



Stand in the Wind

Jean Little

Pictures by Emily Arnold McCully



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1 | All Packed

Martha Winston had to sit on the suitcase to get it to shut. For once she was glad to be fifteen pounds overweight. As it was, she barely got the lid to close. Leaning over quickly, she snapped the catches into place. There! She had managed to squeeze in her sister Ellen's *Guide to Canadian Birds*. Ellen was going to be so busy entertaining the company that she wouldn't have spare time for bird-watching.

"Besides, I'll be home from camp in a week," Martha muttered.

Even though she had talked of nothing but camp for days, it still amazed her that she was really going. She looked around the room she and Ellen shared when they were here at the cottage. She had slept here every summer as far back as she could remember. It seemed strange to be planning to spend a week in July somewhere else.

But the rest of the family was leaving, too, the day after tomorrow. With guests coming, they needed the extra bedrooms in the house in town.

None of that mattered right now though. Getting

herself ready to leave for camp was the one important thing. She was positive she had forgotten something.

Of course! She jumped up and headed for the door.

Ellen, coming in to change out of her bathing suit, blocked her way.

"Where's the fire?" she asked.

"Extra flashlight batteries!" Martha cried. "I just remembered them this minute."

Ellen took her by the shoulders, turned her firmly around and pushed her back into the room.

"You do not need another thing, Martha Jane Winston," she said. "You put brand-new batteries in that flashlight just this morning. I saw you. You'll be home next Saturday, for crying out loud!"

Martha twisted free and faced the older girl.

"But what if I DO need them?" she wailed.

"You can buy them at the Camp Tuck Shop," Ellen told her calmly.

"Oh," Martha said.

Ellen edged past her, stepped over the suitcase, skirted Martha's rubber boots and halted by the chair on which she had left her clothes. Martha, feeling deflated, stood still and watched while Ellen skinned out of her bathing suit, put on shorts and a sleeveless top, hung her suit on the hook behind the door and collapsed on her bunk. Martha looked up

at hers, and decided it was not worthwhile climbing up to it.

"Make more room," she told her older sister.

Ellen shifted her long legs to leave space enough for Martha to sit.

"Whew! It sure is hot," Ellen said.

"You don't look hot."

"I am boiling," Ellen retorted.

Martha mopped her own damp forehead with her shirttail, looked at her sister and sighed. Martha's short summer haircut had taken the weight of hair off the back of her neck but what was left clung stickily to her head. Ellen's, much fairer, had a bit of wave and lay loosely. Ellen's cheeks, too, were only faintly flushed in spite of the sun. Martha could see her own face in the mirror across the room. She was as red as a strawberry.

Of course, she's been swimming and I've been slaving over the packing, Martha comforted herself.

Yet thin people always looked cooler whatever they did.

Even Ellen's eyes were cooler, grey like rain clouds, while Martha's were the bright, bright blue of a clear sky in summer.

"I can't stand the thought of having to leave this nice cottage and go back to roast in town just because these people are coming," Ellen complained.

For one moment Martha thought about the visi-

tors. Nell Swann, a college friend of her mother's, and her two daughters were coming to stay while Mr. Swann attended a convention in nearby Toronto. Mother had not seen Mrs. Swann for years, but they wrote to each other so Martha knew that the two girls were almost exactly the same ages as Ellen and herself. It was too bad the cottage did not have more bedrooms. Summers in town were awful.

But I'll be at camp for just about the whole time, Martha remembered with an inner jump for joy.

She did not answer Ellen.

"I'm sure I've forgotten something," she said instead, gazing at her stuff.

"You have not." Ellen propped herself up on one elbow so that she too could survey Martha's belongings. "Just look at it all! One sleeping bag with an extra blanket and your pillow rolled up inside it. . . ."

"It looks perfect, doesn't it?" Martha put in.

Ellen ignored that.

"Two rubber boots and one raincoat," she went on. "Maybe you should take Mother's good umbrella too."

"Don't be dumb," Martha told her.

"I seem to detect one fishing rod," Ellen said.

"Check," returned Martha.

"And a large suitcase containing . . . let me guess . . . one pair of warm pajamas, one toothbrush, one partly used tube of toothpaste, two bathing suits,

towels, a couple of sweaters, blue jeans, shorts, tops, underwear, your squall jacket, some stuff to keep mosquitoes off, your drinking mug . . .” She hesitated.

“Soap in a soap dish,” prompted Martha. “A plastic one with a lid.”

Ellen looked at her.

“What’s so remarkable about a plastic soap dish?”

“Nothing. I just never had one before.”

Martha settled herself more comfortably and added, “Go on.”

“What do you mean, go on?”

“Go on saying what I’m taking.”

“But you’ve packed and repacked it all a hundred times,” Ellen protested.

“I know, but I still like to hear everything in a long list like that,” Martha said.

Couldn’t Ellen feel the magic in the words as she said them?

Sleeping bag! Martha, in her imagination, was on a camp sleep-out. She saw the red glow of the dying fire, heard her friend Tracey laughing softly beside her and looked up into the night sky patterned with stars.

Fishing rod! Maybe she would get up at sunrise to go fishing. They had rowboats at the camp. Everything would be hushed except for the gentle ~~creak~~ and splash of the oars as they pulled through the water.

Flashlight! She would use it to find her way to the cabin after dark, the bobbing circle of light just ahead of her feet showing her the rocks and hollows.

And her own new soap dish! It too was special when you had always just used the soap that lay in its place on the basin in the bathroom. Martha had never been particularly fond of washing her face but at camp even that promised to be an adventure.

Then, in the middle of her daydream, Martha heard Ellen chuckle.

"What's so funny?" Martha demanded.

"You are," Ellen said. "You'd think you were off to Zanzibar or something. What's so great and marvelous about going to camp for a week? I think you're crazy in the head."

"I am not," Martha retorted. "But I'd rather go to camp any day than go to Zanzibar. Where is Zanzibar anyway?"

"Who knows?" Ellen fell back on her pillow with a sigh. "All I do know is that I wish I was going to camp with you."

Martha stared at her.

"But that one time you did go, you said you hated camp. And every time Mother's tried to talk you into going again, you've said no."

"Mother thinks I was just too young and she's probably right. I thought I'd die of homesickness," Ellen remembered. "And I hated never having time alone to do what I wanted. Though all I really

wanted to do was stay in my cabin and cry. But that was six years ago. And even if it wasn't perfect, going to camp would be better than having to entertain those Swann girls for days on end. In town too, where it'll be so hot and the house will be jammed with people."

Martha counted heads. Her young brothers, Bruce and Toby, Ellen, her parents, Mrs. Swann and the two girls—that made eight people. When she came back from camp there would be nine and if Mr. Swann stayed over a night that would make it ten. Poor Ellen!

For herself, Martha would not mind if twenty people came. She liked new people. But Ellen, though she was older, never seemed to know what to say to strangers.

"It'll be okay once they get here." Martha did her best to be comforting. "I bet those girls will be really nice."

If it hadn't been for camp, she would have envied Ellen.

"Rosemary and Christine," Ellen said gloomily. "Even their names are awful."

"Maybe they'll have nicknames."

"Yeah. Rosie and Chrissy. How sweet!" Ellen jeered.

Then her lips twitched, in spite of her, and Martha grinned with relief.

"Wait till the kids in my cabin see Henrietta and

Herman," she gloated, her thoughts leaving the Swanns.

"Martha, you didn't pack those repulsive things!" Ellen cried. "Why, some of the little kids will be petrified!"

Martha opened her mouth to explain that that was the whole idea but changed her mind.

Nobody in her family, except Toby, understood her delight in practical jokes. She had no intention of taking Henrietta or Herman out of that suitcase. Henrietta was a huge hairy spider, made of rubber, but more horrible than any actual spider could be. When you twitched the thread that controlled her, her long skinny legs took jumpy little steps in the direction of your victim. Herman was a snake and also rubber—but he made other rubber snakes look like nothing. Even Toby had yelped with alarm when he had first met Herman one night, coiled on his pillow; and Toby was fond of snakes. It had cost Martha three weeks' allowance to buy Herman, but she considered him a fine investment. She had a shoe box full of other tricks, all bought with her own money, but they were more ordinary.

"Ellen. EL-LEN!" Toby's voice cannoned up the stairs.

"What is it?" Ellen called back.

"MOTHER SAYS COME AND HELP GET LUNCH RIGHT NOW!"

"Okay, okay. I'll be right down." Ellen slid her feet out around Martha and stood up.

"Thank goodness they don't have boys anyway," she said.

"They DO have boys. It's a coed camp," Martha said.

Ellen gave her a dirty look.

"I was talking about the Swanns," she said, "but all you ever think about is camp, camp, camp. Maybe something will happen to keep you home. Remember last year?"

Martha remembered.

"It wasn't my fault," she said. "I didn't know the camps filled up so fast, and I had to play at that stupid recital. I just forgot all about having the registration form. And then I couldn't find it."

"I should know. I was the one who finally did find it scrunched up in your blazer pocket. If you'd ever put things away . . ."

"Don't preach," Martha told her. "It was bad enough that I was the only one who had to stay behind. This time nothing can keep me home. Nothing!"

"Touch wood," Ellen said, turning to leave.

Martha patted the end of the bunk. Then she got up too. As she came out into the narrow hall that ran around the stairwell like the deck of a ship, she almost stepped on Bruce. He was so quiet it was hard to believe he and Toby were actually brothers, both of whom the Winstons had adopted.

Yet Ellen and I are just as different, Martha thought.

"Hi, Bashful," she said.

Bruce wasted no time on flippant greetings.

"Guess what I found, Marth," he said, hands behind his back.

"A lizard," guessed Martha.

He shook his head.

"A pot of gold?"

"No. Really guess."

Martha was sure she already knew but he wanted so much to surprise her. She scratched her head.

"Um . . . I don't know, Bruce. A new penny?"

Bruce, beaming, slowly extended his grubby hand, palm up.

"A wishing stone!" Martha exclaimed, doing her best to look amazed.

He had wanted one since Martha had read him a fairy tale where the hero got his heart's desire all from a wishing stone. Toby had wanted one too, but he was quickly satisfied with a small rock he picked up five minutes after he started looking. Bruce had searched carefully and long for a stone which was smooth and round and white. When he found one, he went right on looking, determined to find one for Martha too. Now Martha took the pebble from him and ran her fingers over its polished surface.

"It's even better than yours," she told him.

"Martha! Bruce! Lunch!" Mother called from the foot of the stairs.

"Coming," Martha answered. But Bruce barred her way.

"Martha, maybe I'd better keep the stone for you until you're ready to wish," he said. "It's awfully easy to say something without thinking and then everything you touch turns to gold or you have a pudding on the end of your nose or something."

"How about you?" Martha said, trying not to laugh.

"I'll be very careful," Bruce assured her, and took back the stone.

"Let's go." Suddenly starving, Martha ran slam-bang down the stairs, jumping the last three, sailed across the living room and landed on her chair with a crash.

"Martha, those stairs are dangerous," Mother scolded. "Someday you're going to come flying down like that and break your neck."

"Not me," Martha said. "Hey, I'm all packed to go."

Her mother laughed at her.

"You've been packed for a week," she said. "You just can't stop rearranging things. Toby, will you ask the blessing, please?"

"God is great and God is good. Let us thank Him for this food. Amen. I want a peanut-butter sandwich," Toby said in a breathless rush.

"Not till you've finished your soup," Mrs. Winston said. "And eaten some carrot sticks."

Toby went at his soup as though he had had no nourishment for a week. Bruce bent forward and blew gently on his.

"It's cool enough to eat now, Bruce, if you start from the edge," Mother said.

"I like it COLD," Bruce answered quietly but firmly.

Toby spooned in his last mouthful and grabbed three carrot sticks.

"Rabbit food!" he scoffed, chomping into them like a beaver demolishing a tree trunk.

Bruce took one in his left hand. He nibbled at it with his front teeth. Martha, noticing, knew he was playing he was a rabbit.

"Bruce," Mother said suddenly as he picked up his spoon again, "what's wrong with your right hand?"

"I'm holding something in it," Bruce said.

"Well, put it down and eat properly. You're going to spill your soup that way."

Bruce turned a troubled face to Martha.

That crazy wishing stone!

"Give it here," Martha said quickly. "I've thought of one."

Bruce handed her the smooth white pebble and watched to make sure she wished the way she should. Martha closed her eyes, rubbed the wishing stone three times, clutched it tightly and thought.

I wish the camp I'm going to will be the most fun I've ever had in my whole entire life.

Toby, swinging around to watch too, knocked over his milk. His mother snatched up paper napkins and tried to check the spreading white lake.

"Quick, Martha. Get the dishcloth," she ordered.

Martha ran. Rounding the corner into the kitchen, she skidded on the floor. As she slipped, she grabbed for the counter to break her fall but the wishing stone was still in her hand. Instinctively she threw out her other arm.

Crash!

"Martha, what happened? Are you all right?" Mrs. Winston cried.

"Hurry," yelled Toby. "The milk's running into my shoe!"

Martha did not answer. She sat where she had fallen, her teeth clenched, her left arm cradled awkwardly against her.

"Oh, Martha, what now?" Mother was kneeling beside her.

"My arm." Martha tried not to cry. "It hurts."

Her mother reached out, felt Martha flinch and drew back her hand. She stood up then and turned to Ellen, who was watching from the door.

"Dr. Hill's at his cottage. Call and ask him to come."

Ellen stared down at Martha, still huddled on the floor.

"What's the matter with her?" she asked.

"I'm not sure," Caroline Winston said, "but I think she's just broken her arm."