

Chapter 1 – Busy Beavers

It was getting hot in the tree house as the girls were talking as they sat on the floor on pillows with the windows open hoping a nice breeze would blow through the room as they were going over the calendar they had made to keep track of all of their jobs. Jennifer, Nikki, Amy, Morgan, and Katie had all been friends for several years now – ever since that first trip to Camp WiKiToJe with their church group. But when Maggie moved to Laurel Hill a few months ago they had become fast friends with her.

This would be the first time that Maggie would be going to Camp WiKiToJe – if they could raise enough money. After the move and Maggie’s birthday just a few weeks earlier, Maggie didn’t think her mom could afford to send her for the week-long stay at the camp. But the other girls insisted that they would all be able to raise the money together so she would be able to join them for this year’s trip. They just couldn’t imagine being away for the entire week if Maggie wasn’t there with them – camp just wouldn’t be as much fun.

“We’ve got the bake sale during Mrs. Howard’s yard sale on Friday and Saturday so we need to figure out what everyone is making,” Amy stated.

“I can make my red velvet cookies. They’re always really popular so they should sell well,” Nikki offered.

“And I can bring double fudge cupcakes again since everyone loved them at the last bake sale,” Jennifer said.

“How about bringing several cases of bottled water and keeping them cold in a cooler? It’s supposed to be 90 degrees this weekend,” Maggie suggested.

“That’s a great idea Maggie!” Katie said excitedly, “I’m sure they will sell fast! And I planned on making lemon bars.”

“I’m not sure if I should make Krispy Crunchy treats or the peanut butter fudge. What do you guys think?” Amy questioned.

“The Krispie Crunchy treats, definitely!” Katie answered.

“Besides, the fudge might melt in the heat,” agreed Jennifer.

"I didn't think of that. Okay Krispie Crunchy treats it is!" Amy said.

"Good, nobody picked brownies and I have a new kind I wanted to try out so I'll make those," Morgan replied.

"Well, that was easy! Now we just have to plan when everyone is going to work at the table," Amy stated.

The girls began making up a schedule for both days of the yard sale, and then they moved on to discuss the next event. As they talked about babysitting and yard work jobs they had scheduled for the next couple of weeks, Katie asked, "So how much will that give us toward the fund?"

"Well, we already have \$55 so far and with the babysitting jobs and yard work jobs we have lined up, we should have \$100 at the end of the next two weeks," Amy informed the group. "And I'm hoping we can make another \$25 at the bake sale."

"That would leave an extra \$50 that we would need with just one week left before the deadline for camp!" Morgan exclaimed. "Do we have any other job ideas?"

"How about the fair? Is there any way we can raise money there?" Jennifer asked.

"I can't think of any," Nikki replied, "unless we can make some kind of craft to sell."

"No, that won't work because it costs money to have a booth at the fair," Amy pointed out.

They were all quiet trying to think when Maggie spoke up, "There might be one way, but we wouldn't know if it worked until the last minute."

"What is it Maggie?" Katie asked.

"Well, I was thinking about entering a painting in the County Fair's Art Contest," Maggie responded. "First place wins \$70, but I don't think I could win first place," she added.

"Sure you could!" Morgan exclaimed. "Do you know which painting you were going to enter?"

"I was thinking I would enter the one I did of Mulligan's Pond," Maggie replied.

"That's the one you should enter, *definitely!*" Nikki answered quickly. "It's beautiful, and it's a painting of a local spot that everyone knows and loves!"

"Yes, you *have* to enter it Maggie!" Amy added.

"But we won't know if we have enough money for camp until a few days before the deadline." Maggie explained. "There will be a lot of pieces that could win so it's possible we wouldn't have enough money."

"Maggie, I really think you should still enter the painting. We can try to get a couple new jobs lined up for that week just in case," Amy pointed out.

The girls kept telling Maggie that she should enter the painting until finally they convinced her.

Later that day, after a little more convincing by the girls Maggie submitted her painting for the County Fair Art Contest...and the wait began.

Over the next two weeks, the girls were busier than during the school year! They weeded Mr. Reynolds' flower garden and trimmed his shrubs. Then they babysat for Mr. and Mrs. Platner's three children for a Friday night date night, Ms. Remington's two children all day one Saturday as she attended a wedding out of town, and the Gammond twins for four hours each day for a whole week while Mr. Gammond worked and Mrs. Gammond went to stay with her mom at the hospital each day. They even had a car wash at the grocery store.

Then came Mrs. Howard's yard sale. It was a long, hot two days but the girls were able to sell enough baked goods to meet their goal of \$25. They were even able to earn an extra \$10 by taking Ms. Evans' dog out twice a day and feeding him for a few days when she had to go away for a weekend trip. After all of their hard work, they needed just another \$40 to have enough for the week of camp for Maggie.

The following Saturday as the girls were swimming at Jennifer's house, Katie casually announced, "Well, I heard about a job that should give us the rest of the money."

"What job?" Morgan asked, "Have you been holding out on us?"

Katie laughed, "No, I promise! I just heard about it last night when I babysat for the Ingalls!"

"What's the job?" Amy asked.

"Mrs. Ingalls said that they were looking for someone to watch the younger kids for Wednesday's Ladies Bible Study because they haven't been able to find a replacement. Mrs. Cartright and Ms. Beal usually watch them, but they can't that day and they've asked three other people but can't get anyone to commit," Katie informed the group.

"How many kids would we be watching and how much does it pay?" Amy asked.

"They normally have 10 to 15 kids that are between 2 and 5 years old, so it would take just about all of us watching them for the two hours," Katie stated. "But they offered \$50 for the job!" she added excitedly.

"Wow! That would give us what we need plus leave a little extra," Jennifer replied, "but that's *a lot* of kids!"

"First, we need to see if we are even free on Wednesday to be able to take the job," Amy announced.

Everyone was free on Wednesday morning, so Amy said, "Then it's decided. Katie, can you let Mrs. Ingalls know tomorrow at church that we'll take the job?"

"Sure," Katie replied. "And now we can enjoy relaxing after all of the hard work we've done these past few weeks!"

The girls enjoyed swimming in the cool water from the pool and then they laid out in the sun to dry off. Maggie whispered, "I don't know how to thank you guys for helping get the money so I could go to camp with you."

"You don't need to thank us," Katie responded.

"Yeah," Morgan agreed. "It would've been miserable if you couldn't come with us!"

Maggie smiled and said, "Well, thanks anyway."