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~Flora, 11

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BEACON STREET GIRLS®



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lake rescue

by annie bryant

beaconstreetgirls.com

CHAPTER 1**CAMP WHERE?**

“CHARLOTTE,” Jennifer Robinson, editor of *The Sentinel*, said abruptly. “Can you get this story from Mrs. Fields ready by Friday? She just dropped off information about the trip to Lake Rescue.”

“What trip? Lake Rescue? Why would anyone go there?”

Charlotte had been daydreaming about the BSG’s magic act in the recent school talent show. Marty had been so cute lying on his back with his little paws up in the air.

The leap from “magic” to being rescued from some lake was more than Charlotte could handle at the moment.

“Oh, that’s right ... you’re new this year.” Jennifer adjusted her funky purple glasses and continued. “Lake Rescue is up in the White Mountain National Forest of New Hampshire. Abigail Adams seventh graders go there every year for, you know, ‘the outdoor education experience.’ So this has to go in Friday’s paper. Mrs. Fields will give you all the gory details tomorrow.”

“I hope so.” Charlotte stared intently at the stack of papers in front of her.



“Oh, I forgot. Can you ask Isabel to do a cartoon about the trip?”

“Sure. I’ll call her tonight.”

Mountains? Lakes? Outdoor education adventure? Charlotte had to take a few deep breaths to calm down. The possibility of a new adventure was just too exciting. Memories of Australia and Africa flooded her senses. She absolutely loved being outside, camping, hiking, swimming. Was it too cold to swim in the lake? Would they have boats? That would be too cool. She could hardly wait to tell her dad about the trip. Maybe he had already been to New Hampshire.

When she finally gathered her things and made it outside, Charlotte looked around for her friends, but the Abigail Adams school grounds were deserted. She checked her watch again. She wasn’t that late. She must have missed everybody by just a couple of minutes.

Charlotte pulled her jacket closer and hurried toward Beacon Street, then crossed over to Corey Hill toward her house.

On impulse, she stopped at Montoya’s Bakery for hot chocolate. She figured Nick would probably not be there, but she told herself that she didn’t care if he was or not. Once she entered the bakery, the delicious smells of chocolate cookies freshly baked and coffee, which she didn’t drink, made her feel warm and cozy inside.

“Two hot chocolates to go, please,” Charlotte ordered. She’d take her dad one on the chance that he’d be home to share her news.

“*Hola*, Charlotte,” Mrs. Montoya said. “Where are the rest of your *amigas*?” Charlotte loved the way Mrs. Montoya threw in a few Spanish words every now and then. It made Charlotte feel as if she were someplace exotic ... maybe like

the Alhambra Palace in Spain. It was supposed to be spectacular ... definitely on her list of must-sees.

“I don’t know *where* those girls are,” she answered. “I was working on the newspaper and left school late. Avery must have a soccer game. Maeve probably had to baby-sit her brother Sam. I only hope Katani and Isabel are thinking about how we’re going to dress for Pajama Day. They are the only ones who know how to sew in our group.”

“Ah, yes. Nick told me about that. We never got to wear pajamas to school in my day. It sounds like good fun.”

All of a sudden, Charlotte realized that she had been standing there without paying attention to anything. For a minute, she couldn’t even remember what they were talking about.

At the sound of Nick’s name, Charlotte had felt a little fluttery, but she didn’t want Mrs. Montoya to think she had a major crush on her son. She reasoned that Nick was just a friend ... her first real “boy” friend.

“Charlotte,” Mrs. Montoya asked, “What are you wearing?”

“Pajamas, funny pajamas.” Charlotte breathed a sigh of relief. She didn’t want Mrs. Montoya telling her son that something was wrong with her. “It’s going to be seriously funny. I can hardly wait. The Beacon Street Girls are all going to dress alike.”

Mrs. Montoya raised her eyebrows.

Oh, no. Charlotte’s heart skipped a beat. She’s going to tell Nick that I’m *muy loca*.

“Like Wee Willie Winkie,” Mrs. Montoya began to recite.

Charlotte was relieved, but she missed Mrs. Montoya’s reference. “Who’s that?”

“You know ... the nursery rhyme, about that funny little



fellow Wee Willie Winkie, upstairs and down, who ran all over town in his nightgown. Surely your mother read ...”

“No, not that one,” Charlotte sighed. “We just kept reading *Charlotte’s Web* over and over.”

“With the little spider ... that’s so nice, Charlotte,” Mrs. Montoya responded. She then handed Charlotte the bag with two hot chocolates to go. “Want some biscotti? They are just out of the oven. A couple would go nicely with the cocoa.”

Charlotte nodded her head. Montoya’s biscotti were famous. People lined up in the morning to get them for breakfast. “Just a couple.” She searched her purse for enough money to cover her purchase. The cookies were a good idea. Last time she had looked, the cookie jar was empty.

With hot chocolate and cookies in hand, Charlotte waved good-bye to Mrs. Montoya and walked quickly but carefully toward home. She didn’t want the hot chocolates to lose their lids. She could just see herself falling and making a big splat on the street ... with kids riding by on their bikes and people staring out of the trolley. She could see the headlines now, “Huge Fall on Beacon Street. Abigail Adams Student Bites the Dust. Hot Chocolate to Blame.” My inner journalist comes popping up at the oddest of times, Charlotte thought to herself.

She was totally relieved when she reached the yellow Victorian that was home to the globe-trotting Ramseys. As she set everything down to use her key, she could hear Marty the dog dancing and yelping in excitement on the other side of the door.

The little dog followed her all the way to the kitchen, where she found her dad staring into the cupboards, looking puzzled, as if somehow cookies were supposed to appear by magic.

“Here, Dad, I brought us a treat.” Charlotte set the cocoa

cups down, placed the biscotti on a saucer, and plopped down opposite her father at the kitchen table. “I have so much to tell you.”

“Should I prepare myself?” Charlotte’s dad always had a twinkle in his eyes when he looked at her. Charlotte felt so lucky. Her father was right there when she needed to talk. But he wasn’t always in her face either. He gave her lots of private time to write and stare up at the stars. They seemed to have found just the right balance.

She thought of Maeve’s father, who was now living apart from the family, and how Maeve’s parents would probably be getting a divorce. Of course, Maeve got to see her father on weekends, and Avery flew to Colorado every Christmas and summer to ski and hike with her dad. And they both could email their dads anytime they wanted. But “it’s not the same,” Maeve had sighed, “when you don’t have a dad in the house to help you.”

“I love you, Dad,” Charlotte said as she dipped the biscotti into the warm, sweet hot chocolate. A deliciously perfect snack, she thought. Charlotte was grateful that she and her dad got along so well—even if he had been a little absent-minded lately.

“Uh-oh, this is going to be worse than I imagined.” Mr. Ramsey opened his hot chocolate. He took a big sip, reached for a chocolate biscotti, and dipped the crispy cookie in the cocoa for a couple of seconds before he bit off a chunk.

Charlotte laughed. “No, Dad. Don’t worry. No klutz attacks this time. This is *good* news. The entire seventh grade is going to New Hampshire, on an outdoor education adventure. We’ll be camping, hiking, who knows what. Now, what do you know about New Hampshire?”

Mr. Ramsey frowned and thought for a minute. “I think



the rattlesnakes may be holing up for the winter, but they do have the biggest spiders in the United States. Ferocious, man-eating spiders and bears. Let's see, and mountain lions too, I believe. No, I am sure of it. I don't think you should go to New Hampshire, Charlotte—too dangerous even for somebody who has fought off an angry rhino in Africa and snorkeled off the Great Barrier Reef. No, I don't think I can allow it."

Her dad loved to tease.

"Remember when that lady gave me that baby koala to hold? He was so unbelievably cute."

"That was a great day," Mr. Ramsey recalled. "I wonder where that photo is of you holding him?"

"That little bear was so soft. He took hold of me the minute the trainer put him in my arms." Charlotte could remember how cuddly the koala was. He was like a big stuffed toy.

"That's a reflex. Koalas hold onto their mothers like that, then hold onto tree limbs so they can feed. I doubt New Hampshire has any koalas or ostriches either, but watch your towel. A bear might like to take a good chomp out of it."

Mr. Ramsey was referring to the time an ostrich was watching them eat breakfast when they were camping in Africa. What that bird was watching for was the opportunity to snatch Charlotte's washrag off their little clothesline. They chased him, but never were able to get it back.

"He's probably still washing his face with it every morning."

They could have gone on with their memories for the rest of the night. How many daughters had traveled all over the world or had so much fun with their fathers? "You'll need some new gear. I can take you and the other BSG shopping for your trip." Mr. Ramsey finished his cookie and

got up to put the plates into the dishwasher.

"Like you went shopping for groceries on your way home from work today?" Charlotte grinned.

"Busted. I totally forgot. I guess we might just have to go out to dinner. We'll get a few groceries on the way home. Can't shop when we're hungry." Mr. Ramsey gave his stomach a pat.

Charlotte glanced at her watch. "Give me a few minutes, Dad, OK? I need to ask Isabel about something for the school newspaper."

"Sure. I'll just clean up ... don't be long."

"I won't."

Charlotte ran to the Tower where she had left her notebook. Every time she pulled down the stairs and climbed to her favorite hideaway, she thought how lucky she and her dad were to have found the old yellow Victorian. And how cool it was that she and her friends, who weren't friends at the time, found the secret space.

Back in her bedroom, Charlotte logged on, then hit IM, hoping some of the BSG were on.



Chat Room: BSG
File Edit People View Help

5 people here

skywriter: hey frendz
lafrida: What's up?
Kgirl: Where were u after school?
skywriter: Sentinel office, working. Missed u. But have news.
Kgirl: Spill it.
skywriter: Have u heard about the field trip to New Hampshire?
Kgirl: Oh, no. Not the ... outdoor education trip.
lafrida: What's that?
Kgirl: Camping, bugs, cooking over a fire, bugs, hiking in the wilderness. Both my sisters complained about how really grubby you get. And if it rains—pure misery. Xcept you do get to have a dance and the lake is supposed to be really cool. I love lakes.
4kicks: I heard we get 2 climb rock walls and ropes and—
flikchic: We have 2 sleep n a tent?

skywriter
lafrida
Kgirl
4kicks
flikchic

Chat Room: BSG
File Edit People View Help

5 people here

4kicks: No, there r cabins.
flikchic: r there bathrooms please tell me there r bathrooms?
4kicks: Sure. We're not backpacking in the wilderness here.
flikchic: I can't possibly do n e of that. I'm not going—I detest spiders of all kinds.
lafrida: OK that.
Kgirl: I think u have 2. Unless your parents write an excuse.
skywriter: u guys! This will b fun. We'll b n it 2gether. My dad and I camped all the time in Africa and Australia. We had such great adventures.
flikchic: I don't need adventures. Living 2 places, putting up with Sam is plenty of adventure 4 me. Last night he jumped out from under my bed with a water pistol. Besidz I'm a real city girl.
lafrida: Do boys go too?

skywriter
lafrida
Kgirl
4kicks
flikchic





Chat Room: BSG
File Edit People View Help

5 people here

skywriter
lafrida
Kgirl
4kicks
flikchic





   

4kicks: Everyone has 2 go. It's about stretching what u think u can do.
flikchic: I'm all bent out of shape now.
lafrida: BTW what did u want, Char?
skywriter: Almost 4got. Jennifer wants you 2 do a cartoon about the trip 4 the newspaper.
lafrida: How can I do a cartoon when we haven't been yet?
Kgirl: Just think of the worst possible thing that could go wrong while we're camping in the woods and draw that.
skywriter: Maeve falling out of a canoe and coming up with her hair full of fish? LOL
4kicks: Char dangling by a thread from her climbing rope Nick tries to reach her. She falls on him. Ha. Ha.
skywriter: Ooh ... mashed Montoya.

Chat Room: BSG
File Edit People View Help

5 people here

skywriter
lafrida
Kgirl
4kicks
flikchic

flikchic: I think that sounds sweet.
lafrida: ok, I get the idea. I'll do my worst.
skywriter: By Friday, OK? And guys, my dad wants 2 take us shopping 4 supplies. We can get matching sweatshirts and the best smelling mosquito repellent made.
4kicks: O de skunk. That should repel even the biggest spider.
skywriter: Spend the night here Friday night 2 plan? Also get ready for pajama day, don't 4get.
lafrida: OK.
Kgirl: Good idea.
4kicks: Agree.
flikchic: I think I can.
skywriter: Done deal. Over and out.





