

The **THIRD WARNING**

A MYSTERY STORY FOR GIRLS

ROY J. SNELL

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Title: Third Warning
A Mystery Story for Girls

Author: Roy J. Snell

Release Date: February 11, 2014 [EBook #44873]

Language: English

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A Mystery Story for Girls

THIRD WARNING

By
ROY J. SNELL

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Chicago

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I FLAMING ISLAND	11
II THE BATTLE OF SISKOWIT	29
III BEAUTY AND A THREAT	39
IV PLUMDUM	48
V NIGHT SIGNALS	58
VI CHIPS	72
VII RESCUED	84
VIII MYSTERIOUS YOUTH	98
IX THE DEFENSE OF CHIPPEWA	106
X RIDING THE STORM	122
XI ASHES IN THEIR HAIR	134
XII THE CRIMSON SPOT	141
XIII AND MAY YOU COME BACK	148
XIV A DESPERATE VENTURE	154
XV THE DOG'S PARACHUTE	160
XVI WHO RIDES A MOOSE	168
XVII THE PHANTOM OF SUPERIOR	177
XVIII FATHER SUPERIOR AT HIS WORST	184
XIX A FLASH IN THE DARK	192
XX A WEIRD RESTING PLACE	198
XXI SECOND WARNING	206
XXII STRANGE COMRADES IN BATTLE	216
XXIII DON'T STAY TOO LONG	229
XXIV THE INVISIBLE HOST	239
XXV OUT OF THE AIR	247

THIRD WARNING

CHAPTER I

FLAMING ISLAND

“Look, Dave. See those strange clouds?” Florence Huyler shaded her eyes to look away toward the horizon. Her face wore an expression of bewildered curiosity.

“Yes, I see them. They *are* queer!” young “Captain Davie,” as everyone called him, replied as he wrinkled his brow. After giving the wheel of his motor-driven craft a turn, he studied those clouds. “Scurrying along the horizon,” he murmured, “they roll quite a bit, don’t they?”

“Yes, and such a peculiar shade of yellow,” Florence added. “Oh well, clouds are different up here on Lake Superior.”

“Nothing to worry about, I guess,” said Dave, as once again he gave his attention to the wheel.

As for Florence, at the moment she had nothing to do but think. And such bitter-sweet thoughts as they were! She was cruising on Lake Superior. That was grand! She had always loved the water. What was still more magnificent, she was landing twice a week on the shores of that place of great enchantment—Isle Royale.

Once, you will recall from reading *The Phantom Violin*, Florence with two companions had made her summer home on a huge wrecked ship off the rocky shores of this very island. What a summer that had been! Adventure? Plenty of it. The ship had at last been completely destroyed during a storm. They had barely escaped with their lives. The girl shuddered a little even now at the thought of it.

Florence was large, strong, fearless. A marvelous swimmer and a grand athlete,

she had little to fear on land or water. And yet, as her eyes swept the deck of the *Wanderer*, the sixty-foot motor-boat on which she rode, a troubled look came into her fine blue eyes. Nor were those low, circling clouds the cause of her worry. She and her cousin Dave, quite as courageous and venturesome as she, had embarked upon an enterprise that promised to be a failure.

“Grandfather will lose his money. He can’t afford to lose, and it’s not all our fault,” she told herself a little bitterly. But now her thoughts were broken by a short, stout, bronze-faced man, an Indian who appeared at the cabin door.

“Look, John!” she pointed, speaking to the Indian. “Look at those strange clouds!”

“Huh!” he grunted. “Smoke!”

“Sm-smoke!” the girl stared. Then she breathed a sigh of relief. “Oh, from Canada! Forest fires. I’ve heard—”

“No Canada. Come from Isle Royale, that smoke. Island on fire.”

“On—on fire?” It was Dave who spoke.

“Yes.”

“Then that—that’s the end.” His voice was toneless with discouragement.

Isle Royale on fire! Florence tried to think what that might mean. For weeks there had been no rain. During their short stops at Chippewa Harbor, Tobin’s and Belle Isle, she had often walked back into the forests. She had found the trees, the moss, the soil dry as tinder.

“Wha—what part of the island is on fire?” she managed to ask.

“Siskowit Bay.” The Indian took the wheel, relieving Dave.

“Where all those boys are camped?” the girl asked.

The Indian nodded.

“Do—do you suppose they are in danger?”

“Don’t know,” John twisted the wheel, “Bad fire.” He scanned the horizon.

“John,” said Dave, “do you know the rocks of Harlem Reef?”

“Every rock.” The Indian showed his fine teeth in a smile.

“Then I think,” Dave weighed his words carefully, “I think we’d better put in there. It’s off our course, but—”

“What’s that?” a voice broke in sharply, “A fire on Isle Royale?”

“Yes, we—”

Florence did not finish. As she looked into the eyes of the man who had spoken she read there something that almost frightened her.

He was a short, stout man, one of the few passengers on that voyage. In his face she seemed to detect a look almost of antagonism. “But why?” she thought in sudden consternation, “I’ve never seen him before, I am sure of that. What can we have done to him?”

When the man spoke, none of this was to be detected in his words.

“A fire on Isle Royale?” He even forced a smile. “Too bad. But I can’t say that concerns us. This is a passenger boat, bound for Rock Harbor. Lake Siskowit, I’m told, is some twenty miles from there——”

“A fire,” Captain Davie spoke slowly, “any fire that destroys property concerns all of us.”

“Swing her about, John,” he turned to the Indian. “We’re going in there.”

“But your schedule calls for first stop at Rock Harbor,” the man insisted.

“That’s right, but an emergency exists. We——”

“Emergency my eye!” The man’s dark face flushed angrily. “You’ve contracted to have me at Rock Harbor by four o’clock, the *Iroquois* docks an hour later. I shall have just time to transact my business and catch the *Iroquois*. If you don’t get me to Rock Harbor on time, you’ll regret it.”

“Perhaps,” was Dave’s slow rejoinder. Turning to the Indian he said quietly, “John, we’re putting in at Siskowit.”

“I’ll break you!” the man exclaimed angrily.

“That,” Dave laughed uncertainly, “that’s impossible. We’re already broke.”

Turning on his heel, the passenger strode away.

“Big shot,” said Indian John, jerking his head toward the retreating figure.

“What kind of big shot?” Florence asked.

“Don’t know.” John twisted the wheel. “Not Houghton man. Came from somewhere. Don’t know where.”

“Well,” said Dave, “big shot or no, we’re off for Siskowit.”

Leaving the pilot house, Florence walked to the prow of the boat, then dropped into a steamer chair. At once her alert mind was busy on past and present. They were headed for an island. It was on fire. The island was a regular tinderbox. There was gasoline on board. Their boat was motor-driven.

“Three hundred gallons of gas,” she thought with a shudder. “To be of any real help we’ll have to draw in close to the island. That’s dangerous—might be disastrous.”

Then, like a weather-vane whipped suddenly about by the wind, her thoughts turned to the past. It was to have been a rich and glorious adventure—this summer cruise. Four months before she had been seated with a jolly, friendly group, her own people for the most part, listening to a promoter’s rosy tale of money to be made by a boat running from the mainland to Isle Royale.

And they had the boat! Ah! yes, there had been their weakness. The *Wanderer*, her grandfather’s boat, had been tied up at the dock for two years. Before that it had carried fruit across Lake Michigan. Trucks had ruined this trade. Then, too, a weak heart had forced her grandfather into retirement.

“But you young people!” the promoter had exclaimed, “you know how to run the boat, don’t you?”

“Oh sure,” Dave had grinned, “I’ve been on the boat with the captain here for two years.”

“And Rufus is a fine engineer,” Florence had exclaimed, “Why not?” Her heart had given a great leap at the thought of fresh and glorious adventure. “I—I know a lot about the island. I’ll be first mate.”

“There you are,” the promoter had begun pacing back and forth before the open fire, “you’ll make a fortune! You know the island is being made into a national park,” he had enthused, “Thousands will be wanting to go there. Most beautiful spot in all the Midwest.”

“And the temperature,” he had fairly exploded, “It’s never above seventy, even when all the rest of the country is melting at a hundred in the shade. Ten dollars round trip. Fifty to seventy-five passengers to the trip. Three trips a week. You’ll wear diamonds! You’ll go to college! You’ll—”

“Yes,” the girl thought now, sitting there watching the distant island come nearer, “yes, we took it all in. Half of what he said was true. It is a glorious island. The temperature is wonderful, but how many people know it? Not many. How many are coming? Very few. We’re licked, that’s all. Grandfather spent two thousand dollars he couldn’t well spare to fit out our boat. Here we are making trip after trip, taking in enough to make expenses, not earning a cent, and paying back nothing. Diamonds! College!” She laughed a trifle bitterly.

No time now for regrets, however. The *Wanderer* was rapidly nearing shore. She could catch the red glow of the fire. Would there be real danger? There were ten passengers on board. Was it right to endanger the lives of these, even to the slightest degree? Dropping back to the side of her stalwart cousin, she confided to him her fears.

“We’ll be careful,” said Dave. “There may be some small boat that can take the passengers on to Chippewa.”

“I hope so,” the girl agreed.

As the *Wanderer* at last rounded the point of land hiding the camp on Siskowit Bay, it took no second look to tell them that the situation was critical. Creeping slowly forward from bush to bush and tree to tree, the fire was moving like some slow, red serpent toward the stout camp that had been built by so much labor and

such willing hands.

“They’re nice boys,” Florence breathed, thinking of the C.C.C. boys who had built the camp.

“Fine chaps,” her cousin agreed.

Once before the *Wanderer* had put into this harbor with supplies and, becoming storm-bound, its crew had spent several happy hours with the campers. Having seen neither mothers nor sisters for months, the fellows had treated Florence as if she were a queen.

“We may be broke,” Dave muttered grimly, “but we’re not too broke to offer a helping hand.”

“You’re not going in there?” demanded an angry voice. Once more it was the “big shot,” as Indian John had called him, who spoke.

For a short space of time no one replied. In that brief moment, the number of questions that passed through Florence’s mind was astonishing. Who was this man? What did he really want?

“Yes,” it was Dave who spoke at last, quietly as ever, “yes, we are going in.”

“You’ll blow this can of yours sky high and all of us with it.”

“Not you,” said Dave with a touch of scorn. “See! There’s a fisherman’s boat coming to meet us. We’ll send you on to Chippewa with it.”

At that the man subsided into silence. As the small boat pulled closer, Dave saw that Captain Frey, in charge of the camp, was on board.

“We’re coming in,” Dave shouted cheerfully. “We’ve a good pump and an inch-and-a-half hose.”

“That’s great,” was the young captain’s heartened response. “You might save us. But is it safe? How about the passengers?”

“Whose boat is that?” Dave asked, pointing to the small fishing schooner.

“Holgar Carlson’s, from Chippewa,” Frey answered.

“Hello, Holgar!” Dave called. “How much to carry ten passengers to Chippewa?”

“Oh, I tank mebbly ten dollar,” Holgar drawled.

“All right. Come alongside.”

“Here.” Dave waved a greenback when all passengers had been transferred.

“No you don’t. This is on us,” and Captain Frey slipped a bill in the fisherman’s hand.

“You don’t know,” he commented a moment later, as he stood beside Florence on the *Wanderer*, “you’ll never know what this means to us. We’ve worked so hard getting a camp. Rain, cold, swamps, mosquitoes—it sure has been tough on the boys, and now this!” His arms swept a wide circle. “We’re not to blame for the fire. The boys were here, all of them. They didn’t set it. It just came creeping down upon us from nowhere. The boys have been fighting it for hours.”

For a time after that, as guided by Indian John’s skillful hand the boat glided shoreward, nothing further was said. Once, as the wind veered, a heavy cloud of yellow smoke engulfed them.

“Oh-o,” Florence gasped, trying to breathe. “This—this is terrible.”

“It’s what the boys have been up against for hours,” Captain Frey said quietly. “We’ll be out of it in a moment.”

As Florence looked at the captain she thought, “Efficient, brave!”

Then a spectacle of the great fire caught her eye, and she gasped with astonishment. One moment a great fifty-foot, moss-covered spruce tree stood proudly against the sky, the next, with a loud roar, flames rushed from its roots to the topmost branch. “Alight, like a giant candle,” Florence exclaimed, “and there are thousands of them on the island!” “Yes,” the young captain replied. “Close to our camp they stand some distance apart. If only we can wet down the earth about the camp, keep the fire from creeping, then turn the hose on it when it comes, we’ll win.”

“And we will,” Dave exclaimed. “We’ve got a marvelous pump. If only—”

“If only you can get in close enough.” The captain stood up and stared ahead. “How large is this boat?”

“Sixty feet long, by twenty wide.”

“Good!” the captain replied. “I’m sure there is room. The water along the shore is deep, thirty feet. A little way out are shoals.”

“We’ll slide right in there near shore,” Dave took the wheel.

“It’s a close little berth,” he said five minutes later, as Rufus, their young engineer, suddenly put the engine into reverse. “Rocks before us, rocks to right and left. It’s like cruising in a bath tub.”

They dropped anchor, let down their lifeboat, sent the hose ashore, then started the pump. At once a powerful stream of water was busy soaking down the dry, moss-covered earth. At times it set up a terrific sizzling sputter, as it played on a tree that had just caught fire.

Encouraged by these reinforcements, the loyal band of camp workers, toiling with ax and shovel, redoubled their efforts.

“Will we make it?” Florence asked anxiously.

“I hope so,” was Captain Frey’s reply. “If the fire gets by us here, the whole island may go. Think what that means! A forty-mile long island covered with virgin timber, last stand of primeval beauty, future playground of thousands!”

“Yes,” Florence agreed, “it does mean a great deal.” Then, and for weeks to come, she forgot her own disappointments, her lost hopes, whenever she thought of this larger cause which meant so much to many.

For two long hours, with the heat at times growing all but unbearable, with the peril of a gasoline explosion ever threatening, the boat’s pump chugged on.

There came a time at last, however, when the weary fighters leaned on shovel handles and watched the flames fade. Then there rose a glad shout: “The wind! The wind! It’s changed. It will drive the fire into the bay!”

This was true. The wind had changed. But Dave's brow wrinkled. He and Florence were for the moment on shore. "Come on," he exclaimed. "We've got to get the boat out of the bay. In a half-hour that fire will be dangerously close to the boat and our gasoline. It's swung round their camp—that's safe. But it's coming our way with the wind up. Our pump won't stop it. In an hour—"

He did not finish. Instead, he rowed swiftly across to the *Wanderer*.

"Rufus!" he called. "Cut off the pump. Their battle's won. Pull in the hose. We'll back out of here in a jiffy and be away."

"Thanks. Thanks more than we can say," Captain Frey shouted hoarsely from the shore.

"Say-ee!" Dave stared down at the water before the prow. "We've shifted. Current carried us in. I wonder—"

He did not have long to wonder. As Rufus set the motor roaring, the boat's propeller stirred up a great, white mass of foam, but the boat moved never an inch.

"Grounded!" Dave groaned. "Stuck between two rocks. We'll never get off with our own power."

"How terrible!" Florence was almost in tears. "We've tried to help, and now this! The fire is coming! The boat—"

"What's up?" Captain Frey shouted from the shore.

"Aground," Dave called back.

"Wait!" The captain sprang toward the slope where the campers were resting.

A moment later, Florence felt her throat tighten as she watched the weary boys swarming shoreward. The hose was carried to land, and this time the pump did double duty. The boat rocked with the throbbing of its motors. With a heart that at all times seemed to stand still, the girl saw the bravest of the boys in blue overalls force the nozzle of the hose almost upon the onrushing fire.

Was the stream of water large enough? Would the fire be stopped before it was

too late? For a time it seemed that, with the hose alone, the fire might be conquered. Then, of a sudden, a fresh and stronger gale sweeping across the bay sent bright flames leaping along the spruce trees and into the sky.

“We’ll lose,” Florence choked.

“Try the motor again!” Dave ordered. “We might get away now.”

The engines were accelerated, but in vain.

“Getting pretty hot down there.” Rufus mopped his brow as he came up from below.

A wave of despair overwhelmed Florence. What would be the end? Then a thrilling sight met her gaze. Fifty boys, each carrying a shovel or an ax and each with his head covered by a damp cloth, marched out of the camp cabin and straight toward the conflagration. “To do or to die for us,” she thought.

Then the boys struck up a song.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF SISKOWIT

The “Battle of Siskowit,” as the boys later named it, was gloriously fought.

“To think,” Florence exclaimed, as she watched one band of weary smoke-choked fighters fall back only to be replaced by fresh shock troops, “to think that those boys are willing to risk and endure so much to save us and our boat! What does it matter now if we never make a dollar from this summer’s work?”

There were times in that hour of fire fighting when the battle seemed lost; when tall spruce trees, caught in the flames, blazed toward the sky; when the heat burned the faces of the fighters and tar oozed up from the *Wanderer*’s deck.

Three times Rufus went below to set the motors roaring in the hope that some small tide had lifted the ship off the rocks, but his efforts were in vain. The *Wanderer* stuck fast.

Meanwhile, with fresh wet cloths to protect their faces from the blistering heat, some of the camp boys were swinging axes, clearing a broad fire lane, while others had dug a deep trench and were filling it with water to defeat the creeping flames.

“They—they’ll make it,” Florence breathed. “The wind is falling.”

A moment later she, too, was obliged to hold a damp cloth before her eyes. A sudden fierce gust had thrown a shower of sparks on the deck of their boat.

“Quick!” Dave shouted. “Buckets and mops! We must wet down the deck.”

Five minutes later they were breathing more easily. The fire had reached the last tree standing before the lane that had been cut to stop the flames.

“But will it stop there,” the girl questioned anxiously, “or will it jump the gap? If it does, we’re lost.”

Slowly but surely, as if by a miracle, the flames died down. With a shout of victory on their lips, a troop of workers sprang at the charred tree trunks which still stood flaming and threatening at any moment to fall across the gap. With sparks falling all about them, with smoking garments and parched faces, the boys hacked and pushed until the last fiery pillar lay flat upon the earth, its burning tinder extinguished. Only then did all join in a hoarse shout of triumph, Dave sounding the boat siren to heighten the note of rejoicing.

“Just think,” there was a suggestion of tears in Florence’s eyes, “Grandfather’s boat is worth fifteen thousand dollars, and we might have lost it!”

“It might have been blown to splinters of wood and a mass of twisted steel,” Dave agreed. “We should be thankful.”

“We’ll go ashore and hold a jubilee,” Florence exclaimed.

This, for two reasons, they did not do. Half the would-be celebrators were at once dispatched to a point where the fire still threatened to outflank them, and at the same time a slim, powerful motor-boat, Patrol Boat No. 1, rounded the point.

“Yo-ho there!” cried the skipper. “What are you lying here for?”

“Been helping a little,” Dave replied modestly. “Now we’re on the rocks.”

“On hard?” the skipper asked.

“Not very.”

“Good! We’ll have you off in a twinkle. Stand by to take a rope.”

The rope was thrown and attached to the *Wanderer*’s stern. The motors of the patrol boat roared, and the grounded craft moved slowly backward off the rocks.

“Ahoy there!” Dave shouted joyously. “We’ll be all right now. Thanks a lot.”

The *Wanderer* had lost a little paint from her bottom, that was all, and as the boat’s prow headed for Chippewa Harbor, Florence sat down for a breathing

spell before going below to prepare the evening meal. The look on her face was a sober one.

“Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,” she said aloud.

“But we have to live only today,” Dave said as he appeared on deck.

“Only today,” she smiled up at him, “and that—why that’s wonderful, isn’t it?”

Fifteen minutes later when Dave emerged from a little wireless cabin he had arranged on the afterdeck, he held two slips of paper in his hand. “Important messages,” he announced. There was a hint of mystery in his voice. He held out a paper on which she read: “Your passengers have been taken to Rock Harbor. Signed: Ve and Vi.”

This was from Vivian and Violet Carlson, daughters of a fisherman. It meant that the *Wanderer* could proceed at once to Rock Harbor, unload freight, swing around to Tobin’s Harbor and Belle Isle, then head back to the mainland.

“If only,” Florence thought. What question was in her mind? Perhaps she could not have told. She was for the moment oppressed by a feeling of impending catastrophe.

The second message, picked up by chance, was strange. “Important message,” it began. “To all lodgekeepers and to all captains of ships touching at Isle Royale: Be on the lookout for red-and-black boat powered by heavy outboard motor. Tall gray-haired man and girl of sixteen on board. They are believed to have left Port Arthur for Isle Royale two days ago. Nothing has been heard from them. Be on the lookout. Important. Be on the lookout.”

“From Port Arthur. Forty miles of Lake Superior,” Dave said thoughtfully. “Weather’s been pretty good. They should have made it. We’ll be on the lookout.”

An hour later Florence dropped down upon a box of life preservers to watch the stars come out. Far off, dim, indistinct, but suggesting all manner of strange mysteries, could be seen the rocky, all-but-uninhabited shores of Isle Royale. Here there might be a fisherman’s cabin and there an abandoned lighthouse; there the shack of a recluse who mended boats; and there, nestling along the shores of a snug little harbor, the cottages of a small lodge.

“Not three hundred people on the entire end of the island,” she said, as Dave passed.

“And not many coming,” said Dave. “Just think! They told us there would be thousands. And they never said,” he went on, “that the *Iroquois*, three times the length of our poor, little bouncing tub, would be coming here three times a week. We’re stuck all right.”

“Yes, and yet—” Florence sighed. “Well, it’s one grand vacation.”

“What about the fire at Siskowit?” Cottagers, fishermen, lodge people and their guests swarmed the dock at Rock Harbor on the arrival of the *Wanderer*.

“We licked it,” Dave reassured them.

“Yes, you did,” exclaimed a skeptical old-timer. “You don’t lick a fire on this island in that short time.”

“That’s right,” said another. “It creeps along on the ground.”

“Yes, and under the ground,” added a third. “All our soil is of vegetable origin. Dry as it is here, everything but the rocks burn. I’ve seen holes burned four feet deep.”

“Four feet!” Dave stared.

“No kiddin’,” the man insisted. “Question is, what’s going to be done about it? This island is a national park. Are a pack of boys going to be allowed to burn it up?”

“I take it,” said Dave soberly, “that you are referring to the camp boys at Siskowit.”

“Exactly,” said the man.

“Then,” said Dave, still speaking slowly, “all I’ve got to say is that, in a time like this, little talk and much thinking should be the order of the day. Captain Frey says his boys didn’t set the fire. I believe him. I—”

“Then what—”

“One thing more,” Dave broke in, “we’ve just seen those boys put up a fight to save their camp and our boat that would have done credit to seasoned fire fighters.”

Dave stood six feet in his stockings. He had a sharp, penetrating eye. There was that about his tone at this moment that brought the argument to an end.

“All right,” said a sturdily-built old man, known to all at Rock Harbor as the Commodore. “Run your boat into Snug Harbor. Water’s deep there. You’ll tie up for the night?”

“Why, no.” It was Florence who started to speak, then stopped. They had meant to go on but she was weary from the day’s battle, and so, too, were her companions.

“A few hours’ rest,” she thought with a sigh. Then a question came to her, “What of the mysterious man who had insisted that they pass up the ‘Battle of Siskowit’?”

“There’s a boat coming in soon,” she heard the Commodore telling Dave. “A big pleasure yacht from Chicago. She’ll be tying up at the big dock here. That’s why —”

“Oh sure,” Dave broke in, “we’ll slide into Snug Harbor.” He had sensed Florence’s feelings. They would stay for a while at least. Florence heaved a sigh of relief.

“A large pleasure yacht!” she exclaimed. “That will be swell, just to look at.”

“Yes, to look at,” Dave laughed. “That’s as far as we’ll get.” He glanced down at his smoke-blackened clothes.

“But Commodore,” Florence exclaimed. “What about that man? Did he go on the *Iroquois*?”

“What man?” The commodore stared at her.

“A short, stout man with a dark face.”

“I don’t recollect seeing him,” was the reply. Florence stared at the commodore, but said no more. Somehow she had felt all along that this man did not intend to leave the island. But why? She could not answer.

“I believe he’s still here,” she thought. “Perhaps back there somewhere in the dark just now.” The thought gave her a sudden turn. “But why should I care?” she whispered almost fiercely, “Why should he wish to break us? ‘Break you’—yes, those were his very words.” Dave had said they were broke. That was not quite true. They were paying expenses. That was something. But if someone robbed them of their few passengers? What then?

“We’d have to leave the island,” she thought in sudden consternation.

CHAPTER III

BEAUTY AND A THREAT

Slipping away from the main dock, the *Wanderer* moved down the moonlit harbor to find a berth close to the brightly lighted lodge.

After a hasty meal of boiled potatoes and trout fried in deep fat, topped off with coffee and apple pie, Florence felt much better.

The little party went ashore. Dave and Rufus soon settled down in a dark corner to talk with fishermen about boats, motors and the latest catch of fish.

Florence stole off alone to wander down the narrow path that leads to the main dock. Hanging high, the moon shining between the birch trees painted patches of gold on the path. The strong smell of damp earth, mingled with the heavy odor of thimbleberries in bloom, greeted her at every turn. The cool damp of the night made her shiver with sheer joy.

“After all that stifling heat,” she whispered.

Arrived at a spot close to the dock, she turned to one side, climbed a steep slope, scrambled up the side of a great rock, then with hands clasped about her knees, sat looking away at the moonlit harbor that, stretching away and away in that darkness, seemed never to end.

“Glorious!” Suddenly she sprang to her feet to swing her arms wide and to drink in the cool air of night as some famished one fresh from the desert might drink cold water.

“How perfect to live here,” she breathed. “Never too hot nor too cold, and always, always, so beautiful!” And it was beautiful—jagged rocks here, primeval forest there and, far as eye could see, the deep, dark, mysterious waters of Superior.

Yet, even as she stood there, she saw, as in an evil dream, the threat. For, from the far-off shores of Siskowit just then a distant red gleam caught her eye.

“The fire!” she exclaimed breathlessly.

It was true, even as she watched, like the flash of a distant lighthouse, there came a flare that increased in intensity for an instant, then went black.

All too well she knew the meaning of that; those boys had worked hard, but had not entirely won their battle.

A moment passed, then came a second flash. And after that another.

Then, of a sudden, the girl started. She had spied a movement in the bushes close to her rock.

“Who—who’s there?” she demanded.

For the space of a second there came no answer. Then a voice said:

“Them is spruce trees. Dey go up in fire like dat—you have been dere—you have seen. Dey is burning yet. And dey will burn. Dey will burn de whole island. Oh, ya. Dese fires dey is bein’ set by somebody. Oh ya, dey iss.”

“Why?” the girl asked, almost in a whisper. “Why would anyone wish to set a forest fire on this beautiful island?”

There came no answer, only a movement in the brush. The speaker, whoever he might have been, was gone. A strange thrill ran up her spine.

But now the sound of distant music reached her ear, and, as she strained her eyes, she caught the gleam of a moving light. It was over the water.

“The yacht,” she thought. “It is coming.” Once again she settled herself comfortably on her rock to watch the boat’s light grow brighter and brighter, to catch the rise and fall of music that appeared to sway with the boat and at last to hear the deep, mysterious sound, the call of a boat in the night.

“How often,” she thought, “that haunting sound has come drifting in out of the night, the voice of a ship lost in the fog, or in distress on the rocks. But tonight,”

once again she stood up to fling her arms wide, “Tonight it is a call of pure joy, a call to a grand good time on the deck of a beautiful yacht. But then I wonder,” she dropped back to her rock, to wonder some more.

It was true that once a boat docked anywhere on this friendly island, the cottagers and lodge guests swarmed aboard. They were always welcome. But she was not dressed for such an occasion. All her party clothes were on shore. She looked at her smoke-browned slacks, at her blouse torn at the sleeve, then murmured with a low laugh, “Invitation to the dance. But not for me. I’ll be a spectator. They won’t even know I am here.”

It was a large white yacht that at last tied up at the dock.

Sounding out in the silent night and across the dark, mysterious bay that lay beneath the stars, the music was enchanting.

The wail of violins, the tum-tum-tum of the bases, the organ-like roll of a piano accordion all seemed to blend with the beauty of the night.

“It’s glorious!” Florence whispered.

At that instant once again her eyes caught and were held by that faint red threat against the sky.

“The fire!” she exclaimed softly. “Must all this beauty vanish? No!” Her hands were tight clinched now. “No! It must not. At all cost we must save the island.”

But now there was a stir on the deck of the yacht. Something unusual was about to happen. What that was, for the moment, she could not tell.

She gave herself over to speculation regarding the people on that boat. Were they rich? Some of them must be. The yacht was magnificent in its burnished brass and polished mahogany.

“Not all are rich,” she told herself. “Some are guests of honor, famous people perhaps, artists, writers, musicians, dancers—”

Scarcely had she whispered this last word when the orchestra began the low rhythmic notes of a gypsy song she knew all too well, and at once a slim, spirit-like figure, clad in a gown that shone like silver in the moonlight, glided out

upon the deck and began to dance.

“Jeanne!” The sound that escaped Florence’s lips was almost a cry. “Petite Jeanne! It can be no one else. No one can do those gypsy dances so divinely.”

As she sat there entranced, listening to the enchanting music, watching each gliding movement of the dancer, she became more and more convinced that her good pal of other days, the little French girl, Petite Jeanne, was really there within a stone’s throw of her, dancing as she had never danced before.

“But why?” she asked herself. “Why?”

Jeanne, who had been adopted by gypsies, had at last found true kinfolks in France. She had inherited an ancient castle. Florence believed her rich. And yet here she was, dancing as in those old golden days when they were all very poor and happy together.

Involuntarily Florence allowed her mind to drift back over days that were gone. She saw Jeanne dancing with a bear, before the hedges of France, saw her in the wilds of this very northland, and then in a poor tenement of Chicago. She rejoiced with her again as she recalled her success and triumph as a dancer in light opera.

“And now?” she whispered. She was unable to answer her own question, but her heart yearned to know.

“Perhaps she is still rich,” she thought. “This may be her own yacht. She may be dancing for her guests.” Of this she could not be sure. One resolve she made at once, Jeanne should not be disturbed by an old friend in soiled slacks.

“Very soon,” she thought, “the yacht will leave the dock, the music grow faint in the distance, and Jeanne, like a spirit, will float away into the night.”

“Like a spirit,” she repeated musingly. “Jeanne was always like that, always kind, a great friend, but never quite like other humans.”

The dance went on. Again and again, in response to applause, the swaying figure returned to the deck.

There came at last a time when neither applause nor bewitching music could lure

her from her retreat.

“She is gone,” Florence thought, in a dreamy mood, “disappeared down a moonbeam.”

How true this was she was to know soon enough. The deck of the boat was all aglow, but the broad dock was in the shadows. Hidden by these shadows was a little group of onlookers—a cook from the lodge, two roustabouts, a sailor or two. With them were Dave and Rufus. Gliding along in the shadows a slender figure approached this group, whispered a question or two, received her answers, then vanished into the night.

Two minutes later, to her great astonishment, Florence heard her name called ever so softly:

“Florence! Florence! Where are you?”

The big girl thrilled to her fingertips, but did not answer at once.

“Florence!” again the low silvery voice called. “Where are you? It is I, Petite Jeanne. I have come all this way to find you!”

“Here!” The big girl’s voice was husky. She was on her feet now. Tears of joy were in her eyes. “Here. On the rock!”

“Ah!” Jeanne murmured, quoting from a very old book, “Lead me to a rock that is higher than I.” And then they who had had so many adventures together were in each other’s arms.

CHAPTER IV PLUMDUM

“But Jeanne!” Florence exclaimed a half-hour later. “You can’t come with us! You truly can’t!”

“Oh! Can I not?” Jeanne stood up slim and straight as a silver moonbeam.

“Of course not!” Florence tried to be firm. “We are going into a battle. The island is on fire. It will be a battle of storm, flame and smoke. But we must save our beautiful island.”

“And is it not my island?” Jeanne demanded. “Did I not live in a wrecked ship off its very shores? And were you not my very good companion?”

“Yes,” Florence agreed, “but now you belong to France.”

“France,” the little French girl’s voice dropped, “In my so beautiful France everyone is poor again. No rich American will rent my gloomy castle. So—” she breathed, “So here I am!”

“You have rich friends,” Florence suggested, nodding toward the yacht.

“Oh these!” Jeanne tossed her fair head. “Yes, these are friends. They are very kind indeed. They like me to dance so they bring me with them.

“Good people they are, too,” she added, more quietly. “Some are very famous. One writes books, one paints pictures of great rocks, one goes to cold, cold, countries to explore and one he is very rich.

“But you!” she exclaimed, “You are my friend of many, many days. It is in the lines of our hands, it is written in the stars, that we shall be together. Always and always!” Her voice rose.

“All—all right,” Florence surrendered. “Have you any clothes?”

“But yes!” the little French girl exclaimed, “I am prepared. In my locker are slacks of midnight blue. And my blouses, they are orange. Like a flame of fire are these.”

“Like a flame,” Florence laughed. “All too soon they will be like smoke. Look!” Springing to her feet, she pointed down the bay, “See! There is your flame!”

At that moment the red threat against the sky flared anew. Jeanne shuddered. As for Florence, she was thinking of the boys back there fighting the flames in the night, thinking, too, of the gay party on the rich man’s yacht, of young men in white flannels and girls in evening gowns. Then, down deep in her heart, a great wonder possessed her.

Of a sudden her thoughts were brought back to her immediate surroundings. Bobbing up and down in the low bushes beneath the rock some creature came racing toward them.

“Wha-what on earth is that?” Florence exclaimed.

“Oh! that’s Plumdum,” Jeanne cried. Sliding off the rocks, she gathered some wriggling, woolly creature in her arms.

“We don’t let him out when I dance. He wants to dance and doesn’t know how.”

“But Plumdum?” Florence exclaimed. “What is he?”

“Just my dog,” said Jeanne, holding him up to view. “My very good friend Plumdum.”

“Funny name,” said Florence. “How do you spell it?”

“Oh, that,” Jeanne giggled, “I didn’t give him the name. It was a redcap in a railroad station who gave it to him, though I guess he didn’t mean to. He’s the one who told me how to spell it too. But I guess he didn’t really know how, not really—”

“Jeanne,” Florence exploded, “What you’re saying doesn’t make sense!”

“I’m sorry,” Jeanne apologized, “I’ll tell you how it was. I had fallen in love with this dog; saw him in a pet store window. He—he sort of winked at me, so I just went in and bought him.”

“Of course,” Florence agreed.

“And then,” Jeanne heaved a sigh, “he didn’t have any name. Well I went into the railway station and the redcap took the beast and tried to steer him through the crowd. He kept dodging between people and under their feet. At last the redcap got disgusted and said, ‘Miss, that thar dorg is plumdum!’

“‘Is he?’ I asked. I was all excited. I thought that was his real name. Guess I was dumb. But I said, ‘How do you spell it?’ He said, ‘What Miss?’ I said, ‘Plumdum.’ He said, ‘Miss, I ain’t never been no spellin’ champeen, but near as I can figger it’s P-l-u-m-d-u-m.’”

“He was trying to tell you your dog was plumb dumb,” Florence laughed.

“Yes, to be sure,” Jeanne answered. “All the same, that’s his name!”

“And does it fit?” asked Florence.

“Not always,” Jeanne replied slowly. “Sometimes he’s almost human.” This last Florence was to learn in the days that were to come. In the drama of one crowded hour Plumdum was to play an important role.

But now Florence sprang to her feet, “Come on!” she exclaimed. “If you’re going with us you’ll have to get your things together, dark blue slacks, orange blouses—everything. We’re going to Tobin’s Harbor.”

“Tonight?” Jeanne demanded.

“In an hour.”

“*Bon! Mon cher. Tout de suite!*” Jeanne was off the rocks and away.

Following slowly, Florence at last reached the docks. There among the shadows she came upon a young man, little more than a boy. He was standing there looking away at the midnight fire.

She had time to think, “Interesting profile,” then he turned around and saw her.

“Hello, sister,” he said in a friendly voice. “Where did you come from? What do you do here?”

“We take people from here to there and back again,” she laughed quietly. “And,” she added, “sometimes we fight fires. Today we had a terrific battle.”

“Fire? Where?” The young man seemed surprised.

“Look.” She led him to the opposite corner of the dock, “See that red spot?”

“Fire, all right,” the other agreed. “Will they get it out?”

“Who knows?” There was a sombre note in the girl’s voice. “Just think! All this beauty, and that fire!”

“I am thinking,” said the young man soberly. “Tell me about it.”

Florence did tell him, told of the day’s battle, told it with all the drama and feeling of her emotional nature.

“Say-e-e!” the young man exclaimed. “That will be a grand spot on my program! Will you come to New York?”

“New—New York!” she stammered, “On your program!”

“Sure,” he laughed, “I’m Tim O’Hara. I plan and prepare radio programs. Just now I’m working on one to be called ‘Adventurers’ Club of the Air.’ Many people who have had a real adventure will get a trip to New York, all expenses paid, and a grand chance to tell the story of their adventures to the nation, coast to coast, seventy-nine stations. You’ve had a real adventure, why not come?”

“Oh!” Florence gasped. Then, “No—no—I couldn’t. Not now. Perhaps not for months. There’s going to be a battle, a terrific battle. I’m sure of it, and we—we must do our part.”

“Say! That’s the spirit!” Tim voiced his approval in no uncertain tones. “But you’ll come, in the end—I know you will. New York. Ever dream of that great city?”

“Yes, yes, often.”

“And the radio? Coast to coast?”

“Yes, that too.”

“Then you’ll come and you’ll have much more to tell.”

“Will I?” The girl wondered and shuddered.

“Here’s my card.” He thrust a pasteboard square into her hand. “Guard it with care.”

“Next to my heart!” she laughed as she thrust it deep into her blouse pocket.

Then she caught Jeanne’s call, “Florence, where are you?”

“I’m off,” she breathed. “We sail at once—‘Ships that pass in the night.’”

“Sometimes they meet again!” His voice was low. “Here’s hoping!”

At Tobin’s Harbor Florence experienced a new thrill. Though the hour was near midnight, the small dock was crowded. “What of the fire? What about the fire?” they demanded anxiously.

Close beside her, as she stood on the dock telling of the fire, was a slender woman—a fisherman’s wife—listening intently. In her arms she held a child. A second child tugged at her skirts. Her all, Florence knew well, was on Isle Royale. Across the narrow bay was her spotless cabin and before the cabin a neat fish house and many nets on reels. She and her husband had toiled hard to build their happy home, and now, if the fire came, all would be lost.

Standing on the other side of her, leaning on a cane, was a man well past eighty. Every summer for forty years he had made a pilgrimage to Isle Royale. His cabin stood overlooking the rocks on the Point.

“There are scores like him,” the girl thought. “Some young, some old. If the fire reaches their cabins, their joyous summers will be at an end.” Her gaze moved slowly across the placid waters of the long, narrow bay. Primeval forest, dark spruce and fir, beautiful white birch ghosts in the moonlight lined the shores.

Suddenly something catching her eye caused her to start. Beyond the dark fringe of evergreen that lined the distant horizon was a long, thin line of red. From time to time, like a finger of fate, a pencil of this red glow shot skyward, then faded into the night.

“Dave, look!” she sought his attention. “The fire!”

“Beauty and a threat!” he murmured with feeling. “We must do what we can for these people and their island.”

CHAPTER V

NIGHT SIGNALS

Three days later the *Wanderer* was at Houghton on the mainland. Events had moved rapidly. A strong gale had driven the fire on the now flaming island beyond the control of the small band of camp workers who had volunteered anew to fight it. Rapidly formed plans for a battle on a large scale had already been laid. The *Iroquois* had been taken off the run to the island. It was to carry fire fighters and their supplies to hastily constructed camps on Isle Royale shores.

“That gives us a break,” Florence, a born optimist, exclaimed.

“It would,” Dave said, “if anyone wanted to go to the island, but this fire will scare them away. Besides—” he hesitated.

“Besides what?” Florence demanded.

“Nothing much,” Dave looked away, “only, do you remember that big man who was angry because we went into Siskowit?”

“Yes, what—”

“I met him on the street today. He said, ‘I hear you’ve only a sixty-day temporary permit.’ I said, ‘They’ll renew it,’ and he said, ‘Oh, yeah? That’s what you think!’”

“And now you don’t think you’ll get it?” Florence asked soberly.

“I don’t know what to think,” Dave replied. “One thing’s sure, if they don’t renew it, we’re sunk.”

The moment they arrived at Houghton, Florence wrote her grandfather.

“We’ve been betrayed. We’ve been led into an unwise investment, and it was your money. Even in good times there are few passengers to the island. Now there is a fire, and no one will come. I can’t tell you how sorry I am. There isn’t a chance that we shall more than break even. Of course, with this threat of fire there is opportunity for service. And how it will be appreciated!”

Continuing, she wrote of the kindly fisher-folk whose cabins nestled among the trees, and of the old time cottagers who made the island their summer home.

“If we stand by to help them off the island in case disaster threatens, it will be, I think, a great service. But will it pay? What shall we do? It’s your boat. You must decide.”

The answer came by return mail. “Stand by to serve,” her grandfather wrote.

“An opportunity to serve where service is appreciated is a gift of God.

“Just now something is happening to you and, if I read your letter correctly, you are taking it just as it should be taken. And that is all that matters. Might I add that life need never be a bitter struggle. It may always be a glorious adventure!”

There his letter ended.

Florence read it, her heart swelling, “Good old granddaddy,” she murmured. “I only hope we may yet find a way out.” She was thinking now of money.

The very next day, just as darkness was falling, the *Wanderer* and her gallant crew found themselves once more in a precarious situation on Isle Royale. They were at Chippewa Harbor. Here a brave little fishing family had taken its stand against all sorts of adversity and had won. Their neat home, their stout little dock, and three tiny tourist cabins showed all this. Of all the people on the island, the Carlsons of Chippewa Harbor had interested Florence most. Perhaps this was because, unlike other fisher-folk of the island, they did not leave when winter’s ice threatened to close their harbor. Instead, they ordered many sacks of flour, sugar and potatoes. To these were added hams and slabs of bacon, cases of

milk, fruit and vegetables and all else that might be needed.

Then, with bleak winter winds blowing, they settled down to six months of isolation. During all that time, boats neither came nor went. They were there alone. Isle Royale was their home.

Working like beavers, they cut logs for tourist cabins, mended their nets and made all needed preparations for a successful season.

Besides the fisherman and his wife there were Ve and Vi, as they called themselves, girls of Florence's own age, and some younger brothers—a happy family.

Chippewa Harbor, too, was a spot that had made many a heart beat faster. A break in the Island's rocky wall, it stretched back through a narrow channel to a broader bay, where giant spruce trees towered above massive palisades. Here, in the still hour of evening, one might rest on his oars to watch the sun go down over the dark green treetops and dream, transported to another world.

Ah, yes, Florence was ready to fight for Chippewa Harbor. And at this moment it was in great need of a champion. For by great misfortune, this would be the first tiny settlement to be reached by the fire if it came, and at that moment it was coming fast. They could see it crawling, leaping, rushing along the ridges. They could hear it snapping and roaring not two miles away. So sudden had been its advance that no fire fighters had yet arrived. Only the *Wanderer*, with her one small pump, was standing by.

The entrance to Chippewa Harbor is narrow and rocky. A storm was roaring in from the lake. In an hour it might be impossible for the *Wanderer* to leave the harbor. Perhaps, too, in that hour, the roaring fire would be upon the fishing village.

“I think,” said the fisherman, scanning first the fire, then the sky, “that you better put out into open water.”

“But your home, your cabins, everything you have!” Dave protested. “Our pump may save them!”

The fisherman shrugged his shoulders, but did not speak. About him was gathered his family—his wife, Ve and Vi, and three small sons. They, too, were

strangely silent.

“No,” said Dave. “We stay!”

Darkness fell. Only the leaping flames lighted the dark waters of the harbor. It was a dramatic moment. Even Jeanne, always so full of life and chatter, was silent. Indeed, during the days that had passed, Jeanne had seemed a little strange. She took small part in their planning for the future. It was almost as if she were an honored guest aboard the *Wanderer*. The time was to come, however, when she and Plumdum would do their bit. But for the moment, even the curly-haired dog, awed by the roaring lake waters close by and the glare of the fire some distance away, was silent.

“Look!” Florence exclaimed in sudden consternation, as she pointed toward the crest of Greenstone Ridge that, rising a full three hundred feet, extends from one end of Isle Royale to the other. “Look up there! A fresh fire is starting!”

“Another fire,” the fisherman murmured hoarsely, “how do they start?”

At once Florence recalled those mysterious words spoken in the dark—“‘Dese fires dey iss bein’ set.’” Were they?

“It seems to blink,” said Dave. “Strange sort of fire, I’d say. That—why, that’s not a fire!” he exclaimed excitedly. “At least not a forest fire. It’s a campfire. Looks like a signal fire as well. Watch! It’s gone. Now it’s there again. Watch! And now—say! They’re signaling in Morse code. Wait! Let me see if I can get their message!”

And so with the forest fire not two miles away creeping toward them and roaring at them, the little group, unable for the moment to do anything to save themselves or property, stood silent, watching, completely forgetting their own troubles because of their interest in others who might be in distress.

As for Florence, she was thinking of that message which had become deeply impressed upon her mind. The message, as you may recall, had been concerned with a red-and-black boat, a gray-haired man, and a girl of sixteen.

This message once more passed through the girl’s mind, “Important! To all lodgekeepers and captains of ships touching at Isle Royale. Be on the lookout for a red-and-black boat. Tall, gray-haired man, girl of sixteen on board. Important!

Be on the lookout!”

“Is this their campfire up on that rocky ridge?” she asked herself.

“Yes.” It was Dave who spoke. “They must be in trouble. Their message is just one word, ‘Help!’”

“But what could have happened?” demanded Vi Carlson, one of the daughters of the fisherman. “All they’ve got to do is come down the ridge.”

“Yes, but if one of them were sick or injured,” Florence’s brow wrinkled. “And see!” she cried in fresh alarm. “There *is* a tongue of flame farther down the ridge. There is a second fire after all. If no one goes to help them they may be trapped.”

“We might go, you and I,” Dave suggested. “I’ll get a square of canvas. Might need it to make a stretcher. Then we’ll be off.” He hurried away.

“There’s a trail to Lake Ritchie and a moose path up the ridge,” Ve Carlson, the other daughter of the fisherman volunteered. “I—I’ll show you the way. You’d never find the way by yourselves. Come on,” Ve was off.

For a time, guided by the gleam of a flashlight, they marched along in silence. Once a moose sprang from the trail to go crashing through the brush. “A thousand moose on the island,” Florence thought. “They may all be destroyed by the fire.”

“Isle Royale has always been my home,” Vi broke the silence at last.

“Always, winter and summer?” Florence asked.

“Two winters we went to the mainland. Since then, fish have been cheap. Times have been hard. We couldn’t afford to go. They sent us a teacher, so we stayed here. We’ve graduated from high school,” Vi laughed low, “my sister and I, in a log cabin school.

“We go up here,” she said at last. “The moose trail is terrible, but we—we’ll make it.”

And they did. With the beacon campfire as their guide, they climbed until at last,

with a cry of victory, they burst in upon the astonished and overjoyed campers.

“A red-and-black boat, a gray-haired man and a sixteen-year-old girl,” Florence quoted, scarcely realizing what she was saying.

“You’ve got our number,” laughed a tall, thin, gray-haired man. “But how did you know all this?”

“They’ve been broadcasting about you for days,” said Florence.

“See, Grandfather!” the strange girl exclaimed. “I told you they’d find us.”

“Yes, and for once I’m glad to be found.” The man laughed low. “This is growing a bit thick—a fire to the right of us, one to the left of us, and I not able to walk a step. Badly sprained ankle,” he explained.

“You see,” he went on, “Beth and I decided to make a secret visit to this beautiful island.”

“Grandfather’s always so busy,” the girl put in. “So we just ran away.”

“Today was the first time we knew of the fire,” said the gray-haired man. “Been on the other side of the island. When we saw it we got all excited, and I took the wrong kind of step. So here we are. Looks dangerous to me. Think we’d better get going?”

“No-o,” Dave looked away to the southwest. “It’s going to storm. Getting down’s going to be slow. The fire won’t get here for three hours at best.”

“So we’d better weather the storm in the little tent I carried on my back for just this purpose.” The old man smiled.

“That’s it,” Dave agreed.

“You may have been wondering,” the gray-haired man said, after the tent had been set up and they were comfortably seated inside, “why Beth didn’t go for help, when she found I could not walk properly. Truth is, she refused to go.” He chuckled.

“Why should I?” the girl demanded, “The fire was coming our way. There was no one on our side of the island. We had been alone there. I did see a light down on your side but knew nothing about you people. Besides, these trails are terrible.”

“Mostly no trails,” Florence agreed.

“I might have been lost in some swamp. The fire might have come while I was gone,” the girl shuddered. “So, I stayed. At long last, I might have been able to help him down.”

“Brave girl,” the old man placed a hand on her shoulder.

The changing scenes that passed before the eyes of the small group on Greenstone Ridge during the next hour would never be forgotten. Below them, seeming so near that they could reach out and touch them, were the lights of the *Wanderer* and the fisherman’s cabin shining through the darkness. At a greater distance, brilliant and menacing against the blackness of evergreen forests and water, was the fire. Creeping slowly, flaring up here, dying down there, but ever moving forward, it threatened in time to destroy Chippewa Harbor’s little world. Back of all this, rolling in across the waters, was a storm. Now faint flashes of light were seen. Low rumbles were heard.

“If only it would rain hard!” Florence wished.

But what was this? Across the waters, slowly moving lights approached Chippewa.

“Hurray!” Dave shouted, as he read their meaning. “It’s a ship. It must be Captain Frey and his boys! Reinforcements!” Fresh hope shone in his eyes.

Scarcely had the lights of the newly-arrived ship blended with those of the *Wanderer* than there came a vivid flash, a roar of thunder, and large, cold raindrops began to fall.

“It’s the end,” breathed Florence, “the end of our battle with the fire.”

“No,” said the gray-haired man, wiser in these things than the girl knew, “it is not the end, only a truce. The battle will be renewed.”

How right he was the girl was soon to know. The rain did not last long. It made little impression on the blazing spruce trees. The wind changed, however, driving the fire back, and for the time being, Chippewa Harbor was safe.

Two hours later, after a hard but successful struggle to bring the crippled man back to civilization, Florence climbed wearily into her bunk for a few snatches of sleep.

CHAPTER VI

CHIPS

Early as it was, when she came on deck next morning Florence found the slim, gray-haired man in a steamer chair.

“Now that we’ve found you,” she said with a laugh, “what do we do with you?”

“Just anything,” he smiled.

“That’s easy.”

“Where do you go from here,” he asked, “and what do you do?”

“We touch at the old lighthouse, where we tell the fishermen that the fire is pretty bad, but that we know hundreds of men are coming to fight it, and we feel sure they’ll win.”

“And after that?” He was still smiling.

“Rock Harbor Lodge is next. We tell them the same thing. Then Tobin’s Harbor. We’ll tell them not to worry; that if the fire threatens them, we’ll be right there to take them off.”

“And what do you get for all this?” he asked.

“Nothing,” she smiled back at him. “That is, no money—just satisfaction—heaps and heaps of satisfaction.”

“Then,” he looked at her in a puzzling manner, “after you’ve done these acts of kindness, you might run us round to McCargo’s Cove and pick up our small boat. We left it there. You shall be paid in cash for this service,” he added with a laugh.

“And then?” she queried.

“Do you return to the mainland?”

“We must, for fuel and possible passengers.”

“Then we’ll ride there with you. More money!” he laughed happily. “Why, you’ll be rolling in wealth!”

“At least,” she agreed, “we can pay for our fuel, and that’s something!”

As they made the rounds of fishing villages and lodges that day, it was the same old story—worried, anxious faces and whispered rumors of disaster for all of them in the near future. This brought the *Wanderer*’s crew a harvest of a sort. Lodge guests were anxious to leave the island. It became evident that when the boat headed for Houghton its decks would be lined with paying passengers. This brought a happy smile to the big girl’s face. “Perhaps,” she was thinking, “things will not be so bad after all.”

As for Jeanne, she was the life of the party. Donning a pair of coveralls miles too large for her, she staged a ludicrous dance she called “The Deckhands Promenade.”

When at last guests dragged a fiddle and a guitar from their baggage and sent a wailing, thumping tune drifting across the dark waters, she disappeared, to come popping out in her silver robe, and to execute a true gypsy dance that charmed her small audience.

“Jeanne, you are a grand prize!” Florence exclaimed when she had finished. “If only there were no fire, and this were a regular summer, you would charm all those land-loving people into a visit to our island just to see you dance!”

“Ah, well,” Jeanne replied soberly, “perhaps I shall yet dance before the flames and lead them into the waters where they will drown.”

“Yes,” Florence agreed, with a laugh, “the way the Pied Piper led the rats into the sea.”

Truly, things were looking up a little for young Skipper Dave and his crew. One thing was disturbing. Wherever they docked they heard this complaint, hundreds

of men were arriving to fight the fire, the *Iroquois* was bringing them, but there was lack of organization and very little was being accomplished.

“If only Chips was here,” said a grizzled fisherman, as Dave and Florence left his dock. Strangely enough, they heard this again and again, always spoken by old men and with great respect, “If only Chips was here. If only Chips—”

Dave exclaimed at last, “I’d sure like to be that man Chips! Wonder if he’s real, or only a myth.”

“Wait and see,” said Florence.

If Florence had hoped that the gray-haired man whom they had rescued in such a dramatic manner, with his granddaughter, from Greenstone ridge, would, before leaving the boat, reveal his identity, she was doomed to disappointment. After paying his bill he gave directions for having his boat and other belongings taken ashore, then lost himself in the crowd that lined the dock seeking information regarding the fire.

“We haven’t seen the last of him,” Dave prophesied. “He wasn’t on the island just for a vacation, you may depend upon that.”

Was Dave right? What would that mean to their young lives if he were. To these questions Florence could form no answers.

“Took in one hundred and forty dollars this trip,” Dave exulted as he walked into town with Florence. “First thing we know we’ll be making money!”

Would they? For once Florence dared hope. Perhaps this fire was a blessing in disguise. With the *Iroquois* off the run, with army officers and park officials in a hurry to reach the island, and with a few daring souls still ready to spend a short vacation on the island, it did seem that they might hope. And yet, before nightfall hope had vanished.

It was two hours after they had docked. Florence was busy tidying up her galley when a gay party of six, three men and their wives, all attired in the latest sports togs, appeared on the dock.

“Is this the boat that goes to Isle Royale?” they asked.

“Yes, but—” Florence hesitated, “perhaps you haven’t heard—the island’s on fire.”

“Oh, yes, we’ve heard,” one of the women enthused. “That makes it all the more exciting. When do we sail?”

“Tomorrow evening at eight o’clock is our regular time.”

“Six round trip tickets,” the girl was thinking. “Sixty dollars. And perhaps—yes, there were three young officers coming down the dock—ninety dollars. Wonderful!”

But wait! There was a disturbance—the stout man who had taken such a dislike to Florence and Dave that first day of the fire, drew one of the six would-be passengers aside. Florence did not hear what he said, but, with a sinking heart, she saw him pointing to a large speedboat tied up at a smaller dock.

The man returned. There was a conference among the six prospective passengers. Florence caught only the words, “Speedboat! How thrilling!”

Turning to Florence, the little lady with the shining eyes said in an apologetic voice, “I—we’re so sorry, dear. We’ve decided to take the speedboat. Think of it! We can be over there in two hours, and it will be so thrilling!”

Florence made no reply. What was there to say? There was a sinking feeling at the pit of her stomach. Her shoulders drooped. “So that’s it!” she thought. “That man’s going into competition with us. He’s got influence. He’ll see that our license to carry passengers is not renewed. And yet,” her body stiffened, “he can’t keep us from serving the people of the island. We can still stand by.”

Then a strange thing happened. As the sunlight slowly receded from the summit of Copper Range, a short, stout man appeared on the dock. To Florence his dress seemed odd. A broad-brimmed black hat, blue shirt, overalls, cut off six inches from the ground and not hemmed, and high topped boots of coarse leather clothed the man. What he said gave her a start.

“I’m Chips.”

“Mr. Chips!”

“Just plain Chips,” the man corrected. “I want to go to Isle Royale.”

“Yes,” the girl exclaimed. “They want you and need you. The island is in flames.”

“I know. When do we sail?” Chips was all business.

“Why, ri-right away.” Florence took one bold fling at life. What would Dave say? Turning about, she set her boat whistle waking echoes among the sun-tipped hills.

Dave came on the run. “What’s the rumpus? What’s up?” he demanded.

“This,” she said, with as much dignity as she could command, “this is Chips. The island needs him. We’re sailing as soon as possible, that is—” her voice trailed off, “if you’re agreed.”

Dave said, “O. K. by me,” and it was done. One passenger. Ten dollars.

This was not the last unusual incident of that day—there was more to come. Chips had gone for his luggage. Florence was slowly pacing the deck when a girl shorter and broader than herself appeared before her on the dock.

“I am Katie,” said the girl. Florence knew she must be a Finlander.

“Katie who?” Florence smiled.

“I am Katie Eskelund,” said the girl. “And I am going to Isle Royale.”

“What place on Isle Royale?” Florence asked.

“Siskowit Bay.” The girl lowered a heavy blanket roll to the dock.

“She’s strong,” Florence thought, “strong as a man. How she could send a boat through the water!”

“Siskowit?” she said. “There are no women there. Only men and boys.”

“My brother is there,” said Katie. “He is fighting fire. I shall stay with him. I can fight fire.”

“Why! They won’t let you,” Florence exclaimed. “It’s a boys’ camp!”

“So-o,” the Finnish girl’s face clouded. “But my brother is there,” she insisted. “We are twins.”

“Oh!” Florence had some notion of what it meant to be a twin. She wanted to help this girl. But how?

Seized by a sudden inspiration she demanded, “Can you cook? Can you make pasties?”

“Oh, yes! Very good pasties.”

Pasties! How Florence’s mouth watered. Good little turnover pies all filled with meat, made only as the people of strange little Finland knew how.

Just then Dave came up from below. “Dave,” Florence smiled in spite of herself, “do you think we could use a cook on the *Wanderer*?”

“We—we might,” Dave seemed a little puzzled. “Come to think of it,” he added after a brief pause, “it would help. Looks to me as if we were stepping into something rather big. May be a day-and-night affair before we’re through. You’re O.K. for a cook but not twenty-four hours a day. And Jeanne, she’s fine, but a bit of a butterfly, don’t you think?”

“Perhaps,” Florence agreed, “anyway I want you to meet Katie. She’s no butterfly.” Katie grinned good-naturedly. “She wants to be our cook. She can make pasties.”

“Pasties. Oh! Boy!” Dave grinned. “Sure. Take her on.”

“I can make bread, too,” Katie volunteered eagerly. “Saffron buns and everything!”

Florence did not know what saffron buns were, but decided she could stand them at least once.

“All right,” she said, with a note of finality, “you are hired. Then perhaps you will see your brother now and then. You shall be our cook. That is,” her voice dropped, “if you want to.”

For answer, Katie Eskelund tumbled her blanketroll over the rail. That is how the *Wanderer* came by a new cook. And she was a cook indeed!

At eleven o'clock that same night Florence awoke. She was wide-awake. A feeling that all was not well disturbed her. What could it be? Were they having engine trouble? Had there been tampering on board? No, the motor throbbed sweetly. Was there a storm? Only a choppy sea that should have rocked her to sleep.

A breath of cold air brushed her cheek. Her stateroom door was open. How come? She sat up. The roll of the boat had banged it open. But look! She now stared away at the black waters. Had she caught a gleam of light out there? It did not seem probable. They were halfway across the lake, thirty-five miles from anywhere. And yet—yes, there it was! She saw it plainly now.

“It blinks!” she exclaimed aloud. “Distress signal! Oh, dear!” she sighed. “It seems as if the whole world’s in trouble.”

Hurriedly drawing on dressing gown and slippers, she climbed out into the chill air of night to find Dave in the pilothouse.

“Dave,” she said, “there’s a light out there. It blinks as if someone were in trouble. We—We’ll have to put about and go to his aid, won’t we?”

“Yes, I—I suppose so.”

“I’m going to make a big pot of coffee.” Dave twisted the ship’s wheel, turning the *Wanderer* toward the signaling light.

CHAPTER VII

RESCUED

As the *Wanderer* came nearer to the blinking signal of distress, it seemed more and more certain that it was approaching some light-buoy and not a boat at all. When at last, however, the beams of the ship's lights reached the spot, Florence smiled in spite of herself, for the vessel in distress was none other than the speedboat, that, having robbed them of their passengers, had so joyously left the harbor hours before.

"Well, look at that!" Dave exploded, as he signaled for slow speed ahead.

"Oh, it's you! It's the *Wanderer*!" a shrill voice screamed.

"That's the little lady who was going to be so thrilled," Florence remarked.

"She doesn't seem thrilled now," said Dave.

"Probably chilled instead," the girl shuddered.

And chilled it was. "Just think!" one woman exclaimed, as she climbed stiffly on board. "The motor's dead. Probably it's going to storm. The cold night. We—"

"And not a blanket, nor bite to eat," added another. "It was perfectly frightful."

"Climb right up and come into the cabin," Florence invited cheerily. "I've got a roaring fire and gallons of coffee!"

"Coffee! Hot coffee! Man! Oh, man!" exclaimed the leader of the party. "Take us to it!"

"It was my batteries," grumbled the stout speedboat man, as he crowded into the cabin after them.

“Started out with bum batteries. That’s b-a-d.” It was Chips who spoke. “But I got some that belong to pumps,” he volunteered. “I’ll lend ’em to you.”

“Not for taking us on to Isle Royale,” exclaimed the leader of the party. “We’re through! No more speedboats for us. We stay right here. What do you say?”

The shouts of approval which rose at this suggestion warmed Florence’s heart.

“What’s more,” the leader fairly bristled, “that money we paid you for the trip!” he shouted at the speedboat man. “Shell out, or we’ll sue you for damages. That money goes to this young skipper and her crew.” He turned to Florence.

“I’m not the skipper,” she protested.

“It’s all the same. What do you say?” he turned on the speedboat man.

“All right!” The man held out a roll of bills.

“Here you are, sister.” After adding one bill, the leader transferred the roll to Florence. “A bit extra for doughnuts and coffee and—and as a penalty for our insulting a real boat.” At this they all laughed.

An hour later the *Wanderer* was once more rolling on her way, and Florence was preparing for ten more winks of sleep. Before her eyes closed, however, her mind ran dreamily to the mysterious Chips and the more mysterious gray-haired man and the girl they had rescued from Greenstone Ridge.

Dawn found the *Wanderer* and its passengers at the island. Once they arrived, they were not long in discovering that the man, Chips, had not been over-advertised. Born and bred in the north woods, a natural director of men, he inspired confidence and hope everywhere.

Scarcely had he left the boat when he asked, “Where’s your map? Now where are the fires? There are hundreds of men on the island. Where are they? That’s good! This is bad. Where are the patrol boats? Where’s the *Iroquois*? Move these men. Put pumps there. We’ll make a stand across here: Lake Ritchie, Chickenbone Lake, and McCargo’s Cove. That line must hold. This end of the island must be saved at all cost. See?”

Everyone did see at once; and little by little order was being restored.

“You’ve saved us,” a bearded cottager gripped Florence’s hand. “You young people of the *Wanderer* did it. You brought us Chips. You’ve stood by. We’ll not forget.”

Warmed by this speech and glowing with hope, Florence turned to Dave and exclaimed, “We’ll win now. I know it!”

“Win what?” Dave grinned good-naturedly.

“We’ll save the island.”

“Oh, that. I always knew we would.” Dave laughed.

And yet, would they? After one long, sober thought, Florence was not so sure. There were rumors of a third fire, started several miles from the first two, near Tompsonite Bay, on the farther end of the island.

“Are these fires truly being set?” the girl asked herself. “And if they are, why?” For the moment she found no answer.

After unloading a few groceries at Rock Harbor, they went pop-popping round Schoville’s Point to Tobin’s Harbor Landing, then round to Belle Isle at the north side of the island. Everywhere there was talk of fire, but to Florence’s growing astonishment she caught no word suggesting that the fires might have been set. At last, she all but dismissed the thought from her mind. But not for long.

Isle Royale is forty miles long. The east end broken up into points is like the fingers on a man’s hand. Blake’s Point, which forms the long middle finger, extends far out into Lake Superior. It is here that sturdy fishermen mumble a prayer on nights of storm and fog, for the roar of breaking waves is like the roar of the sea, and great gray walls seem to reach out hands to drag them in.

Once, so we are told, a freighter, carried away by a terrible storm, crushed head on against this wall, and sank. She was loaded with canned salmon. For a long time after that the fishermen caught canned salmon in their nets.

On this day as the *Wanderer* rounded this point there was no storm. A lazy breeze pushed a thin, gray haze before it. A seagull soared high. A wild duck swimming before their boat, eyed them for a moment, then rose to go flapping away. Off to the left, perhaps a mile, some objects, a little grayer than the haze,

appeared to glide back and forth across the water.

“What is it?” Jeanne asked in surprise.

“The Phantom Fisherman,” Florence said with a low laugh. “He is always there when there is a fog. When you come near him, he fades away into deeper fog.”

“How strange!” said Jeanne, charmed with this note of mystery.

“Probably trolling for lake trout,” said the practical Dave. “There’s a reef out there they call ‘Five Foot’ because it comes within five feet of the surface.”

“The Phantom Fisherman,” Jeanne repeated dreamily.

And so, gliding along between narrow rocky islands, they came once more to Tobin’s Landing. Here they meant to spend the night, and perhaps all the next day. There was a suggestion of storm in the air. A storm from the southwest meant fanned flames and added peril to all. Their great command at this moment appeared to be, “Stand by to serve!”

At Tobin’s harbor all was peace. In this snug little bay the wind had gone to rest. As evening came, the water was like glass. Here spruce and balsam, growing down to the very water’s edge, cast dark green shadows, and there, like fairy maidens in filmy dresses, white birches appeared to bend over and look down into the water’s clear depths.

When the gong sounded for the evening meal, savory odors greeted the crew of the *Wanderer*. Katie’s pasties were all that the heart might desire. The crust melted in one’s mouth and the meat was done to a turn. When it came to her saffron buns, opinion was divided. Jeanne, ever fond of new experiences, pronounced their strange flavor “delicious!” Florence ate them in brave silence, while Dave turned his attention to “good old army bread.”

“Anyway,” Florence said in a low tone, “Katie is a dear, and she’ll be a great help.”

“Yes,” Dave agreed. “And if we’re ever one man short, she can pinch-hit for the best of us.”

As darkness began to fall, weary from the night’s adventure and the day’s toil,

Florence sought her berth. But Jeanne, who, like the crickets and katydids, always sang best at night, went on the dock in search of some new and interesting adventure.

She found it in the form of a man with a mass of tangled gray hair and very bright eyes, who sat on the dock, staring dreamily at the moon.

“One doesn’t see the fire tonight,” he said as he rose, and bowing politely, offered her a seat beside him.

“It’s there all the same,” Jeanne said, as she dropped into a chair.

“Of what do you speak?” asked the old man.

“The fire,” said Jeanne. “It’s like some big, red-faced giant, hiding behind the hills. Bye and bye it will pop up all of a sudden and roar at us.”

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said the man, with a chuckle, “but then, why worry about tomorrow? When you are my age you’ll know there may be no tomorrow!”

“No tomorrow?” Jeanne tried to think what that might be like and failed.

“Tell me,” she exclaimed, as if to break the spell, “This is a land of primeval forests. It should be one of ghosts, fairies, elves, just any little people. Are there no legends about it?”

“Yes, one,” said the old man.

“Tell me,” said Jeanne.

“Have you seen Monument Rock?” the old man asked.

“No.”

“You must.”

“Good. I shall,” said Jeanne.

“The legend is about Monument Rock,” said the old man. “It is just over yonder. If it were daytime I might point it out to you—the rock, I mean.

“You see,” he settled back in his place, “before the white man came, no one lived on the island, that is, hardly anyone.

“Indians came in their great canoes to hunt and to crack away rocks and gather great copper nuggets which they beat into spear points and arrowheads. But when the dark whispering trees cast their shadows on the bay they seemed to hear voices saying: ‘This is no fit place for man to live. This is the home of all island gods.’ And always they hurried to their canoes and went paddling away. That is,” his voice seemed to trail off, “almost always.” From somewhere far away a faint echo murmured “Almost always.”

For a time they sat there, the aged man and the blonde-haired girl, lost in meditation, contemplating the beauty of the night.

“Ah,” the old man breathed at last. “It is magnificent, all this. God made it glorious and man has done little to mar it.

“Once,” his voice grew mellow, “a few years back, when there were more people here and there were joyous young people with us, we held a night party on the little island, just over there.

“Those young people sang beneath the stars.” His voice was low—“They sang as no one had sung before, sang to life, beauty and joy, to God, who is all these.

“And then,” he heaved a deep sigh, “we made a great bonfire. The wood was dry. There was not a breath of air. The flames rose straight up—up—up—till they reached the stars. We were in touch with Heaven.”

“And then?” Jeanne breathed.

“As the flames touched the stars, someone in a boat coming down the bay started music. What kind? I do not recall. Someone was playing Kreisler’s ‘Old Refrain.’ Ah,” he breathed, “it was the final touch.

“Late that night,” his voice dropped, “I threw myself on my cot and said, ‘Why should I live longer? This is life’s great moment!’

“And yet,” his voice rose again, “there is more of life—much more. And the way leads up, always upward toward the stars.

“It is late. I must be going.” Springing to his feet, the old man vanished into the night.

“What a strangely glorious old man!” Jeanne mused, as Dave came up. “And, oh!” she cried, “he was going to tell me the legend of Monument Rock!”

“He is Doctor Emery,” said Dave. “They call him ‘Dean of the Island.’ Perhaps he will tell you that story tomorrow.”

“Perhaps,” Jeanne answered.

“And yet,” she thought to herself, “it could not be half so charming as it would have been, told here beneath the stars!”

As Jeanne crept softly to her berth in Florence’s stateroom, Plumdum gave a low “yip—yip.” He was silenced at once, but Florence, wakened from her dreams, did not fall asleep for some time.

As she listened to the sounds of the night, the low tweet-tweet of the night bird, the swish-swish of a moose swimming the bay and the distant howl of a bush wolf, her mind was crowded with thoughts that for the moment seemed not connected at all.

There were the gray-haired old man and his granddaughter whom they had rescued from Greenstone Ridge. Who was he? And would they meet again? There was the big man whose speedboat had failed. Would he try again? Would their license be renewed, or would this man put an end to their work as passenger carriers? And the fires? Were they under control? Dared she hope this? She dared not hope. Why had the voice in the night said these fires had been set?

“Why would they?” she whispered. “How could they?”

Suddenly, as if in answer to her whisper, a voice broke the silence of the night. “Ya. Dese fires dey iss bein’ set. Dey iss—no doubt about dat. But who is setting dem? Dat’s de question.”

“The same voice,” Florence almost said aloud. Springing from her berth barefooted, in pajamas, she dashed out onto the deck to send the gleam of her flashlight far and wide.

“There is no one on the water,” she whispered. Shuddering, she crept back beneath the blankets.

A moment later she heard footsteps on deck. At first she thought it must be the mysterious man. As she listened, however, she recognized Dave’s substantial tread.

“Florence,” he spoke through the latticed window, “we’ve been going it rather strong of late. Guess we’ll take a half-day off. If you and Jeanne have anything to do, you might go at it in the morning. We won’t leave here before noon.”

“Good!” she exclaimed, “we’ll go on some sort of a hike. I’m aching for a chance to stretch my legs. They get all cramped up here on deck.”

CHAPTER VIII

MYSTERIOUS YOUTH

Early next day, Florence and Jeanne rowed across the bay to a small dock marked, "Monument Rock Trail."

After tying up their boat they took up the trail that, now winding beneath sweet smelling cedar and balsam, and now passing over a swamp spanned by shaky logs, at last brought them to the foot of a ridge. Here they started climbing toward the crest.

Some half-way up they made an abrupt turn, to find themselves facing a mass of towering rock that, like the tall chimney of some burned building, rose to the very tree tops.

"Monument Rock," Jeanne whispered. Something of that spell cast over her by the "Dean of the Island" recurred now. "It's like a headless man, that rock," she said in awed voice. "A man with hands folded across his knees."

"That's just like the legend!" Florence exclaimed.

"Oh, do you know it?" Jeanne was pleased.

"It goes like this," Florence began. "In the early days Indians seldom came to live here. It was, they said, the home of all island gods. If men came here to live they would meet with disaster."

"Did any of them ever try it?" Jeanne asked.

"Yes," Florence smiled and nodded. "This one! 'Sitting Cloud' they called him. He's still sitting, you see."

"Sitting Cloud," Jeanne said in a small voice.

“Yes. You see, like lots of other people, he didn’t believe in gods, so he came here to live. The hunting was good. There were caribou, lynx and beaver in those days. He traded lumps of copper to others of his tribe and got on very well indeed.”

“And then?” Jeanne breathed.

“Then he began to believe in the gods. Sometimes, in a night of fog, he thought he saw them creeping upon him. So he took to hiding in a small cave that opened out right at this place.”

“And then?” Jeanne repeated.

“Then he hunted very little. He did not crack away rock to get copper. Indians who came to visit the island found him shuddering in his cave. You see, Jeanne,” Florence said soberly, “that’s what comes of believing in island gods, fairies, gnomes, and all such.”

“Or, in not believing.” Jeanne was quite serious. “Perhaps the island was *not* meant to be lived upon,” she went on. “Perhaps it will all be burned over. Then no one can live here.”

“Oh, but no!” She sprang to her feet. “It is so beautiful! It is always so cool! The air is so delightful! It must not be destroyed! It truly must not be!”

“But this Indian, Sitting Cloud?” Her voice changed. “What happened?”

Florence looked toward the great rock towering to the sky. “Just what you see. Sitting Cloud was a giant. Perhaps he had grown since coming to the island. Anyway, so the story goes, one spring his friends came to look for him and all they found was this rock. Even his cave was gone. The gods had turned him to stone.”

“The gods had turned him to stone.” Jeanne whispered.

“Perhaps,” said Florence.

“I am sure it was so!” Jeanne declared. “But come!” She seized Florence by the hand. “Let us go to the very top.”

Once again they took the upward trail. They came at last to the crest of the ridge. There, standing on a platform of rock known as "Lookout Louise," they stood in silence, while their eyes took in the glorious view.

It was a clear day. At their feet lay Duncan's Bay. On the little camping spot at its entrance, more than once in the days that had gone they had pitched their tent.

"Happy days," Jeanne whispered.

If Florence heard, she made no reply. She was looking away toward the Canadian shores where Sleeping Giant, Pie Island, and Thunder Bay seemed to call to her.

At that Jeanne broke in with three magic words: "The Phantom Fisherman."

"Oh, no!" Florence exclaimed. "You only see him in a fog." The fact is, the big girl scarcely believed in this phantom at all.

"See for yourself!" Seizing her arm, Jeanne pointed away over the shimmering water to a spot well beyond the last jagged end of the island.

"There!" she exclaimed, "there he is!"

"Sure enough. Let's have a look." Florence dragged a pair of heavy field glasses to her eyes.

"Seems real enough," she murmured. "White boat with a red gunwale, sort of short and chubby. I'd know that boat anywhere. What a powerful motor he must have! How he does dart about!"

"If we were there he would vanish," Jeanne insisted.

"Jeanne, you're a dreamer." Florence let the glasses drop to her side. "But then, what is one to expect from a gypsy, you—"

At that instant a cry escaped her lips. "Look! Only look, Jeanne!" She had turned half-about. "Smoke everywhere! The whole island is on fire!"

This seemed indeed true. To judge distances was difficult but it looked as though the nearest fire must not be more than ten miles away. Beyond that the whole

island was hidden by smoke.

Even as Jeanne looked, Florence exclaimed again, "Look!"

Once again, dragging the heavy fieldglasses to her eyes, she studied a mass of rocks that at some distance rose above the treetops.

"A man," she murmured, "A man in a bright red sweater. Must be five miles away, where no one lives."

The man had been leaping from rock to rock. Now he paused to turn and look away. Did Florence see a fresh column of smoke rise from the evergreen forest? She thought so. She could not be sure.

"He's young," she thought. "Perhaps only a boy. Not even a middle-aged person could go over the rocks like that. Can he be a firebug? Are these fires being set by him?"

To these questions there could be no answer for the present. One thing was certain. If she saw him again close by and he wore that sweater, she would know him, for surely there was but one such flash of red on the island.

Two hours later the girls were having lunch with Edith Mateland, the wife of one of the fishermen. She was a small person, and Florence thought rather frail for such a life.

"Edith," Florence said, "do people ever set forest fires?"

"Oh, yes. Many times!" was the startling reply.

"But why?"

"Perhaps they do not like the people who own the timber."

"Revenge?"

"Yes. And perhaps they just want work."

"Work?" Florence stared.

"Oh, yes," Edith explained. "These days there are many who have no work. If

there is a very terrible fire men will be hired to fight it. Thousands of men.”

“Oh! but these wouldn’t do that!”

“It has been done many times.” There was a ring of truth in Edith’s voice. She was of the North. She knew.

Florence thought of the hundreds of men being brought to the island to fight this fire. One thing was certain. If there was a firebug on this island he must be caught. She would ask questions of people here and there about the mysterious youth in the crimson sweater. She would search far and wide for him. If he seemed to avoid her she would hunt him down. He should not escape. So, fired by a new resolution, she rowed back to the *Wanderer*.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEFENSE OF CHIPPEWA

She had barely reached the *Wanderer* when a messenger, having raced over the two-mile trail from Rock Harbor Lodge, appeared on the shore. Quite out of breath, and greatly excited, he shouted across the narrow stretch of water,

“Hey, there! Chippewa Harbor is burning!”

“What?” Florence was startled. “How do you know?”

“Got a short wave message from Ve and Vi, whoever they are.”

“Ve and Vi,” Florence said, “they are the fisherman’s daughters. They have a short wave outfit for winter use. I shouldn’t wonder,” she hesitated. Then she shouted across to the messenger, “Who’s there?”

“At Chippewa? Only the fishermen and a troop of boys.”

“Boys? What boys?”

“Troop No. 18.”

“Eight-eighteen?” The big girl’s hopes fell. She knew those boys. City bred, they knew nothing of fire fighting. Two boys, Mike and Tony—the worst of the lot—she suspected, were their leaders. What was to be expected from them?

“Go back and get a message to them. Tell them we’re coming!” she called.

“But what’s the good?” Dave demurred, as Ruth ordered the deck cleared for action. “If the place is burning what can be done?”

“You know as well as I,” Florence replied rather sharply, “that reports on this

island are always exaggerated. The least we can do is to go over there and take the folks off. Think of losing everything,” she said in a sober tone, “Home, furnishings, everything—the work of a lifetime.”

Soon they were skirting the rocky shores, headed for Chippewa, sixteen miles away. Sitting on the deck, Florence closed her eyes, and tried to picture in her mind the snug little harbor with its tiny huts, its toy-like log cabin store and its little group of fishing folk. Had she seen it all for the last time? It would seem so, for as her eyes opened she saw a long column of yellow smoke trailing out over the lake. As they rounded a point some two miles from the harbor, her anxiety increased. So dense was the smoke that it did not seem that one building could be left standing.

Imagine her surprise and joy when upon rounding the final jutting of rock she beheld Chippewa Harbor just as she had seen it last!

“Doomed, for all that,” Dave said soberly. “Look at that line of fire not a half-mile off and coming this way!

“For once,” he spoke slowly, “the *Wanderer* is going to run.”

“Oh! No! Not yet!” Florence remonstrated.

“Not yet, but soon,” was the reply. “When we touch the dock you tell those folks to get everything that’s portable on the deck of this boat without delay.”

“But will they do it?” All too well the girl knew the stubborn determination of these Scandinavian people.

To her surprise she found the fisher-folk ready to comply. They had seen enough, were ready to admit themselves beaten. Even the troop of city boys, who knew nothing of fire fighting, joined in the rescue work. In no time at all the cottages, fishhouse and store were stripped.

“What about these?” a boy asked, pointing to several large boxes.

“Government property,” Florence decided. “They stay.”

“When do we go aboard?” Mike, leader of the boys’ troop, asked.

“You don’t go!” Florence gave him a strange smile. “You, too, are government property. Oh, you won’t burn,” she added, as she saw the sullen look on the boy’s face deepen. “All you have to do is run over the ridge, climb down fifty feet, and find a good place to rest. The fire will never touch you. Besides—” She did not finish.

“All right. Swing off. I’m staying.” There was a bluntness about her tone, as for the first time she gave Dave an order.

“But why? You can’t—” Dave did not finish. She shot him a look. He had seen that look on her face before.

“Cast off the line,” he said. Shuffling to the post, the boy called Tony lifted the line and gave it a fling.

“Well?” Tony growled, giving Florence a hard look. “So you’re stayin’?”

Florence did not answer, for at that moment robust Katie appeared at the ship’s rail. One look at Florence and, boy-like, she vaulted the rail, sailed over three feet of water, and landed with a thud on the dock.

In sudden consternation, Florence saw that Jeanne, too, was preparing to try the leap to shore. By this time the distance was too great. She would fall into the water and might be injured by the boat’s propeller.

“No! Jeanne!” she screamed, “Don’t jump. Stay on the boat. They may need you.”

Laughingly Jeanne held up her hands in sign of surrender then disappeared down the hatchway.

“So you’re stayin’, too?” said the boy called Mike turning to Katie.

“You bet I’m stayin’,” said Katie. “Maybe we can lick that fire even if a whole army can’t.”

“Aw, now don’t you get excited,” said Mike, with a leering grin. “It takes men to fight a fire.”

“What’s in those boxes?” Florence demanded, ignoring their banter.

“We don’t know exactly,” said Tony. “Mebby they might be pumps.”

“Pumps?” The girl’s eyes widened. “Why don’t you open them up and see?”

“Captain’s gone,” said Mike. “Left yesterday. We can’t—”

“You can’t do a thing until he comes back!” There was biting sarcasm in Florence’s voice. “Not if the whole island burned!”

“That’s what we want,” Tony jeered. “Exactly it. When it’s all burned we can go back to the mainland.

“Lookit,” he waxed fairly eloquent, “What sort a place is this? Y’ can’t crank up the flivver on Saturday night and go to town ’cause there ain’t no flivver. An’ y’ can’t go see the girls and get a glass a beer ’cause there ain’t no gals and there ain’t no beer.”

“Too bad!” said Florence, reaching for an ax that was leaning against the dock house, and giving one of the six boxes a sharp crack.

“Y’ can’t do that!” Tony exclaimed. “Government property.”

“Can’t I?” She swung her ax again, knocking off a board. Crack—crack—crack. The box broke away, revealing a neat contraption.

“It is a pump!” The girl’s eyes shone. “Any of you know how to run it?”

No answer. Her eyes wandered to the nearby ridge. A giant spruce, ignited from below, blazed clear to the sky in one terrifying whash. Seizing the remains of the box, she cast them into the bay.

“Looks like an outboard motor,” she murmured. “Shouldn’t wonder if it was made like one.”

“Yes! A rope to start it!” exclaimed Katie, grabbing a short rope with a wooden handle attached. “I’ll try it!”

“You’ll get the devil for that!” Mike threatened. “Can’t fool with government property.”

“You can’t and you don’t want to!” Florence flared up. She was uncoiling a forty-foot hose. “You’d rather let the island burn. It might be a playground for thousands. Tired people could rest here.”

“Yeah, rest!” Mike sneered, “Who’d want to rest? Go places! See things! That’s me!”

“You’ve eaten Mrs. Carlson’s doughnuts and slept in her cabins when it was raining, and now,” Florence threw him a look of scorn.

“You’re too fresh!” With a threatening gesture Tony moved closer along the edge of the rock.

To all this Katie gave no heed. She had discovered a small tank on the pump. This she had filled with gasoline. Now she was fitting the knot of the short rope into its place. If this pump worked like an outboard motor she could start it. And then—

Florence was thinking all this when with a start, her mind was brought back to Mike.

“Think y’re smart, don’t yer?” There was a dangerous glint in his eye. He took a step toward her—another, and another. “Think I’m a guttersnipe, don’t y’—a tough city guy? Well, that’s what I am. I—I’ll show y’.” He took one more step.

“No!” Florence tried in vain to steady her wildly beating-heart. “No! That’s not what I think at all. I don’t care where you came from nor what you’ve been. I only know what you are now. What you’re doing. Lying down on your job—leading all these boys the wrong way. You’re ungrateful—you—”

“Think yer smart,” Mike stepped closer.

“Don’t do that, Miss,” a wavering voice came from the line. It was the smallest, most timid boy of the lot who spoke. And yet—he had courage.

Swallowing hard, the girl tried to speak. Words would not come. Mike’s fists were clenched hard as he moved one step nearer. He was closely followed by Tony.

“Don’t let him, Miss,” came in that same wavering voice.

And then the thing happened. Three times, all unknown to Florence, the powerful Katie had pulled the rope that turned the wheel of the strange pump that looked like an outboard motor. All that time Florence had held the hose in her hand. Once again Katie gave the rope a vicious jerk. And then! Was it like an outboard motor? Like ten outboard motors all in one the thing thundered—the hose in Florence’s hand writhed and twisted like a snake. It swung half around her neck, tripped a boy passing down the line, stiffened like a bent and twisted gas pipe, then shot forth a stream that would have gone forty feet if it had not encountered an obstacle. That obstacle was Mike’s broad chest!

Thrown off his balance by that irresistible force, with the swiftness of light, Mike spun half-way round, rose in air, then went plunging into space. When space rejected him, the glad, cold waters of the harbor opened their arms to receive him!

Startled, thrown into sudden consternation by this turn of events, Florence, without intending it at all, swung the hose about and the stream sent Tony plunging after his pal.

Then, like some creature that has done its work swiftly and well, the pump coughed twice, and lapsed into silence. Above this silence there rose a low laugh. It ran all down the line of boys and all the way back again.

Taking advantage of the situation, Florence exclaimed, “Boys, we have pumps. You all have homes. If they were in danger, you’d save them if you could. You’ve got to help save this home now! Get those boxes open. Quick. Fill the tanks. Turn ’em over. If half the pumps work, we’ll win!”

Catching the spirit of the moment thirty boys leaped into action. In the shortest imaginable time five pumps were coughing and sneezing like five bull moose come up for air.

“This,” Florence thought, with a sudden touch of despair, “is all right. But how shall we reach the fire?” Her eyes fell upon a dozen gasoline barrels piled neatly by the dock house.

“Quick!” she exclaimed. “Cut two holes in the top of each barrel. Then roll four up the ridge, each about forty feet from the next one.”

Though they did not understand why, the boys followed her directions. When

this was done, she said, “Now! Two of you to a pump. Take them up to the barrels!”

“Bu-but, Miss, we don’t understand,” said the small, timid boy.

“There’s little time for explaining,” Florence snapped. “But this is the idea, each pump will throw water thirty or forty feet.”

“Yea, yea,” they agreed, “but it’s a hundred and fifty to the top of that first ridge.”

“That’s just it,” the girl explained. “The first pump will force the water up to the first barrel. Then we will put the short hose of the second pump in that barrel and draw the water out. That second pump will carry the water another thirty feet to the second barrel.”

“And so on and on to the top,” someone exclaimed. “It’s a grand idea. Think of a girl workin’ that out all by herself! Come on. Let’s get goin’.” And they did.

It was with a feeling of deep satisfaction that Florence saw this first task well begun. This first ridge, with its sparse growth of fir and balsam, could be well soaked down before the fire arrived. The battle was not won, but a good beginning had been made and Florence, as she studied the youthful faces about her, knew that her little army would stick to the last.

“There are chickens on board,” she said so they could all hear. “Twelve large, fat chickens in the boat’s refrigerator. They were meant for a Lodge. We’ll roast them all over the coals of this fire when the battle is won.” A low, hoarse cheer greeted these remarks. Then, at a word, five sturdy young pumps, each with the power of ten outboard motors, began passing water from barrel to barrel until it shot forth in a broad stream.

Fired with new hope, boys not needed at the pumps seized axes and began slashing at the taller trees and dragging them away. When at last the fire, fanned by a fresh breeze, came sweeping down the highest ridge into the narrow run, then started climbing the “last desperate hope,” that lower ridge, a thin line of grim-faced, determined boys met it half-way. Such was the influence of one girl who refused to give up!

With all the pumps manned by the lightweight boys, the powerful Katie and

Florence seized axes and rushed down to add their bit. It was then that a flaming spruce tree, toppling to a fall, pinned a smoke-blackened boy beneath its branches.

“Katie! Quick!” Florence screamed. “He’ll be burned to death!”

With power born of desperation, the girls wrenched away flaming branches, then dragged the boy clear. His shirt was on fire. Florence tore the garment from him and stamped it into the damp moss. Then half dragging, half carrying the injured lad, she removed him to safety.

It was only after the danger was over that she recognized the youth she had saved. She truly did receive a shock!

“Mike! It’s you!” she exclaimed.

“Who’d y’ think it was goin’ to be?” growled Mike.

“But Mike! You helping to fight the fire?”

“I wasn’t helpin’,” Mike lied. “I was just dryin’ out me clothes.”

“Yes?” Florence turned over his right hand. It was still red from the work it had done. There were two fresh blisters there. “Yes,” she said, speaking with difficulty, “you—you were drying your clothes!”

For a moment there was silence, save for the roar and crackle of the fire blazing away where it could do no harm. As the girl watched the flames dart high, only to fall back against water-soaked trees, she knew she was safe in snatching a few moments of rest. The victory was won. The little fishery, the tiny cabins, the humble home of her friends—all were safe. The fire would creep along the ridge until it came to barren rocks and the waters of Superior. There it would flash and sputter its life away. There might be other fires on the island. There were. She caught the light of them in the distance. But Chippewa Harbor was safe!

“It wasn’t fer you that I done it!” Mike protested.

“Then why?” she demanded.

“Think yer smart, don’t y’?” was Mike’s only reply.

The truth was, Florence had unlocked the only door to Mike's heart. With the aid of that sputtering pump, she had licked him good and plenty. And the law of physical force was the only law Mike knew anything about.

"Mike," said Florence after a time, "what do you know about these fires being set?"

"Not a thing," said Mike. "Say! You don't think—"

"No! No!" She stopped him. "I don't think anything like that. But I must find out, right away. Here, shake on it." Her good, stout, capable hand gripped Mike's blisters, but Mike never flinched.

CHAPTER X

RIDING THE STORM

True to their promise, when the *Wanderer* returned, Florence and Katie prepared a grand feast of roast chicken, hot biscuits and coffee for the weary young firefighters. None enjoyed this more than did Mike and Tony.

“When the next war comes,” Tony laughed, “you join up as Captain and we’ll be your privates!” Coming from Tony this was high praise.

“One thing sure,” Dave said, after the feast was over, “if you ever again need help from those boys you’ll get it without a murmur.”

“Chickens come high!” was Florence’s strange reply. “But I guess it’s worth it.”

Yes, chicken did come high. All those dressed birds must be replaced, and the little company’s purse was very flat. There was a worried note in Dave’s voice as he said, “Tomorrow we must return to the mainland for fuel oil. I wonder if we get it? The last bill isn’t paid yet!”

That worry was still with them as, after unloading the fishermen’s goods, they headed away across the glassy waters of Superior. But when Father Superior is in a happy mood, who can worry? “Never,” Florence thought, “was the water so smooth or the sky so blue.”

With Indian John at the wheel and Katie’s galley sending out delicious odors, the three of them, Dave, Florence and Jeanne, sat on deck looking dreamily off across the water.

“There is a phantom fisherman off the end of Edward’s Island,” Jeanne murmured, half talking to herself.

“A fisherman, but no phantom,” Dave insisted.

“It is our privilege in this life,” said Jeanne, “to have what we want, provided we tread on no one’s toes. I want a phantom fisherman, so I shall have one. You want a real fisherman. You may have him, too. Neither of us wishes any fish, so what does it matter?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Dave agreed.

“One thing is important,” Florence insisted. “Are those fires on the island being set?”

“No,” said Dave.

“But I’ve been told they were,” insisted his cousin. “Twice I’ve heard it.”

“Who told you?”

“I—I don’t know. That’s the queer part.” She went on to tell of the strange voice.

“Probably some ignorant fisherman talking nonsense,” was Dave’s verdict. “They cling to these crags trying to eke out a living until they get a little cracked in the head.”

To this, Florence would not agree. She had heard the voice. She had seen the mysterious youth and was sure she would see him again.

“Questions that interest me more are—shall we be allowed to continue carrying passengers?” said Dave, “and can we get more fuel oil on credit? Upon these answers depends our future.”

“And perhaps the future of the island,” Florence added soberly.

“Yes, even that,” Dave admitted.

“Well,” Dave laughed as, late that day, his boat tied up at Houghton, he slowly paced the dock, “we won’t have to worry about the future for a day or two. This nor’wester will keep us in port, come what will.” Just as they entered the canal, ten miles from Houghton, a wild storm had come booming in.

“Couldn’t we make a trip if we had to?” Florence asked.

“Well, if we had to, I suppose we could.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that,” a brusque voice interrupted.

“Why?” Dave stared. He found himself looking into the keen, gray eyes of the elderly man whom with his granddaughter, they had rescued some days before from Greenstone Ridge on Isle Royale.

“They are having a hard time on the island,” the man explained. “Chips wants more pumps and hose. There are pumps here—twenty of them—and ten thousand feet of hose. I’d like—”

“But I don’t see—” Dave broke in.

“You don’t see how that affects me,” the man laughed. “I happen to be an assistant national park commissioner; so this is my job. I am Colonel Colby.”

“Oh-o,” Dave breathed, “and you want us to make a trip to Isle Royale?”

“It is imperative. The pumps must go. The *Iroquois* is in port, but she is old and clumsy. She’d not be safe, but your boat—”

“She’d do all right, but—” Dave hesitated, “our passenger license expires tonight.”

“Passenger license!” The old man’s voice rose. “Who said anything about passengers? Of course,” he added, “I shall go with you, but—I,” he hesitated. “Well, you may ship me as freight,” he laughed heartily. “Anyway, I represent the Government.”

“All right. Bring on your pumps. We’ll run down for fresh fuel. Be back here in half an hour,” was the young skipper’s reply.

“One thing more,” he hesitated, “I hate to tell you this. You may think we’re whining, but I doubt if our credit for fuel is good.”

“I’ll attend to that also,” the colonel replied without a second’s hesitation.

“O.K. We’ll be with you in an hour.”

“That’s the talk!” The colonel gripped Dave’s hand for an instant, then was away.

When two hours later the *Wanderer* nosed her way out of the smooth water of the canal into the surging seas that swept Lake Superior, Dave caught his breath. Had he, for once, overestimated the cruising power of his stout little craft? Only time would tell. The *Wanderer* appeared to glory in its battle with the waters. Climbing one monstrous wave, it glided down the breaker’s slope, only to start climbing again. Great splashes of white spray were dashed against the pilothouse window. The deck was all awash; yet the *Wanderer*’s motors throbbed sweetly as the gallant boat forged its way ahead.

Night came. The storm increased. The black waves of night seemed more terrible than those of the day. Struggling into her little galley, Katie braced herself stiff-legged against a screwed-down table while she prepared sandwiches for the weary men.

Below deck, one of the twenty pumps, breaking its moorings, threatened to smash the others into bits. Only after many bumps and bruises was Rufus able to restore it to its proper place.

“Wi-wild night,” Dave’s words were blown down his throat as he reached gratefully for his sandwich.

“Tho-thought I saw a light,” Florence screamed.

“Sure! Sure! There it is!” Dave shouted. “Must be Passage Island. And boy, oh, boy! If it is, we’re right on our course!”

They were on their course. They had Indian John to thank for that. One peril still lay before them—the narrow, rocky entrance of Rock Harbor. Could they make it? There was a prayer in every heart as they neared the dark bulks looming out of the night.

“Little islands that guard the channel,” Dave explained, playing his ship’s light upon them. “They’re all solid rock. And you don’t see all of them. Some are just under the water. One touch on a night like this, and—

“There! There’s the gap!” he exclaimed excitedly. “It’s straight ahead of us, one marker to the right and one to the left. Thank God, the waves are striking the

island squarely! We'll ride them like a bucking broncho.

"Now!" he breathed, as a huge breaker bore them forward.

"Now!" Florence exclaimed, as a second, larger than the first, broke with a hiss under the *Wanderer's* prow.

"And now!" shouted the gray-haired colonel, as the stout little craft glided off the last wave to the calm of Rock Harbor. "That—that was marvelous!" He gripped Florence and Dave by the hands. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world. And now," he added quietly, "now for Chips. He'll be waiting."

Chips was waiting, and it was the privilege of the young navigators to witness his marvelous efficiency. With the smoothness of clockwork, his men marched aboard the boat, thrust rope-lashed poles beneath each pump, then disappeared into the night.

"That'll lick the fire," Chips murmured. "Besides, the wind's shifting, and there's the smell of rain in the air."

"There are good beds down at the lodge at the other end of the harbor," the gray-haired colonel turned to the *Wanderer's* crew. "You all need some real rest. It's smooth going all the way. What do you say we go down and tie up there for twenty-four hours?"

"That," exclaimed Florence, "would be keen!"

"And so say we all," Dave echoed.

"O.K.," he exclaimed, "John, you know this channel. Suppose you take the wheel."

"Aye, aye, sir!" Indian John saluted.

"And now, how about a few words over a cup of coffee?" suggested the colonel.

It was a very friendly chat they had with the colonel, as, with the light of the moon streaming in at their window, they sat contentedly listening to the distant roar of dashing waves.

Without seeming to pry into their affairs, the gray-haired man found out just how matters stood with them.

“You’ve been doing a grand work,” he rumbled at last. “In a most splendid spirit. Before I left I told Addison, the fuel man you know, to supply all your needs. I shall stand back of you in this.”

“Oh, that—that’s grand!” Florence choked a little.

“I don’t know how we can thank you, sir!” Dave said huskily.

“You don’t need to. This is perhaps but the beginning. I hope we have much better things in store for you.”

“The little we have done has been for the good of the kindly people of the island,” said Florence.

“And for the good of all,” added the colonel. “You must not forget that Isle Royale is to be a national park. That it is to belong to all the people of America. When you save a square mile of that virgin beauty you are saving it for all the American people.

“By the way,” he said after a moment’s silence, “That man with the speed boat doesn’t like you very well, does he? I suppose you know the reason why.”

“No,” was Florence’s quick reply, “we have wondered about him ever since we brought him to the island and he seemed ready to put us in chains because we insisted on helping to save the camp at Siskowit.”

“He’s threatened to have our license revoked,” Dave put in. “It all seems a bit fantastic. We really never did anything to him.”

“No, probably not,” the colonel agreed. “But your grandfather did and it is his boat you are operating, I am told.”

“Grandfather! Grandfather?” they exclaimed. “He never wronged anyone.”

“He never did,” the colonel agreed, “but he got in bad by doing right. This man who has chosen you for an enemy was once running a boat contrary to regulations, carrying many more passengers than the law allows, endangering

people's lives. The authorities asked your grandfather about it. Being the sort of man who hates lies, he told the truth."

"Good for Granddad!" Florence exclaimed.

"Right," the gray-haired man agreed. "For all that, he made himself a lifetime enemy. But," he added, "you need not worry further about him. I shall see that he is properly taken care of.

"Look!" he exclaimed springing to the window, "we are at Snug Harbor—our night of storm is over. I shall arrange at once for your accommodations at the Lodge."

"We are to have a hot bath and sleep between clean, white sheets," Florence whispered to Jeanne. "How perfectly grand!"

Scarcely had their boat touched the dock when Katie began talking in her own tongue to a fisherman whose small boat was tied up to the dock.

"He says," she exclaimed eagerly, "that he is going to the camp at Siskowit where mine brother is. I do so wish to see him."

"Is he coming back?" Florence asked.

"Tomorrow night."

"Let her go," said Dave. "She'll catch up with us somewhere."

So the happy Katie went gliding away through the dawn with her new-found friend. She had dinner that day with her brother and his companions at camp. That night, fired with enthusiasm by the talk of the boys who had only words of praise for the *Wanderer* and her crew, she returned to Rock Harbor in plenty of time to take up her duties.

CHAPTER XI

ASHES IN THEIR HAIR

To our good pals, Florence and Jeanne, who had been so tossed about by the waves of old Superior in his worst mood, nothing could have been more delightful than the interlude that followed.

“Contrast!” Florence exclaimed, as, after a refreshing bath, she welcomed the clean coolness of linen sheets. “It is contrast that makes living such a joy. Half the night we tumble about in the dark, the other half we rest in the most perfect of summer lodges.”

“Yes,” Jeanne agreed. “Tomorrow we dream by an open fire. And next day—who knows?”

Who indeed!

They slept until ten next morning. Because of their service to the island all dining room rules were broken, and they were served with delicious French toast and coffee. After that, they retired to the broad lounge where they stretched themselves out in roomy chairs before a cheerful fire.

“How grand it would be just to live here as guests!” Jeanne whispered.

“And forget all about the fire,” Florence agreed. “But that would be impossible.”

And indeed it would. The fires were not forgotten by anyone. Only the hardiest of souls had remained on the island. At that moment, catching snatches of conversation from the guests lounging in the big room, the girls heard, “They say they’re being set; these fires.” It was a woman who spoke.

“See?” Florence whispered. “What have I been saying?”

“That’s nonsense,” a man’s voice rumbled. “The island is like tinder. Bits of birchbark are lighted by the flames. They break away and are carried miles.”

“Still on fire?” said another voice.

“Absolutely!” the man insisted. “There are ashes in your hair right now, and you weren’t out of doors a quarter-hour. Where did they come from? Many miles away. Yesterday I saw a black object floating down. I caught it. It was a leaf, charred black by the fire. It had floated in the air miles and miles.”

Apparently convinced, his companions said no more. But Florence was not satisfied. Had she not been told the fires were being set? And had she not seen the youth with the crimson sweater? Did some imp whisper, “Yes, and you are to see him again—very soon. No good will come of that, either.” Well, perhaps not. Who can say?

“There’s grand fishing here at the island,” said a man in high boots and red plaid shirt. “I row a heavy boat three hundred miles every summer, trolling for lake trout. It reduces my waistline two inches.”

“I am always going to row a heavy boat three hundred miles,” drawled a large, fat man, “next year!” Everyone laughed.

“Last year,” said the ardent fisherman, “I lost my metal lure. Wasn’t tied right. A fish carried it off, but he gave it back.”

“Gave it back? How come?” asked his fat friend.

“Seems he didn’t want it, so he hung it on a fisherman’s net and the fisherman gave it to me.”

“You expect us to believe that?”

“I’ve got the lure to prove it.”

“Jeanne,” Florence whispered, “I’m going fishing first chance I get. A fellow has a little fun coming to him.”

“Yes,” Jeanne admitted, “you have.”

So the long, lazy day passed. It was glorious to sit in the sun, to climb over the rocks, to loaf by the fire without a care.

When the next day dawned— Sh! That was to be quite another matter.

Their day of perfect peace was climaxed by a pleasant surprise just before sundown. The evening meal was over. They had settled themselves before the fire, when someone burst into the room with a low exclamation, “Moose! Over at the salt lick!”

This was a signal for a silent exit and a tiptoe march out around the stockade at the back of the lodge, across the tennis court, then into the brush to a spot where salt had been placed to lure the wild moose.

“A monster!” someone whispered, as they came in sight of the salt lick. And he was just that. With wide spreading antlers and bulging eyes, in that dim light he appeared like a very dangerous creature. Jeanne shuddered at the sight of him. And well she might.

“No cause to be afraid,” said the Commodore. “This is a game preserve. No one is allowed to shoot them. They are as tame as cattle.”

“Almost!” came from someone in the rear. Who had spoken? Later, when they tried, no one could recall.

The moose did seem tame enough. There was a camera enthusiast in the group. Slipping up close, he took time exposures. Then, growing bolder, he touched off a flash bulb. The moose looked up, glared about him, then once more began licking the salt.

“Perfect!” someone whispered.

“Almost!” came as a sort of echo.

And then peace ended. Something stirred at Jeanne’s feet. It was Plumdum. Jeanne gasped. She had left him curled up asleep by the fire. Somehow, he had got out. The dog scented the moose. The moose saw the dog. To a moose, a dog is a wolf. To a dog, moose spells danger.

Plumdum was courageous. Barking wildly, he leaped straight at the moose.

Lowering his head and letting out a terrifying bellow, the moose charged the dog.

“Plumdum! You’ll be killed!” Poor Jeanne shrieked.

The visitors vanished.

“Come on.” Florence seized Jeanne by the arm, “You can’t do anything about that!”

“He’ll be killed!” the little French girl screamed.

Slowly, as the moose came on, Florence led her companion back. It did seem as though Plumdum would be killed. Yet, quick as a flash, he avoided every toss of those massive antlers.

Then came a touch of comedy. A stout clothesline was stretched three times across the monster’s path. Heaving his antlers high for one more try at Plumdum, he brought them squarely into these lines. At once he was entangled. Florence laughed at his frantic efforts to break loose. But Jeanne, dashing forward, seized the small dog to carry him away.

She was not an instant too soon. The moose, having torn the line from its hooks, gave vent to one more bellow of rage, and was after them. Before them was a high board fence, and in the fence a swinging gate. Pushing her companion before her, Florence crowded through the gate. The moose, only a step behind them, thrust his nose into the opening just as the gate slammed shut. A chain, hung with two heavy rocks, held it tight. Florence added her weight to that of the stones by dropping on the chain, and Mr. Moose had his nose pinched in a manner he would not soon forget.

When at last he had freed himself, he went swiftly and silently away into the brush. The fight was over. Peace again reigned in Snug Harbor. Jeanne and Florence enjoyed one more night of repose. And tomorrow was another day.

CHAPTER XII

THE CRIMSON SPOT

The next morning Florence lay dreaming luxuriously in bed. Without knowing why, she thought of smiling Tim O'Hara and his Adventurers' Club of the air. On her last trip to the mainland she had found a letter from him.

"The radio program is going big," he wrote. "It's a grand spot, coast to coast. We are looking forward to your coming. As soon as the battle of Isle Royale is over, wire me, collect, and I'll get off a round trip ticket for you that every hour."

"To speak over the radio," she thought, as she thrilled at the prospect, "a chain broadcast, coast to coast! What would that be like?" She had not the slightest idea, but hers was the right to dream. And dream she did.

Jeanne, who had risen at dawn to watch the matchless sunrise from over the dark waters of Superior, suddenly burst into the room.

"Come, my dear!" she exclaimed. "It's slacks and hiking boots today!"

"What's happened?" Florence asked.

"There's to be a mountain climbing. It's Mt. Franklin, only five hundred feet high, but you can see the fire from there."

"It's worth doing, if we have no more serious business," Florence agreed.

"Oh, yes!" Jeanne exclaimed. "Your gray-haired friend is back. He says there's good news for you."

"Good news?" The big girl's heart leaped. She was in her clothes and out of doors before Jeanne could catch her breath.

“Come inside and have your morning coffee,” Colonel Colby invited, after greetings had been exchanged. “Dave has gone in. I have something to say to you both.”

He was tantalizingly slow in coming to the point, but after he had talked of moose, salmon, trout, Snug Harbor and big timber, and after the morning coffee was over, clearing his throat, he satisfied their curiosity.

“I have been in touch with my Department by short wave radio. We are obliged to revise our plans—” Pausing, he looked at his young companions, then went on, slowly,

“I truly hate doing this. I think it would be splendid training for your young souls if you were allowed to return home for a month or two hence with empty pockets, but fired by the realization that you have made a real contribution to the happiness of your fellow men, as you surely have.

“However,” he cleared his throat again, “there is your grandfather’s interest to be considered. He is a splendid man. I know him well. He can ill afford to lose.

“What’s still more important,” he paused for a space of seconds, “the truth is, we need your boat.”

“You do!”

“Absolutely.” The colonel leaned forward. “When men are to be moved by hundreds, a large craft like the *Iroquois* is best. But when we have won this major battle with the fire, which we hope to do in a few days—two weeks, at most—there will remain weeks of mopping up to be done. Men will be scattered here and there all over the island, putting out spot fires, cutting down charred trees, digging out burning peat bogs. They must have food and other supplies. Their officers must be moved from place to place. For such a task the *Wanderer*, that can turn around on its own shadow and can enter every little cove with safety, is just the craft.

“So-o,” he added, as his listeners waited in breathless suspense, “in the name of our Government I am going to requisition your boat for perhaps eight weeks. The pay shall be four hundred and twenty-five dollars per week, and you shall be supplied fuel and oil without cost.”

“But—”

“The matter has been gone into quite carefully,” the colonel held up a hand for silence. “We have decided that this will be a fair settlement. And you,” he threw back his head and laughed, “you can’t do a thing about it!”

“Do anything about it!” Dave enthused. “Four hundred and twenty-five a week, for two months. We’ll pay off the debt!”

Florence let out a low “Hurray! Boy! That sure is a break for us!”

“No,” the colonel counseled. “Don’t say that. It is not a matter of luck. The best things of life do not come by chance. You have been tried and have proven yourselves worthy of trust. Having discovered an opportunity to do a real service, you did it without thought of reward. Time after time in my long life, I have seen men who placed service before reward led by their very attitude into higher things.

“Well, that’s settled then.” He rose from his chair. “I doubt if we shall need the services of the *Wanderer* today. At least you may stand by here for further orders.”

“Thank you, sir.” Dave rose to salute in a soldierly fashion.

Florence’s head was fairly bursting. What wonderful good fortune! They were to carry on this fight, to do all the good possible, to help save the island and its people. “And be paid for it!” she whispered. “How grand!”

It is little wonder that she should be ready for a picnic. When Dave assured her that he, with the help of Katie and Ruben, could take care of any emergency that might arise, she and Jeanne joined the hikers, who, after a long walk, were to view the fire from the peak of Mt. Franklin.

Recalling her experience on that other occasion when she climbed the ridge, she slung the heavy field glasses over her shoulder.

“May see a moose,” she laughed. “Or perhaps a bear!”

“There are no bears on the island,” someone corrected.

“All right,” she laughed, “then I’ll look for some other creature.” She knew what. Nor was she to be disappointed.

Two hours later they were standing on the crest of the ridge, looking down the length of the island, where great clouds of smoke were rising and drifting away across the water. The nearest fire, Florence estimated, could not now be three miles from the spot where they now stood.

“If a strong wind came up—blowing this way—” She shuddered as she spoke.

“Yes,” said Jeanne, “that would be tragic!”

And so it would be. Back of them were woods and water, picturesque cottages and happy people. Before them, fire.

“Look, Jeanne!” With trembling hands Florence passed the field glasses to her companion. “There on the rocks close to that dark cluster of spruce trees, right between three fires—do you see anything there?”

“Yes.” Jeanne spoke very slowly. “There is a spot—a crimson spot. It moves. It is a man.”

“Or perhaps a boy,” said Florence. “Listen, Jeanne,” the big girl’s lips were a straight line, “I am going to that spot!”

“Oh, no!” Jeanne protested.

“Yes.” Florence was serious. “If that is the firebug, I shall get him.”

“See that trail?” She pointed to a narrow break in the forest. “It leads to the head of the harbor. I’m going down that on the run. If you wish you may follow me to the camp and the dock at the end of the trail.”

“I shall follow,” said Jeanne.

“Wait for me there.”

Florence was away.

CHAPTER XIII AND MAY YOU COME BACK

As, a half hour later, Florence neared the entrance to a second trail leading to the flaming forest, she suddenly thought of the fire-fighter, who had been placed there to prevent fire-fans from rushing into danger, and her knees all but doubled under her.

“How am I ever to get past him?” she asked herself in sudden consternation.

How indeed? Well enough she knew what these hard-boiled fighters thought of girls who, for sentimental reasons or for the purpose of experiencing a thrill, tried to crowd past them.

“If I stop to argue I’m lost,” she told herself.

Then the experience of a friend in a great city came to her and she smiled. This friend had been hurrying to a train when a man sprang out before her and exclaimed,

“Give me your money! This is a stick-up!”

“I—I’ve got to catch a train,” her friend had panted as she went racing straight on.

“I’ll do something like that,” she concluded. And she did.

“Hey! Where y’ think yer goin’, sister?” the fire guard demanded as she ran up to him.

“I—I’ve got to get back there,” she puffed. “It—it’s awfully important.”

She was past him and had lost herself in the brush before he knew what had

happened.

“Well, that’s that,” she chuckled. “Now to find that boy.”

This, she discovered at once, was not going to be easy. There was little or no trail. She had hoped to find an even slope on which to travel. Instead there were ridges and narrow valleys or low, deep runs. She was obliged to pass around the deepest of these. In doing so she lost her sense of direction. The brush was thick. Wild raspberry bushes tore at her. Vines tripped her. She stepped on a great, fallen log. It caved in and sent her sprawling. Fallen trees blocked her path.

“I—I’ve got to get through,” she thought, fighting doggedly on.

To make matters worse the wind shifted, setting great masses of smoke bellowing down upon her. Choking and coughing, eyes blinded, she paused to consider.

“Am I going the right way?” she asked herself in some alarm. To this question she could form no answer.

The wind changed again. The smoke was less dense. She pushed on.

Fifteen minutes later, billows of smoke once more bore down upon her. And this time the air seemed hot to her flushed cheek.

“What a dunce I was,” she exclaimed. “I—”

She did not finish, for, at that second, the smoke appeared to rise straight in the air. And there, not a hundred yards away, was a wall of fire. Even as she watched, the flames, reaching the foot of a great spruce tree, raced to its very top with a great whoosh. A second tree went up like a rocket, then a third.

She did not wait for more. She turned and ran. Over rocks and fallen trees, through masses of thimbleberry bushes, through a low swampy spot that sank to her tread, she raced until, with staring eyes and wildly beating heart, she came squarely up against one more wall of fire.

All but exhausted, she sank down upon a great, hot rock to think. What had happened? The wind had shifted. This had brought the fire in from a new direction. Perhaps that boy in the crimson sweater had set fresh fires. Perhaps

she was completely surrounded.

“Trapped,” she thought with a shudder.

“But I must keep my head,” she told herself. “There should be a way out. There must be. There—there just has to be.”

Strangely enough at that very moment her good friend, Captain Frey, was talking about that very question. He was speaking to a dozen of his boys. Among them were Mike and Tony.

“Boys,” he was saying, “a girl dodged past the guard and went back there where the fire is burning its fiercest. What she wanted I don’t know, but from what the guard tells me I’d say it was this big girl, Florence. You all know her.”

“Yea—yea—yea,” they all agreed.

“I’ll say we do!” Mike muttered.

“She’s the realest thing on the island!” the Captain exclaimed. “If we all were like her there’d be no more fire. I don’t know her reason for going in there but it’s bound to have been a good one.

“Thing is,” his tone was sober. “Wind’s shifted since she went in. If she loses her way—”

“And she will,” Mike broke in. “I know dat place. It’s bad.”

“Some of you boys must go in and bring her out,” the captain challenged abruptly. “Who’s it going to be?”

“Me and Tony, eh, Tony?” Mike volunteered.

“Sure t’ing,” Tony agreed.

The captain looked at them squarely. “Seems to me I heard that she ducked you two,” he said.

“Fergit it,” said Mike. “We had it comin’. Anyway, that was a long time ago. Leave us go after her. We’ll bring her out, Cap’n. Honest, we will.”

“Sure we will,” Tony seconded.

There was a strange new light in the Captain’s eye and a huskiness in his voice as he said, “All right, boys. In you go! And may you come back.”

CHAPTER XIV

A DESPERATE VENTURE

Mike and Tony had been gone a half hour when Jeanne came up to the small dock next to the entrance to the trail. Plumdum was at her heels.

“Cap-Captain Frey!” she exclaimed as she met the fire fighter on the trail, “did my friend, Flor-Florence come this way?”

“I’m afraid she did.”

“Is she in danger?” Jeanne tried to read his face.

“I am afraid she is. However, two boys went in after her. They may find her.”

“But if they don’t?”

“It’s going to be bad.” He frowned. “The wind changed. She’s likely to be trapped.”

“Oh,” Jeanne stood first on one foot, then on the other. Whining low, Plumdum, sensing her troubles, brushed against her.

Of a sudden a bright idea took possession of the little French girl. “There’s a hydroplane tied up at the dock,” she exclaimed. “Where’s the pilot?”

“There are three of us that take a turn at it,” said the captain.

“Then—then,” she caught her breath. Jeanne had flown a great deal. She loved the air as a seaman loves the sea. “Why couldn’t we circle over them? We—we might find them a way out.”

“It’s an idea!” said the captain. “Come on!”

“What about Plumdum?” Jeanne asked.

“Take him along. We might want to throw him overboard just to let them know we’re interested,” the captain chuckled.

“No!” Jeanne was shocked.

“It’s an idea at that.” He was hurrying now. “Can he wriggle out of a harness?”

“Oh! Always!”

Jeanne was thinking, “What’s he got on his mind now?”

The captain said no more. A moment later opportunity for talk was gone, the motor was roaring. They were away.

Racing down the bay they rose in the air, circled over the tree tops, circled once again, then shot away above the smoke-whitened island.

Had it not been for the fear in Jeanne’s heart regarding the safety of her good pal, she would have enjoyed this to the full. Here they passed over the glorious blue of the bay and there the dark green of island forest. Here all was blotted out by billowing white clouds and there was dense black smoke, edged by flames that appeared to reach for them.

“How terrible to fall into a burning forest from the air,” she thought with a shudder.

Then she saw something that set her pulling at the pilot’s shoulder. “There!” she screamed. “There they are!” She pointed straight down.

Little room was left for doubt. In a field of dark green a white spot stood out plainly and beside it two dark ones. The white spot would be Florence in slacks and a white blouse, the other two Mike and Tony.

They circled low. Jeanne saw those below wave white handkerchiefs.

Once again the plane shot upward. Three times the pilot circled the spot. Three times Jeanne’s keen eyes sought for a possible way out and three times she failed. It seemed to her that her friends were completely encircled by flames, that

the wall of fire from the west was closing in and that nothing could save them. Involuntarily she pressed Plumdum to her breast.

Three minutes later the plane was at rest on the beautifully quiet bay.

“The situation is difficult but not hopeless.” The Captain spoke rapidly. “There is not a minute to lose. There is a break in the fire up the ridge toward the north. It’s hidden from them by smoke. They can’t see it. If we had some way to tell them.”

“Can we land?” Jeanne was eager.

“In a hydroplane on dry earth and rocks?” he stared at her.

“A parachute,” she volunteered. “I—I’ve baled out. Three times.”

“No parachute,” the captain groaned. “If we had one I wouldn’t let you risk it. You’d get hung in a tree and be roasted to a turn.

“But say!” he exclaimed. “There is a parachute of a sort.” He began digging into a leather pocket. “Here it is, a dog parachute. Belongs to my dog over at camp. I’ve dropped him a score of times. He likes it.

“And there’s your dog,” his voice picked up. “I—I’ll just draw a crude map, showing where the gap is, write a note and tie it to the dog’s collar. Then he’ll make a parachute flight. If they don’t see him, he’s sure to wriggle out of the harness. We’ll put it on rather loosely. After he’s free he’ll circle and find them. Sure to. Any dog will do that. And he knows your big girl friend, doesn’t he?”

“Plumdum?” Jeanne could scarcely speak.

“Yes, your dog.”

“Yes—yes. Oh, yes, he knows Florence.”

“Then is it a go?”

“Yes, I—guess— Yes. Sure it is!”

“Poor Plumdum!” Jeanne was thinking, and then, “Poor Florence.”

Ten minutes later, as the hydroplane once again left the water to soar wide and high, Jeanne sensed rather than felt that the wind was picking up.

“We’ll have to hurry,” she shrilled in the pilot’s ear.

The pilot nodded as he put on a sudden burst of speed.

CHAPTER XV

THE DOG'S PARACHUTE

By this time you are wondering what had happened to Florence. She had paused to consider her own plight. She had lost all trace of the trail, was surrounded by smoke and flames and knew of no certain way of escape. The only answer to such a problem was retreat.

But which way? Up the ridge perhaps. She resolved to try this. The wall of rock was all but perpendicular. At times she was obliged to find a toe hold in a crack between rocks, then to grasp the root of a tree that, like herself, clung precariously, then drag herself up. Always there was the danger of a fall. A broken leg might mean a terrible death by fire.

The girl was strong and steady of nerve. No cigaret smoking, no fasting to attain a perfect figure had sapped her strength. All this stood her in good stead at this moment. It saved her from possible accident. It could not, however, change the course of the fire. To her further consternation she discovered as, all but exhausted, she threw herself upon the crest, that the fire was on its way up the opposite slope to meet her.

“Oh! Oh-a!” she breathed in dismay. How the fire roared and crackled! Already great waves of heat were wafted up to her.

Turning wearily she began letting herself back down the slope.

“I must not allow myself to grow desperate,” she told herself. “I *must* not.”

Forcing herself to unusual caution she held her nerves steady and step by step made her way down.

One other way of escape seemed to present itself—a narrow, dry swamp ran between two ridges. It was filled with smoke but there were no flames. It might

still be open. Daring to hope, she went hurrying over its brush-entangled bed of leaves and moss. The smoke was stifling and all but blinding. At times she found herself fairly groping her way.

There came a time when it seemed she could no longer breathe. A peculiar brown smoke appeared to rise from the very ground. This, she discovered to her despair, was exactly what it was doing. At this point the ground was on fire. Isle Royale, in the beginning, was a barren rock. All its soil is of vegetable origin. Here in the narrow valley a form of peat lay some three feet thick. Dry as tinder it had ignited. To attempt to pass over it would be to find oneself floundering in masses of burning peat. This was unthinkable. Once again the way was blocked.

Wearily she turned back to retrace her steps to higher ground and clearer air. Scarcely had she reached her starting point when, to her great surprise, she heard her name called. A great wave of joy swept over her as she answered, "Here! Here I am!"

Call answered call until at last Mike and Tony burst into view.

"Oh! It—it's you," she faltered.

"Sure it's us," Mike agreed. "Who'd you t'ink? We may be tough, miss, but we know real coin when we see it. You come from right down our alley. Come on, we'll git y' out a' here."

"Not so fast," a voice might have whispered. The boys had been too intent on getting over the trail to note that a wall of fire was at that very moment fast closing the trail. They had retraced their steps only a matter of two hundred yards when they found themselves face to face with that wall of fire.

"All right fer you," Mike shouted defiance at the flames. "We'll find a way out. Never doubt that!"

It was not long before even Mike did doubt this. Florence had warned him of danger in two directions. All others seemed blocked.

This was the state of affairs when Jeanne and the captain flew over them for the first time. At sight of the plane Florence took courage. She was sure they would try to help. But how? They could not land. There was no lake in the fire-encircled area. What could they do? She was to know.

In the meantime, on a very high point of Greenstone Ridge, perhaps a mile away, there stood a solitary figure. He wore a crimson sweater and carried a high-powered glass at his side. Three times he lifted the glass to study the spot where Florence and the two boys stood. At last he turned and took three steps in their direction. Then he stopped. A sound had reached his ears, the drum of an airplane motor.

He did not go on, but, as the airplane circled toward him, dropped from sight behind some low-growing fir trees. Who was he? Why was he here? Did he know a safe way back to the spot where Florence and the boys stood? Who could answer these questions?

Florence and her companions, too, heard that motor. It was the plane's second trip. Their hopes rose. They might receive aid. But how?

Twice, as they stood watching, the plane circled. Then a spot of white appeared at the side of the plane. In the rear seat a slim figure stood erect. It was Jeanne. She was saying, "Poor Plumdum."

The spot of white detached itself from the plane. The girl sat down.

"A parachute!" Florence murmured hoarsely.

"It ain't big enough," said Mike.

"There's something dark—" Florence did not finish.

"Oh—ah! Gone into a cloud of smoke," Tony groaned.

"It—it's a message or something. I—I'll get it. I've got the direction. You stay right here," Florence was away.

Dashing through brush, over fallen trees and around giant boulders she had covered half the distance when to her vast astonishment she began hearing strange sounds.

"What can it be?" she asked herself. She stopped dead in her tracks.

What indeed? Now it was like the ki-yi of a badly frightened dog and now like the roar of a mad bull.

As she stood there the sounds grew louder until the whole air seemed filled with them. Then, to her utter consternation she saw poor little Plumdum racing toward her. And after him, tongue lolling, massive antlers tossing, came a giant bull moose.

For ten seconds, her whole body paralyzed with fear, she stood there motionless. Then her alert mind began to work. Full well she knew the hatred every moose bears for every creature of the dog and wolf family.

To stand there and gather the small dog in her arms would have been a gallant but fatal gesture. She would have been torn in pieces.

She did not pause but fled down the way she had come. Realizing that the moose was much faster than herself, she began dodging to the right here and the left there. The moose, she knew, had poor eyesight. She was putting low-growing spruce trees between herself and her pursuer. This gave her added time. Twice the moose, coming head on into the sturdy limbs of a tree, was obliged to back away before continuing the chase.

Plumdum had dodged off into the brush. Mike and Tony, hearing the roar of the moose had climbed trees. It was Florence and the moose for it. Or was it?

She had gained considerable distance, had raced past the spot she had left without seeing the boys in the trees and was hoping to elude her pursuer when catastrophe befell her. Her boot caught in a vine and sent her sprawling. Worst of all, she fell on a half rotten stump which knocked the breath out of her. In agony she tried to rise. It was impossible.

Tony was slim, agile as a cat, a typical Italian. His dark eyes had taken it all in. His trigger-like mind had formed a plan. The moose would pass beneath his tree. And then—

Something hit the moose squarely in the back. Something seized his antlers in a grip of steel. Thrown into sudden panic, he forgot Florence to go bolting down the slope toward the swamp where the ground was on fire.

Neither Mike nor Florence saw this last bit of wildwoods drama. They were astonished when Tony did not at once answer their call. But here was Plumdum whimpering at their feet. And there, safely tied to his collar was a precious message.

CHAPTER XVI

WHO RIDES A MOOSE

The small hydroplane was back at the dock. The captain had said, "We have done what we could. We can only hope for the best." A picture of woe, Jeanne sat on the narrow dock. In an effort to save a good pal she had sacrificed her beloved Plumdum. She did not regret the sacrifice if only it saved her friend. But would it?

At times she felt an all but overpowering desire to dash away over the trail in the vain hope of passing the fiery barrier. Twice she rose to carry out the mad plan. Twice she resumed her seat on the dock.

When she rose for the third time the captain said, "Come on. Hop in. We'll fly over and see what's happened."

They did fly. And they did see. Jeanne had marked the spot where Florence had stood. It was between three great rocks. Already the fire had come that far. Three times they circled. No trace of their lost comrades did they find. What had happened? Would they ever know? Jeanne sank back into her seat.

She did not remain so for long. Of a sudden she sat up to clutch the pilot and to scream in his ear, "Captain Frey please circle back over that bare knob of rock."

"Right." The captain turned the wheel.

A crimson spot on that bare flat rock had caught Jeanne's attention. This, she reasoned must be the boy in the crimson sweater. He it had been that had lured her good friend Florence into the fire trap. Well, he should pay for that. He should have a warning this very moment. Deftly forming a bit of string and her handkerchief into a tiny parachute, she attached a bit of greenstone rock to it, then clutched it between her knees while she scribbled a note. This note read:

“You are suspected of setting these fires. If you are guilty you shall be caught. We are on your trail. *Gypsies never forget.*”

Binding this note to the greenstone rock she waited. The plane soared lower and lower. They would pass over the rock at a hundred feet. Accustomed to judge the speed of planes, she leaned far over and waited. Then, as she found herself all but looking into the eyes of the mysterious youth, she allowed the tiny parachute to go drifting away.

Watching, she saw the white spot dropping lower and lower. “Good! He sees it!” she exclaimed, “He can’t miss it.” Then she whispered low, “The gypsies’ first warning.”

It was with trembling fingers that Florence unbound the pocket on Plumdum’s collar. Together she and Mike studied the crude map which Captain Frey had drawn.

“Let’s see,” the girl murmured. “That gap between fires must be in that direction.” She pointed toward a low ridge.

“No,” Mike corrected. “This way more.” He was looking at his compass. “We better scam. Dat note says no time to lose.”

“But, Tony? What about him?” the girl protested.

“Oh, Tony,” the boy’s brow wrinkled. Well enough Florence knew the bond of undying friendship between these two boys.

“Oh, Tony.” There was a forced note of cheerfulness in Mike’s voice. “Tony’s a Dago. He’s made out of tin cans, old asbestos an’ other scrap. He wouldn’t burn.” The laugh that followed was far from real.

Florence was touched. She swallowed a tear, swayed a little, then said simply,

“Al-all right, let’s go.” And what else was there to do?

“We’ll let out a yell now and then,” said Mike.

Gathering Plumdum into her ample arms, Florence led the way.

Their way ran across the dried-up bog. The ground was soft. For some distance their footprints remained plainly marked. At last these prints were lost on the rocky slopes beyond.

Now and again Mike paused to shout, “Yo-ho!”

Only the ridge echoed back faintly, “Yo-ho!” and yet more faintly, “Yo-ho!” Mike’s feet seemed to drag but he kept doggedly on.

“If I stay behind,” he was thinking, “she’ll stay too. An’ that won’t do. She’s worth the two of us.”

They came at last to a spot where, near the crest of the ridge, they were between two fires. The heat here was intense, almost scorching. Plumdum whined piteously.

“Come on,” Florence urged. “It’s our only chance.”

“I—I can’t,” Mike moaned. “It’s me pal, Tony. I—I gotta go back.”

“You can’t,” Florence hissed, seizing his arm. “Not now. You’re going on if I have to drag you.”

“Oh, all right, I’ll come,” Mike replied miserably.

Fifteen minutes later they were past all danger. On the crest of a higher ridge, where there were no trees, only rock, and where a cool breeze fanned their parched cheeks, they watched the fire roaring on beneath them.

“Ton-Tony!” A veritable roar of anguish escaped Mike’s lips.

To their unbounded astonishment there came an answer, “Here! Here I am! What you t’ink?”

“I knew it!” Mike broke into a roar of laughter. “It’s Tony. My Tony. Didn’t I tell you? You can’t burn up a Dago like him!”

Unashamed the two boys embraced each other. A moment later, with Plumdum

yip-yipping his delight at their heels, the three of them danced a jig atop a great, flat rock.

Once more Mike went into the lead by declaring, “We’d better scram.”

And scram they did. Following the ridge until they were well beyond the fire line, they came at last upon an ancient trail leading down. Turning they went racing down this trail at a speed that must have spelled disaster to a less hardy trio.

Fifteen minutes later they burst out upon the shores of silent waters.

“Good old Rock Harbor,” Florence breathed, almost as a prayer of thanksgiving.

On the dock at the head of that same harbor a half hour later Jeanne sat in the depths of despair. Florence was gone. Plumdum was gone. What could she do?

Of a sudden, from the distance she caught a familiar sound, the shrill barking of a small dog.

“Plumdum!” she exclaimed springing to her feet. “It must be. There is no other such dog on the island.”

It was a wild looking Jeanne who burst through the brush to greet her lost friends a short time later. Her dress was torn, her hair was flying wild, but her eyes shone with a glorious light.

“Plumdum! Florence!” she screamed, gathering the dog in her arms and being in turn gathered in by Florence.

It was only over a rich “Mulligan” stew prepared by Captain Frey’s cook that Tony’s story was told.

“I saw you go down,” he said to Florence. “An’ heard yer breath go out. I thought, ‘That moose will get her fer sure.’”

“And so he would have,” Captain Frey agreed. “A moose has hoofs that are like steel chisels.”

“So-o,” Tony breathed, continuing his story, “I dropped on his back. Swell luck.

I grabbed his antlers. Then I ducked down to miss the branches. And say-ee!" he breathed. "Talk about speed! He was worse'n an airplane.

"And then—" he paused.

"Then what, ye dummie?" Mike demanded.

"It ain't nice. I hate t' tell ye." Tony took in a long breath.

"Did he go toward the dry swamp?" Florence asked. Tony nodded.

"Then I know," the girl said with a shudder, "the moose went into the peat bog that's on fire."

"An' stuck there fer a minute." Tony agreed. "I swing off on a low limb of a tree. Then I scam. Of course, I don't know but I kin guess what come of Mr. Moose." He heaved a heavy sigh.

"But, Tony," Florence said after a moment, "how did you know which way the gap in the fire wall was?"

"Found yer tracks crossin' t' dry swamp," said Tony with a grin. "'They're goin' straight,' I says to meself. 'That means they know which way t' go.' And you did."

"And I'm glad," Florence put in warmly.

"That was great!" Captain Frey exclaimed.

"Wind has changed," the captain announced a short time later. "That means Rock Harbor shores don't burn, not just yet. We may get a little rain tonight.

"You better stay with us," he added, turning to the girls. "We'll run you down to the lodge first thing in the morning. There's a snug cabin which Mrs. Frey occupies when she is here. You will have it all to yourselves."

So it was agreed. And Florence was not sorry. Surely she had seen quite enough of life for one day. Sleep would be sweet after such wild adventure.

"What of the boy in the crimson sweater?" she asked herself dreamily as she

drifted off to sleep. Then, “I’ll get him yet.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE PHANTOM OF SUPERIOR

“Jeanne,” said Florence, “do you remember that man over at Rock Harbor lodge who was always talking about fishing?”

“Yes. Why?”

“He’s got me all excited. Let’s celebrate our wonderful luck getting that Government contract by going fishing.”

“I—” Jeanne murmured, “I only wish to sit on the rocks and dream the hours away.”

It was the next day. Several hours were at their disposal. They were anchored at Tobin’s Harbor. The *Iroquois* was due at sunset with a boat-load of supplies for fire-fighters. The *Wanderer* was to help distribute these, so for the time they were standing by.

“You would desert me?” said Florence with a laugh. “Katie will go. Won’t you, Katie?”

“Fishing?” Katie’s eyes shone. “Absolutely.”

A half hour later the two girls were on their way to the fishing grounds. Florence was in her element. For her there was nothing quite like the “living water” of old Superior. In a rowboat you are so close to it. Each dark blue wave as it lifts you, then pushes you gently forward, seems reluctant to let you go.

“The water is so blue!” she exclaimed. “Must be the copper in these rocks that makes it.”

“Yes,” said Katie.

“Or the blue of the sky.”

“Yes,” Katie agreed once again.

Truth is, Katie had scarcely heard. She, too, was in her element. She was enjoying perfect physical activity, and that, to her, was life. L I F E, spelled with big round letters. With a rhythmic motion, keeping pace with the waves, her strong arms moved slowly back and forth while the oars flashed in the sun.

“Yes,” she repeated as if something more had been said.

“Wait! Stop!” Florence cried. Her line had been given a sudden pull.

“A fish,” said Katie.

“A big one!” Florence enthused, reeling in.

“Not so big,” said Katie.

Katie was right. It was not so big, perhaps three pounds. A fine fish for all that and Florence thrilled at landing it.

“And yet,” she thought, as they rounded a rocky point to cut across a gap to a small rocky island beyond, “there must be a fifteen pounder somewhere, just must be.”

“Yes,” said Katie as if reading her thoughts.

There was not for all that. No fifteen pounder rose to their lure around the far end of Edward’s Island. Six times they worked their way along the point, crossed it and circled back, but only one small fish brought them a moment’s thrill.

“Look!” Florence exclaimed as once more they headed out from the point. “There’s that lone fisherman, the mysterious one who is always there. Jeanne calls him the Phantom.”

“Yes,” said Katie. “He’s out at what the fishermen call Five Foot.”

“How far is it?” Florence’s voice was eager.

“One mile,” said Katie.

Lifting the field glasses to her eyes Florence studied the lone fisherman as he glided across the blue waters, then turned and glided back again. There was something about the waters on this day that seemed to lift him up above the surface.

“Looks as if he were floating through air.”

“Yes,” said Katie, showing all her fine teeth in a smile.

“There! He—he’s got one!” Florence exclaimed, quite forgetting her own line. “Must be a big one. How he pulls!”

The lone fisherman was standing up in his boat. He was pulling in a hand line, yards and yards of it. To Florence, who waited breathlessly, the line seemed endless. And yet, when the end did come it was with sudden shock, for the fish seemed immense.

“A whopper!” she exclaimed. “A regular whale. Katie, we’re going out there! We must!”

“Might be too far,” Katie suggested half-heartedly. She, too, was a born fisherman.

“He’s there,” Florence argued. “His boat is no larger than ours.”

“Motor boat.” Katie suggested. For all her protests she was not turning back. Instead she was heading straight out over the blue-black surface of Superior.

“A mile,” Florence thought with a sudden intake of breath, “a mile from anywhere.”

She thought of the *Wanderer* tied up there at the dock in Tobin’s Harbor, of Dave and all the rest. All that seemed dreamy and far away. What did it matter today?

Had she but known it, today had but begun and what a day it was to be!

It was with a feeling almost of guilt that she sat there watching the waves pass them one by one. With an all but silent swish, each seemed to whisper a warning.

“I won’t hear,” she told them defiantly. “Five Foot and big fish.”

Ah, yes, Five Foot. How often she had heard fishermen speak of it. There, a mile from anywhere, the rocks rose within five feet of the surface. That was why it was Five Foot. Beneath this giant submerged boulder, a full quarter mile long, scaly monsters lurked.

“We’ll get ’em,” she thought.

Was it conscience that whispered, “Yield not to temptation!” Florence did not believe in conscience, at least, not too much. So Katie rowed on and Florence, watching a bank of beautiful blue and black clouds roll along the horizon, thought, “What a grand old world this is.”

“Soon be at the spar,” Katie broke into her day-dreams.

“Reef begins there.”

“Al-all right,” Florence gripped her rod. “I—I’m ready.

“But look!” she exclaimed. “The Lone Fisherman is gone.”

“Gone?” Katie seemed startled.

“Oh, no!” her face broadened into a smile. “Over there.”

It was true. Out some distance further, perhaps a mile, the same small boat circled and bobbed, bobbed and circled again.

It was then that Florence began to believe in Jeanne’s strange notion, that this Lone Fisherman was no real fisherman at all and his boat no real boat, but that it was a phantom boat manned by a ghostly fisherman.

“More than one small craft has vanished,” she thought with a shudder. “The Flying Dutchman of Superior,” she whispered. She laughed at her own superstitious imagination, but the laugh was followed by a shudder. And at that moment the sun went under a cloud.

CHAPTER XVIII

FATHER SUPERIOR AT HIS WORST

The instant the sun left them the whole world appeared to change. The water lay all about them black and threatening. Land seemed miles away. Florence shook herself. Then she glanced up at the sun. The cloud was but a small one. Already the sun was painting a golden rim along its lower edge.

“The rocks,” said Katie, “are down there.”

Looking down into the water at the side of the boat, Florence was startled. The water was crystal clear. The great masses of rocks were so real that they seemed dry land. “As if we were floating on air above it,” she told herself. It was strange.

“This is the place,” said Katie, as, a moment later, they passed across the far end of that submerged reef. “You go across fast.” Her stout arms sent the boat racing. “Then you drop your oars and let the lure sink down, down, down. If you don’t get a rock, you—”

She did not finish, for at that instant something all but dragged the pole from her companion’s hands.

“There!” Katie exclaimed, “You’ve got—”

But no! The line went slack.

“Oh!” Florence exclaimed. “What a—”

“There!” Katie exclaimed again as the pole all but bent double. “Hang on tight. You—”

Was there ever such a thrilling, appalling moment? Once again the line went

slack.

But not for long. Ten seconds and the pull came again. “Now!” Katie exclaimed, half rising in her place, “Now you got him.”

That she had something big on her line, Florence could not doubt. That it was alive she was not long in finding out. She had reeled in twenty feet of line when, of a sudden, the reel handle was jerked from her fingers. Her knuckles were barked until they bled as she tried in vain to recover that handle. Only the strength of her line saved the day, the line and Katie, for the stout young Finn began backing the boat away.

“I—I’ve still got him,” Florence panted as she took a fresh grip on her reel.

Once more she began reeling in. Ten, twenty, thirty feet, the fish came grudgingly. Then, with a suddenness that was startling, the pull on the line redoubled.

“He’s turned on you. Hold—hold on hard!” Katie screamed.

This time Florence’s fingers did not slip. With grim determination she held on. This was a truly big one. She must have him. Was he the catch of the season? What joy if only he were. To work as she had worked, then to play for only a day, to bring in the prize fish!

“Ah!” she breathed as once more the strain lessened and she started reeling in.

Of a sudden the line went slack. “Gone!” she exclaimed in consternation.

“No! No! He may—be only—” Katie did not finish. Once again the reel sang. After a rush toward the boat the fish had darted to the right. Once again the girl’s reel was emptied and it was only Katie’s skill with the boat that saved the line.

“Sometimes,” said Florence with a mock-sober look on her face, “I wish we hadn’t hooked that fish.” Rubbing the blood from her knuckles, she began again.

For a time she met with greater success. Nearly all her line was in. The fish was directly beneath them when, with a sudden rush he shot upward. It was as if a spring-board were beneath him, for, as he hit the surface he rose clear of the water.

A blue-black streak of silver, he appeared to hang in air, then, like a depth-bomb shot downward.

“Wha-what a whopper,” Katie cried.

As for Florence, she was too busy saving her bruised knuckles even to think. One thing stood out in her mind, she would not give up. She must have that fish.

Sixty seconds later the fish once again came to the surface, this time forty feet away. He came to the top, head, tail and all. For a split second they were permitted to admire him, then he was down again.

Had Florence been a man, with the strong hard grip of a man in her fingers, the battle must have ended much sooner. As it was, time passed swiftly and as swiftly the big fish battled for freedom.

At last, just as the girl was giving up hope, the fish, with the perversity of his kind, came up beneath the boat, circled twice on a short line, then lay quite still on the surface. It was Katie who put the finishing touch to that bit of drama. Reaching out with her strong arms she gathered the fish, all wet and dripping, to her bosom and “loved him” into the boat. After that for a full minute the two girls sat staring first at each other, then at the fish. He was a forty-pounder, thirty-five at the least; twice as large as any fish caught that season.

Then, with the suddenness of a blow on the head, both girls awoke to the startling fact that during the battle their little world had vanished. Gone was the spot of green among the blue that is Passage Island, gone Blake’s Point and Edward’s Island. There was no land, only black threatening skies and blacker water. Clouds and fog had blotted out everything. Stealing up from behind Isle Royale, one of Superior’s sudden storms was racing down upon them. Katie courageously gripped her oars. But which way? Who could tell? In vain their eyes scoured the surface of the waters for the Lone Fisherman. He was not to be seen. Man or phantom, he had vanished.

“It’s a grand fish,” said Katie, striving in vain to keep the tremble out of her voice.

“Yes,” Florence thought, “it is a wonderful fish, but at what cost!”

It was a sober pair that faced the immediate future. Low-lying clouds had blotted

out every trace of land. They were a mile from anywhere. Which way was land? How were they to know? Two hours before the wind had been off-shore. If they now headed into the wind, would they reach the island? Lake Superior winds change on a moment's notice. If land did lie off there to windward, could they reach it? Every moment saw the gale increasing. White-caps were appearing.

Resolutely Katie headed into the wind and began rowing. There was, on the sturdy girl's face at that moment, a look of such dogged determination as Florence had never seen there before.

"I got her into this," she thought soberly. "It was wrong to come."

And yet, had it been wrong? It was their day off. They had wanted a good time. They had had it, too. No one could deny that. Yet they had been—well, perhaps one might say rash, impulsive. Did impulse ever have any rightful place in one's life? She wondered and could not answer. Surely life would be dull if everyone plodded straight on always doing the sure, safe thing. No vim nor sparkle to life. And yet—

Suddenly she realized that this was not a time for thought but for action. Extra oars lay in the bottom of the boat. Seizing these she set them in place, then waited until she had caught the rhythmic swing of Katie's rowing. After that for a full quarter hour the creak of oars, the whistle of wind and the low swish of mounting waves were all that disturbed the silence of those black waters.

Suddenly Florence felt a hand on her shoulder. "Stop rowing," said Katie.

"Why? What—"

Katie made no reply. Instead she turned the boat about to guide it by slow, easy strokes straight away from the storm.

"It's no good." Her voice sounded tired when at last she spoke. "All the time the wind it grows stronger. Perhaps land is this way. Who knows? We cannot go against the wind. With the wind we can go far, far! It is a good boat."

There was a note almost of affection in the big girl's voice. "It is a Thompson boat."

Florence did not know what a Thompson boat was. She did know that their boat

was deep, straight across the top and strong. She was thankful for all this. But which way were they heading? In some directions it was two hundred miles to land. And who could tell how this storm would end?

“Waves, mountain high,” she murmured. “Lake Superior at its worst.”

CHAPTER XIX

A FLASH IN THE DARK

An hour later darkness lay like a black blanket over the waters of Superior. Every moment of that hour saw the gale increase and the waves mount higher, yet the strong arms of Katie never wavered. Heading straight away from the storm, she held their boat to a course.

Florence was obliged to admit that for once her steady nerves that had stood so much had now all but deserted her. What was the end to be? Would they drift on and on in the path of the storm until waves were strong enough to swamp their boat? As she listened she caught the low hiss of each wave and shuddered in spite of her courage.

Then, with a suddenness that was startling, a light that was fairly blinding flashed over their heads. Florence was thrown into consternation.

“Ka-Katie!” she cried. “What is it? Are we in the path of a steamer?” Through her mind there flashed a vision of some black bulk looming out of the night.

As for Katie, so overcome by emotion was she that for a space of seconds she could not speak. When at last she found her voice, she exclaimed joyously, “It is the Passage Island light. I forgot it. We are almost at the island. Listen—”

As they both listened there came the roar of waters beating on rocks.

“It—it’s terrible,” Florence said in a low, awed tone. “We couldn’t land there. Our boat would be smashed to splinters.”

“No, not there,” Katie agreed. “But on this side there is an entrance. There is a snug little harbor. If only we can find that—”

“Yes, if only we can. We—”

Suddenly Florence's voice was drowned by a hoarse hoot that filled all the night.

"Oh!" she all but jumped out of the boat. Then she laughed. "The Passage fog horn! I have heard it at a distance."

"Yes," Katie agreed, "the light and the horn. They should have been there before."

"Perhaps something was wrong with their power."

After that, for some time neither girl spoke. Katie was busy with the oars and Florence with her thoughts. Long thoughts they were, you may be sure.

It was a relief to know their position. And yet, how much danger lurked before them? Ships going north pass between Isle Royale and Passage Island. Should they find themselves in the path of a freighter the black waters of the night might swallow up their smashed boat. Their fate would never be known. They were headed for Passage Island. But could they find the entrance to that harbor?

"Katie," Florence said, "how wide is it?"

"Is what?" Katie demanded.

"The entrance to that harbor."

"Twenty feet, I think," Katie replied.

"Twenty feet!" Florence thought this but did not say it. Could they find such an entrance in the dark and could they, with waves mounting high, make that entrance? It seemed to her all but impossible.

A sudden feeling of rebellion swept over her. Here she was taking a day off, trying to have a good time. For weeks she had worked hard with little or no hope of reward. She had worked for the good of others. And now—

"It's not fair!" she whispered. "Not fair at all." Her fists clenched tight, she looked out over the black waters where white crests of foam played.

One moment more and she was in a different mood. What was it, after all, that she had asked of life? Thrills, adventure, suspense, mystery, that was it. Happy

adventure. Well, she had known all these.

“And this,” she told herself stoutly, “shall be just one more happy adventure.”

But now Katie was straining eyes and ears. “We are close, perhaps too close,” she murmured. “Sometimes the waves, they bring you in.”

She veered to the right. Dashes of spray cut sharply at their cheeks. “We must take it,” she insisted, “or we may crash.”

Florence “took it” in silence.

The whole setting was strange beyond belief. With that bright light flashing above them they were in darkness. Not one trace could they see of the cliffs against which the waters dashed madly.

Then, for the first time, as if to light their way, there came a gleam from the clouds.

“Lightning!” said Florence.

“Rocks! Close—too close!” exclaimed Katie. They were both right.

The moments that followed will remain long in Florence’s memory. No more flashes came. The roar of surf on rocks was deafening. They were close. But how close? Were there low, jutting rocks ahead? Would there come a grinding crash and after that the end? Somewhere in that wall was a gap. Where? How were they to find it?

It seemed the darkness and suspense would become unbearable. Then came again that flash across the sky. Three flashes, close together. These served only to mock them. The first flash gave them hope. The rocky wall was still there. Perhaps the gap was only a little way ahead.

Now came a second flash. What was this? The wall was low now. It seemed that here were only jagged rocks. The girl’s heart sank.

One more moment passed into eternity, then another flash and she knew. About them was only black water flecked with foam. They had drifted past the mile-long island without finding the gap. They could not go back. They must go on.

Where to?

Florence buried her face in her hands and tried to think, but her thoughts, like the sky and sea, were one mad whirl.

CHAPTER XX

A WEIRD RESTING PLACE

Rain came sweeping down upon the sea. This flattened out the waves but added greatly to their misery. The wind raced on. Riding with it they moved forward into the great dark unknown.

Just when Florence was ready to give up hope her keen ears caught again the sound of waves rushing over rocks.

“One more shore!” she exclaimed. “Is there another island?”

“No other island,” Katie’s voice was solemn, “only rocks.”

“Yes,” Florence thought as a fresh chill ran up her spine, “there are rocks.”

She remembered it now. She had seen them rising above the water. One was called Gull Rock. Sportsmen went there to fish. Were they approaching Gull Rock? And if they were? She found little comfort in such thoughts. The waves were still running high.

Forcing her mind away from the immediate terror, she thought of Dave and Jeanne, of Mike and Tony and the mysterious boy in the crimson sweater hiding away in the forests. Did he truly set the fires? If he did what was his motive? No one had seen him even close enough to know how he looked. Would Mike and Tony catch him? Would—

Of a sudden a dull, grating tremor passed through the staunch little boat.

“Wha-what happened,” she gasped. They had reached the crest of a wave. Now their boat was gliding backward. The darkness was intense. Peer as she might, she could see nothing save the dim outline of Katie’s body.

“It’s the rock,” Katie’s voice was deathly calm. “That wave was not high. The next will be higher. We will be carried onto the rocks. We must jump. It is our chance.”

She did not say, “Our only chance.” Florence knew it all the same. At that moment she was thankful for slacks and sneaks. They would improve her chance.

“Katie!” she cried, “The rock! Is it high?”

“Who knows? We must jump. Now—” Katie caught a long breath. “Now we are going up. Now—” There came a shuddering grind much more terrible than the first. “Now jump! And run—run away from the sea.”

Gripping the gunwale, Florence vaulted over the side, struck a slippery rock, all but fell, then, regaining her footing dashed with the energy of despair up the slanting rock.

Had not the stout Katie gripped her arm just in time, she must have dashed quite across the rock and have fallen down the steep side into the boiling water below.

As for Katie, there was no chance of over-valuing her wisdom at such a time.

“Come!” she cried, once her companion had regained a little of her composure, “That great wave left our boat on the rock. There will be three small ones, then perhaps a greater one. We must save our boat if we can. You on one side, I on the other, we must slide it higher.”

Left to herself, Florence would not have taken one step toward those racing waters, but inspired by her companion’s splendid courage, she retraced her steps, seized the boat and, with energy born of despair, did her full share of lifting the boat to a higher position.

“Now!” Katie panted. “Now! Now! And now!”

As she heaved away Florence counted the waves. “One, two, three.” Would the fourth be larger?

“Yes! Yes!” she cried, as its dark, shadowy bulk appeared to rise above her. “It—it—is a terrible one.”

“Run!” Katie cried once again.

Florence needed no urging. This time, however, she measured her distance with great care.

With anxious eyes they stared into the darkness. Had they done enough? Had their precious boat been saved, or would it go floating away, never to be seen again? Florence had visions of herself perched on a barren rock through a night of cold and darkness.

“Hurray! We win!” Katie exclaimed. “The boat is still there!”

It was true. The wave had reached out, but not far enough. They were in possession of a shelter from the storm and a means of leaving when the storm had passed. Florence breathed a deep sigh of relief.

“Come,” said Katie, “we must lift it higher.”

“Oh!” Florence exclaimed, as, starting forward, she stumbled over some solid object and fell flat.

“Are—are you hurt?” Katie bent over her.

“No. I—I fell over something, Katie! It’s a driftwood log! We can use it for a roller. That makes it easy.”

So it did, in more ways than one. Having rolled the boat forward on the log, they fumbled in the prow of the boat for a fire-fighter’s hatchet they knew was there. They hacked at the log until there were dry chips aplenty.

Then Katie said, “We’ll tip over the boat. We’ll use part of the log to prop it up. This makes a house.” There was a note of pure joy in her voice. “I have matches in the pocket of my boot. They are always there. We shall have such a fine fire.”

Such a fine fire as it was, too. To Florence, whose teeth would not cease chattering, it seemed the jolliest fire in the world.

The north shore of Isle Royale is strewn with smooth, eight-foot pulpwood logs that have escaped from booms in Canada and, drifting across, have lodged on those shores. From the crevices of their rock Katie and Florence managed to

gather nine of these dry logs. Soon four were blazing brightly.

Hidden from the wind by their over-turned boat, warmed by the fire, the girls managed to struggle from their soaked outer garments and prop them on sticks before the fire.

For a full hour they lay there before the blazing logs. Soaking in the cheering heat and dreaming, half asleep, they all but forgot that this spot was far from their snug floating home, the *Wanderer*, and Isle Royale with all its problems.

When Florence at last sat up to stretch herself and stir up the fire, she exclaimed, "Katie, I'm hungry. Seems to me I remember something about a meal we were to eat on the rocks after the fishing was done."

"Not these rocks." Katie laughed a deep, happy laugh. "But these will do."

They had planned a supper of planked fish on the rocks off Edward's Island. Snugly stowed away in the prow of the boat was a closed tin bucket containing sandwiches, a small pie and salt for the fish.

With some difficulty, Katie managed to prepare a plank from a flat section of log.

"Now," she said, "the fish."

"The big one?" Florence asked.

"No. Never!" Katie was horrified. "That prize! No. We shall go home tomorrow and we shall say, 'See, we have been fishing and we caught this one. Such a whopper!'" Once again she laughed her deep, mellow laugh.

"No," she added, "one of the little ones will do very well. A two-pound fish. Who could ask for more?"

The fish was cleaned, boned and laid out flat on the plank. Then, with a wire, Katie bound it fast. For a full half hour after that the fish hung stewing and sizzling over the fire. Turning browner and browner, it was at last like the rich gold of an autumn leaf.

"Now," said Katie with a sigh, "it is done."

In her short life Florence had eaten many grand meals and in many a curious place. But none was as grand as this and no place more strange.

“Now,” she sighed when it was over, “we must sleep, for tomorrow will be another day.”

Sleep they did. Rolled up in their dried out garments, crowded close together before the great, glowing bed of coals, they slept the sleep of forgetfulness.

Twice during the night Florence was conscious of Katie’s movements as she replenished the fire, and that was all.

CHAPTER XXI

SECOND WARNING

In the meantime, driven from her sun bath by that same storm, Jeanne had begun worrying about the safety of her friends.

“Must be getting pretty wild out there,” Dave said, as he tried to see through the driving fog.

“Do you think they would go far?” Jeanne asked anxiously.

“You know Florence,” was the reply. “She’d take a chance.”

Turning to a fishing guide on the dock he said, “Where are the best spots?”

“For lake trout fishing? Blake’s Point and Five Foot.”

“And neither is protected from storms?”

“I’ll say not,” the man laughed hoarsely. “Blake’s Point reaches out into Lake Superior like a pointing finger. Five Foot is a clean mile from anywhere.”

“Would it do any good to go out and look for them?” Dave asked.

“In this fog?” the man laughed again. “Not a bit. Never find them.

“Oh, they’re probably O.K.,” he consoled. “They’re a sturdy pair. They’d make a point on one of the small islands. Plenty of driftwood everywhere. With a good fire and moss for a bed they’ll get on very well.”

“And there are narrow channels between the small islands,” said Dave. “Storms don’t hit there. They may come sneaking in along the shore any time.”

Loaded with supplies, the *Iroquois* arrived alongside the *Wanderer* at dusk. Captain Frey was on board.

“Some of these supplies,” he said, “go to Florence Bay. That’s about twenty-five miles up the north shore. The *Iroquois* can’t get in there. We have a hundred fire-fighters there. They’ve been living on salt pork and beans for two days. How about going there tonight?” he asked Dave.

“We—we can do it,” was Dave’s prompt response. He was thinking of Florence and Katie. But his first duty was to those hungry men.

“If those girls don’t show up by dawn,” he said to the guide, “get out your boat and look them up. I’ll stand the expense.”

“O.K.,” was the prompt response, “you can depend on me.”

“I know that,” Dave replied heartily.

An hour later, well loaded with supplies, the *Wanderer* stole out into the night. From time to time as they moved slowly down the channel between small islands and at last around Blake’s point, they gave long blasts on their siren. The only response was the scream of a seagull or the wail of the wind.

The pitching of the boat made rest impossible, so, encased in sweaters, blankets and a huge oilskin coat, Jeanne sat huddled on deck, feeling the cold damp of spray on her cheeks, and wondering about the fate of her two good pals.

Shortly after midnight, guided by the light of a forest fire, they slipped into a narrow bay, there to be given an uproarious welcome by a hundred hungry men.

“We’ll wait the night out here,” was Dave’s decision. “There are supplies for McCargoe’s Cove on board. We’ll drop them off on the way back. And you—” there was an extra note of friendliness in his voice as he spoke to the little French girl, “you better get some sleep.”

Jeanne’s beauty-rest that night was a short one. However, her hours of dreaming in the sun the previous day stood her in good stead and she was up with the sun. Early as it was she found the *Wanderer* in motion.

After serving the crew with coffee and hot cakes, she came on deck to watch the

shore line slipping by.

It was still early when the boat began sliding into McCargoe's Cove. At the entrance of this cove was one of the most entrancing little islands Jeanne had ever seen.

"Oh, Dave!" she exclaimed. "Please drop me off in the dory and let me visit that island until you come back this way!"

"Sure! Be glad to." Dave signaled for a stop. "They call it Birch Island. It's a beauty."

As she came close to the island in her small boat, Jeanne assured herself that here was a place of great enchantment.

White birches, evenly spaced and reaching for the sky, grew to the very water's edge. Mingled with these were hundreds of fern-like balsams.

A single fisherman's cottage, built of weather beaten logs, stood close to the shore. Silent and seemingly deserted, it told of another day.

That this cabin had not been long deserted, Jeanne was not slow in discovering. True, save for a few rusty cans of pepper, ginger and other spices, there was no food on the narrow shelves. But the frying pan, tea-kettle and coffee pot still shone brightly.

Leaving the cabin, the little French girl wandered down a narrow path that ran the length of the island. It was not a long walk. She was soon at the far end of the island. There, to her surprise, she discovered a second cabin. Perhaps one might say it was only a shelter. Built of driftwood logs, it had but three sides and a roof. The front was enclosed only by a mosquito-bar canopy.

When Jeanne had looked within she backed hurriedly away. She was, she thought, intruding on someone's privacy. A few pots and pans hung against one wall, while on the opposite side, in considerable disarray, were garments, quite evidently a man's. From the nature and color of these clothes she concluded the man must be from some city and quite a young man.

She was not long lacking in proof of this theory. Even as she stood there, the low thud of footsteps reached her. With a voiceless cry and a soundless leap, she was

away in the bush.

She had escaped. Yet curiosity compelled her to linger for a peeping look through the bushes.

What she saw startled her no end. A tall, good-looking youth of uncertain age stood before the shelter. His gaze wandered from place to place. “He suspects something,” the girl told herself as her heart skipped a beat.

And then she barely avoided a gasp. She had, for the first time, noted his manner of dress.

“A crimson sweater!” she breathed. “The—the youth in the crimson sweater.”

Had she found any reason for questioning her judgment in this case it would not have been for long. Of a sudden, the youth glanced down at his feet then, without a backward look, dashed away into the bush.

Surprised and startled, Jeanne held her ground. For all this, her heart was beating a pretty tattoo against her ribs. Where had this boy gone? Would he return? And if he did what should she do? Her first thought was to slip swiftly and silently away. And yet—she recalled her first warning, dropped from the airplane. He had not heeded the warning, at least had not come out into the open and proved himself innocent. Would a second warning help? She dared hope it might.

With fingers that trembled in spite of her best efforts to control them, she drew a stub of a pencil from her jacket pocket, pulled a square of birch bark from a tree to serve as paper, then wrote in scrawled words:

“*Second warning:* You are suspected of a terrible crime. If you are innocent you will come out and clear yourself. Gypsies never forget.

Signed,

Gypsy Jeanne.”

Why had Jeanne signed this second warning? Perhaps she could not have told. Was it because the youth in the crimson sweater seemed a rather romantic figure?

With knees that all but refused to support her, she moved slowly toward the shelter. Once there, she slipped inside, placed the note on a small, hand-made table, weighted it down with a stone, then, springing away like a startled deer, went racing toward the fisherman's cabin and her boat.

Arrived at the small dock she found all serene as before. Some small bird whistled at her from a tree. A pine squirrel chattered at her. For a moment she stood there thinking. Why had the young man run away? He had seen something. What had it been? In a twinkle she had the answer, her handkerchief was gone. "Must have lost it and my initials were in the corner," she thought, a little startled.

After that, shoving off in her boat, she rowed to the opposite shores, hid in a narrow cove and waited until Dave's return, then climbed aboard and rode away without a word concerning her adventure.

Dawn came on the barren rock that had saved Florence and Katie from the storm. They were awakened by wild screams. These were uttered by a host of angry gulls demanding to know who had invaded their favorite roosting place during the night.

Breakfast of fish and gull's eggs, a few bright hours of watching the waves lose their threat, then once more they were on the water.

Two hours of hard, double rowing against the wind, a line out for trout and two catches—one a beauty—then they were entering the Passage Island harbor they had missed before.

Exclaimed over and welcomed by the lighthouse keeper's smiling wife, they were fed on roast beef and baked potatoes and brown gravy, plied with questions, and at last taken aboard a neat little motor craft that carried them back to Tobin's Harbor and their astonished friend who had all but given them up as lost.

"See!" exclaimed Katie, true to her promise. "We have been fishing. And just look what we caught. A whopper!"

A whopper indeed it was—thirty-seven pounds by the scales—easily the best fish of the season. Was Florence proud? No end of it. There was, however, little

time for strutting. A few moments of triumph and her insistent mind was demanding, "What of the future?"

"Where is the *Wanderer*?" she asked.

"Somewhere on the north shore," was the answer. "Make yourself comfortable. They should be back before dark."

In two big chairs before a driftwood fire the girls dozed the hours away. And so ended one more happy adventure that might not have been so happy after all, had it not been for Lady Luck's kindness and Katie's good, strong arms.

CHAPTER XXII

STRANGE COMRADES IN BATTLE

When Florence learned of Jeanne's exciting discovery on Birch Island she was for going there at once.

"You saw him!" she exclaimed. "The boy in the crimson sweater? The firebug?"

"Yes," Jeanne replied quietly. "The boy in the crimson sweater."

"What is he like? Does he look dangerous? What if—"

Florence shot a dozen more questions at Jeanne. Strangely enough, the little French girl was quite vague in her answers, much more so than the occasion warranted. And, when the question of her accompanying Florence arose, she pleaded a headache.

"It's only a two hour's run in a small motor boat," Florence said to Dave. "You have another wait of several hours?"

"That's right."

"Then suppose I hire the lodge fishing boat and get Indian John to run me over here?"

"O.K. by me. You might take Katie with you. But watch your step! If this fellow is really a firebug, he may be dangerous."

"I'll watch," Florence was off.

Arrived at Birch Island, they found the fisherman's cottage just as Jeanne had left it. But when, after a silent march down the island, they came to the spot where the log shelter had stood, they discovered that it was gone.

“Every trace of it,” Florence exclaimed.

No, this was not quite true. Dry moss had been strewn over the spot upon which it had stood. When this was dragged away, they found a smooth, hard surface which once had been an earthen floor.

“Jeanne was not dreaming.” Florence looked about her as if expecting the mysterious boy to appear. “There has been a shelter here. But now it’s gone.”

“Easy to move,” said Indian John. “Take ’em down logs. Put ’em in boat. Row away, that’s all.”

“Yes, or just throw the logs into the lake and let them float away,” said Katie.

For some time they stood there in silence. At last Florence said, “I am not Jeanne and not a gypsy, but she says there is always a third warning and so there shall be.”

Imitating Jeanne, she wrote her warning on birch bark. It read:

“The Gypsy’s third warning. And the last. A last chance to clear yourself. Once we leave Birch Island, we shall set a company of fire-fighters on your trail.

Signed,

The Gypsy’s Friend.”

After pinning this note to a tree with the aid of three long thorns, she was prepared to follow her companions back to the fisherman’s cabin.

It was a silent and mystified Florence who walked slowly back. All that had happened appeared to prove that she was right. This boy wished to hide. Why, unless he were doing wrong? And what was more probable than that he was setting fires? And yet— Why had Jeanne been so silent, so reluctant to tell all?

As they at last stood again on the small fisherman’s dock, Florence looked at Indian John’s jet black hair and smiled.

“John,” she said, “you are rapidly growing gray. There are white ashes in your

hair.”

It was true. Fine white specks of ash were slowly drifting down from the sky.

“The threat is still with us,” the girl murmured.

Nor, on this day, was it long in making itself known. A brisk wind, blowing off the island, began bringing in an uncomfortable feeling of heat. Then, quite suddenly, like battling troops coming out of the trenches, a long line of flames appeared at the crest of a low ridge not a mile from Birch Island.

“Florence!” Katie exclaimed. “It is terrible. This beautiful island will burn unless —”

“Unless what?” Florence asked eagerly.

“Unless we can save it.”

“How?”

“There are many birch trees, not so many balsams. Balsam needles will catch from sparks. Birch leaves will not. If we cut away the balsams and throw them into the water—”

“We must try,” Florence broke in. “All this,” her gaze swept the small island, “must not be destroyed.

“John,” she said, turning to the Indian, “run the boat to a safe spot and anchor it. Come back in the skiff. We must all do our best.”

“Perhaps,” she thought grimly a moment later, “that boy in the crimson sweater will be smoked out like an owl in a hollow tree.”

Very little she knew about the truth of her prophesy. Not knowing, she dragged a dull ax from the fisherman’s cabin and began doing her bit to save Birch Island.

It was a battle indeed. As the wind increased and the fire crept closer not ashes alone, but tiny, glowing sparks fell at their feet.

Whacking away at the trunks of small spruce trees, dragging them to the water’s

edge, then whacking and dragging again, Florence never faltered. Grim, grimy, and perspiring, hating her dull ax, she toiled doggedly on. One thought was uppermost in her mind, this battle, perhaps their last, must be won.

And then she received a sudden shock. A boy stood beside her. Taller than she, he smiled down at her. He was dressed in high boots and corduroys. His blue, plaid shirt was open at the neck. In his hand he carried an ax with a razor-like edge. She had never seen him before.

“Come on in,” she invited.

“What are you doing, may I ask?” He smiled again.

“We are saving this island,” she fairly snapped. “If—if we get all the balsams out it won’t burn.”

“Say! That—that’s an idea!” His face brightened like a sky after a storm.

“I’ll cut. You drag ’em off,” he said shortly.

After that for a full hour it was cut and drag, cut and drag, a seemingly endless task. And the fire grew hotter every moment.

Not even the girl’s strenuous endeavors could keep her from wondering about that boy. Who was he? Where had he come from? Why was he here?

“He works like one who is defending his own home,” she told herself.

Strangely enough there was something vaguely familiar about his movements. “As if I had seen him before. But I can’t have.”

Then a strange and mystifying thing happened, as the boy bent over to pick up his ax which had slipped from his aching fingers, a small square of white fluttered from his pocket to the ground. He was quick in retrieving it but not quick enough. In one corner of this girl’s handkerchief Florence had read the initials, “J. E.”

“Jeanne’s handkerchief,” she whispered to herself with sudden shock. “Where did he get it and why does he keep it?” Strangely enough, at that moment, all unbidden, three words came into her mind, “The Gypsy’s warning.” Then the

stern business of the moment claimed her entire attention.

The last, slim end of the island was closest to the fire. The heat became all but unbearable. Twice the boy's cotton shirt began to smoke. At last he drew it off, and dipped it in water, to put it on again.

Then came the moment when the last balsam tree toppled into the water.

"Come on," he grabbed Florence's arm. "We gotta get out o' here quick."

They did get out quick.

When at last Florence reached her skiff where Katie and Indian John were anxiously waiting, to her astonishment she saw the strange boy go racing away.

"Wait!" she called. "Come back."

Did he hear? It seemed he must. But he raced straight on.

"We'll just row out a little where the heat is not so bad," Florence suggested. "Then we'll wait and see what happens."

This they did. The moment when the raging furnace reached the water's edge, then came to a sudden halt, was a glorious one indeed.

Florence was watching with all her eyes when, of a sudden, she seemed to hear oarlocks creaking. At first, looking out over the smoke-clouded water she saw nothing. Then she caught the shadowy outline of a small boat moving out on the water.

"Must be that boy," she told herself. "But where is he going?"

The answer came to her at once. Beyond him was the outline of a small power boat. He was rowing toward that.

Strangely enough, just as he reached the motor boat's side, a current of air lifted the smoke and everything stood out clearly.

"It *is* that boy," Florence said aloud. "But what's he doing?"

"Standing up in his row-boat," said Katie.

“Putting on a sweater. A crimson sweater!” Florence was ready to fall from the boat in her excitement. “He—he’s that boy, the boy in the crimson sweater. And how he has fought this fire!

“And that motor boat!” she exploded again. “It’s the one Jeannie says carries the Phantom Fisherman.”

Then, as if a curtain had been dropped, the smoke fell hiding the boy in the crimson sweater, the Phantom and all. Was Florence sorry? She could not tell.

She did not know it at that moment, but this was the last time she was to see either the Phantom or the boy in the crimson sweater on Isle Royale.

“It’s the end,” Florence thought, as they went chugging back toward Tobin’s Harbor. “The wind is really shifting. It will drive the fire back upon itself.” Even as she thought this, cold drops of rain struck her cheek. Rolling up from across the lake a real rainstorm, the first in weeks, was on its way.

Two hours later, drenched to the skin but joyously happy, the little party arrived at Tobin’s Harbor.

Late that night, the great log cabin used as a lounge for the lodge was comfortably crowded with people. The little fisherman’s wife was there. One child was asleep in her lap, another played at her side. On her face was a look of joy.

“Listen!” she was saying to the old man near her, “how it rains!” Great sheets of rain were beating against the window panes. “A northeast wind,” she added in a whisper, “the fires are over. Our homes and our islands are safe.”

This was the joyous feeling in every heart. That was why they were there. Drawn together by an invisible bond of common interest and friendship in hope and in despair, they had gathered to celebrate.

In the corner, an impromptu trio—piano, cello and violin—began playing, *Over the Waves*.

As the music rose and fell, as the sparks from the driftwood fire leaped toward the sky, Florence thought that no moment in her whole life had been as joyous as this.

“Jeanne,” she exclaimed, “you must dance. Dance to the patter of rain on the roof.”

“Yes,” Jeanne agreed almost eagerly, “I shall dance. I have been practicing a new dance quite in secret.”

“A new dance,” exclaimed one of the musicians, “what is it?”

“*Dance of the Flames*,” said Jeanne.

“Good! We have the very thing, an Indian dance to the fire god—you shall dance to our music.”

A few moments later, after the lights had been dimmed, when the flames from great logs in the broad fireplace leaped high and the strains of a weird Indian dance rose from the corner, a slender figure clad in garments of orange and red, with two long scarfs streaming behind, came dancing into the room.

It would be hard to describe the dance that followed. Only the little French girl could have so caught the movement and seeming spirit of flames. Now she was a low fire creeping stealthily upon some stately spruce tree. And now, urged on by some mischievous wind, she went rushing forward. And now, by a trick performed with the scarfs, she appeared to rise straight in air as the flames rushed to the very top of the tree.

When at last, quite exhausted, she flung herself down at Florence’s side, there came a burst of applause that would have done credit to a much larger gathering.

Katie arrived with a great pot of delicious hot chocolate and a pan of cakes. They ate and drank and then, led by a very pious old cottager, sang a hymn of thanks to the God who, with their aid had saved their island for them and for their children, years on end.

“Jeanne,” Florence whispered, as they groped their way back to the boat, “it is for such times as these that we live.”

“Ah, yes,” the little French girl agreed, “for such times as these.”

Just then Florence caught the sound of a voice that caused her to start. “Ya dese fires dey will be over now. Dis is de end we is been waiting for so long.”

At that Florence did a strange thing. Rushing up to the aged fisherman who had spoken she said, "You are the man!"

"Ya, I is de man," the fisherman agreed, "but what man, this is de question?"

"Twice I heard you say the fires were being set."

"Ya, it may be so."

"Why did you say that? Was it true?"

"Perhaps ya. Perhaps no," was the strange answer, "dese is been hard times. Might be we old men think too many t'ings." At that the old man disappeared as silently as usual into the night, leaving the girl with her own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXIII

DON'T STAY TOO LONG

All that night it rained, a slow, steady downpour. The wind that for weeks had been driving the fire forward shifted. It was now driving the fire back against itself. Everyone agreed that the battle was won. There was great rejoicing on the island. The whole country received the glad report by newspaper and radio.

Tim O'Hara, in his New York radio tower, at once got off a wire to Florence.

"Congratulations. Stop. Have set your appearance on our program for next Tuesday. Stop. Ticket will await you at Houghton.

Signed,

Tim O'Hara."

"He wants me to come to New York," Florence exclaimed. "New York," she repeated softly. "He wants me to tell the story of our fight to save the island, tell it on his Adventurer's Club radio program. Just think! Coast to coast! Millions of people will hear. Shall I go?"

"Go?" Dave roared. "Of course you'll go. Finest publicity in the world for our island. And think of the time you'll have!"

"And I shall go with you," said Jeanne.

"Sure! Why not?" Florence threw her arms about her. "No great occasion would be complete without you."

The two pals did little else save eat and sleep on their way to New York. From time to time they discussed the mysterious boy in the crimson sweater.

“He was a nice looking boy,” Jeanne mused. “Not a bit like a firebug.”

“No,” Florence agreed. “Not a bit. I can’t think he was one. All the same I would like to know why he always ran away.”

“Was there a firebug at all?” Jeanne asked.

“Probably no one will ever know. Many of the mysteries of this old earth are never solved.”

“Take a taxi from the depot.” This had been the order in Tim’s letter. Florence took him at his word. After handing a grinning redcap a whole quarter, she stepped into one of those luxurious New York taxis, and said, “Hilton Hotel, please.”

Then she settled back against the cushions and sighed, “Boy! This is life.”

At the hotel desk Tim O’Hara’s letter proved an open-sesame to all that was grand and luxurious. They were ushered to a room with delightfully low, twin beds, delicately shaded light, spinet desk and even a radio.

Florence thought of their crowded quarters on the *Wanderer* and sighed.

But not for long. To the accompaniment of soft music, breakfast was served in the great dining room below.

One more taxi and they were at the radio building. A moment later and they looked into Tim O’Hara’s beaming eyes.

“I am glad you could come!” he exclaimed. “I am sure you have a grand story.

“And this is Jeanne.” He gripped the little French girl’s hand. “Any new dances?”

“Just one.” Jeanne smiled.

“*Dance of the Flame*,” Florence explained.

“Sounds great! But then,” Tim added, “you can’t dance on the radio.”

“More’s the pity,” said Florence. “It is a glorious dance. Truly fantastic and—

and—”

“Yes, I see,” said Tim O’Hara. “You really can’t describe it. We shall have it somehow, somewhere.

“But now,” he was all business, “the other members of the cast are here. Step into my office.”

There three men awaited them: a bronze-faced giant, a man of very ordinary appearance and a slim, wiry man with sharp black eyes. The first had been hunting lions in the heart of Africa, the second had been driving dog teams in the “farthest north” and the third was a revenue man, who hunted down moonshine stills in the mountains of Kentucky. Each had known perils and adventures. Each, in his own way, was to tell his story.

“This is just a get-together,” said Tim O’Hara when introductions had been attended to. “We’re going to work together for three days—and by that I mean *work*. So we should know one another.”

After that in a very informal manner each told of his experiences. When Florence had heard the others she felt the least bit unimportant. But when, with a word here and there from Jeanne and Tim, she had got truly warmed up to her subject which, she laughingly explained, was rather a hot one (fighting fires) she realized that they all were listening with undivided interest.

“It wouldn’t be a complete show at all without your part,” Tim O’Hara murmured in her ear when the others were gone. “Your story is truly thrilling. And it has humor, interest and real heart-throbs. We’ll play up those little fishing cabins and the old men who have been coming to the island for so many years. You come back at two-thirty and we’ll write the script.”

“Oh!” Florence exclaimed. “Must there be a script? Can’t I just tell it in my own words.”

“Your own words? Surely! But it must be put on paper. Come back at two-thirty. You shall see it all worked out in a very grand manner.” He bowed them from the room.

“So this is New York?” Florence breathed as they once again found themselves on the sidewalk. “How thrilling!”

“Over one block is 5th Avenue,” said Jeanne. “So very wonderful! Gift shops eight stories high. Everything!”

“Fifth Avenue, here we come!” Florence exclaimed, seizing Jeanne by the hand. Once they had discovered the broad avenue, so alive and gay, they wandered on and on. In one shop they bought a bright plaid neck-tie for Dave, and in another still brighter dress material for Katie. In a music shop around the corner Jeanne purchased a small statue of a very great dancer.

“For my studio,” she said with a gay laugh. “The place of my dreams.”

“Ah yes,” Florence thought with a sigh, “how much of all our lives is made of dreams. And how very cold and lonely we would be without them.”

This mood passed quickly. “Jeanne,” she exclaimed, as a clock caught her eye, “we must have lunch and get back to that office!”

“Fried oysters!” said Jeanne as they seated themselves at a bright green table. “Shoestring potatoes, coffee and lemon pie. Why not? This is New York.”

Fried oysters it was and all the rest. Then a taxi whisked them away to Tim O’Hara.

“Now,” Tim said to Florence, as he leaned back in his chair to close his eyes, “tell me all about it in greater detail.”

“New—New York?” she stammered. “It—it’s grand!”

“Not New York.” His eyes flew open. “Tell me about Isle Royale.” His eyes closed again.

Florence did tell him. Told him in her own dramatic manner. From time to time he interrupted her to exclaim, “That was a close one—That’s grand—Just grand—You mean you were trapped by the fire? They flew over you and dropped the dog? A moose went after the dog? You heard him ki-yi? Say! That’s a grand story!” At this his eyes popped wide open.

“But this boy in the crimson sweater,” his eyes closed again. “Tell me about him.”

“He—he disappeared.” Florence hesitated. “I wish we could find him. He put up such a wonderful fight for that beautiful little island. He wasn’t the firebug. Probably there wasn’t any firebug. He knows we suspected him. I—I wish we could find him.”

“We will.” Tim’s eyes were wide open now. “Why not?”

“Do you suppose we really could?”

“You’d be surprised.” Tim leaned forward in his chair. “We pick all sorts of people right out of the air. As if we had a string on ’em.

“Little while back a man was telling about his adventures buying unclaimed trunks at auction and trying to find their owners. One very mysterious case baffled him. He told about it over the air and what do you think?”

“Wha-what?”

“Two days later he heard from the owner.

“You’re going to ask a million people to send that boy in the crimson sweater to you and to tell you his story. And they will send him. Someone surely will.

“But now,” continued Tim, “we’ll write your script.” For a half hour he pecked away at his typewriter. Then, with a sigh, he murmured, “A mighty fine story. That’s all for now. Tomorrow in Studio Six we rehearse.”

Four hours later the two girls stepped out on the brightly lighted streets of America’s greatest city. It was night. A slender, gray-haired man, with stooping shoulders offered them an evening paper.

As Florence took the paper and dropped a nickel into his hand she could not help noting how bright his eyes were.

“Isn’t New York wonderful?” she said in a deep voice full of emotion.

“Yes,” the old man agreed. “It’s wonderful when you’re young. But don’t stay too long.”

“Why—why not?” she was puzzled.

“New York takes you by the hand and whirls you ’round and ’round. It’s very wild and gay and it makes you drunk. But bye and bye—well,” he sighed, “look at me. You’d never guess it but I was once a reporter on that very paper you bought. It whirls you ’round and ’round.” His voice cracked. “Don’t stay too long, child. Don’t stay too long.”

“A reporter!” Florence exclaimed. “I knew a reporter. He went away to New York, Peter Kepple.”

“Ah, yes,” the old man sighed, “I knew him here. He died—let me see, two years ago. Don’t stay too long, Miss.”

Then his shrill old voice rose above the rush and roar of New York.

“Paper! Paper! Get your evening paper here.”

When they were half a block away Florence seemed to hear him calling, “Don’t stay too long.” How long was too long? She did not know.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE INVISIBLE HOST

That night Florence dreamed of herself as a gray-haired woman in a drab shawl selling papers on Christmas Eve.

The bright sun of next day drove all such dark fancies from her mind.

“Jeanne!” she exclaimed as she bounced out of bed, “Today we rehearse. Tomorrow we rehearse again. And that night comes the big show!”

As the hours passed, Florence found herself losing all thought that she was simply to make a little six-minute talk into a microphone. The feeling grew upon her with every passing moment that she was to be a part of a truly big thing.

And why not? Was she not preparing to speak to a million people? Would the opportunity ever come again? Perhaps not. And would not her friends be listening? Crowded about their radios on Isle Royale, in Chicago, in far-away Alaska, would they not be saying, “That’s Florence! How natural her voice sounds!” Ah, yes, it was to be wonderful.

Nor did Tim O’Hara allow a single member of his cast to forget the importance of his part. Every moment of rehearsal found them keyed up to a high pitch.

There were individual rehearsals, general rehearsals, a rehearsal for recording. And then, on the second day, Florence caught her breath as she was ushered into a large theater.

“Is this the place?” she asked, staring at a “mike” in the center of the stage.

“This is the place,” was the answer.

“And will there be people here?”

“Two thousand people.” Florence was ready to bolt out of the door.

“Oh, but my dear!” Jeanne exclaimed. “It is just another show. Remember how I sang in light opera.”

“Yes, but you are you and I am I.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Jeanne. “One or a million! Tell them! I know you can.”

When orchestra members began filing in she felt better. Her part of the show might not be so grand, but these would back her up.

Then a bright idea occurred to her, and in thinking of others she forgot herself. It is often so in life.

While others were rehearsing their parts she slipped over to the orchestra leader and said something to him in a low tone. He looked at Jeanne and nodded.

She talked some more. He smiled broadly, then began beating out imaginary notes with his baton.

“It can be done,” he agreed at last.

“I promise you it will be startling and wonderful!” said Florence.

The dress rehearsal thrilled her to the very tips of her toes. As the notes of the orchestra died away and she took her place before the “mike,” she seemed to feel the expectant hush of a real audience and from the far-flung prairies and the blue waters of her own beloved midwest a breath seemed to fan her cheek. For the moment, forgetting her little plot with the orchestra director, she went through her part as in a dream. Almost she expected a boy to step out from among those empty seats and say, “I am the boy in the crimson sweater.”

After that her thoughts returned to the orchestra leader and Jeanne. The moments dragged, but at last the rehearsal was over.

And then, just as Tim O’Hara was about to bid them scatter until six-thirty, the place went dark, a spotlight began playing over the stage, the girl in red drew her hands across the harp strings, the orchestra took up the notes of some tantalizing oriental music and, dressed in red with red and orange scarfs streaming behind

her, Jeanne danced out upon the stage.

In the moments that followed the little French girl was dancing upon a great flat rock. The roar and crackle of fire was in her ears, the flash and heat of flames in her eyes.

To the little group of onlookers this dance was entrancing. When at last, all aflutter, Jeanne danced away into the wings, even the musicians dropped their instruments to applaud.

“Bravo!” Tim O’Hara exclaimed. “You shall repeat it tonight.”

“But you cannot dance on the radio,” Jeanne protested.

“No,” was the answer, “but when we go off the air the audience here shall be treated to a grand surprise. They shall see *The Dance of the Flames*.”

So it was arranged. While Florence and Jeanne slipped away to a little place around the corner to sip hot chocolate and nibble at sweet cakes, the moments passed quickly and at last the opening moment of the great show was at hand.

As the audience began to arrive the curtain dropped and there they were, the performers moving about, quite breathless with anticipation. Slowly, one by one, the musicians arrived and took their places.

From behind the curtain came the murmur of many voices. How many? Florence could not guess. One thing she knew, these were but a handful compared to the invisible host waiting out there in the vast spaces beyond the theater’s walls.

Now someone outside the curtain was speaking, welcoming the audience. There was laughter and applause.

Then, slowly—ever so slowly—the curtain rose. And there they were seated before a theater packed to the very doors.

Florence caught her breath. She fixed her eyes on the clock. At exactly seven fifteen the show would go on the air. Fascinated, she watched the long second hand sweep around the dial. And then—

The girl in red drew her fingers across all the chords in her harp. The little dark-

eyed Spaniard on a stool thrummed his guitar, the big man with a bass viol drew his bow, the horns, drums, the violins joined in with a crashing crescendo. In the strange silence that followed a voice said, "The Adventurers' Club is on the air, coast to coast."

Once again Florence watched the circling of that second hand. At exactly seven twenty-seven she was to go on the air. Never had that hand raced so madly. Her heart kept time to its racing. At last here was a nod from Tim O'Hara.

Her knees trembled as she marched up to the microphone. But like a flash it came to her, "All my good friends are listening out there. They are part of the invisible host. I shall speak to them."

And she did. The audience before her thrilled and chilled at hearing of her adventures. They laughed when she told how Plumdum got his name and were breathlessly silent as she told of being trapped by the flames, of Plumdum's parachute jump, and of the mad moose. As she told of her escape they burst into applause. But to her, the great, invisible audience counted most. And when, in her last tense sixty seconds, she sent out an appeal, it was for one person somewhere out there on the air, the boy with the crimson sweater.

Ten seconds of applause followed her speech. This was broken in upon by the wild wail of the harp strings, and her share of the big show was at an end.

At an end? Not quite. Truth is, she was only half through. At ten thirty there would be another show for the western states. And before that, she knew, the whole cast was to be treated to a banquet in one of the show places of New York. What a night!

Jeanne's triumph, as, at the end of the performance, she did her weird dance of the flame, was even greater than Florence's own. And Florence was glad.

CHAPTER XXV

OUT OF THE AIR

As Florence sat in a shadowy corner of the stage waiting for the company to gather and start their march to the banquet hall, she was thinking, "I wonder if he heard. If he did, shall I hear from him? Or will the mystery of the boy in the crimson sweater remain unsolved?"

She was roused from these wonderings by Jeanne's voice in her ears, "Come, *ma cherie!* It is time to go."

To Florence, who had lived so much of her life in out-of-the-way places, their banquet hall with its blinking candles, snow-white linen and glistening silver was a place of great enchantment.

They were all there: Tim O'Hara and his two bright-eyed young secretaries, the harpist in her red waist, the little Spaniard who played the guitar, the entire cast and several others.

They were all scanning the bill of fare when there was a commotion at the door.

"You can't come in," a waiter was saying.

"But I must come in," a youthful voice insisted. "They called me in out of the air and here I am."

"Out—out of the air!" Florence exclaimed, springing to her feet.

At that instant the intruder broke from the head waiter's grasp and there he stood, the boy in the crimson sweater.

Tim O'Hara sized up the situation at a glance. Next instant he was on his feet, "Ladies and gentlemen." There was a thrill in his voice. "I have always insisted

that we bring them in from the air. Now here is visible proof. Less than an hour ago Miss Huyler broadcast an appeal. It was to the boy in the crimson sweater. And now here he is.”

Turning to the boy he said, “Whoever you are and whatever your name, you are a welcome guest at our party.” At that he ushered him to a place at Florence’s side.

The boy’s story was soon told. He had been sent to the island by the conservation editor of a New York magazine. His task had been to determine, as far as possible, how many wild moose were on the island. Some seventy or more had been taken from the island. Were there still hundreds or thousands? All those interested in wild life wanted to know.

“When the fires started,” he went on, “I thought of volunteering as a fire-fighter. But I had to have the count of moose for the next issue of the magazine. I couldn’t back out on the job I’d been sent to do. So I continued to count moose.

“At last,” he hesitated, “well, you know how it is. You sometimes feel things.”

“Yes,” Florence agreed, “and sometimes feel them wrong.”

“But this time I felt them right.” He laughed. “I was suspected of doing something terrible. I was suspected of setting fires. How horrible! I setting fires! I who have always worshipped trees as God’s first temples?”

“But how were we to know?” Florence exclaimed. “We—”

“You couldn’t know,” the boy broke in. “Nor could you help my being angry.

“Well,” he sighed, “I decided to play the game out to the end. So I dodged you again and again.

“The end came,” he took a long breath, “when Birch Island was in peril. That island had been my home. I loved it. And I loved the ‘Phantom Fisherman’ as you called him. He was my friend and that island was his home too. So you see,” he laughed low, “I had to come out in the open and fight beside you. I was sure you’d never know me without my sweater. When the fight was over I put the sweater on where you could see me. Then I vanished.”

“And you—” Florence did not finish, just sat staring at him.

“I caught a small boat to the mainland, prepared my report, and came to New York just in time to find you here. Which is worth all my trouble,” he added with a touch of gallantry.

“Then you—”

“I meant to give myself up,” he added.

“What I didn’t know was that you’d call for me from the air.

“That,” he went on after a brief silence, “was the finishing touch.

“And now,” his tone changed, “something tells me this is a grand feed and I’m keeping you from enjoying it. Suppose we proceed. Don’t let me spoil your celebration.”

Enjoy it they did to the full. When it was over they all went trooping back to the theater for the final performance.

To her surprise, Florence found herself going through her act the second time like a seasoned actor. As her voice went out over the air, no one listening in would have guessed that she was just another girl from the tall timber of Isle Royale.

When Jeanne had repeated her dance of the flames and the curtain was run down for the last time, the two girls said goodbye to that jolly, friendly company and to their new friend in the red sweater. After that they strolled out to the brightly lit streets of New York at night.

“Look at the people,” Florence exclaimed.

“They act as if they did not mean to go home till morning.”

When they neared their hotel they heard a cracked voice calling, “Extra! Extra! All about—”

“There!” Florence exclaimed, “There’s our old newsboy. I must buy one more paper.”

As she took the paper she slipped a silver half dollar into his bony hand. He stared at her for a moment, then coming close he said in a low voice, "Don't stay too long, child. Don't stay too long."

"He's right," she said to Jeanne, as they entered their room a moment later. "Look! It is midnight. New York has been whirling us 'round and 'round."

"Ah, yes," Jeanne sighed. "But it has been glorious."

"Yes," Florence agreed. "For all that, I'm glad we're starting back to Isle Royale and the *Wanderer* tomorrow. I want to hear the wash of the waves on the rocky shore and the seagull's scream. I want to waken in the night and catch the hoarse hoot of the fog horn on Passage Island. I want to smell the cool damp of balsam and spruce trees and watch the sun go down over Green Stone Ridge. That's life for me."

"Yes, *ma cherie*," Jeanne agreed. "That is life, but not for your little Jeanne, not for a long, long time to come."

"Why? What's the matter?" Florence was startled.

"A letter from France," Jeanne explained. "It has followed me days and days. Now it has caught up with me. I must return to France at once. So you see, my dear, it is goodbye. I go east and you go west. Is it not ever so?"

"But I shall come back," her spirits rose. "When the tulips nod gaily and there is the scent of lilacs in the air I shall return. And then—*Oh, la—la!* Who knows what will happen?"

Next morning on the deck of Jeanne's ship they clasped hands.

"Goodbye, Florence."

"Goodbye, Jeanne."

"Shall we meet again?"

"Who knows?"

And so they parted. Shall they meet again? We can but repeat Florence's words,

“Who knows?” If they do and it is our good fortune to learn of their further adventures you shall read of them in a book to be called, *Mystery in Red*.

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