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[Jack And Jill](#)

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Chapter 22 - A Happy Day

"Oh dear! Only a week more, and then we must go back. Don't you hate the thoughts of it?" said Jack, as he was giving Jill her early walk on the beach one August morning.

"Yes, it will be dreadful to leave Gerty and Mamie and all the nice people. But I'm so much better I won't have to be shut up again, even if I don't go to school. How I long to see Merry and Molly. Dear things, if it wasn't for them I should hate going home more than you do," answered Jill, stepping along quite briskly, and finding it very hard to resist breaking into a skip or a run, she felt so well and gay.

"Wish they could be here to-day to see the fun," said Jack, for it was the anniversary of the founding of the place, and the people celebrated it by all sorts of festivity.

"I did want to ask Molly, but your mother is so good to me I couldn't find courage to do it. Mammy told me not to ask for a thing, and I'm sure I don't get a chance. I feel just as if I was your truly born sister, Jack."

"That's all right, I'm glad you do," answered Jack, comfortably, though his mind seemed a little absent and his eyes twinkled when she spoke of Molly. "Now, you sit in the cubby-house, and keep quiet till the boat comes in. Then the fun will begin, and you must be fresh and ready to enjoy it. Don't run off, now, I shall want to know where to find you by and by."

"No more running off, thank you. I'll stay here till you come, and finish this box for Molly; she has a birthday this week, and I've written to ask what day, so I can send it right up and surprise her."

Jack's eyes twinkled more than ever as he helped Jill settle herself in the boat, and then with a whoop he tore over the beach, as if practising for the race which was to come off in the afternoon.

Jill was so busy with her work that time went quickly, and the early boat came in just as the last pink shell was stuck in its place. Putting the box in the sun to dry, she leaned out of her nook to watch the gay parties land, and go streaming up the pier along the road that went behind the bank that sheltered her. Flocks of children were running about on the sand, and presently strangers appeared, eager to see and enjoy all the delights of this gala-day.

"There's a fat little boy who looks ever so much like Boo," said Jill to herself, watching the people and hoping they would not come and find her, since she had promised to stay till Jack returned.

The fat little boy was staring about him in a blissful sort of maze, holding a wooden shovel in one hand and the skirts of a young girl with the other. Her back was turned to Jill, but something in the long brown braid with a fly-away blue bow hanging down her back looked very familiar to Jill. So did the gray suit and the Japanese umbrella; but the hat was strange, and while she was thinking how natural the boots looked, the girl turned round.

"Why, how much she looks like Molly! It can't be - yes, it might, I do believe it is!" cried Jill, starting up and hardly daring to trust her own eyes.

As she came out of her nest and showed herself, there could be no doubt about the other girl, for she gave one shout and came racing over the beach with both arms out, while her hat blew off unheeded, and the gay umbrella flew away, to the great delight of all the little people except Boo, who was upset by his sister's impetuous rush, and lay upon his back howling. Molly did not do all the running, though, and Jill got her wish, for, never stopping to think of herself, she was off at once, and met her friend half-way with an answering cry. It was a pretty sight to see them run into one another's arms and hug and kiss and talk and skip in such a state of girlish joy they never cared who saw or laughed at their innocent raptures.

"You darling dear! where did you come from?" cried Jill, holding Molly by both shoulders, and shaking her a little to be sure she was real.

"Mrs. Minot sent for us to spend a week. You look so well, I can't believe my eyes!" answered Molly, patting Jill's cheeks and kissing them over and over, as if to make sure the bright color would not come off.

"A week? How splendid! Oh, I've such heaps to tell and show you; come right over to my cubby and see how lovely it is," said Jill, forgetting everybody else in her delight at getting Molly.

"I must get poor Boo, and my hat and umbrella, I left them all behind me when I saw you," laughed Molly, looking back.

But Mrs. Minot and Jack had consoled Boo and collected the scattered property, so the girls went on arm in arm, and had a fine time before any one had the heart to disturb them. Molly was charmed with the boat, and Jill very glad the box was done in season. Both had so much to tell and hear and plan, that they would have sat there for ever if bathing-time had not come, and the beach suddenly looked like a bed of red and yellow tulips, for every one took a dip, and the strangers added much to the fun.

Molly could swim like a duck, and quite covered herself with glory by diving off the pier. Jack undertook to teach Boo, who was a promising pupil, being so plump that he could not sink if he tried. Jill was soon through, and lay on the sand enjoying the antics of the bathers till she was so faint with laughter she was glad to hear the dinner-horn and do the honors of the Willows to Molly, whose room was next hers.

Boat-races came first in the afternoon, and the girls watched them, sitting luxuriously in the nest, with the ladies and children close by. The sailing-matches were very pretty to see; but Molly and Jill were more interested in the rowing, for Frank and the bicycle boy pulled one boat, and the friends felt that this one must win. It did, though the race was not very exciting nor the prize of great worth; but the boys and girls were satisfied, and Jack was much exalted, for he always told Frank he could do great things if he would only drop books and "go in on his muscle."

Foot-races followed, and, burning to distinguish himself also, Jack insisted on trying, though his mother warned him that the weak leg might be harmed, and he had his own

doubts about it, as he was all out of practice. However, he took his place with a handkerchief tied up as if he meant business. Jill and Molly could not sit still during this race, and stood on the bank quite trembling with excitement as the half-dozen runners stood in a line at the starting-post waiting for the word "Go!"

Off they went at last over the smooth beach to the pole with the flag at the further end, and every one watched them with mingled interest and merriment, for they were a droll set, and the running not at all scientific with most of them. One young fisherman with big boots over his trousers started off at a great pace, pounding along in the most dogged way, while a little chap in a tight bathing-suit with very thin legs skimmed by him, looking so like a sand-piper it was impossible to help laughing at both. Jack's former training stood him in good stead now; for he went to work in professional style, and kept a steady trot till the flagpole had been passed, then he put on his speed and shot ahead of all the rest, several of whom broke down and gave up. But Cox and Bacon held on gallantly; and soon it was evident that the sturdy legs in the knickerbockers were gaining fast, for Jack gave his ankle an ugly wrench on a round pebble, and the weak knee began to fail. He did his best, however, and quite a breeze of enthusiasm stirred the spectators as the three boys came down the course like mettlesome horses, panting, pale, or purple, but each bound to win at any cost.

"Now, Bacon!" "Go it, Minot!" "Hit him up, Cox!" "Jack's ahead!" "No, he isn't!" "Here they come!" "Bacon's done it!" shouted the other boys, and they were right; Bacon had won, for the gray legs came in just half a yard ahead of the red ones, and Minot tumbled into his brother's arms with hardly breath enough left to gasp out, good-humoredly, "All right, I'm glad he beat!"

Then the victor was congratulated and borne off by his friends to refresh himself, while the lookers-on scattered to see a game of tennis and the shooting of the Archery Club up at the hotel. Jack was soon rested, and, making light of his defeat, insisted on taking the girls to see the fun. So they drove up in the old omnibus, and enjoyed the pretty sight very much; for the young ladies were in uniform, and the broad green ribbons over the white dresses, the gay quivers, long bows, and big targets, made a lively scene. The shooting was good; a handsome damsel got the prize of a dozen arrows, and every one clapped in the most enthusiastic manner.

Molly and Jill did not care about tennis, so they went home to rest and dress for the evening, because to their minds the dancing, the illumination, and the fireworks were the best fun of all. Jill's white bunting with cherry ribbons was very becoming, and the lively feet in the new slippers patted the floor impatiently as the sound of dance music came down to the Willows after tea, and the other girls waltzed on the wide piazza because they could not keep still.

"No dancing for me, but Molly must have a good time. You'll see that she does, won't you, boys?" said Jill, who knew that her share of the fun would be lying on a settee and watching the rest enjoy her favorite pastime.

Frank and Jack promised, and kept their word handsomely; for there was plenty of room in the great dancing-hall at the hotel, and the band in the pavilion played such inspiring music that, as the bicycle boy said, "Every one who had a leg couldn't help shaking it." Molly was twirled about to her heart's content, and flew hither and thither like a blue butterfly; for all the lads liked her, and she kept running up to tell Jill the funny things they said and did.

As night darkened from all the houses in the valley, on the cliffs and along the shore lights shone and sparkled; for every one decorated with gay lanterns, and several yachts in the bay strung colored lamps about the little vessels, making a pretty picture on the quiet sea. Jill thought she had never seen anything so like fairy-land, and felt very like one in a dream as she drove slowly up and down with Mamie, Gerty, Molly, and Mrs. Cox in the carriage, so that she might see it all without too much fatigue. It was very lovely; and when rockets began to whizz, filling the air with golden rain, a shower of colored stars, fiery dragons, or glittering wheels, the girls could only shriek with delight, and beg to stay a little longer each time the prudent lady proposed going home.

It had to be at last; but Molly and Jill comforted themselves by a long talk in bed, for it was impossible to sleep with glares of light coming every few minutes, flocks of people talking and tramping by in the road, and bursts of music floating down to them as the older but not wiser revellers kept up the merriment till a late hour. They dropped off at last; but Jill had the nightmare, and Molly was waked up by a violent jerking of her braid as Jill tried to tow her along, dreaming she was a boat.

They were too sleepy to laugh much then, but next morning they made merry over it, and went to breakfast with such happy faces that all the young folks pronounced Jill's friend a most delightful girl. What a good time Molly did have that week! Other people were going to leave also, and therefore much picnicking, boating, and driving was crowded into the last days. Clambakes on the shore, charades in the studio, sewing-parties at the boat, evening frolics in the big dining-room, farewell calls, gifts, and invitations, all sorts of plans for next summer, and vows of eternal friendship exchanged between people who would soon forget each other. It was very pleasant, till poor Boo innocently added to the excitement by poisoning a few of his neighbors with a bad lobster.

The ambitious little soul pined to catch one of these mysterious but lovely red creatures, and spent days fishing on the beach, investigating holes and corners, and tagging after the old man who supplied the house. One day after a high wind he found several "lobs" washed up on the beach, and, though disappointed at their color, he picked out a big one, and set off to show his prize to Molly. Half-way home he met the old man on his way with a basket of fish, and being tired of lugging his contribution laid it with the others, meaning to explain later. No one saw him do it, as the old man was busy with his pipe; and Boo ran back to get more dear lobs, leaving his treasure to go into the kettle and appear at supper, by which time he had forgotten all about it.

Fortunately none of the children ate any, but several older people were made ill, and quite a panic prevailed that night as one after the other called up the doctor, who was boarding close by; and good Mrs. Grey, the hostess, ran about with hot flannels, bottles of medicine, and distracted messages from room to room. All were comfortable by morning, but the friends of the sufferers lay in wait for the old fisherman, and gave him a good scolding for his carelessness. The poor man was protesting his innocence when Boo, who was passing by, looked into the basket, and asked what had become of his lob. A few questions brought the truth to light, and a general laugh put every one in good humor, when poor Boo mildly said, by way of explanation, -

"I fought I was helpin' Mrs. Dray, and I did want to see the dreen lob come out all red when she boiled him. But I fordod, and I don't fink I'll ever find such a nice big one any more."

"For our sakes, I hope you won't, my dear," said Mrs. Hammond, who had been nursing one of the sufferers.

"It's lucky we are going home to-morrow, or that child would be the death of himself and everybody else. He is perfectly crazy about fish, and I've pulled him out of that old lobster-pot on the beach a dozen times," groaned Molly, much afflicted by the mishaps of her young charge.

There was a great breaking up next day, and the old omnibus went off to the station with Bacon hanging on behind, the bicycle boy and his iron whirligig atop, and heads popping out of all the windows for last good-byes. Our party and the Hammonds were going by boat, and were all ready to start for the pier when Boo and little Harry were missing. Molly, the maid, and both boys ran different ways to find them; and all sorts of dreadful suggestions were being made when shouts of laughter were heard from the beach, and the truants appeared, proudly dragging in Harry's little wagon a dead devil-fish, as the natives call that ugly thing which looks like a magnified tadpole - all heads and no body.

"We've dot him!" called the innocents, tugging up their prize with such solemn satisfaction it was impossible to help laughing.

"I always wanted to tatch a whale, and this is a baby one, I fink. A boy said, when they wanted to die they comed on the sand and did it, and we saw this one go dead just now. Ain't he pretty?" asked Boo, displaying the immense mouth with fond pride, while his friend flapped the tail.

"What are you going to do with him?" said Mrs. Hammond, regarding her infant as if she often asked herself the same question about her boy.

"Wap him up in a paper and tate him home to pay wid," answered Harry, with such confidence in his big blue eyes that it was very hard to disappoint his hopes and tell him the treasure must be left behind.

Wails of despair burst from both children as the hard-hearted boys tipped out the little whale, and hustled the indignant fishermen on board the boat, which had been whistling for them impatiently. Boo recovered his spirits first, and gulping down a sob that nearly shook his hat off, consoled his companion in affliction and convulsed his friends by taking from his pocket several little crabs, the remains of a jelly-fish, and such a collection of pebbles that Frank understood why he found the fat boy such a burden when he shouldered him, kicking and howling, in the late run to the boat. These delicate toys healed the wounds of Boo and Harry, and they were soon happily walking the little "trabs" about inside a stone wall of their own building, while the others rested after their exertions, and laid plans for coming to the Willows another year, as people usually did who had once tasted the wholesome delights and cordial hospitality of this charming place.