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The Note

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Why did she send another note home? Now they'll be mad again. The last time they made me join the boy scouts—said it would teach me how to get along with people. It's not that. I tried to tell them, but they didn't understand—wouldn't even listen, in fact. I like people—I like to watch them and try to figure out what they'll do next. It's like being at the movies and watching actors in a story, but more exciting because it's real. And you can find out what you like or don't like about people—and it helps you know how to be. I like to listen to them, too. Sometimes they say funny things and make you laugh. Sometimes they tell you something you didn't know before. But whatever they say it's theirs—and it tells you something about them. Anyway it's fun just sitting back and looking on—being only eyes and ears—more fun than trying to think of something to do or say and knowing you can't. I never could. I've tried but I guess not hard enough. Others don't seem to have trouble—it's almost natural with them. Why is it so hard for me? I want to be able to get along with people—if that's what it's called—so Mom and Dad won't be mad. I wanted to like the boy scouts, too—thinking they knew what was best and believing it was me that was wrong. I camped and played games trying to like it—but I couldn't. There was always something—like when we played baseball. The kids were more interested in winning than anything else. Some of them even pushed the others around and told them what to do—Billy, especially. He always had to be captain and pitch. And if he threw the ball too high, it was always somebody else's fault for not catching it. Nobody really liked him. I didn't when he kept telling me to chatter. I didn't tell him not to—and the noise bothered me. There didn't seem to be any sense in it. I guess it was supposed to make the other side nervous and build ours up. It seemed a waste of time though. The only ones that got riled up were those who were already nervous. And it only helped those on our team who were already confident—I guess that's the word I want, anyway I know what I mean. It's kinda like false courage because it leaves as soon as you meet a team better than yours. For me the best thing is to practice until I know I can throw, bat, and catch good. Then this knowing—coming from lots of playing—will get me through the game. And nobody can take it away, because nobody gave it to me. I made it myself and only I can destroy it—through neglect—I don't like baseball anymore—or the boy scouts. I'm just not interested. People have different interests—they can't all like the same things. And it seems a good thing too. Otherwise everyone would want to be doctors or engineers or something else and nobody would want to be teachers or secretaries. Someone has to teach and type up papers though. But they couldn't be very happy if they didn't like their jobs. And it doesn't seem right to spend your life doing something you don't like and being unhappy. Then why is
there something wrong because I don’t like baseball and the boy scouts? At least Miss Steward thinks there is—and she made Mom and Dad think so. She told them I was moody too. I’m not—anyway I don’t think I am. But I like wondering about things. It’s fun. I do it mostly when I’m fishing. Lots of times it’s more fun than catching fish. And I discover new things—well, new to me. It’s funny how you can get a different slant on things that way. Like the time I saw two squirrels playing together—having fun chasing each other up and down a tree and through the grass. One of them bit the other, but they were back playing in a little while—and I knew they forgot easy. I realized then for the first time that squirrels don’t have wars and kill each other. And I wished I was a squirrel. But as I watched I saw them spend most of their time looking for food—and I worried whether they would have a warm place to live in the winter. They didn’t have time to wonder (maybe dream)—like I did. And they didn’t do things for the fun of doing them—or for the feeling of knowing you can. They couldn’t be very happy! And I was glad I wasn’t a squirrel.—I’m happy. I don’t know how I can tell except I feel quiet. I like everybody, and everything seems so pretty—like sunshine and blue sky and green—especially faces, even when they’re not smiling. This hill always makes me feel this way. I’m glad I came. It’s so high and I can see so much and so far—the tops of trees barely hiding the houses beneath, further back the town with it’s tall buildings, and above it all the dying sky. It makes me seem small in size but big in seeing.

I better get home now.

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“I’m getting tired of getting notes about Dick. When are you going to do something about him? He’s going to have to learn sometime he can’t do as he pleases all his life. It’s about time he realizes there are other things in this world besides himself. Why can’t he be like Johnnie?”

I Am Alone . . .

In a world of knowing
  winks
And little jokes and
  pastimes
Made for two
  I am alone!

... Shirley Havice