swimming test. I just knew all the girls were going to hate me. But crying about it wouldn't have done any good. I just had to learn how to swim. Think about it."

"Thanks, Barb. I feel better now. I really do, and I will try to do better."

"Okay, Elaine, start right now. I'll help you."

Barbara showed Elaine how to make neat hospital corners on her bed. She helped her sort and hang some of her clothes on the pegs and fold others on her shelf. Elaine got the broom and swept under her bed. And she got so far into the act that she swept the whole cabin. Both girls policed up the grounds around the cabin.

At inspection time the next morning, Mrs. Johnson could not find one reason to give them a demerit. That afternoon, the Maple cabin girls were treated to ice cream.

As she licked her double-chocolate cone, Barbara said to Elaine, "I don't understand why grown-ups are such neat-freaks. But, you know, it's funny. When I was telling you to clean up **your** stuff, I thought about how my mom is always after me to put **my** stuff away and clean up my room. Now I think I know just how she feels."

Chapter VIII Can I Count on You?

The second time that Barbara had been posted for KP duty, her partner had been Karen. They had sat in the shade on the porch outside the kitchen. The job for the day had been to scrape the carrots, snap the green beans, and peel the potatoes for evening stew.

Barbara would not have admitted to anyone that she liked kitchen work. Good smells and sometimes cookie treats came from the kitchen. And anyway, jobs that she didn't have to think about allowed her to sit easy and daydream. *There she was in the beautiful red dress from the mall dancing with...* Suddenly, Barbara's dream bubble had popped. "Karen, square potatoes? The cooks will really be mad at you. Here, trade jobs. You snap beans. There isn't anything much you can do to ruin **them**."

"Great! I hate KP. I hate peeling potatoes," Karen had said.

"You're so good with your hands, Karen. I'd have thought you'd enjoy KP."

"Well, I don't." Karen had said. "Look, when you do a handicraft project, you've got something that lasts. When you peel potatoes, you put them on the table, and they're gone. Then you just get to peel more potatoes. Boring."

Barbara had said, "Well, I'm just the opposite. I don't mind KP too much, but that handicraft stuff really gets to me. I've got so many needle pricks, my first finger looks like a sieve."

"That head band pattern you designed is going to look elegant, though. Black, red, and white, good choice."

"Hey," Karen had said a few minutes later. "What say we trade jobs? There's one more KP for me next Thursday. You take my KP, and I'll do two inches of your headband."

"Three inches," Barbara had bargained.

"Oh, all right, three. Can I count on you to remember?"

Barbara had nodded, and they had shaken hands on the agreement.

Karen cleared the wildflower gathering with Mrs. Johnson. "I want to make some note cards with dried wildflowers mounted on them. I know that you don't like us to pick them, but could I pick just a few?"

"Well, Karen, I guess we could make an exception this once. That sounds like a worthy project. But I'll want you to pick just the ones I tell you."

"I'll be careful, Mrs. Johnson," Karen promised.

"All right. Pick just one flower from each plant. That way there will be plenty of

flowers left to reseed. You can pick columbine, lupine, penstemon, and windflowers. Can you identify those?"

"Yes ma'am, we did nature study with Ms. Jay."

"Good. Don't disturb the Glacier Lilies or any other member of the orchid family."

"I won't. I promise."

"Very well. Stay near camp, and take someone with you."

The next Thursday morning, Karen and Elaine went wildflower gathering. Barbara went with Nancy and Tran Duc to practice archery.

And the cooks went to Mrs. Johnson to complain that only Margaret from Larch cabin had shown up for KP.

"Karen, I'm disappointed in you," Mrs. Johnson scolded. "I know that I gave you permission to go and pick wildflowers, but you didn't tell me about your KP duty. That was dishonest."

"But, but..." stammered Karen.

"You will not take part in this evening's campfire. You will be restricted to your cabin,"

"But Mrs. Johnson," Karen cried. "Barbara and I traded. I told her that I would do three inches of her head band if she would do my KP today. She said that I could count on her."

"Well, young lady, obviously you couldn't. I expect each camper to do her part. The cooks had only Margaret to help them today. That wasn't fair to them, nor to Margaret. Suppose you go and find Barbara.

Tell her that you are both restricted this evening. And I will want a note telling me what you have learned from this incident."

"Don't blame me for the whole thing, Karen. I'm sorry I forgot, but you got us into this in the first place."

"Shut up and write," Karen hollered.

"Sheesh! What a sorehead."

They thought in silence for a while, and then...

Karen wrote:

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

It wasn't my fault that I missed KP. I had arranged with Barbara to trade my KP for helping her with her headband. I learned that I can't count

on friends, especially Barbara.

Karen Stapleton

Barbara wrote:

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

I will apologize to Karen, Margaret, and the cooks. I am sorry that I forgot to cover for Karen on her KP duty. I just promised her I'd take her turn because she said she hated KP. I learned that I shouldn't ever try to help someone out.

Barbara Kay Turner

It seemed to both girls that the campfire lasted a long, long time **that** evening. It was quiet in Maple cabin. Then Karen offered, "I'll show you my note if you'll show me yours."

"Okay, and I am sorry that I forgot, Karen."

After reading Karen's note, Barbara asked, "You mean you wouldn't give me a chance again or anyone else either?"

"Does mine sound as bad as that? Yours sounds like Grump City, too, for that matter. You aren't going to help anyone out ever at all?"

"We both sound like we're blaming someone else. How about we each just write what we could do better."

They thought for a while in silence.

This time Karen wrote:

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

I learned that I should do my assigned jobs even if I don't like them.

Karen Stapleton

And Barbara wrote:

Dear Mrs. Johnson:

I will apologize to Karen, Margaret and the cooks. I learned that when I give my word, I should keep it. A promise is to keep.

Barbara Kay Turner

They exchanged notes again.

"I like them better this way, don't you?" Karen asked.

“Yep, and I think Mrs. Johnson will, too,” Barbara answered.

Chapter IX The Scavenger Hunt

They had thought it was very mysterious when Ms. Pearl had told them to take their flashlights along.

“Why do we need flashlights at a campfire,” Elaine had asked.

“Ask me no questions...”

Sometimes even Ms. Pearl acts like all the other grown-ups, Barbara had thought.

When the girls quieted down, Mrs. Johnson announced, “For tonight’s campfire activity, we are going to have a scavenger hunt. Each cabin is to choose a leader to take charge of the list. Be back at the campfire by 10 o’clock.

The Maple cabin girls voted for their leader. It didn’t take them long to choose Karen.

Mrs. Johnson gave each of the leaders a list and a collecting bag. Girls scattered in all directions. Karen didn’t budge. “Look here,” she said. “We can make better time if we get organized first. I’m going to read you the list, and you think where we can find the stuff.” She read:

1 angleworm	a bird feather
10 ants in a pill bottle	5 different kinds of leaves
1 crayfish, dead or alive	a yard of shoreline
5 pine cones	a chunk of moss
1 jar of elbow grease	1 beetle

“Hey, I’ve got a pill bottle in the cabin,” Elaine said. “But I haven’t got a jar for the elbow grease.”

Denise giggle hysterically. “C’mere, Elaine, I’ll give you a jar of elbow grease.” And when Elaine got near her, Denise gave her a jarring elbow in the ribs.

“Ouch, you meanie!” Elaine complained, but she laughed along with the others.

“Are there any other joke things on the list?” asked Barbara.

“A yard of shoreline isn’t sensible either,” Nancy said, “but I don’t understand it.” No one else did either.

“Okay,” Karen said, taking charge again. “Elaine, go get the bottle for the ants. We’ll be right at the edge of the woods. And bring the mosquito stuff. These guys are eating me alive.”

With all of them collecting, it wasn’t long before they had a worm, a blue jay feather, a velvety chunk of moss, 5 pine cones, and leaves from oak, maple, alder, fir and pine trees.

“Needles **are** leaves,” insisted Karen. “Trust me.”

The ants were a little harder, but by the time Elaine got back, they had collected 10 ants, which were only slightly the worse for wear, and a small black beetle.

“What you do with them?” Tran Duc asked. “You can’t eat.”

Everyone howled with laughter. They had all forgotten that Tran Duc would not know about scavenger hunts.

“It’s just for fun,” Nancy explained. “It’s just a race to see which cabin can get all the junk first.”

“We win race!” Tran Duc exclaimed. “I know where get crayfish.”
And off she ran.

Barbara took off after her. She knew how easy it would be to get lost in the woods when night came.

Tran Duc ran to Cow Creek. The water was just low enough for her to jump from rock to rock along the bank. She paused to check each pool for crayfish and then raced on.

Barbara followed her at a slower pace. The round river-rock made for treacherous footing, and it was getting dark.

Tran Duc followed the creek in a wide curve, getting farther and farther from camp.

Suddenly, Barbara heard a crash and the tinkle of glass, followed by a wild cry, “Oeee!”

“Tran Duc, stay still,” Barbara called. She trained her light on the rocks and picked her way along. It wouldn’t do to have both of them in trouble.

When she caught up with Tran Duc, the girl was rocking back and forth, moaning, and holding her leg.

“It’ll be okay. I’m here. Hold the flashlight, and let me have a look at your leg.” Tran Duc’s knee had been cut by the glass from her broken flashlight, but worse yet, her ankle was rapidly swelling.

“Try to stand up and put your weight on it, Tran Duc.” She did, but it was no use.

“Listen to me, Tran Duc. I’m going to have to leave you here and go back to camp to get some help.”

“No leave, Barb,” Tran Duc begged. “It dark.”

Barbara hugged her and promised, “I’ll be back in no time.” She tried to explain how she would use her compass to cut through the woods instead of going the long way around by the creek, but it was no use. Tran Duc couldn’t understand.

Barbara resolutely shut her ears to Tran Duc’s crying and set a course to cut off the big loop they had traveled by following the creek. It was pitch dark, and the sickle moon was slight help. *I ought to be able to see the fire when I get close*, she thought.

And sure enough, after about ten minutes of stumbling through the woods, she saw the row of cabins and beyond them the campfire.

She began to run, calling, “Ms. Pearl, Ms. Pearl. It’s Tran Duc. She **really is** hurt this time. I...” And she ran square into Ms. Pearl herself.

Barbara showed them how she had used her compass to set a course for camp and told them how she figured that they could just trace her course backward to find Tran Duc.

And that is what they did. So Tran Duc came back to the scavenger hunt campfire riding on a four-hand sling made by Ms. Pearl and Mrs. Johnson.

After their adventure was told and Tran Duc’s ankle was strapped, swaddled in an ice pack, and elevated on a pillow, the girls got back to the contest.

The leader from each cabin checked in with Mrs. Johnson. Alder cabin had not found a bird feather, and they had been too squeamish to dig up and angleworm. Walnut cabin lacked a jar of elbow grease and a pill bottle for the ants. And so it went.

“We have a pretty good chance,” Barbara whispered to Nancy.

“Wait,” Nancy cautioned. “Look what Margaret is doing.”

Margaret had a paper sack. She reached into it and took out a handful of sand. Then she dribbled it on the ground in a long line.

Just like I learned to cover the baby seeds for Mrs. Hewlitt, thought Barbara.

Karen slapped herself on the forehead. “A yard of shoreline! I should have known.”

“Beech cabin has won,” announced Mrs. Johnson. “And the Maple cabin girls are the runners-up. Let’s give a cheer for everyone. You’re all winners in my book.”

With Ms. Pearl on her fiddle, Ms. Jamieson with her concertina, and Ms. Jay strumming her guitar and leading, the “winners” sang campfire songs till lights-out.

If the campfire of the scavenger hunt had been a super special time, the campfire of the last night in camp was **truly memorable**. Ms. Pearl had said to the girls, “Ms. Peterson and I are going to town this evening. Take your flashlights to campfire, and have a good time. If you have any trouble with anything, ask Mrs. Johnson for help.”

At the campfire, Mrs. Johnson announced, “Tonight we’re going to do something really special because it’s the last campfire. You girls are going on a snipe hunt.”

The girls began whispering. “What is a snipe?” “Did you ever hear...” “I never heard...”

“Snipe are small birds, about the size of a baby turkey,” Mrs. Johnson continued. “You girls have probably never seen one because they are nocturnal. They are delicate little creatures, so you must not be rough with them. Ms. Jamieson has organized the hunt, so I’ll let her explain what it is that you are to do.”

Ms. Jamieson began by appointing six of the girls to be beaters. “Now you girls are coming with me. We’ll beat through the woods and drive the birds toward Juniper Flats.” She gave each of the girls a short stick to beat on the trees.

She distributed a paper grocery bag and a length of string to each of the other girls. “You girls station yourselves in a line at the edge of the woods. You’ll be able to see the birds as they come into the clearing. When you catch a snipe, put it into the sack and tie the top. Gently does it when you handle the birds. Stay together by cabin. If anyone in your cabin catches a bird, you all come in. First cabin in are the winners. Understand.”

When there were no more questions, Ms. Jamieson said, “Come along beaters. Catchers, give us ten minutes to get into position.”

“Coo-ee, coo-ee,” the girls could hear the call louder as the beaters came toward the Flats. They heard the banging of sticks on the trees, and the cry came again, “Coo-ee, coo-ee.”

“They’re getting nearer,” Denise called out. “We should see some action soon.”

The sound of the beaters echoed nearer and nearer. Nothing happened; no birds.

“Not want Beech cabin win again. Laugh at us.” Tran Duc said.

No birds.

“Maybe there aren’t any snipe in these woods,” Nancy suggested.

“Is there any such thing as a snipe?” Karen wondered aloud. Ms. Jay told us all about the plants and animals that live around here. Do you remember her **ever** saying anything about a snipe?”

“Hey, all those girls with Ms. Jamieson were in camp here last year,” Nancy said.

“That Mrs. Johnson!” Denise said indignantly, and they all laughed.

“A yard of shoreline.” Barbara giggled. “A jar of elbow grease.”

“The other cabins will catch on pretty quick. Race you back to the campfire,” Karen challenged them.

They were first in, and, after taking some kidding from their counselors, they all had a good laugh.

The girls from the other cabins all caught on eventually, and each group came in for an increasing amount of teasing as the circle around the campfire grew.

Larch cabin’s girls didn’t give up until the beaters came out of the woods. They were given a royal razzing.

“Never again,” Elaine said. “No one’s ever going to fool me with something silly like that again. All of the girls agreed with her on that.

Mrs. Johnson gave them a little speech about what good campers they had been and how much she and the counselors would miss them. Then came a time for handing out the certificates of honor the girls had won in the past two weeks. Most of the girls knew who would win, but even so, they squealed with excitement when the names were called out. In Maple cabin, only Elaine had been cited. She had won honors in diving.

And then Barbara heard, “For Barbara Kay Turner. In keeping her head in an emergency, in using her equipment effectively, in helping to get prompt help for an injured fellow camper, Barbara has earned this special honor.”

Barbara took the paper unable to believe it, and as she looked up from it, she caught a shy, sweet smile from Tran Duc. “I know you come back, Barb.” The best thanks of all.

Then it was time to sing, but it wasn’t quite as much fun without Ms. Pearl’s fiddle. They were just finishing *There’s a Long, Long Trail* *Awinding* when the sound came from the woods, a long piercing scream.

The girls shivered. “Oh, my heavens!” “What was that?” “Did you ever hear...?” They looked to the counselors for help. The counselors looked frightened, too.

Mrs. Johnson recovered first. “Girls, we’ve never seen a mountain lion except up on the far bluffs, but...” The tortured scream sounded again, ending in a snarl.

The girls screamed.

“Go to your cabins quickly,” Mrs. Johnson ordered. “Keep the doors closed and the windows shuttered. I’ll get some help.”

The shrieking girls broke all records getting to their cabins.

“I’m scared.” Nancy spoke for all of them. “I wish Ms. Pearl was here.”

“The latch of the door’s busted,” Barbara said. “What are we going to do?”

The screaming, snarl echoes again, closer this time.

“Suppose it tries to get in,” Elaine was sobbing. “Oh, I’m so scared.”

“America not safe now,” Tran Duc said.

“Let’s push that bunk over to the door. We can all sit on it,” Karen suggested. “That ought to keep it out, whatever it is.”

“Wait a minute. I’ve never seen a mountain lion. I might never get a chance again,” said Denise. “I want to peek out the door.”

“Denise, you’re always doing something foolish,” Barbara accused.

“Just a tiny second; just a small peek,” Denise coaxed.

“Ieeee-grrrr,” came the cry again, sounding right on their doorstep.

“I’m going to open that door,” Denise insisted. “Get ready to slam it shut and push the bunk over.” She eased the door open a crack. Then laughing hysterically, she swung the door wide open. The others shrank back, but soon curiosity overcame their fright. They rushed to the doorway.

In the light of Ms. Petersen’s flashlight beam, they could see Ms. Pearl, her fiddle tucked under her chin. She was sawing up and down on the violin’s E string; the “mountain lion” screamed and snarled.

The girls whooped with relief.

As the girls in the other cabins heard the laughter, one by one they dared to open their cabin doors. The laughter echoed through the camp.

“Who was that who said she was **never** going to be fooled by something silly again?”

And the laughter echoed again.

Chapter XI The Deadline

It was too soon. No more songs around the campfire. No more skits. No more “yards of shoreline” nor “jars of elbowgrease” to scavenge. It was time to pack up and go home. Barbara decided that the only thing she wouldn’t miss was the horses. She wouldn’t have to worry anymore about whether or not to dare riding.

“Mr. Tucker will bring the truck around for your belongings. Deadline 10 o’clock,” Ms. Pearl announced.

“Okay,” the girls chorused.

The others bustled around and soon were all packed, but 10 o’clock seemed a long way off to Barbara. She had her beaded headband to finish, and she was still working on it when Mary from Beech cabin ran by yelling, “Pictures are in!”

“C’mon, Barb. Let’s go. You’re sure to be in at least one,” said Nancy.

Barbara stalled. “I don’t know. I’m not packed.”

“You can do that later,” Denise coaxed. “Tucker won’t make you carry your stuff. He’s too nice.”

So off they went.

When they got to the camp store, Barbara found that she was in two of the pictures which Ms. Pearl had been taking. She’d have to thank her for the great souvenirs.

But when she got back to Maple Cabin, she forgot all about that. All the other blanket rolls were gone, but her stuff was still there! *Boy, Ms. Pearl is really going to bawl me out, Barbara thought, I’d better find Mr. Tucker.*

She searched the camp from Alder cabin to Walnut cabin; no Mr. Tucker. Hot and a bit desperate, she was scuffling along past the maintenance building when she heard hammering, and there he was.

“Mr. Tucker, I didn’t get my blanket roll done, and you left my stuff. Can you get it now?”

“Little Miss, I’m busy with this door latch for Maple cabin.”

Barbara knew that the latch on their cabin door needed fixing, but wasn’t her problem more important? “Please, Mr. Tucker,” she pleaded, it’ll be too heavy for me to carry.”

“No, Miss, I can’t do it,” he said more sternly. “Deadline means deadline. Sorry.”

But he didn’t sound sorry to Barbara. With drooping shoulders, she plodded back to Maple cabin. At least the coast was clear; no Ms. Pearl, but no friends to help her either. She guessed that they had gone for a last walk by the lake. Might as well pack.

She laid out her blankets and sheets and piled on her clothing. Then she folded the

blanket sides over and started rolling it up. But even though she rolled it as tightly as she could, the roll was enormous. She tied each end, making a carrying-cord between the ropes, as the campers had been taught to do.

When she was finished, Barbara scrunched down on the bottom bunk, head in hands, and tried to think. *She couldn't carry the roll, too heavy. Mr. Tucker had the only wheels in camp. How else to carry a load? Oh...the horses! But she wouldn't, couldn't dare. She hadn't even been as afraid of swimming as she was of those horses. But it did seem to be the only way.*

Before Barbara had time to scare herself out of the idea, she dragged the blanket roll to the door, bumped it down the steps, and hauled it across the grass to the corral. The cords cut into her hands, and she had to stop often to wipe her sweaty face.

Boy and Moonbeam were grazing peacefully in the corral. Barbara didn't want to attract Boy. He had nipped Nancy on the leg, and she had a horrendous black and blue mark. How could she attract Moonbeam?

She saw that there was a long bunch of grass growing at the base of each fencepost. She pulled some, climbed the fence and leaned over, calling softly to Moonbeam. As the mare ambled over, she loomed larger and larger. Her teeth looked enormous, and she smelled horsy.

Barbara leaned away from her and fell off the fence. Moonbeam bolted.

Climbing back on the fence, Barbara coaxed, "Moonbeam, here's grass for you." The mare sidled up, and carefully keeping her fingers out of reach of those teeth, Barbara fed her the grass. Then she gritted her teeth, and patting the horse's nose with one hand, she reached for the mare's halter with the other. As she tied the halter to the top slat of the fence, she suddenly realized that she wouldn't have to ride Moonbeam, just get that blanket roll loaded on her. Barbara sighed with relief.

Pulling harder than she ever thought she could, Barbara struggled the blanket roll up onto the fence and over onto Moonbeam's back. It draped down on both sides, but it stayed on.

Then, crawling through the bottom slats of the fence, she untied Moonbeam. Keeping the horse between herself and Boy, she led her out and latched the gate.

As Barbara led Moonbeam through camp, she thought hard about the advice that Ms. Pearl had given her the day of the swim test. There certainly had been a lot of new people and situations in her life this year. She thought of the times when she had not taken charge of her life and someone else had "given her a shove."

And then she thought of the other way. She **had** acted responsibly when she had helped Elaine and Tran Duc. It felt good and warm around her heart remembering those

times.

And then here she was again, doing something the hard way because she had not paid attention to the deadline warning. Maybe growing up was like a zigzag; you couldn't go at it straight and once and for all. But it was pretty easy to understand that taking you own responsibility felt better inside. When she reached the parking lot, she hauled the blanket roll down and put it where the others' rolls were stacked. Then she led Moonbeam back to the corral and rewarded her with more handfuls of the long grass. Somehow Moonbeam was not so frightening now. *Maybe I'll even learn to ride next summer,* Barbara thought.

Chapter XII The Decision

By the time she had said goodbye to her new friends and to Ms. Pearl, Barbara could laugh about the whole blanket roll misadventure. And when her folks came to pick up the two girls, she told them the whole story. "Next time someone says I've got to do something by such and such a deadline, I'm going to swivel my radar ears around and really zero in. I won't have to learn about deadlines twice."

Barbara and Nancy chattered about camp all the way up the mountains and down the other side, All the way to Evergreen City. Barbara told about learning to swim. Nancy told about making her leaf collection. And then their tongues tripped over one another to tell about Ms. Pearl's "mountain lion," and the almost disastrous scavenger hunt. They talked and talked. Mrs. Turner promised Barbara that they would get a frame for her special honor, so that she could hang it in her bedroom. The twinkle in her dad's eye told her how proud he was of her.

Barbara and her mother worked half of the next day to clean Barbara's clothing and camping gear. The clothes were easy, just wash, dry and hang away on hangers. Barbara had to work hard to get the paint Elaine had splattered off her sneakers. Getting the burrs out of her heavy sweater was even worse. And then there were the blankets. "I'm sorry for getting them so dirty, Mom."

"Sorry doesn't do it Barbara Kay; you'll have to take them to the cleaners and pay for them yourself."

Barbara groaned, but she didn't give her mother an argument. *I would have argued with Mom about that in the before camp days,* she thought. *Something different is going on with me. Maybe Ms. Pearl is still talking inside my head.*

As Barbara was finishing the dinner dishes that night, her father called, “Barbara Kay Turner, will you come in here.

Her heart sank to her sneakers. She knew that when your parents call you by your whole name, it’s never good news. *What have I done or not done now*, she thought frantically.

But they didn’t look angry. “Barb,” her Father began, “your Mother and I have been talking. We feel that after listening to you talk about your camp experiences, that you are showing some new bumps of responsibility.” He felt around on her head playfully, as if looking for the bumps.

“You see, Barbara,” her Mother continued, “that’s why we wanted you to go to Dominican. We felt that we could not quite depend on you to do your work, and the teachers there would have seen to it that you did it. At Eastpointe, you would have been in charge of getting your work done yourself.

“Nance was right! She guessed that might be the reason.” And then Barbara explained what she herself had been thinking about. “It seems that getting to be dependable is kind of like a zigzag path—fail, succeed, fail, succeed. I probably won’t always do it all right, but I have all the rest of my life to practice.”

They seemed to understand, like maybe they had zigzags, too.

“Well, young lady,” her Father said, “It looks as if the camp money is the best money you and I ever invested.” He hugged her and winked at her mother. “I may even have saved money on the deal,” he said. “We may not need to buy those school uniforms after all.”

“Do you mean it?”

“You bet. Your mother and I are so proud of you, it’s hard to put into words.”

Barb gave each of them a queen-sized kiss. As she ran to the telephone to give Nancy the good news, she let out a yell, “**Look out Eastpointe. Here I come!**”

