

The Curlytops on Star Island

Howard R. Garis

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THE CURLYTOPS ON STAR ISLAND

OR

Camping out with Grandpa

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

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Stories," "Uncle Wiggily Series," Etc.

Illustrations by

JULIA GREENE

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Or, Camping Out With Grandpa

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Or, Grand Fun With Skates and Sleds

THE CURLYTOPS AT UNCLE FRANK'S RANCH

Or, Little Folks on Ponyback

1918

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CHAPTER I

THE BLUE LIGHT

"Mother, make Ted stop!"

"I'm not doing anything at all, Mother!"

"Yes he is, too! Please call him in. He's hurting my doll."

"Oh, Janet Martin, I am not!"

"You are so, Theodore Baradale Martin; and you've just got to stop!"

Janet, or Jan, as she was more often called, stood in front of her brother with flashing eyes and red cheeks.

"Children! Children! What are you doing now?" asked their mother, appearing in the doorway of the big, white farmhouse, holding in her arms a small boy. "Please don't make so much noise. I've just gotten Baby William to sleep, and if he wakes up--"

"Yes, don't wake up Trouble, Jan," added Theodore, or Ted, the shorter name being the one by which he was most often called. "If you do he'll want to come with us, and we can't make Nicknack race."

"I wasn't waking him up, it was you!" exclaimed Jan. "He keeps pulling my doll's legs, Mother and--"

"I only pulled 'em a little bit, just to see if they had any springs in 'em. Jan said her doll was a circus lady and could jump on the back of a horse. I wanted to see if she had any springs in her legs."

"Well, I'm _pretending_ she has, so there, Ted Martin! And if you don't stop--"

"There now, please stop, both of you, and be nice," begged Mrs. Martin. "I thought, since you had your goat and wagon, you could play without having so much fuss. But, if you can't--"

"Oh, we'll be good!" exclaimed Ted, running his hands through his tightly curling hair, but not taking any of the kinks out that way. "We'll be good, I won't tease Jan anymore."

"You'd better not!" warned his sister, and, though she was a year younger than Ted, she did not seem at all afraid of him.

"If you do I'll take my half of the goat away and you can't ride."

"Pooh! Which is your half?" asked Ted.

"The wagon. And if you don't have the wagon to hitch Nicknack to, how're you going to ride?"

"Huh! I could ride on his back. Take your old wagon if you want to, but if you do---"

"The-o-dore!" exclaimed his mother in a slow, warning voice, and when he heard his name spoken in that way, with each syllable pronounced separately, Ted knew it was time to haul down his quarreling colors and behave. He did it this time.

"I--I'm sorry," he faltered. "I didn't mean that, Jan. I won't pull your doll's legs any more."

"And I won't take the goat-wagon away. We'll both go for a ride in it."

"That's the way to have a good time," said Mrs. Martin, with a smile. "Now don't make any more noise, for William is fussy. Run off and play now, but don't go too far."

"We'll go for a ride," said Teddy. "Come on, Jan. You can let your doll make-believe drive the goat if you want to."

"Thank you, Teddy. But I guess I'd better not. I'll pretend she's a Red Cross nurse and I'm taking her to the hospital to work."

"Then we'll make-believe the goat-wagon is an ambulance!" exclaimed Ted. "And I'm the driver and I don't mind the big guns. Come on, that'll be fun!"

Filled with the new idea, the two children hurried around the side of the farmhouse out toward the barn where Nicknack, their pet goat, was kept. Mrs. Martin smiled as she saw them go.

"Well, there'll be quiet for a little while," she said, "and William can have his sleep."

"What's the matter, Ruth!" asked an old gentleman coming up the walk just then. "Have the Curlytops been getting into mischief again?"

"No. Teddy and Janet were just having one of their little quarrels. It's all over now. You look tired, Father."

Grandpa Martin was Mrs. Martin's husband's father, but she loved him as though he were her own.

"Yes, I am tired. I've been working pretty hard on the farm," said Grandpa Martin, "but I'm going to rest a bit now. Want me to take Trouble?" he asked as he saw the little boy in his mother's arms. Baby William was called Trouble because he got into so much of it.

"No, thank you. He's asleep," said Mother Martin. "But I do wish you could find some way to keep Ted and Jan from disputing and quarreling so much."

"Oh, they don't act half as bad as lots of children."

"No, indeed! They're very good, I think," said Grandma Martin, coming to the door with a patch of flour on the end of her nose, for it was baking day, as you could easily have told had you come anywhere near the big kitchen of the white house on Cherry Farm.

"They need to be kept busy all the while," said Grandpa Martin. "It's been a little slow for them here this vacation since we got in the hay and gathered the cherries. I think I'll have to find some new way for them to have fun."

"I didn't know there was any new way," said Mother Martin with a laugh, as she carried Baby William into the bedroom and came back to sit on the porch with Grandpa and Grandma Martin.

"Oh, yes, there are lots of new ways. I haven't begun to think of them yet," said Grandpa Martin. "I'm going to have a few weeks now with not very much to do until it's time to gather the fall crops, and I think I'll try to find some way of giving your Curlytops a good time. Yes, that's what I'll do. I'll keep the Curlytops so busy they won't have a chance to think of pulling dolls' legs or taking Nicknack, the goat, away from his wagon."

"What are you planning to do, Father?" asked Grandma Martin of her husband.

"Well, I promised to take them camping on Star Island you know."

"What! Not those two little tots--not Ted and Jan?" cried Grandma Martin, looking up in surprise.

"Yes, indeed, those same Curlytops!"

It was easy to understand why Grandpa Martin, as well as nearly everyone else, called the two Martin children Curlytops. It was because their hair was so tightly curling to their heads. Once Grandma Martin lost her thimble in the hair of one of the children, and their locks were curled so nearly alike that she never could remember on whose head she found the needle-pusher.

"Do you think it will be safe to take Ted and Jan camping?" asked Mother Martin.

"Why, yes. There's no finer place in the country than Star Island. And if you go along--"

"Am I to go?" asked Ted's mother.

"Of course. And Trouble, too. It'll do you all good. I wish Dick could come, too," went on Grandpa Martin, speaking of Ted's father, who had gone from Cherry Farm for a few days to attend to some matters at a store he owned in the town of Cresco. "But Dick says he'll be too busy. So I guess the Curlytops will have to go camping with grandpa,"

added the farmer, smiling.

"Well, I'm sure they couldn't have better fun than to go with you," replied Mother Martin. "But I'm not sure that Baby William and I can go."

"Oh, yes you can," said her father-in-law. "We'll talk about it again. But here come Ted and Jan now in the goat-cart. They seem to have something to ask you. We'll talk about the camp later."

Teddy and Janet Martin, the two Curlytops, came riding up to the farmhouse in a small wagon drawn by a fine, big goat, that they had named Nicknack.

"Please, Mother," begged Ted, "may we ride over to the Home and get Hal?"

"We promised to take him for a ride," added Jan.

"Yes, I suppose you may go," said Mother Martin. "But you must be careful, and be home in time for supper."

"We will," promised Ted. "We'll go by the wood-road, and then we won't get run over by any automobiles. They don't come on that road."

"All right. Now remember--don't stay too late."

"No, we won't!" chorused the two children, and down the garden path and along the lane they went to a road that led through Grandpa Martin's wood-lot and so on to the Home for Crippled Children, which was about a mile from Cherry Farm.

Among others at the Home was a lame boy named Hal Chester. That is, he had been lame when the Curlytops first met him early in the summer, but he was almost cured now, and walked with only a little limp. The Home had been built to cure lame children, and had helped many of them.

Half-way to the big red building, which was like a hospital, the Curlytops met Hal, the very boy whom they had started out to see.

"Hello, Hal!" cried Ted. "Get in and have a ride."

"Thanks, I will. I was just coming over to see you, anyway. What are you two going to do?"

"Nothing much," Ted answered, while Jan moved along the seat with her doll, to make room for Hal. "What're you going to do?"

"Same as you."

The three children laughed at that. "Let's ride along the river road," suggested Janet. "It'll be nice and shady there, and if my Red Cross doll is going to the war she'll like to be cool once in a while."

"Is your doll a Red Cross nurse?" asked Hal. "If she is, where's her cap and the red cross on her arm?"

"Oh, she just started to be a nurse a little while ago," Jan explained. "I haven't had time to make the red cross yet. But I will. Anyhow, let's go down by the river."

"All right, we will," agreed Ted. "We'll see if we can get some sticks off the willow trees and make whistles," he added to Hal.

"You can make better whistles in the spring, when the bark is softer, than you can now," said the lame boy, as the Curlytops often called him, though Hal was nearly cured.

"Well, maybe we can make some now," suggested Ted, and a little later the two boys were seated in the shade under the willow trees that grew on the bank of a small river which flowed into Clover Lake, not far from Cherry Farm. Nicknack, tied to a tree, nibbled the sweet, green grass, and Jan made a wreath of buttercups for her doll.

After they had made some whistles, which did give out a little tooting sound, Ted and Hal found something else to do, and Jan saw, coming along the road, a girl named Mary Seaton with whom she often played. Jan called Mary to join her, and the two little girls had a good time together while Ted and Hal threw stones at some wooden boats they made and floated down the stream.

"Oh, Ted, we must go home!" suddenly cried Jan. "It's getting dark!"

The sun was beginning to set, but it would not really have been dark for some time, except that the western sky was filled with clouds that seemed to tell of a coming storm. So, really, it did appear as though night were at hand.

"I guess we'd better go," Ted said, with a look at the dark clouds. "Come on, Hal. There's room for you, too, Mary, in the wagon."

"Can Nicknack pull us all?" Mary asked.

"I guess so. It's mostly down hill. Come on!"

The four children got into the goat-wagon, and if Nicknack minded the bigger load he did not show it, but trotted off rather fast. Perhaps he knew he was going home to his stable where he would have some sweet hay and oats to eat, and that was what made him so glad to hurry along.

The wagon was stopped near the Home long enough to let Hal get out, and a little later Mary was driven up to her gate. Then Ted and Jan, with the doll between them, drove on.

"Oh, Ted!" exclaimed his sister, "mother'll scold. We oughtn't to have stayed so late. It's past supper time!"

"We didn't mean to. Anyhow, I guess they'll give us something to eat. Grandma baked cookies to-day and there'll be some left."

"I hope so," replied Jan with a sigh. "I'm hungry!"

They drove on in silence a little farther, and then, as they came to the top of a hill and could look down toward Star Island in the middle of Clover Lake, Ted suddenly called:

"Look, Jan!"

"Where?" she asked.

"Over there," and her brother pointed to the island. "Do you see that blue light?"

"On the island, do you mean? Yes, I see it. Maybe somebody's there with a lantern."

"Nobody lives on Star Island. Besides, who'd have a blue lantern?"

Jan did not answer.

It was now quite dark, and down in the lake, where there was a patch of black which was Star Island, could be seen a flickering blue glow, that seemed to stand still and then move about.

"Maybe it's lightning bugs," suggested Jan.

"Huh! Fireflies are sort of white," exclaimed Ted. "I never saw a light like that before."

"Me, either, Ted! Hurry up home. Giddap, Nicknack!" and Jan threw at the goat a pine cone, one of several she had picked up and put in the wagon when they were taking a rest in the woods that afternoon.

Nicknack gave a funny little wiggle to his tail, which the children could hardly see in the darkness, and then he trotted on faster. The Curlytops, looking back, had a last glimpse of the flickering blue light as they hurried toward Cherry Farm, and they were a little frightened.

"What do you s'pose it is?" asked Jan.

"I don't know," answered Ted. "We'll ask Grandpa. Go on, Nicknack!"

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE FABMER TOLD

"Well, where in the world have you children been!"

"Didn't you know we'd be worried about you?"

"Did you get lost again?"

Mother Martin, Grandpa Martin and Grandma Martin took turns asking these three questions as Ted and Jan drove up to the farmhouse in the darkness a little later.

"You said you wouldn't stay late," went on Mother Martin, as the Curlytops got out of the goat-wagon.

"We didn't mean to, Mother," said Ted.

"Oh, but we're so scared!" exclaimed Jan, and as Grandma Martin put her arms about the little girl she felt Jan's heart beating faster than usual.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the old lady.

"Me wants a wide wif Nicknack!" demanded Baby William, as he stood beside his mother in the doorway.

"No, Trouble. Not now," answered Ted. "Nicknack is tired and has to have his supper. Is there any supper left for us?" he asked eagerly.

"Well, I guess we can find a cold potato, or something like it, for such tramps as you," laughed Grandpa Martin. "But where on earth have you been, and what kept you?"

Then Ted put Nicknack in the barn. But when he came back he and Jan between them told of having stayed playing later than they meant to.

"Well, you got home only just in time," said Mother Martin as she took the children to the dining-room for a late supper. "It's starting to rain now."

And so it was, the big drops pelting down and splashing on the windows.

"But what frightened you, Jan?" asked Grandma Martin.

"It was a queer blue light on Star Island."

"A light on Star Island!" exclaimed her grandfather. "Nonsense! Nobody stays on the island after dark unless it's a fisherman or two, and the fish aren't biting well enough now to make anyone stay late to try to catch them. You must have dreamed it--or made-believe."

"No, we really saw it!" declared Ted. "It was a fliskering blue light."

"Well, if there's any such thing there as a 'fliskering' blue light we'll soon find out what it is," said Grandpa Martin.

"How?" asked Ted, his eyes wide open in wonder.

"By going there to see what it is. I'm going to take you two Curlytops to camp on Star Island, and if there's anything queer there we'll see what it is."

"Oh, are we really going to live on Star Island?" gasped Janet.

"Camping out with grandpa! Oh, what fun!" cried Ted. "Do you mean it?" and he looked anxiously at the farmer, fearing there might be some joke about it.

"Oh, I really mean it," said Grandpa Martin. "Though I hardly believe you saw a real light on the island. It must have been a firefly."

"Lightning bugs aren't that color," declared Ted, "It was a blue

light, almost like Fourth of July. But tell us about camping, Grandpa!"

"Yes, please do," begged Jan.

And while the children are eating their late supper, and Grandpa Martin is telling them his plans, I will stop just a little while to make my new readers better acquainted with the Curlytops and their friends.

You have already met Theodore, or Teddy or Ted, Martin, and his sister Janet, or Jan. With their mother, they were spending the long summer vacation on Cherry Farm, the country home of Grandpa Martin outside the town of Elmburg, near Clover Lake. Mr. Richard Martin, or Dick, as Grandpa Martin called him, owned a store in Cresco, where he lived with his family. Besides Ted and Jan there was Baby William, aged about three years. He was called Trouble, for the reason I have told you, though Mother Martin called him "Dear Trouble" to make up for the fun Ted and Jan sometimes poked at him.

Then there was Nora Jones, the maid who helped Mrs. Martin with the cooking and housework. And I must not forget Skyrocket, a dog, nor Turnover, a cat. These did not help with the housework--though I suppose you might say they did, too, in a way, for they ate the scraps from the table and this helped to save work.

In the first book of this series, called "The Curlytops at Cherry Farm," I had the pleasure of telling you how Jan and Ted, with their father, mother and Nora went to grandpa's place in the country to spend the happy vacation days. On the farm, which was named after the number of cherry trees on it, the Curlytops found a stray goat which they were allowed to keep, and they got a wagon which Nicknack (the name they gave their new pet) drew with them in it.

Having the goat made up for having to leave the dog and the cat at home, and Nicknack made lots of good times for Ted and Jan. In the book you may read of the worry the children carried because Grandpa Martin had lost money on account of a flood at his farm, and so could not help

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