

Chase Josephine

Marjorie Dean, College

Senior



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CHAPTER I – A QUESTION FOR THE FUTURE

“Tomorrow evening at this time I’ll be back in my old room at Hamilton. Tonight, the Country of College seems very far away. Tomorrow, it will be Sanford that seems so.”

Marjorie Dean smiled frankly up into Hal Macy’s rather sober face. The strains of a slow waltz were throbbing to an harmonic end. Hal and his sister Jerry were giving a farewell hop in honor of the five Lookouts who were to return to Hamilton College the next day. Hal was thinking, as he looked down at Marjorie’s lovely, upraised face that no one, not even her father and mother, would miss her as he should.

“And who are you going to miss most?” he asked boldly, his eyes twinkling, nevertheless. “If you say myself, I shall be *so* flustered. You never say nice things to me, you know.”

“I’m not going to begin now,” Marjorie returned mischievously. “I shall miss General and Captain most, *of course*.”

“And *me* next most. I’ll say it for you, since you have no regard for my tender feelings. I think I ought to be ranked next to General and Captain,” Hal persisted audaciously.

“You do come next to them Hal – you and Connie and Laurie. The old guard are next dearest,” Marjorie hastily assured. “Oh, dear, the waltz is ending! I wish it would begin all over again. I like waltzing much better than fox trotting or one-stepping. And I love that particular waltz. It is called ‘In Sunny Gardens,’ and there is a certain suggestion of the title in the music, I think.”

Marjorie had sought hasty refuge in commenting on the waltz music just ended. Hal might appear to be joking. Marjorie knew he was not. During the summer vacation she had been in his company a great deal. The Deans had spent the summer at Severn Beach, a seaside resort patronized yearly by the Macys. Jerry and Marjorie had been constantly together, with Hal a delightfully persistent third party, whenever the two girls allowed him the privilege.

Hal Macy had been Marjorie’s devoted cavalier since the beginning of her high school days. Three years older than herself, he was already sure of his love for her. Marjorie, however, regarded him through the eyes of friendship only. She was still too greatly absorbed in college to make room in her life for romance. To her it was a vague something too remote from her mind to be considered. She did not wish Hal to be other than her friend of the old days. The bare thought of changing that pleasant friendly footing for a fonder relationship was repugnant to her.

“I’ll ask the musicians to play that waltz again, if you like, Marjorie. Say the word.”

Any momentary disappointment Hal might have felt did not betray itself in his tones. It was not the first time Marjorie had refused to take him seriously. He understood her too well to feel more than a momentary twinge over her indifference toward sentiment.

“Oh, never mind, Hal. I only said that because I liked the music so much. Thank you, just the same.”

“Have some lemonade, then. I am determined to please you, if I can.” Hal took gentle hold on Marjorie’s arm and began steering her toward the lemonade bowl which stood at one end of the long room.

“You always please me, Hal,” was the instant response. “You are the best boy ever was, and I never fail to have a perfectly scrumptious time at yours and Jerry’s parties. Now *you* can’t say again that I never said anything nice to you.”

“That’s not bad for a beginning.” Hal put on a critical expression. “Say something else nice to me.” His eyes regarded her very steadily now.

“Let me see.” Marjorie knitted her brows. “Well, I wish we had a ball room like this. We always have to dance in our living room, you know.”

“It’s a good old room. We have had some fine times here.” Hal found it harder this time to be casual, but he succeeded. It was plain to be seen Marjorie didn’t care a button about him, except as a friend. He resolved to keep the conversation strictly impersonal thereafter.

Marjorie was hard-hearted enough to feel glad of the change in Hal’s tone. His almost humbly-expressed desire to please her had touched her. It had brought forth from her the sincere little speech regarding her liking for him. The deepening light in his eyes, however, had warned her to rush from the subject to one more comfortably impersonal.

“I’m going to be lonesome this winter, Marjorie,” Hal continued. “I am about the only fellow in the crowd I’ve always run with to be left in Sanford. Danny’s going to New York to study law. Did I tell you the Crane is going to Buffalo to take charge of a branch of his governor’s business? Harry Lenox is going on the road for their business. And Laurie!” Hal made a gesture of resignation. “He’ll not be far away. Only the Atlantic Ocean between us! That’s all! I was in hopes he wouldn’t go back to Europe this winter. Circumstances, however – ” Hal stopped suddenly.

The significance of his tone caused Marjorie to interrogate quickly: “Circumstances? What do you mean, Hal?”

“It is plain you haven’t heard something you are due to hear. I can’t explain. I can only say this – Don’t be surprised at anything you may hear.” Hal made this mysterious assertion with the suspicion of a tantalizing smile.

Before Marjorie could inquire further as to his meaning, Danny Seabrooke joined them with: “The next dance will be a fox trot. Bid Macy a pleasant but sudden farewell, Marjorie, and prepare to dance it with me. I am a much better dancer than he. You will have something agreeable to look forward to.” He simpered at Marjorie, then closed one eye and squinted reflectively at Hal.

“Hope you’ll be in condition to dance that fox trot.” The silky intonation was not without menace.

“I trust that I shall. It all depends. If I can persuade Marjorie to leave this danger-laden spot at once, all will be well.”

“Don’t be too confident. There’s many a slip – ”

“I know it,” Danny cut in wisely. “I have fallen down three times on this floor tonight. I know all about that slip business.”

This confession merely provoked unsympathetic laughter on the part of his hearers.

The lively music of the fox trot beginning, Danny made an elaborate salaam to Marjorie.

“Goodbye for the present, Hal. I’m coming back to quiz you about that mysterious remark you just made,” she called over her shoulder as she started to dance away.

“You may expect *me*, too,” assured Danny. “Farewell!” He beamed foolishly at Hal and waved his hand.

“Farewell. You needn’t mind coming back, Dan-yell,” Hal flung ironically after him.

Readers of the “Marjorie Dean High School Series,” comprising the four volumes, “Marjorie Dean, High School Freshman,” “Marjorie Dean, High School Sophomore,” “Marjorie Dean, High School Junior,” and “Marjorie Dean, High School Senior,” are already in close touch with Marjorie and her friends.

Those who have been pleased to follow her through four years of high school life have undoubtedly been interested in her further doings as a student at Hamilton College. The account of her three years of hard study and progress, both social and mental, has been faithfully set down in “Marjorie Dean, College Freshman,” “Marjorie Dean, College Sophomore,” and “Marjorie Dean, College Junior.”

During the spirited fox trot Marjorie wondered busily as to the meaning of Hal's remark. Her musings were forcedly disjointed. Danny now and again interpolated into his dancing an additional funny step which kept her attention on him.

The dance over, she promptly sought Hal. Now he was disposed to be thoroughly tantalizing. He laughed at her and accused her of undue curiosity.

"*All right!* Keep your old secret, Mister Stingy!" she at last exclaimed in laughing vexation. "I won't dance with you again this evening, just to pay you for being so aggravating."

"It isn't my secret," Hal began by way of conciliation. "The reason I mentioned it to you was because I was told you were to share it. Go and find Connie. She will tell you. I've told you too much already. I'm a *fine* repository for secrets." Hal put sarcastic emphasis on the "fine."

"I'll forgive you when I find out what it is. There goes Connie now. I'm going to ask her." Marjorie hurried off to intercept Constance, who was crossing the floor.

"Oh, Lieutenant!" Constance exclaimed, her fair face radiant. "I was just looking for you. I've something to report."

"Go ahead. I've something to report, too," Marjorie returned gayly. "Let us go downstairs to the window seat. We can have a wee little talk there."

Arm in arm the two girls steered their course to the door of the ball room. At the foot of the rather steep stairway was a double window with a deep cushioned seat. There they settled themselves for an exchange of confidences. The full light of the white, sailing moon flooded the window seat, lending to the two young faces an enchantment of beauty.

Constance was wearing a pale blue chiffon frock, embellished here and there with small clusters of pinkish-white rosebuds. It was a facsimile of a blue gown long since laid away as a treasure of a by-gone day. The worn-out gown of blue chiffon had been Marjorie's first gracious gift to Constance.

"You look just exactly as you did the night of the Hallowe'en party when you wore the other blue dress, Connie," Marjorie said. "Will you ever forget that night?"

"No. I couldn't. I still count it as the most eventful night of my life. It was my first dance, my first party dress, my first meeting with Laurie." Constance became suddenly silent. Her hand reached out and found one of Marjorie's.

"What is it, Connie?" Marjorie understood that Constance had something special on her mind which she was about to impart.

"I – I – Oh, Marjorie! I am not going to wait to be married to Laurie next June when he comes back from Europe. I am going to be married to him on Thanksgiving Day and go to Europe with him. We're going to study together there."

"Why, Connie Stevens! You take my breath!" Marjorie, who had been sitting very straight relaxed with a little, "Ah-h!"

"I knew you'd be flabbergasted." Constance's reply was tenderly apologetic. "I just had to tell you, though. We would be married as early as October, but, if we were, then you girls couldn't come to our wedding on account of college restrictions. It will be a very quiet wedding. When we come home next June we will give a reception and invite all our friends. I am so happy, Marjorie. I couldn't bear to be separated from Laurie for another year." Constance hid her glowing face against Marjorie's shoulder.

Marjorie listened to Constance, not yet over her first amazement at the news. Hal's words, "Don't be surprised at anything you may hear," returned with force.

"It's a beautiful plan, Connie," she approved, when she found her voice again. Both arms went out to encircle her friend.

"I knew you would agree with us." Constance gave a little sigh of satisfaction. "Aunt Susan was not pleased, at first. She wished to announce our betrothal formally at a reception for me this winter. She has been so dear to us. She was broad-minded enough to allow for such stray musicians as Laurie and me. Neither of us care about pomp and ceremony, you know."

Constance raised her head. In her blue dress, with the moonlight playing upon her soft, childish features and golden hair, Marjorie thought she looked even younger than she had appeared at the eventful Hallowe'en party. Then, poverty and unhappiness had marred her beauty. Now, it had grown with every good gift that had been showered upon her.

“Marjorie,” she continued very solemnly: “I have never said a word to you before, but – ” with a slight pause, “I hope you will marry Hal some day. I am sure he loves you as dearly as Laurie loves me.” Constance spoke with the sincerity of the truly happy. She had found love. “You have always been friendly with Hal, but I understand you don't love him now. I have watched you both, and I know he cares a great deal more for you than you for him. I don't mean I wish you would fall in love with Hal tomorrow or next week or even next year, but, someday, I hope you will.”

“I don't wish to fall in love with Hal or anybody else.” Marjorie shook her head with a decision that loosened a curl from the thick, wavy masses of hair drawn over her ears. She frowned down the remote possibility of such a catastrophe. “It has always been different with you and Laurie than with Hal and me. You two were really lovers as far back as your sophomore year at Sanford High. Hal and I have been just good friends, and so far as I am concerned, we are going to stay *just good friends*.”

CHAPTER II – THE RETURN OF THE “TRAVELERS”

“And is it yourselves, and no other? Where was I, may I ask, that I was not at the station to meet you?”

Leila Harper stood at the top of the front steps of Wayland Hall just long enough to thus interrogate the party of four girls who were advancing toward her. With a jubilant Irish whoop she made a sudden, forceful descent of the steps and landed among them with open arms.

“And I am that glad to see you!” she exclaimed. “Here I have been, melancholy as a roofless banshee, for two whole days. Vera, may the moon defend her and the sun lend her grace, was to be here today. Still no sign of our respected and regretted Midget!”

“Maybe we aren’t glad to see you, Leila Greatheart!” Marjorie was embracing Leila with a fervor that bespoke her affection for the genial Irish girl. “I would have wired you we were coming, but I hadn’t heard from you for three weeks, neglectful person, so I didn’t know where you were.”

“Now has it really been three weeks?” Leila inquired ingeniously, then laughed. “I’m guilty, Beauty. Forgive your Celtic friend. I am always meaning to write letters. It’s not lack of intention, but lack of execution that troubles me. But where is Ronny?” Making the round of greeting as she talked, Leila had now missed Veronica Lynne.

“Ronny hasn’t come from the West yet.” Muriel replied to the question. “This is the first year she hasn’t traveled to Hamilton with us. My, how I have missed her! We used to have such lovely squabbles on the train, all the way to college. It made things so pleasant and lively.” Muriel’s brown eyes danced as she forwarded this naive admission.

“Ronny and her father went on one of their long pony-riding trips,” Marjorie further enlightened Leila. “She may be on the way East now. I have not heard from her for over a month. Miss Archer, her God-mother, has only received one letter from her since the first of July. When she is on one of those trips she doesn’t write letters for she has no chance to mail them.”

“Who’s back, Leila?” eagerly inquired Jerry, as the party leisurely ascended the steps, Leila in the middle of the group.

“Hardly anyone, yet. It is early, you know. Mary Cornell and Eva Ingram are here; Kathie, too.”

“Hurrah!” Lucy Warner’s face lighted at this news. “How long since Kathie came, Leila?”

“Day before yesterday. She is staying at Lillian’s. I saw her when she got off the train. So did Lillian. Result – I haven’t seen her since.”

“I must call her on the telephone this very afternoon,” planned Lucy.

“I don’t know what I shall do without Hortense,” wailed Muriel. “I’ll be simply lost without her. I am glad I arranged for a single. I don’t want a room-mate, so long as I can’t have good old Moretense.”

“Yes; and recall what a fuss you made when Miss Remson asked you to let good old Moretense have half of your room,” reminded Jerry.

“I was a grass-green, arrogant freshman, then,” Muriel loftily excused. “I had not yet attained to heights of wisdom and discernment which – er – ahem – became mine later.”

“When did this miracle you speak of take place?” Jerry affected deep interest. “First I’d heard of it. I never even suspected it.”

“I never answer foolish questions,” retaliated Muriel. “There are persons who make a practice of asking them. Such persons should not be encouraged.”

“Pay no attention to those two, Leila,” Marjorie advised. “Talk to Lucy and me. Tell me, are there any new arrivals at the Hall?”

“Two freshies. I haven’t asked Miss Remson their names. They have Leslie Cairns’ room. They are a noisy pair. I hear them giggling and talking in the halls at every turn.”

“That doesn’t sound as though you admired them, Leila.” Jerry had not lost what Leila had been saying.

“I do not. As a crusty old post graduate, I am hard to please.” Leila’s genial smile belied her words. “I have been too long used to distinguished company.”

“That means us. Bow to the lady.” Muriel gave Jerry a significant nudge.

“Do your own bowing and don’t interrupt. I want to hear who’s come back and who hasn’t. Go ahead and tell us some more, Leila. Never mind my friend here. She is what I should term ‘valuable.’” Jerry turned her back on Muriel.

“Let me see. Martha Merrick is coming back. With her, Vera, Helen and I, there will be four P. G’s. Five Lookouts, make nine of the old girls here. Eva and Mary make eleven, and there are six or seven more. In all, perhaps eighteen students who were here last year. The Hall holds forty-four girls, but Muriel has a single and Kathie’s room will stay empty unless some one wins the scholarship she won. That is not likely to happen.”

“I hope Kathie will have half as nice a room at Randolph House as she had here,” Lucy said. “I’m going to miss her dreadfully.”

Engaged to teach English at the college, Kathie had applied for admission to Randolph House the previous June. It was a campus house given over to members of the faculty.

“You will have to be on your best behavior when you go to see Kathie,” warned Jerry. “The eyes of the faculty will be upon you.”

“Don’t worry about me.” Lucy fixed Jerry with a withering glance. “I know how to behave. I’m going into the house to see Miss Remson.” She reached for her suitcase and leather bag with an air of lofty disdain.

Girl-fashion, the group had reached the floor of the veranda only to gather about Leila and ask questions. Following Lucy’s example, they now repossessed themselves of their luggage and entered the house to pay their respects to Miss Remson.

She had already heard the babel of voices rising from the veranda. Recognizing Muriel’s peculiarly clear, high-pitched tones, she had delightedly hurried to the door. She met the arrivals on the threshold and gave them a hearty welcome.

“Go up to your rooms, girls, and leave your luggage,” she directed, after a cordial hand-shaking all around, “then come down to the dining room. It is only four o’clock. You need something to eat. I will have tea ready for you. If I remember rightly, you Sanford girls have always arrived on a later train.”

“Yes; the five-fifty,” Jerry informed. “The train schedule has been changed. Our train left Sanford at twenty minutes past seven this morning. It was the only one we could take that would bring us here before dark.”

“You’re a dear, Miss Remson,” lauded Muriel. “The very thought of tea is inspiring. I’ve been hungry for the last hour.”

“So have I,” echoed Jerry. “No reason for it, either. We had luncheon on the train.”

“Yes, but at what time?” reminded Muriel. “Precisely twelve. Four hours’ ride after that on a bumpety-bumpety train is sufficient cause for a quick return of appetite.”

“Quite true, my dear Miss Harding,” allowed Jerry, favoring Muriel with a patronizing smile.

“So glad you agree with me. It might worry me if you didn’t.” Muriel returned the smile with one equally patronizing.

“Such smirking and beaming, and so deceitful, at that,” teased Leila.

“I’m merely trying to take Ronny’s place with Muriel,” defended Jerry. “She keeps complaining that she has no one to squabble with.”

“When do you think Veronica will be here?” Miss Remson had been listening in amusement to Jerry and Muriel. She was genuinely happy to have the Lookouts back at Wayland Hall again. “I received one long, delightful letter from her in July.”

“We don’t know,” answered Marjorie. She went on to tell the manager what she had already told Leila regarding Ronny.

Such information as she had concerning her missing chum given, the quartette, accompanied by Leila, went on up the staircase and once more made port in their familiar quarters.

“Oh, wow!” ejaculated Jerry, as she dropped her luggage to the floor and sank thankfully upon her own particular chair. “I’m glad I’m here. I hate leaving home, but, now that I’ve once more struck this fond, familiar spot, I find it pretty fair, Bean; pretty fair.”

“I echo your sentiments, Macy. I do, indeed; all except the Bean,” Marjorie retorted, giggling, nevertheless, at the appellation.

It was the derisive name which Leslie Cairns, the leader of the mischief-making Sans, had been pleased to apply to her. It never failed to make Marjorie laugh. There was something so utterly ridiculous about it. Jerry occasionally found amusement also in addressing her as “Bean.”

“You are always so good to us, Miss Remson,” Marjorie gratefully voiced, when presently the hungry travelers had gathered at a table in the long, cool dining room. The day being warm, the manager had thoughtfully provided a tall pitcher of iced tea and a large plate of chicken, olive and lettuce sandwiches.

“Don’t think me stingy for not offering you more of a spread. I wish you to have some appetite for dinner. This little bite will be just a help along the way until dinner time.”

“No wonder everybody is crazy to live at Wayland Hall,” commented Muriel, in appreciation of the manager’s kindly efforts.

“I am so sorry Anna Towne and the girls off the campus wouldn’t allow us to carry out our plan for them.” Marjorie looked her regret. “We wanted them here, you know.”

The “plan” to which she now referred had been one mapped out by herself and Robina Page during her junior year at Hamilton. They had agreed to save a part of their spending money through the college year and also the summer vacation. Object of their self-denial, to make it possible for Anna Towne, and one other off-the-campus girl whom Robin should select, to enjoy the comfort of Wayland Hall as a residence. Their particular friends had been quick to imitate the example they had set. Altogether fourteen girls had joined in the generous movement.

Marjorie and Robin had been detailed to put the offer before the girls each youthful benefactor had elected to help. Two weeks before the close of college Robin had invited them to a spread in her room and there explained matters. No amount of urging, however, on hers and Marjorie’s part, could persuade them to take advantage of the offer. It was with reluctance that they even consented to go on accepting assistance from the students’ beneficiary recently formed.

None of the young philanthropists had been sanguine of an acceptance of their generosity. At least it had been made in good faith. According to Jerry it was too bad they “couldn’t see it,” but it hadn’t done any special harm to cut out a few extravagances. The money each had saved to such a worthy end was collected by Robin and added to the sum on deposit as the Hamilton College Beneficiary Fund in a Hamilton Bank.

“Oh, well, no one could blame the girls for feeling as they did about letting us help them. In their position, I suppose it would have been the same with us,” was Muriel Harding’s opinion. “It would have been fine to have them at the Hall. They are a dandy lot of girls.”

“I am sorry, too, that they will not be here,” Miss Remson said. She had been signally interested in the idea at the time it had been agitated. “I expect sixteen freshmen here and eight upper class students. Two of these last are from Craig Hall, two from Acasia House, and four from Alston Terrace. I had a number of applications from students at other campus houses but took the first eight who applied.”

“Alston Terrace?” Leila interrogated, lively interest animating her expressive features. “Would you mind telling us, Miss Remson, who is coming from Alston Terrace?”

Every pair of eyes now fastened upon the manager, looked inquiry. The same thought had flashed through each brain.

“I have not familiarized myself with the new names as yet. I will go for my register. It will be a good plan to go over these names with you girls. The students from other campus houses are no doubt acquaintances, perhaps friends, of yours. As seniors, you will wish to know the names of the freshmen who are to be here. I depend on you to help them to feel at home.”

Miss Remson rose from her chair and left the room. A brief silence followed her exit, during which five girls regarded one another speculatively.

CHAPTER III – THE INTRUDER

“I wonder – ” Jerry stopped, a displeased pucker between her brows.

“You are not the only one.” Leila shrugged her shoulders. “I do not like the sound of ‘four from Alston Terrace.’ There might be one of the four not quite to our taste.”

“You mean Miss Walbert, don’t you?” Jerry questioned frankly.

“I do. She has been aching to get into Wayland Hall. Vera and I were told that last year. And what is to prevent her? I doubt if Miss Remson knows of her friendship with the departed but not regretted Sans,” Leila argued.

“She must have noticed her last year when she came to see Miss Cairns. I met her in the halls more than once,” Muriel said quickly.

“Miss Remson would pay no special attention to visitors from other campus houses. The maid would admit them to the Hall,” returned Leila. “Don’t you know, Miss Remson is famous here at Hamilton for minding her own affairs? She never interferes with the girls in such matters so long as they keep within bounds.”

“What’s the use in borrowing trouble,” interposed Marjorie cheerfully. “Miss Walbert may not be one of the four students from Alston Terrace to register here. Even if she should be, why need we care one way or the other? When Miss Remson first mentioned it, I thought of her too. We all did, I guess.”

“And why?” Leila turned quickly to Marjorie. “Because we all know her for what she is, a snob and a deceitful little peacock. In my old age and dignity I longed for peace – but not with that trouble-maker in the house. You remember – Jerry and I both took a rooted dislike to her the first time we set eyes on her at the station. I never found reason to change my opinion other.” Leila spoke with decided warmth.

“Nor I,” echoed Jerry. “I’m going to tell Miss Remson, if she reads off Miss Walbert’s name, precisely what she may expect from her. Phyllis Moore said she made so much trouble for the freshies as president of their class that if it hadn’t been so near the end of the year they would have appointed a committee to tell her where she got off at.”

Before more could be said on the subject of the disagreeable Miss Walbert the manager was among them again, register in hand. The five girls watched her in canny silence as she opened the familiar black book and let her index finger travel down the page of registrations.

“You asked about the students from Alston Terrace, Leila. They are Miss Schultz, Miss Kane, Miss Mead and Miss Walbert. Are any of these friends of yours?” Miss Remson glanced up from the page.

“No. Three of them I do not know. One I do not wish to know.” Leila’s bright blue eyes met the manager’s squarely.

“Which is the one you do not wish to know, Leila? I ask you the question because I know your fairness of mind. If you do not care to know this student you must have good reason for your attitude toward her. Will you be frank with me?”

“None of us like Miss Walbert,” Leila said slowly, after a brief pause during which she mentally framed what she wished to say. “We don’t wish to keep her out of the Hall. We only wish you to know that she is a trouble-maker. She was a friend of Leslie Cairns. It is seldom you hear me speak against anyone, Miss Remson,” Leila continued. “Knowing what you had to endure from the Sans, I feel free to warn you against this girl. She may never justify my warning. Still you have the truth about her.”

Leila had not spoken from characteristic Irish impulse alone. A sense of practical friendly duty toward Miss Remson had also prompted her bold stand. The manager quite understood this.

“Thank you, Leila,” she said gravely. “You understand my position here. I am not a boarding-house keeper who must have references. I am supposed to take these students changing from another

campus house to Wayland Hall on faith. Now I recall why Miss Walbert's face seemed so familiar. I must have noticed her last year during her calls here on Miss Cairns, then paid no further attention to her. It is most unfortunate. Had I known of her friendship with Miss Cairns, I should have refused her application. She would have considered me prejudiced, but I should not have cared. She applied for a single. I had none to give her. She is to room with Miss Schultz."

"I'm sorry for Miss Schultz," commented irrepensible Jerry.

"You needn't be," laughed Marjorie. "She is independent enough to look out for herself. She is often in the Chemical Laboratory when I am. She is a dig of the first water and a very brilliant student. She won't bother her head about Miss Walbert."

"It is to be hoped her influence may prove beneficial," remarked the manager dryly. "I am very certain that I want no repetitions of the noisy quarrel which took place in Miss Cairns' room one evening last winter. Luckily Miss Walbert will have no one to aid and abet her in making mischief, as would be the case if Miss Cairns and that group of girls were still here. I will read you the other names."

Her listeners were not sorry to close the subject. With relief they riveted their attention on the list of names read out to them. When it came to the two students from Acasia House they received another shock. Miss Remson named Alida Burton and Lola Elster.

The manager's eyes on her book, she did not see the significant glances which flashed back and forth at this news. None of her hearers made open comment on either name. While they did not approve of either Lola Elster or Alida Burton they had seen little of them since their freshman year.

Later, on the way to their rooms, Marjorie expressed herself as wondering whether, after all, they should have mentioned to Miss Remson the former intimacy of both girls with the Sans.

"I hated to say anything more." Leila thus explained her silence on that point. "Those two are very chummy. They troubled no one last year. I heard Leslie Cairns was very sore at their desertion of her standard."

"I'll mention the fact to Miss Remson some day when it comes just right. I think she ought to know it," was Jerry's view.

"Wait until Vera comes. She will break the news to Miss Remson in that nice soft little way of hers which never holds a bit of malice. I am hoping she will appear tomorrow. Not since I left her in New York in June have I set eyes on her. Her father spirited her away to visit an aunt in Idaho. It's our Midget who will come back a wild and woolly Westerner. Can you not see her in a cowboy hat with a brace of revolvers at her belt?" Leila humorously painted.

The idea of dainty, diminutive Vera in any such garb was provocative of laughter.

"Doesn't it make you sick to think that Walbert snip is coming to the Hall to live?" Jerry vented her supreme disgust the moment she and Marjorie were behind their door.

"I haven't stopped to think much about it," Marjorie confessed.

"Well, think about it now, then. I never adored the Sans, but I can't stand *her*. She will stir up a fuss here if she has half a chance. She is as much of a fusser as Rowena Quarrelena Fightena Scrapena used to be. I'm positively, heartily and completely disgusted over such bad news." Jerry's tone was half joking, half serious. "I was looking for pleasant sailing and no snags."

"Our best plan is to pay no attention to her," Marjorie placidly returned. "It is her fault that none of us are on speaking terms with her. She began cutting us the same day we tried to help her at the station."

"And that lets us out," decreed Jerry slangily. "As seniors we can look down on her with a cold and un pitying eye. Something like this." Jerry drew herself up and stared at Marjorie with icy fixity.

"Br-r-r! Don't try that on me again unless I have my fur coat handy," was Marjorie's joking reception of that freezing stare. "Excuse me for changing the subject, but let us go over to Silverton Hall after dinner this evening. I'd like to see who's back."

“De-lighted. We won’t eat much dinner after those sandwiches. We could cut out dinner tonight and start for Silverton Hall early. We’d then be hungry enough on the way home to stop at Baretti’s. Miss Remson won’t feel hurt if we aren’t here for dinner. We had tea with her. Besides, she knows how it is when one first comes back to college.”

“Oh, she won’t mind,” Marjorie assured confidently. “We’d better tell the others right away. You go and see Lucy. I’ll tell Leila and Muriel.”

“As soon as I put away this stuff from my suitcase,” Jerry promised. Her suitcase on the floor beside her couch, she had strewed the contents from one end of the bed to the other. “I suppose,” she began afresh, as she gathered up her toilet set and moved with it toward her chiffonier, “that I ought to – ”

The speech remained unfinished. Suddenly and without warning the door opened. A young woman in an automobile dust coat and cap walked serenely in. At sight of the two startled occupants of the room she set her leather traveling bag down with a sharp, “Well; may I ask what you two girls are doing in my room?” The newcomer was Elizabeth Walbert.

CHAPTER IV – A BIT OF NEWS

“Your room? Since when?” Jerry had forgotten all about the icy stare with which she intended to freeze this very person. She was gazing at the intruder with belligerence, not hauteur. Her tone conveyed an ominous chill to the too-sure claimant.

“I don’t understand you,” she returned with a slight toss of her head. “I only know that I was assigned to this room by Miss Remson.”

“Did she come to the door of this room with you?” inquired Jerry bluntly.

“Certainly not. She assigned me to Room 16. You two have evidently made a mistake. I know I haven’t.” Another toss of the head, more disagreeably pronounced. “I didn’t need her or a maid to show me. I know this house.”

“The number of this room is 15. Miss Macy and I have had it for three years,” Marjorie broke in evenly. “You will find 16 across the hall. The numbers on this side of the hall are odd; on the other, even.”

“Oh!” The arrogant claimant turned poppy-red. Plainly in the wrong, Marjorie’s civil, utterly dispassionate information fell upon her ears as a merited rebuke. “I was told – ” she began feebly. “I am sure the number over this door *looks* like 16. This is the room I *wanted*. I beg your pardon. Still I don’t understand – ”

In spite of the grudging apology she appeared only half convinced. Marjorie merely inclined her head without speaking. Jerry was silent from sheer disgust. The battery of two pairs of eyes full upon her proved too much for the intruder. She made a rather hurried exit, closing the door behind her with enough force to indicate a rise of temper.

“Blunderhead!” pronounced Jerry contemptuously. “I understand now why she can’t be taught to drive her car with safety to the public. She is really stupid underneath her trickiness.”

“Too bad she didn’t look before she leaped.” A quiet little smile dimpled the corners of Marjorie’s red lips. She had been merely amused at the incident.

“She must have felt foolish,” Jerry declared. “That’s what we might call ‘Skirmish, Number One.’ I daresay we’ll have more of them with her Walbertship before we receive our diplomas and hike for Sanford.”

“Not if I can help it,” vowed Marjorie, still smiling. This time it was at Jerry’s funny way of phrasing her opinions.

“Oh, I forgot. I was going to tell Lucy about going to Silverton Hall. I’ll put the rest of these things away when I come back. As long as I am to tell her, I might as well see Leila and Muriel. You go ahead and finish unpacking your suitcase.”

Jerry left the room on her errand. She presently returned with all three girls. The start for Silverton Hall was promptly made, the five friends strolling bareheaded across the campus.

Marjorie thought she had never seen her “second friend,” as she liked to term the campus, looking more verdantly beautiful. A fairly rainy summer had left the short, thick grass peculiarly vivid in its greenness. The leaves of every decorative shrub and tree seemed greener than of yore. It was as though the life of the free emerald spread was rising, not waning, with the approach of autumn.

Arrived at Silverton Hall, disappointment awaited them. Not one of their particular friends had returned. Half a dozen seniors grouped in girlishly picturesque attitudes on the veranda welcomed the callers with warmth. Leila, in particular, was hailed with delight. Her great popularity with the Silvertonites made her return as a post graduate a matter of rejoicing.

Place was made for the visitors on the veranda and the steady hum of voices soon proclaimed an enthusiastic exchange of campus news. It was earlier than the Wayland Hall girls had thought. They therefore declined a pressing invitation to stay to dinner at Silverton Hall, and, after half an hour’s stay, got under way again.

“Where to?” asked Jerry, as they left the premises of Silverton Hall. “Fortune isn’t with us tonight. We are wandering about almost as aimlessly as on the evening we landed here as freshies. Leila, excepted, of course. She was a soph then.”

“And very well I remember that evening,” rejoined Leila. “When I saw you Sanfordites come into Baretti’s I looked at Marjorie and planned the Beauty contest.”

“Yes; and inveigled me into joining the line that night when I had intended to keep out of it,” reproached Marjorie. “I was really cross with you for about two minutes, Leila Greatheart.”

“’Tis a long day away since then,” Leila lightly assured.

“I asked where we were going, but no one saw fit to answer me,” complained Jerry. “I’m not hungry enough yet for Baretti’s.”

“Let’s stop and find out,” proposed Muriel. “Only lunatics keep on going without knowing for what point they’re bound.”

“We might go over to Acasia House and see if Barbara Severn has come back,” proposed Marjorie.

“I’d propose going over to Wenderblatts’ to see Kathie and Lillian, but I haven’t called Kathie on the ’phone yet. One doesn’t like to descend on a private family unannounced,” Lucy the proper said regretfully.

“Oh, make it Acasia House,” Jerry voiced, with a touch of impatience. “If Barbara hasn’t come back we may see someone else we know. Either we are especially early at Hamilton this year, or else everybody else is late. No one’s home! Boo, hoo!” Jerry burst into a dismal wail.

“I refuse to go another step until you stop that awful noise,” balked Muriel. “We all feel *very* sad, Jeremiah, over the absence of our various friends, but we try to control our sorrow. Try and do likewise.”

“It is ice cream we will be after buying you at the nice Italian man’s, if you will stop roaring,” wheedled Leila, adopting a decided brogue.

“I believe the rules of Hamilton forbid unseemly noise on the campus.” Lucy fixed a severe eye on Jerry.

Jesting in this fashion the quintette had again taken up their walk, this time headed for Acasia House.

“We started out too early to make our calls,” commented Marjorie. “The Acasia House girls will probably be at dinner. It is only half-past six now.”

“We’ll only stop a few minutes there. By the time we have walked that far we may be hungry enough for a bang-up dinner at Baretti’s,” Jerry expressed this hope. “Nothing like hiking around the campus by way of celebrating our return to the knowledge shop.”

Acasia House, however, did not yield the winsome presence of Barbara Severn. “Not back yet,” was their second disappointment that evening. As Marjorie had surmised, such of the students who had returned were at dinner. The callers mounted the front steps to a deserted veranda. More, it was a maid, who, in answer to Marjorie’s ringing of the doorbell, furnished the information regarding the still absent Barbara.

“Balked all around!” Jerry dramatically struck her hand to her forehead as the party descended the steps. They had decided not to try getting acquainted with the freshmen of Acasia House that evening. They preferred waiting for Barbara’s return.

“Grant Giuseppe hasn’t shut up shop and gone on a vacation,” grumbled Leila. “’Tis my Irish bones that ache from so much weary wandering.

“Oh, it’s up the hill I had gone me fast,
Till my feet were stoned and sore;
And down the dale I hurried last
To find but the bolted door.”

She had broken into one of the curious wailing Celtic chants which were the girls' delight.

"Do sing the rest of it, Leila," begged Muriel, as the Irish girl stopped laughingly after the fourth line.

"Not now, I should only wail you to tears," she declared.

"Truly, Leila, I don't know a Hamilton girl I would have missed so much as you," Marjorie said convincingly, passing her arm across Leila's shoulders. "I am *so* glad you came back!"

"I'm thinking I had fine sense," solemnly agreed Leila. "And I shall be treating you all at Giuseppe's this evening to celebrate my own smartness."

Thus adroitly she had taken the dinner upon herself. It was usually a matter for animated discussion as to which one of them should stand treat. A chorus of dissent arose as it was, but her further wily and broad Irish reminder, "Will yez be quiet? Think af me dignity as a P. G!" won her the privilege.

Signor Baretto's welcome of his favorite patrons was given with true Latin sincerity. He had not forgotten the serenading party of the previous year and asked anxiously for Phyllis and her orchestra.

"They come back this year, those who play and sing for me so nice?" he queried. "Many are the graduates each June. Then I don't see more. Always I know those – what you call the fraish – fraish – mens. Only these are not the mens at all, but the girls. Why you call these – mens?"

The Italian's evident puzzlement over this point evoked amused laughter in which he good-naturedly joined. He showed childish gratification, however, at Marjorie's simple explanation of the term.

"Never before have I understand," he confessed. "Now I must ask something more. You know those girls I have not like who come here? Every one know, I don't like." He made a sweeping gesture. "They don't come here for, oh, long time before college close. Somebody say they are made to go away because they don't do well. You tell me. That is the truth?"

For a moment no one spoke. The blunt innocence of the inquiry was not to be doubted, however. The odd little proprietor's question must be answered.

"They were expelled from college, Signor Baretto," Marjorie made grave reply. "You heard the truth."

"That mean, they can't come back more?" persisted the Italian.

"Yes." Again it was Marjorie who answered him.

"Ah-h-h!" The ejaculation contained a note of triumph. "So I think. But one, the one these girls I *most* don't like she walk in this place one day las' week. This day she is friendly; never before. She say she come back early. I know better." He placed his finger to his eye, a significant Latin gesture, meaning that he was not to be deceived. "She think I don't know. This one is Miss Car-rins."

CHAPTER V – JUST FRESHIES

The Italian's announcement was received by his hearers with varying degrees of surprise. His sole object in inquiring as he had regarding the Sans appeared to be a desire to prove his own surmises as correct. Satisfied on this point, he hospitably insisted on taking their dinner order himself, and trotted kitchenward to look after it.

"Humph!" Jerry gave vent to her favorite ejaculation the instant the proprietor of the restaurant had left them. "Now what do you suppose she is doing in this part of the world?"

"Ask me something easier." Leila's dark brows lifted themselves. "She may be visiting someone in the town of Hamilton."

"I should think she would hate to come back here after what happened," commented Muriel. "The idea of her telling Signor Baretti she had come back early to college. I suppose she thought he wouldn't know that she had been expelled."

"Be sure your sin will find you out," quoted Lucy with a touch of satiric humor. "It's a moral warning to behave, isn't it? News of disgrace travels fast and wide."

"Yes, Luciferous, it does. I trust that you will ever walk in the path of rectitude. Let this deplorable instance be a lesson to you."

Muriel had promptly taken advantage of Lucy's remarks. Her mischievous features set in austerity she managed to keep them thus for at least two seconds. Then she burst into a ripple of laughter.

"Don't lose any sleep over me," was Lucy's independent retort. "Just apply some of that wonderful advice to yourself."

"I will, if I ever get to where I feel I need it," beamingly assured Muriel.

Thus the subject of Leslie Cairns' re-appearance at Baretti's was passed over without further comment. Nor was it renewed again that evening. Before they left Baretti's they were treated to a real surprise. Engaged in eating the delectable dinner they had ordered, none of the five saw two laughing faces peering in at them from the main entrance of the inn. Two pairs of slippered feet stole noiselessly along the broad aisle between the tables.

Looking up from her Waldorf salad, Jerry gave a sudden cry that was in the nature of a subdued war whoop of pure joy.

"Can you beat it!" she shrieked jubilantly, standing up and waving her salad fork. "The wanderers have returned!"

Her shout of welcome was quickly taken up by the others. Leila sprang from her chair and made one dive toward a diminutive young woman in a pongee traveling coat and white sports hat. The Lookouts were equally eager to claim their own. She happened to be Veronica Lynne.

For an instant the hitherto quiet room was filled with the rising treble of girl voices. They had been entirely alone in the restaurant since their entrance save for Signor Baretti and the waitresses.

"Our Midget – and see the cunningness of her in her long coat! Does she not look many inches taller?" teased Leila, holding Vera at arms' length and then re-embracing her.

"I'm not even half an inch taller, you old Irish flatterer," Vera declared as Leila released her to greet Ronny. "Oh, girls, it is fine to see you all again." Vera clasped her little hands in her own inimitable fashion.

"It's wonderful to have both of you popping in on us at once." Marjorie was holding Ronny's hands in her own. "How did you both happen to arrive here together? It must have been sheer luck."

"What do you think? We bumped into each other in Chicago," Vera informed them. "It was at the Union Station. I had been feeling awfully bored by my own society. Father had gone to call on an old friend between trains. I didn't care to go with him. I sat in the women's inner waiting room trying

to read a magazine when who should walk straight past me but Ronny. I couldn't believe my eyes for a second. Then I made just about such a dive for her as Leila just made for me."

"I came as far as Chicago in Father's aeroplane," announced Ronny proudly. "It is the longest trip he ever made. He didn't wish to go farther east than Chicago, so he secured a stateroom for me on the Great Eastern Express. Talk about luck in meeting Vera! I should say it was luck. We sat up nearly all night to talk. We both began to feel sleepy away this side of Hamilton. It will be an early bedtime for us both tonight, won't it, Midget?"

"Um-ah!" Vera put a small hand to her mouth to conceal a rising yawn. "We stopped at the Hall, but you were gone. We knew where to find you."

"Are you hungry?" demanded Muriel. "We've gone as far as the salad. What'll you have?"

"Nothing but some ice cream and a demitasse for me," declared Ronny. "We had dinner on the train."

Vera decided on coffee and a pineapple ice. The two were soon established at table with their chums, listening to the meager amount of college news which they had to give out.

"It must be unusually quiet at Hamilton," Vera presently remarked. "Nearly a third of the students were back at this time last year."

"It's a deserted spot, Midget," Leila assured. "We've been to Silverton Hall and Acasia House this evening and none of our special pals from either house are back yet."

"Oh, well, I'm back, and so is Ronny. We certainly count as a couple of someones," Vera laughed. "Old Hamilton will blossom out over night. No one here, then, all of a sudden, everybody back and things humming."

The first rush of greeting having subsided, Ronny's companions bombarded her with eager questions concerning her trip to Chicago by aeroplane. Absorbed in what she was relating, none of them had paid much attention to the few girls who had dropped into the restaurant.

Sounds of singing followed by a burst of rather loud laughter and high-pitched conversation drew their gaze simultaneously toward the door. A crowd of perhaps a dozen girls now entered the large room, still talking and laughing boisterously.

The central figure among them was a girl well above the medium height and rather heavily built. Hatless, her short brown hair curled about her face in a manner suggesting its natural non-curliness. Her face was full and her color high. Her bright brown eyes, though large, contained a boldness of expression that rather marred their fine shape and size. Her nose was retroussé and her mouth too wide for beauty. The ensemble of features was dashing; not beautiful. She wore a one-piece frock of pale pink wash satin, a marvel as to cut and design. Her whole appearance indicated the presence of wealth. She looked not unlike a spoiled, overgrown baby.

"Freshies, and they act it," muttered Jerry.

The party arranged themselves at two tables, keeping up a running fire of loud-toned repartee. Signor Baretta, now seated at one end of the restaurant, perusing an Italian newspaper, peered sharply over it at the disturbers. The little man knew, to a dot, the difference between natural high spirits and boisterousness.

Hardly had they seated themselves when the tall girl stood up and called out, "Attention, everybody!" She waved an inclusive arm over the two tables occupied by the flock she appeared to be leading.

"Sit down Gussie!" giggled a small girl with very light hair, a snub nose and freckles. "You are making a lot of noise in the world. Didn't you know it?"

"Who cares." The tall girl tossed her short-cropped head. "Already now with the Bertram yell. Let's show folks where we came from. When I raise my arm – go ahead and *whoop!*"

Highly pleased with herself and utterly regardless of proprietor and diners, she raised a rounded arm, bare almost to the shoulder, with a grandiose air.

Immediately lusty voices took up a yell ending in a long drawn “Ber-t-r-a-m! That’s us!” This was repeated three times. As it died away the enterprising leader resumed her chair, apparently careless of what impression she and her companions had made.

Two meek Italian waitresses now approaching to take their order, they hesitated and hung back a little. The yelling having subsided, they rose afresh to duty and went over to the party. There they continued to stand, unheeded by the revelers. The exuberant freshmen now had their heads together over the menu, babbling joyously.

“Are we ready to go?” Leila glanced inquiringly around the circle. “Let us leave these little folks to their merry shouts and laughter. Two of those youngsters, the tall one and the little tow-head, are at Wayland Hall. I mentioned them a while back as noisy. Have you reason to doubt me?”

“We could never doubt you, Leila Greatheart,” lightly avowed Marjorie. She was eyeing the rollicking freshmen with some amusement.

“I guess Bertram must be a prep school. Hence the loyal howls for their little old kindergarten,” surmised Jerry.

“They have a whole lot to learn,” smiled Vera. “A few well-directed remarks from the faculty will soon calm their joyous ardor. Perhaps we shouldn’t criticize. We were rather noisy ourselves not many minutes ago.”

“Yes; but in moderation,” reminded Jerry. “All our rejoicing together wasn’t as loud as one whoop from the freshies. Not that I care,” she added genially. “I can stand it if Giuseppe can.”

“Bertram?” Lucy questioningly repeated. “Where is it?”

“Not far from New York City,” Vera answered. “I knew two girls who entered Vassar from there. One of them told me it was more like an exclusive boarding school than the regulation prep. She called it the Baby Shop. She said the girls there behaved like overgrown youngsters. That was four years ago. Maybe the Bertramites have grown up since then,” she added in her kindly way.

“Again, maybe they have not.” Leila glanced skeptically at the Bertramites. They were now engaged in all trying to order at once, a proceeding quite bewildering to their servitors.

“I hate to get me gone from here,
Oh, my stars, I’m glad I’m going!”

hummed Leila under her breath. “Now that is as fine an old Irish song as you’d care to hear. Do I shout it at the top of my breath and disturb the peace? I do not. I keep my lilting strictly within bounds.” For all her criticism, Leila was half amused at the noisy freshmen.

“Subdued like, as it were,” supplemented Muriel with a killing smile.

“You have a fine understanding.” Leila beamed with equal exaggeration.

In this jesting mood they rose from the table. Leila had already pounced upon the dinner check. On the way to the cashier’s desk, they became aware of less noise at the freshmen’s tables. The concentrated interest of the newcomers had become centered on the departing upperclassmen.

The gaze of the tall, dashing girl, who had led the others in the Bertram yell was now traveling with peculiar eagerness from face to face. Her expression was a mixture of curiosity, defiance, admiration and envy. Her glance rested longest on Ronny. She devoured every detail of Ronny’s smart tweed traveling suit, gray walking hat and gray buckskin ties. A gleam of respect showed itself in her bold brown eyes.

The freshman Leila had described as a “tow-head,” after an equally deliberate inspection of the departing group, caught the tall girl by the arm and began a rapid flow of talk. Not for an instant as she talked did she remove her gaze from Marjorie and her chums.

Jerry was the first to note they were being thus observed by the other crowd of students. A decided scowl appeared between her brows. She always resented being stared at.

“Those freshies have mistaken us for a part of the exhibits in the Hamilton Museum, I guess, let loose for an hour or two of recreation,” she grumbled. “I object to being rubbered at. What?” She mimicked Leslie Cairns’ affected drawl.

Her manner of expression, rather than her remarks, induced the laughter of her companions. Nor did she realize that she had turned her eyes upon the freshmen as she spoke, with a look of bored endurance far from flattering to them. Unfortunately the tall girl happened to catch it, as well as the ripple of laughter. Her face darkened. Her retroussé nose elevated itself even higher.

“Isn’t that girl with the big brown eyes simply gorgeous?” exclaimed a pert-looking freshman with shrewd black eyes. The girls they had been watching were now out of sight.

“A regular dream of beauty,” praised another. “Her complexion was like a magnolia petal.”

“My, but you two are crushed on that – well, quite pretty girl,” the tall leader said in a slightly miffed tone. “My eyes are larger than hers,” she added.

“Oh, no, Gus, they certainly aren’t a bit larger,” flatly contradicted a stolid-looking girl with eyeglasses.

“They certainly *are*,” maintained the tall girl.

“Don’t grab all the bouquets, Gus,” lazily advised Calista Wilmot, the black-eyed girl. “Leave a few for someone else.”

“Sha’n’t. I want ’em all myself.” The reply was careless rather than ill-humored. “Anyhow there was nothing startlingly beautiful about that one girl you folks are raving over.”

“Oh, I think there was,” differed the freshman with the eyeglasses, with a positiveness that courted argument.

“Do you suppose they were freshmen?” A plump blonde girl with a pleasing face tactfully propounded this question. Anna Perry, the stolid freshman, and Augusta Forbes never agreed on anything. Charlotte Robbins purposed to nip rising argument in the bud if she could.

“No, indeed,” Augusta assured. “The tall one with the black hair is a post graduate. I inquired about her. She rooms three doors up the hall from Flossie and me. I haven’t seen the others before. I don’t care to again.” A glint of wounded pride appeared in her eyes as she made this announcement.

“Why, Gus?” demanded three or four voices.

“Because they are snippy. Didn’t you see the disgusted way that one girl in light blue looked at us? Much as to say, ‘Oh, those silly freshmen!’ They are all upper class girls. I don’t admire their manners. They were making fun of us, I’m sure. They have no time for mere freshmen.”

“Gus talks as if it were a positive crime to be a freshman in the eyes of the upper class students.” Calista Wilmot lifted her thin shoulders. “I’ve always heard they go by preference rather than class in taking up a freshman.”

“They do *not*.” Augusta seemed determined to oppose her companions. “The juniors and seniors at college are *awfully* high and mighty. I have been told that they are *very* patronizing to the freshmen. They shall not patronize *me*. I won’t submit to it. This business of the freshmen having to defer to upper class students is all nonsense. I shall assert myself from the start.”

CHAPTER VI – THE REBUFF

“Leila, do you think we should have spoken to those freshies and extended the hand of friendship?” Marjorie inquired half doubtfully as the party, now seven strong, loitered along their way to the Hall. The balminess of the still September night made them reluctant to go indoors.

“Not tonight,” Leila reassured. “Plenty of time for that. Did I rush into your pocket the first time I saw you, Beauty? I did not. Remember Selma, Nella, Vera and I were at Baretti’s when you five girls walked in there on your first evening at Hamilton.”

“Give us credit. We didn’t whoop like a war party of Comanches, did we?” This from Jerry, who had not yet brought herself to a tolerant view of the noisy party of freshies.

“You did not. We four made more noise than you. That was nothing compared to these Bertramites,” Leila’s criticism held indulgence.

“You said the tall one and the ‘tow-head’ were at the Hall. It would not surprise me to find the whole aggregation there. The others may have arrived while we were marching around the campus, making calls on people who were not at home. I see our finish.” Jerry groaned loudly. “The majority of the sixteen freshmen Miss Remson spoke of!”

Jerry’s surmise proved correct. The same group of girls they had encountered at Baretti’s on the previous evening trooped into the dining room the next morning just as the Lookouts were finishing their breakfast.

“The strangers within our gates,” announced Jerry. “It’s up to us to remember ’em. What? I’m really growing fond of that ‘What?’ I can understand why Miss Cairns was so fond of it.”

“I think it is a foolish expression,” condemned Muriel, her eyes twinkling.

“Then never indulge in it, my dear Miss Harding,” cautioned Jerry. “May I venture to inquire what the pleasure of this distinguished company is today?”

“Unpack, if our trunks come,” returned Ronny and Marjorie together. “I wish Helen would hurry up and get here,” Marjorie continued. “We all ought to go over to Hamilton Arms to see Miss Susanna. I’d not care to go without Helen, though.”

“What’s a journey without the ninth Traveler?” propounded Ronny. “Have you any idea when she’ll be here?”

No one had. At eleven o’clock that morning, however, Jerry signed for a telegram. She hustled up stairs with it to impart the good news that Helen Trent would arrive on the four-ten train from the North. The trunks having been delivered shortly before ten o’clock that morning, unpacking was in full swing.

“We’ll all go to the station to meet her,” planned Jerry. “Only eight of us can’t very well squeeze into Leila’s roadster. Four of us will have to go in a taxi.”

“I’d better call Kathie on the telephone and tell her and Lillian to be ready,” was Marjorie’s spoken thought. “Lillian isn’t a Traveler, but she ought to be asked to join us. She has been so dear to Kathie and Lucy especially, and to us, too.”

“We might as well be the Ten Travelers as the Nine,” agreed Jerry. “I’d like Lillian to meet Miss Susanna, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes; only we can’t take her with us to Hamilton Arms without having first explained all about her and asked permission to bring her.”

“I know it. Do you believe our little old Travelers’ club is really important enough to leave to Hamilton as a sorority? It was different with the Lookout Club. We were regularly organized with constitution and by-laws, etc. This is very informal; secret, one might almost call it.”

“I have thought about that, too,” Marjorie replied. “I’ve also thought we ought to ask Robin and Portia to join – in fact the Silvertonites who have stood by us since our freshie days. There are Ethel Laird and Grace Dearborn, too. They have been devoted to us.”

“Don’t forget Eva Ingram and Mary Cornell,” added Jerry. “They certainly stood by us when we had that row with the Sans during our freshman year.”

“I meant to count them in,” Marjorie nodded. “Once, this past summer, I made a list of names. There were nineteen, counting the original nine of us. I didn’t count Phil or Anna Towne or Barbara Severn. They are still to come. If we leave the club as a sorority to the next senior class, they will be the first girls chosen.”

“The Nineteen Travelers.” Jerry critically tried out the title. “That sounds as well as the Nine Travelers. I don’t know but better.”

“We really need the whole nineteen if we are really going to accomplish laying a foundation for a dormitory,” was Marjorie’s energetic declaration. “I mean that figuratively. If we manage to get the site for a dormitory this year we’ll have done well. We don’t even know whether those boarding house properties are for sale.”

“If they aren’t, we might find another site, even better. There is plenty of open ground below them.”

“Yes; but it belongs to the Carden Estate and isn’t for sale. I asked Miss Susanna about it last June. She knows all about the land near the college and Hamilton Estates. She explained to me the reason for that row of houses along that little street. You know we wondered why they were there.”

“It always looked to me as though a couple of city blocks of third rate houses had been picked up and dumped down just outside the campus limits for no particular reason,” was Jerry’s view of it.

“Well, there’s a reason,” smiled Marjorie. “The workmen who built Hamilton College lived in those houses while the work was in progress. It took almost five years to build our Alma Mater, Jeremiah. By the workmen, I mean the foremen and more important of the builders. I don’t know where the laborers lived. In the town of Hamilton, I presume. Those houses were considered very sizable and comfortable in Mr. Brooke Hamilton’s day, Miss Susanna said.”

As the two busied themselves with their unpacking, they continued to talk over the project of enlarging their little circle to nineteen members. Until their particular allies had returned to Hamilton nothing could be done.

“Wait until college has opened, then I’ll call a meeting. We’d best have it in Leila’s and Vera’s room. It is larger than ours. Between you and me, Jeremiah, what ought we to do about the freshies?” Marjorie straightened from her trunk, her arms full of wearing apparel, and stared dubiously at Jerry.

“What?” This time the ejaculation came involuntarily. On her knees before her trunk, Jerry’s head and plump shoulders had been temporarily eclipsed, as she dived into the trunk to fish up the few remaining articles at the bottom. “Oh, yes, I got you.” Jerry had comprehended a second after Marjorie had spoken.

“What you said at breakfast about the strangers being well within our gates, made me feel that we ought to begin to try to get acquainted with them. We promised Miss Remson to help them get settled, if we could. I don’t mind their being noisy.” Marjorie paused.

Jerry eyed her quizzically. “You think they are too much like the Sans to be a positive comfort around the house, now don’t you?”

“They seemed a little that way to me,” Marjorie admitted. “The Sans were older by a year or two than these girls when they entered Hamilton. These freshies are very juvenile acting.”

“They acted last night as though they didn’t care a button whether they met anyone else or not. A sufficient-unto-themselves crowd, you know. Still, if we hold off from them, they may feel that we are puffed up over our senior estate. The best way, I guess, is to cultivate them. We can be friendly, but a trifle on our dignity at the same time.”

“We’ll probably meet them in the halls and on the veranda during the next day or so. That will start the ball rolling. I’d rather not make any calls until I’ve had one or two chance encounters with some of them. Being on station duty is different. It is a detail.”

“I hate to butt into a stranger’s room, freshie or no freshie,” Jerry agreed. “You know how we felt when the three Sans came to call before we had hardly taken off our hats.”

In spite of Marjorie’s ever ready willingness to be of service when needed, she still retained a certain amount of shyness which had been hers as a child.

“I am not afraid of being snubbed by these lively freshie children,” she presently said, with a trace of humor. “I don’t care to intrude on them unless I am truly sure they want to know us.”

“They don’t know what they want or what they don’t want,” calmly observed Jerry. “I am not enthusiastic over them, Marvelous Manager. I’ll try to be a conscientious elder sister to them, but it will be an awful struggle.”

Marjorie laughed at this. Jerry chuckled faintly in unison. The unexpected invasion of Lucy, Katherine Langly and Lillian Wenderblatt put an end to confidence. The will to labor also languished and was lost in the ardor of meeting and greeting.

Invited to stay to luncheon, the ringing of the bell found Jerry’s and Marjorie’s room in a state of temporary disorder. Every available space was piled with feminine effects.

“Things are in an awful uproar.” Jerry waved her arm over the chaotic array. “The worst is over with our unpacking done. It won’t take long after luncheon to put this stuff where it belongs. Glad you girls came to the Hall. It saves us the trouble of going after you.”

Ronny and Muriel now appearing, the seven girls went happily down to luncheon. As a result of Jerry’s and Marjorie’s talk regarding the freshman arrivals at Wayland Hall, both were prepared to be conscientiously friendly on sight.

A trifle ahead of their companions in descending the stairs, at the foot of the staircase they encountered Augusta Forbes, Calista Wilmot and Florence Hart, the “tow-head,” just entering the hall from the veranda. The eyes of the two sets of girls met for an instant. Marjorie smiled in friendly, unaffected fashion, intending to speak. Jerry emulated her example. To their surprise Augusta Forbes put on an expression of extreme hauteur; Florence Hart stared icily out of two pale blue eyes. Calista Wilmot, however, smiled cheerfully, taking no notice of her companions’ frozen attitude.

It was all done in a second or two. Marjorie’s color heightened. She felt as though she had received a slap in the face. The smile fleeing from her lips, she treated the haughty pair to a steady, searching glance. Then she quietly withdrew her gaze.

CHAPTER VII – MAKING SURE PROGRESS

“Now what was the matter with them?” Jerry demanded, as she and Marjorie entered the dining room. “Were we properly snubbed? No mistake about it. They must have heard what I said about them last night.”

“I don’t recall that you said anything very dreadful about them,” returned Marjorie.

“I compared them to Comanches and expressed my general disapproval of their howls,” confessed Jerry cheerfully. “Only they didn’t hear me say anything. Leila said as much as I. Neither of us meant to be ill-natured. You know I usually say outright whatever I think in a case of that kind.”

“Those two freshies acted as though they were angry with us for some unknown reason or other.” Marjorie knitted her brows. “They’d hardly have behaved like that simply because they didn’t know us and resented our smiling at them on that account.”

“That *would* be the height of snobbishness,” replied Jerry. “We’d better tell the girls. They may try to be helpful and get a snubbing, same as we did.”

Seated at table, Jerry proceeded to tell the others of the incident. Be it said to her credit she made no attempt to retail it as gossip. She bluntly stated what had happened and warned them to keep their helpfulness at home.

“That’s too bad,” Lillian Wenderblatt said sympathetically. “It puts you all at sea as to what to do next. You say the one girl returned your smile. Perhaps when you know her better you can find out what ails the other two.”

“They can’t have a grievance against us when they don’t know us,” Marjorie said. “I shall let those two alone for the present and confine my attention to some of the other freshies.”

With this she dropped the incident from her thought and speech. After luncheon, as she redressed her hair to go to the station, it recurred to her disagreeably. She half formed the guess that Elizabeth Walbert might have made the acquaintance already of these two freshmen and prejudiced them against herself and her friends. Miss Walbert could not possibly have a just grievance against her. Their acquaintance had been too brief. As a former friend of Leslie Cairns, however, she probably held rancor against the Lookouts.

Marjorie sturdily dismissed this conjecture as not in keeping with her principles. She felt it unfair to accuse Elizabeth Walbert, even in thought, of such an act. She resolved to take Lillian Wenderblatt’s advice and cultivate the acquaintance of the black-eyed girl who had shown signs of affability. She might then, eventually, learn wherein lay the difficulty.

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