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The young woman who did

by

Elyse J. Lord

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Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
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MASTER OF ARTS

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'But surely no woman would ever dare to do so,' said my friend. 'I knew a woman who did,' said I, 'and this is her story.'
--Grant Allen, Perugia, 1893

AUTHOR'S NOTE

What follows is but one representation of how life might have been for a select group of people in the United States during five months in 1893. While I have often relied upon history to develop my plot--have even borrowed peoples' names, reputations, and actions to help my plot unfurl--what I have compiled is, at best, a fictional recreation. The real Dr. S. Weir Mitchell did indeed instruct numerous women to take a rest cure (including the real Charlotte Perkins Gilman), but these women were not left unsupervised in the manner that Winnie was. And to the best of my knowledge, there was never a resort like the Bear Creek Rest Resort.

Other characters who really existed, though not necessarily as I've portrayed them in the book, include Samuel Clemens, Sally Bell, Charlie Moon, and William Blaikie.

While there is a county in Northern California called Humboldt County-- it's just south of Redwood National Park-- please note that I have altered the terrain a little to suit my purposes.
Winifred Potter was uncharacteristically glum as she watched bland-looking Ohioans board the train. A month ago, the renowned nerve doctor, S. Weir Mitchell had diagnosed her as being “neuraesthetic.” In other words, NERVOUS. Winnie agreed with the good doctor that she was thin for her age, and yes, indeed, she did sometimes faint. But she was not nervous.

Or she hadn’t been until two days ago, when she boarded this train, to travel God know how many miles to have a “rest cure” in California. It occurred to Winnie, who smiled in spite of herself at the thought, that she might soon become neuraesthetic if this train ride didn’t end soon.

“Are you travelling alone? May I join you?”

Winnie looked up at the cool young woman whose crisp blue dress put her own wrinkled muslin to shame. The woman’s hair was dressed high with feathers and furbelows, and her cream-colored complexion made Winnie feel boyish in comparison. When the train rocked so that the wheels screeched, the two young women collided, the one in the crisp blue dress giggling.

“If you don’t allow me to join you, some old biddies will corner the both of us!”

The young woman recovered her balance and flounced down beside the silent Winifred.

“I’m Kate Hubbard,” she continued. “You don’t mind, do you?”

“No, gracious not. I’m grateful for your company.”

“I’m going to Idaho. To be married.”

“I’m going to California.” Winnie lowered her voice, as she always did when explaining her fate. “I’m going to have a rest cure.”

“Lucky you.”
Winnie was dumbstruck by the woman's attentions, and wanted, somehow, to keep the conversation going. But adequate pleasantries had already been exchanged, and she felt shy in the presence of such a glamorous stranger.

"Is your fiance from Cincinnati, too?" she asked.

"I don’t, to be honest, know," said Kate. "I haven’t met him."

"Oh!" Winnie peered up into Kate’s radiant face, approving of the way her hair curled gently towards her cheekbones, but baffled by her words. No proper woman would travel alone, half-way across the country, to marry a stranger.

"May I say you’re braver than I?" she offered to Kate. "I’m just going to visit my aunt. And to stay at the Bear Creek Rest Resort. Which sounds rather safe in comparison to what you’re doing."

Safe, Winnie thought. Yes, I am glad to be safe. That was one consolation. She’d heard stories about rail bridges collapsing, and of trains coming off their tracks--perhaps because of inadequate construction. She’d heard that bulls often attacked trains, and then keeled over dead, a sight she had no curiosity for.

Too, it had been a trying month. And Winnie welcomed any and all opportunities to recover some of her natural optimism. She leaned back in her seat, closed her eyes, and fell into a kind of a stupor.

"Horseback riding without a saddle can result in prolapsement of the uterus," Winnie’s mother, a big Dr. S. Weir Mitchell fan had said nearly a month ago.

"What’s that? A prolapsed uterus, I mean." Winnie had just returned from a long ride without a saddle.
“In laymen’s terms, it’s when your uterus falls out. It’s very painful and very dangerous, and it’s a disease that runs in the family.”

Winnie’s insides had hurt a little, and it was very possible that’s because they were shifting about to make room for her uterus to leave her.

Despite the rolling and swaying of the train, Winnie’s uterus had not left her yet, unless it had snuck away one night during her sleep. Winnie smiled again at the thought of her uterus having a brain and sneaking away, though it would, in all likelihood be sneaking away from Dr. Mitchell, with her approval.

She could still hear his voice.

“The current treatment for neurasthenia is rest. I’ll recommend some resorts where Winifred can have her cure.”

Winnie had been immediately indignant, but her protest, voiced alongside Dr. Mitchell’s recommendations, had fallen on empty ears.

And Mr. Clemens, one of Winnie’s most respected allies, had told her she should welcome months of diligent loafing.

Since he was a great one for laziness himself, Winnie could see his point. And would, perhaps, have viewed the rest cure as tolerable had not her mother taken to issuing unfair commands.

“Winifred! Dr. Mitchell said you must not urinate before breakfast. You heard me, didn’t you, Dear?”

“Yes, Mother.”

Later that same day her mother had closed Tom Sawyer with a thump, saying that Dr. Mitchell had forbidden book-reading.
Winnie hadn’t been paying Kate Hubbard any more attention, so when she came to she was startled to see the elegant young woman peering at her in amused perplexion.

“You haven’t stirred in hours! thought perhaps you were dead,” said Kate.

Winifred shrugged, and then the train screeched to a stop, and the two young women were ushered out of the train. They were already in Saint Louis!

Winifred followed Kate, who followed a throng of exceedingly well-dressed people onto the steaming Missouri Pacific. Their new train was smaller, dingier, and more packed than the Boston to Saint Louis train, and they sat back to watch the other passengers arrive.

“Do you know him,” whispered Winnie of a perfumed young businessman with slicked hair.

“Who? Oh. Him.” Kate shook her head.

The train bells clanged, the steam whistle wailed, and the train began squealing its way out of the station, so Kate had to raise her voice to a shout. “Intriguing, though.”

Winnie giggled. Being closer to the platform, she had a more complete view of the waving loved ones, who began blowing frantic kisses as the train strained forward—and then came to a grinding, shuddering halt—barely a hundred yards later.

Some of Winnie’s earlier fears resurfaced.

“Is it my imagination or has the train just malfunctioned,” she asked Kate as casually as she could.

“I no longer keep abreast of current technology, but I daresay a train is a better bet than a carriage. Safer anyway.”
The other passengers, made friendly by the small space of the car, were less tenuous about sharing their interpretations of the delay.

"These steam engines need to fire up for a few hours before they can move," proposed a man behind Winnie. "But you won't hear the rail admitting that's the reason for a delay."

"I'll bet it's Indians, Mommy," said a young boy a few seats up. Winnie smiled at him.

"Baltimore and St. Louis Rail is never on time. That's the one rule you can rely on," said a tight-lipped matron in the front of the train, confirming to both of the young women that she was a biddie to avoid.

About fifteen minutes later two porters in their red jackets carried a tatty-looking man, dressed in a fedora tie and a rumpled walking suit into the station.

The man was shouting and kicking and resisting his captors in other small ways, but it was obvious he didn't constitute a threat to anyone but himself.

"Probably a drunk," said Kate.

Then the train was rolling and swaying for real.

It occurred to Winnie as she sat in the shaking Iron Horse watching the blur of the sunset and the Missouri cottonwood trees, that Dr. Mitchell would gain considerable sums of money from her rest. He was, after all, co-owner of the Bear Creek Rest Resort. Why hadn't her parents seen through him?

And while she was wondering, Winifred debated whether or not to find a travelling companion whose behavior was not as vulgar as Kate's. Kate was still
eyeing the businessman who had seated himself in the first row of seats, and who, judging from his stiff back, had noted her attentions. Winnie knew that chastity is best-preserved when one keeps one's social experimentation to a minimum.

"I'm glad this trip is going to take a while," said Kate.

"Yah." Winnie decided that there was no guarantee any other passengers would be any better. The biddie in the back, for example, with her buttinski eyes, was to be avoided at all costs. And except for her primitive behavior, Kate seemed like a very kind-hearted individual, and Winnie did respect kindness in others. Perhaps even more than she respected virtue. She wasn't quite sure.

"I'm going to WORSHIP each mile that separates me from my family," said Kate. "Like a lover."

"I think I know what you mean." Winnie smoothed her dress, and shifted her weight in the uncomfortable seat.

"You're not scared are you?" said Kate. "I'm certainly not." Her words provoked a response from the businessman, who turned to see who was talking in such euphonious--but assured--tones, and Kate, unconcerned, continued on.

"Why are you going on a rest cure, anyway? She asked. You don't seem sick to me."

Winnie flushed the color of a baby that has been pricked by a pin. "My parents are worried about me, I suppose. I do faint, and I have lost considerable weight this past year. One of my father's friends is a nerve doctor, and he said I just needed a good rest cure. He recommended about ten of them, and since my aunt lives very close to the Bear Creek Rest Resort, that's where I'm going."

"But that doesn't answer my question. Why are you going on a rest cure? Are you sick?"
“I don’t know if I’m sick. Honestly,” said Winnie. “There is something wrong with me, but I’m not convinced it’s nerves. As for why I’m going. Well, I promised my parents I would obey them until I came of age. I am not yet of age. I really haven’t any choice.”

“So will you be able to eat dinner with the rest of us?” Kate’s gray eyes looked gravely into Winnie’s green and yellow eyes. ‘Puffs of dandelion in your eyes,’ her father used to say.

“I expect so,” said Winnie. “But I’m not hungry tonight.”

“Hmmm.” Kate looked as fresh as when she’d first appeared.

“Would you mind terribly if I went to supper now? I could bring you back something.”

“Please go,” said Winnie. “I’ll look after your things.”

Kate was soon swishing down the aisle and talking amiably to her businessman. Winnie was just as glad she couldn’t hear the conversation that ensued, for it is easier to remain chaste when one doesn’t know how to be otherwise.

Could I have prevented this rest cure, and thereby this 3,661-mile trip, wondered Winnie. If James, her brother, had been right with his last-minute, top-secret information, her mother might have had a subtle motive for sending her West. Her mother’s sister Ada, beautiful as a young woman, more beautiful than Winnie’s mother, had, according to James, woman fallen in love with a woodsman she had met on holiday, had soon become pregnant with his child, and had then refused to marry him. For moral reasons she said. “Marriage is servitude,” she had tried to explain to Winnie’s mother, who hadn’t seen what she meant.

Ada had shamed the family.
So if Winnie had told her mother that she had no desire to meet this aunt, this much-maligned aunt, her mother might have reconsidered.

But if part of the "rest cure" was to make a friendly overture to her Mother's sister, who surely had loved her siblings and who surely had never intended to lose her family on account of a lover... If this was the case...perhaps the rest cure would be good for the entire family?

Winifred's musings had somewhat weakened her resolve, and though she truly did not want to leave Boston, she felt herself forced to watch the causes for unhappiness set in action, and yet do nothing.

Kate sat reading a book in the morning, a tiny pink saucer of a hat perched on her head. She wore white gloves, and had changed into a gingham dress, and smelled faintly clean, as if she had bathed quite some time ago, but had not quite worn through her soap.

Winifred dabbed at the sleep in her eyes and hurriedly smoothed her hair.

"Kate?" she blurted. "Do you think it would be possible to walk three thousand miles? I mean for a woman?"

Kate closed her book and gave Winnie a most ironic look.

"I think I'd like to walk three thousand miles," added Winnie. "I mean, if it were physically possible and if I had the time."

"Time? You can't be any older than I am. What does time have to do with anything?"

"You know what I mean. Only explorers have time to explore. Everyone else has work to do."

"I can't believe that's your opinion expressly," said Kate. "I dare say you haven't any important work to do. Name one thing."
“Everyone has to work,” said Winnie, looking into Kate's smiling eyes.

“Otherwise nothing would get done.”

Kate laughed. “Work is what you make it,” she added. “Think about it.”

Winnie was careful at lunch not to look at Kate’s businessman, even when he spoke to her. She didn’t want word to get around the train that there were two “easy” women travelling together.

“I think your hair would look better shorter,” said Kate. “Would you like me to fix it for you?”

Winnie declined.

Kate shrugged. “Do you have a beau?” she asked.

“No. I suppose it’s a rather inevitable occurrence, though,”

“Not necessarily.” Kate seemed delighted and settled back in her seat. “Women in Boston are, shall we say, overstocked right now. And men choose women according to the laws of selection, you know. So if you’re fifteen already and you don’t have a suitor, who’s to say you’ll be any different when you’re twenty-six. Or thirty-six?”

“I know it’s perfectly dreadful of me, but I really don’t want a suitor now,” said Winnie. “But I probably will when I grow up.”

“If you want to be a chickless hen,” said Kate, “I won’t stop you. But just between you and I, I suspect you’re as grown up as you’re ever going to be.”

Winnie looked out the window. All the colors—the barks, the grasses, even the clouds in the sky—had blurred together into one bright landscape.
"I probably talk too much--" Kate persisted, "But I just don't want you to be disillusioned. But I've had suitors--more than I can count. And there's only one kind of man for me."

"One kind of man?" said Winnie.

"My man will let me act like myself, and he won't expect me to have more than a few babies."

"Is your fiance like that?"

"I hope so. I wrote to him that I am stubborn and he wrote back that that was what he needed--100-acres will break a woman without strength." Kate sobered then brightened. "The real trick, though, with any fellow," she lowered her voice, "is to get him feeling like he can't keep his hands off you--and then not to let him touch you. If my husband proves disagreeable in any way, that's what I'll do." She smiled.

Winnie felt shock run through her entire body, and snuck an amused peak at the businessman up ahead, who was, as she had feared, listening to the conversation.

"But Kate," she implored. "Isn't that dishonest?"

"Not in the least. It's what you might call survival."

The train rolled into Salt Lake City on time, and Kate, who had a quick connection to make, was already gathering her belongings closer to her.

Winnie was going to take the Central Pacific Railway over the Sierra Nevada Mountains into California, but that wouldn't depart until two.

"If you'll recall, Kate," she said, picking Kate's scarf up off of the floor, "you said that it would be possible to walk across the United States. That time wasn't necessarily a determining factor. I think you're right. But what about constitution? If a woman were to attempt such a journey and become overfatigued, wouldn't her constitution break?"
“Winnie, my Dear, I’m going to miss you,” said Kate. “And I’m going to ask you a question in return. How would the woman know whether her constitution would break if she never tried? I expect all women are different." She reached out to pat her arm. “And I expect Winnie, that when you put your mind to it, you’ll be able to do just about anything you want to. Overfatigued or not.”

And that was really their only good-bye--save an emotional embrace--because the connecting train to Idaho was already in the station and everyone had to shuffle off.

The station’s ceiling was so high above, the space around her so silent. Winnie already missed Kate, and felt foolish to be ignorant and alone so far from home.

A man was watching her, too. Had been since she left the train. She suspected he knew she had noticed him. Did he think she was a seductress? Winnie pulled her skirt down nervously, and set off for the cantina. A break from train food would be much appreciated.

The restaurant was half-full, and Winnie settled down at the counter, a few seats away from an old man in a plaid coat who was drinking coffee and talking with the waitress.

She took a deep breath and looked up at the menu. Suddenly a gunshot rang out, loud as a cannon. Someone screamed, and Winnie, her eyes wide open in terror, looked at the gunman, who threatened a gray-haired man in the back corner.

“When you come to Ma Belle’s,” snarled the gunman, “you eat all of your food. Ma didn’t fry those eggs so you could turn your nose up at them.”

The unfortunate diner began eating his eggs, and Winnie quietly slipped down off her seat and out the door. Welcome to the West, she thought.
Verily Winnie became aware of the sensation she was causing on the train. A young woman alone. Unchaperoned. But she held her chin high, always sat like a proper woman, and took care to eat everything on her plate.

The only face-to-face encounter she had was with a group of cattlemen in the dining salon. One of them, who wore a dusty red bandana, invited her to join them to discuss women's suffrage.

Winnie blushed scarlet.

"You're a woman. You have to have an opinion," encouraged a smaller man, who smoked a cigar. Winnie wasn't ready to tell them what she really thought. Because she'd never met anybody who thought like she did.

"I'm afraid I don't have an opinion just now," she said. "Though I do think our country has seen enough change for the time being. People are still struggling after the War. Our country needs more time to collect its thoughts."

"I wish you'd join us," the man said.

"No thank you." She was properly demure.

Winnie moved slowly towards the door, ready to confront the glare of the early morning sun, and grateful for the porters' help. One porter, dressed nattily in a black suit, carried her bags. Another helped her down the steps.

She stepped outside into the Union Town fog. Union Town's air was fouled by sewage and industry, and she inhaled with distaste, discouraged by the run-down buildings in the town square.
Suddenly her "Uncle" Peter—for that was what her mother had called him—a big man with a thin face and a white cowboy hat, was hugging her tight, and Aunt Ada was there, too. She had Mother's complexion, and pushed Uncle Peter away to kiss Winifred, saying how much she looked like her mother. Winnie, who had the hollow-chested look of someone who reads too much, didn't agree, but kept silent about it.

Having just stepped out of the great steaming beast into the ocean breeze, Winnie felt cold. Very cold. For May.

There were obviously some adjustments to be made.
Winnie pulled the green and yellow quilt tighter around her body, shivering in the damp morning air. It was time to leave her warm cocoon. It wouldn’t do to oversleep on her first day.

She poked a tentative bare foot out from her covers, then, in the same manner that she had risen prior to her illness, flung her covers back and leaped out of bed. What a day! She thought. I’m in California, and I might meet outlaws, or homesteaders, or even find gold. And I’m going to get to know my aunt!

She hurriedly pulled on some long underwear (for even though it was summer, the cold was exceedingly damp), and a long dress, which her aunt had helped her unpack the night before. She then splashed water from the wash bowl onto her face.

There, she thought. I expect I look decent enough now. Wouldn’t want to overwhelm them with my beauty! And off she went into the drafty, musty smelling hall, in search of other humans. Winnie didn’t find the smell entirely unpleasant, but then, she didn’t want it to rub off on her, either.

“Good morning, Winifred. I was just coming to wake you,” said Aunt Ada, whose face was lined more heavily than Winifred had noticed last night. Mostly from smiling and sunshine, though Winnie saw a kind of sorrow, too, that made her aunt look just a little puzzled, as if someone, or some problem had interrupted her pleasure.

“How about a tour?” said Aunt Ada. “I want you to think of this as home while you’re with us.” Winnie’s leather slippers made slapping sounds as she followed her aunt down the hall, saw the master bedroom, and then entered a room so spacious it could have been a church. A white table stood in its center, and a couch sat beneath the bay window.
“The living room is my favorite room,” said Aunt Ada, one arm on Winnie’s shoulder and the other pointing at the window. “As it should be. I had to wait six years for this glass.”

Aunt Ada’s house was perched barely a hundred feet upwards from the lagoon, Bear Lagoon, she supposed it was called, and Winnie gazed out at the overcast swamp, enchanted. The only motion outside was the fingers of fog which wisped into the sky, and an occasional ripple in the smooth water.

“There’s no telling what you’ll see out this window if you look long enough,” said Aunt Ada, leading Winnie into a much-smaller room, which was almost too small to contain an antique oak table big enough to have originated in a castle. Stacked china had been placed on the table and Ada, noting the direction of Winnie’s eyes said there’d be time for breakfast soon enough, and urged her into the smallest room of all. The kitchen, which fairly shone with cleanliness.

Winnie wondered who cleaned the mud and dust off of the brick floor, and hoped, for a fleeting second, that the responsibility wouldn’t fall her way, as she was not generally efficient with domestic tasks. Winnie peered down into the large wooden sink. Not a dirty dish was to be found.

The closed-top cooking range was one of the older types that had an iron flue and needed to be brushed daily.

“This could be Mother’s kitchen, too,” said Winnie, impressed by the remarkable similarity between her aunt’s and her mother’s style of organization. Her mother had modeled their kitchen after Catherine Beecher’s, and judging from Aunt Ada’s flour barrel door, beside the efficient-looking drawers, each which contained its own grain, one with rye, another with corn meal and so on, Aunt Ada had used the same model.
"Mother taught us both that a tidy house belongs to a tidy mind," said Aunt Ada. "Though, truthfully, I'm thinking about having a rebellion." She smiled at Winnie.

"Well, that's the tour. The privy is out back, of course, as you've already discovered. If you can talk my husband into investing in a biffy I'd be much-obliged." She paused and then hollered at her husband. "Peter Jacob. Hurry and have some breakfast or the day'll be half gone."

"I'm so glad you've come," she said to Winnie.

Winnie could detect no sign of any affection between her aunt and "uncle". Perhaps James' theory about their illicit courtship had been wrong, perhaps her parents had been talking about someone else. The thought of passion between her kind, efficient aunt, and her rather preoccupied, even arrogant uncle, just didn't seem possible.

Uncle Peter was shoveling heaping spoons of oatmeal into his mouth, and Aunt Ada, in contrast, consumed her food in delicate pecking motions. Winnie was fascinated to watch Aunt Ada's mound of oatmeal grow rapidly smaller despite her slow consumption, and was surprised to see both relatives begin their second helpings before she, Winnie, had even made a dent in her own.

"What do you think of our house?" asked Uncle Peter at length, beginning to eat his fried potatoes.

"It's more civilized than I expected."

Uncle Peter laughed. "And just barely at that. We tore down the log house to put this simple home up, and to me, it seems downright luxurious."

Winnie nodded, and tried not to stare as her aunt and uncle, each with their own inimitable style, consumed their food.
When Uncle Peter was done eating, he wiped his mouth off with his hand, kissed Aunt Ada, clapped her on the back, and headed for the door.

"I've got to go to Weaverville. Probably be gone a few days."

Aunt Ada jumped up to clean the table, and he went out to the barn. Winnie sat looking at distastefully at a well-rounded mountain of sticky, dry oatmeal.

"Do you need some help?" she asked her aunt.

"Always," said Ada. "A woman's work is never done. If you're not going to eat your breakfast you can compost it in the back. Then you can blacklead and brush the stove."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Hurry Child," said Aunt Ada, "Or your uncle will have left." Winnie's exertions seemed not to affect the stove, which sat tall and black and clean, so she put her brush down guiltily and considered herself done.

"Yes, Ma'am," she said.

Aunt Ada was definitely in good, even excessive good health. Though she walked daintily, in the same way that she ate daintily, she managed to cover much ground. Winnie resolved to observe her at greater length to see how she could deploy such grace, but employ such power. Perhaps there was a system involved.

The two women watched Uncle Peter, sitting tall in his flatbed truck shout at his spirited, though thin horses, who obliged by kicking up some dust and snorting.

"I hope I didn't stare too much at breakfast," Winnie said anxiously.

Aunt Ada was waving at her mate. "What's wrong with staring?"

"Well, it's, it's rude."

Aunt Ada turned to Winnie, and regarded her with a long, searching gaze.
"You have your Mother's eyes," she finally said, twinkling, as if she wanted to say more. But come along now, we can't stand out here all day waving at the horizon."

"Yes, Ma'am," said Winnie, turning reluctantly.

"I must say there's plenty o' work to do if it's work you want," continued Aunt Ada. "But since you are here as a guest, I'd prefer that you spent your day exploring." She gave Winnie another curious look. "You can't be seriously planning on resting, can you? I've seen too many of those rest cure patients at Bear Creek. What a lot of hogwash that is!"

Winnie beamed ecstatically, appreciatively, at her aunt. "I confess I can't see the point of resting, as all that happens is that I grow cantankerous and slothful. Frivolous resting is the only type of rest I could ever tolerate, in fact."

"I'll tolerate no resting," declared Aunt Ada. While all those wives in the East Coast are languishing and taking ill and listening to all the balderdash about how they should rest, the great questions of the day are being answered. A woman who stays in bed gets left behind, Winifred. You want proof of that, you can just talk to the women at Bear Creek. I've heard of patients who grow fat and infirm there. I'll have no niece of mine participating in such nonsense."

"I'm delighted, really I am," said Winifred. "But I'm not entirely certain my parents would approve after sending me all this way."

"They want you to come home healthy. There's plenty of good health around these parts. It's in the land. I'll send you home healthy," said Ada.

So Winnie, for the first time, really, in her life, found herself alone, with permission, even a command to explore. And, if the truth be told, she felt a little more like languishing. Not even perfectly healthy people can step off of a week-long train ride as frisky as when they stepped on it.
But she bid her aunt farewell, anyway, and affected a jaunty walk in case she watched. At the bottom of the path to the house was the road that they’d taken from Union Town the night before. It was probably the only road. And it paralleled the lagoon, so Winnie knew she would at least be able to keep her bearing.

The forest grew dense on the eastern slope by the road, and the clay-colored trees were made vernal by green ferns that fanned beneath them. Trees in Boston had never been so tall. Winnie could not see high enough to determine where these trees ended, however, and calculated that it would have taken at least eight or nine people to reach around the trunks, so fully-grown were they.

Rather suddenly, as if the sun had broken through the fog, she felt more inclined to appreciate the damp air. Clearly the vegetation thrived on it and the sort of salty, earthy foggy smell that greeted her outside seemed a link to the natural world.

“I say, hello there Miss.”

Winnie whirled and found herself eyeing a tall boy, perhaps two years older than she, and on the verge of exquisite manhood. He had dark, friendly eyes, and tufts of hair that were being blown like milkweed.

“I suppose you’re Winnifred Whats-her-face. I remember the Winnifred. It’s a peculiar name if you’ll pardon my saying. I’m Crocker. How do you do?”

He hurried on. “I rarely get any free time off work but both of my parents agreed it would be proper for me to welcome you to Humboldt County. And we’re neighbors. I live in the shingle-style home about a half-mile from here.”

Winnie regarded him fairly calmly, but she was not sure what to do or say. In Boston she had not interacted with many men. Certainly not unchaperoned. Was she supposed to say something in return?
"If you don't close your mouth you might swallow a fly. Our home is the only peach-colored home in Humboldt County. How it came to be peach-colored is a rather long story and I'm not sure I've the time to tell you about it. You do talk, don't you?"

"I talk," snapped Winnie. "Though I daresay I'm not as fast or as expansive as you."

"Well, listen, Winifred Whatever-your-last-name is. I've got to get to Union Town today with some hops. But I did want to say hi."

He grinned, showing a mouthful of clean teeth.

Winnie nodded. She would have said she had enjoyed meeting him, looked forward to seeing him again, but something told her that silence was better.

Crocker turned to go, then paused. "I don't suppose you're planning on going to the beach."

"I haven't decided for certain, but it seems a likely destination. I've never before touched--or even seen--the Pacific Ocean."

"Well, I'd be the first one to recommend the beach--especially to a phildoodle like yourself. But you'd better stick to Warnerhead or Baker. No females allowed at Luffenholtz."

Winnie mused as she walked further down the road. "No women allowed. There were some places women didn't belong. Like in a men's club, or in a bar, because women had children and children didn't belong in a bar. But to ban women from a beach. That seemed like a strange custom indeed."
The wooden chairs the family had sat in for breakfast had been moved into the living room, and Winnie was startled to see two women with Ada, taking tea around the same square white table that had seemed so barren—and strangely poignant—in the middle of the room.

"Oh Winifred!" said Aunt Ada. "I thought you'd be out all day."

"I'm not used to being out," said Winnie apologetically. "And I thought I'd better rest a bit before further exertions."

"What's this?" said a fierce-looking woman with blond bangs and gray-blue eyes, who sat to Aunt Ada's left. "A young woman who wants to rest! Don't tell me this is your celebrated niece."

"Yes," said Aunt Ada. "Winifred, I'd like you to meet Mary Ellen Stow, who has moved here from San Francisco in order to do some political work. And Sally Bell, recently transplanted from Lolankok." She looked at Sally Bell. "Did I get that pronunciation right?"

Sally Bell nodded curtly. She had a remarkably calm face but her eyes, like Mrs. Stow's seemed ready to leap out of her face at any moment to do battle. Her skin was wrinkled, not from excess water, but from years of living in the sun. Her skin had the texture of the earth, and Winnie wanted to touch it, as she'd touched the tall tree earlier today.

"How do you do," said Winnie. "I'm very pleased to meet you. And very relieved that we're not the only settlers here. I didn't see many homes on my walk."

Mrs. Stow smiled and said most sensible folk lived inland where it was warmer and not so often flooded, and then, with genuine good humor, invited Winnie to join them. Aunt Ada's expression was almost angelic, and she neither encouraged or discouraged her niece, who sat down eagerly beside Mrs. Stow.
And had a huge shock! For the woman, so refined in her speech and manners, was dressed in exceedingly odd attire—man’s trousers underneath a kilt skirt.

Aunt Ada cleared her throat. “You’ve just discovered one of my secrets,” she said. “There’s no need to feel embarrassed about it, though.”

Winnie looked to Sally Bell and Mrs. Stow for an explanation, but could detect nothing untoward, save the women’s obvious vitality.

“You see, Dear, when Peter takes night trips, we arrange meetings to talk about WSL.”

“That’s the Women’s Suffrage League,” said Mrs. Stow.

“Oh!” said Winnie. “You mean you want to help women get the vote?”

“The vote is just one aspect of equal rights,” said Mrs. Stow. “We’re hoping to form our own party. The Republicans are just too wishy-washy and someone needs to speak out for justice in this world.”

“I hear no women are allowed at Luffenholtz Beach,” said Winnie. “Would WSL change that?”

Sally Bell looked stern. “Women don’t belong at Luffenholtz Beach,” she said. “They are bad for the fish. WSL is only concerned with equality when it counts.”

“Oh,” said Winnie. “I didn’t know there were any suffragists on the West Coast. Do you suppose I could join?”

“If it’s equality you’re after, you’re welcome anytime,” said Mrs. Stow, Sally Bell staring appraisingly at Winnie. Aunt Ada looked momentarily worried.

“I don’t think your mother would like it,” she began. “Why don’t you listen to what we have to say first, though, before making a decision. You’re old enough to give it some serious thought.”
Winnie had already given equal-rights considerable thought, for it seemed that most of the times when she wanted to do something she was told she couldn’t, and always for the same ridiculous reason. Because she was a lady.

More than anything in the world, she wanted to ride a bicycle. It looked fun, it looked fast, and it seemed to her like the ideal way to see the world. But bicycles weren’t for ladies.

Her parents, however, liberal in some respects, would not consent to the idea, and it was on the basis of cycling alone that Winnie had first begun to read the works of Susan B. Anthony, Belva Lockwood, even Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who was a family friend.

She was quite convinced the women were brilliant thinkers, and baffled by how little readership they received from the general public. She was also quite convinced that cycling was for ladies. That the very finest ladies were those who rode. Look at Lillian Russell. She was a lady, and she even had a gold-plated bicycle!

Winnie was rather too caught up in her own excitement—she had put her ambitions on hold this past year, wavering and thinking they were, perhaps mere indulgences of an immature child—to listen much to the talk. And she was intimidated, too, by her companions’ convictions.

But she did watch, and she saw how Sally Bell considered carefully every thing that was said. And she saw how the perplexity left her aunt’s face when she was talking, and she saw how Mrs. Stow’s strength was magnetic. Mrs. Stow was a small woman, but when she spoke, enthusiasm erupted from her entire being, and she seemed invincible.
Perhaps Winifred should have listened more closely to the members of the Women's Suffrage League before deciding to join. Perhaps she should have asked her aunt further questions about her beliefs. Alas, guided by passion more than principle, enthusiasm more than reason, the young woman found herself caught up in a movement much greater than she, found herself suddenly propelled into a powerful, even life-altering, forward-moving current.

Aunt and niece ate a hurried and silent meal together of fresh vegetables and oyster soup. Winnie could not remember enjoying a meal so thoroughly.

"Aunt Ada," she finally said, in between swallows. "Why does WSL meet when Uncle Peter's gone?"

"I suppose we're hoping he won't interfere."

"But what could he do? You're a good wife. You keep your house clean."

Aunt Ada laughed. "I hope your optimism reflects changing times and not naivete." Then she sighed, and said quietly, "I have already vowed to obey my husband. And I'm not sure what I'd do if I had to break that vow, and so, I guess you could say I prefer not to tempt fate."

Winnie stared at her aunt, surprised by the violence of her feelings. "Father supports direct vote of the people. And he's a man."

"But what does he do about it? Words mean very little in this world--except when they're meant to enslave someone."

"I'm sorry, Aunt Ada. For seeming naive. I think I might be. But I'll work hard to help WSL. And that might be a good cure for me."
"Eat your soup, Dear. You’ve got plenty of time to grow crusty and cynical. Naivete is no crime. In fact, the WSL could use a healthy dose of optimism from time to time." She smiled at Winnie who felt warm, and a little sad too.
After supper Aunt Ada built a fire in the living room, and sat down at the white table in the middle of the room to do some writing. Winifred, restless without the excitement of her home in Boston, which was every night filled with different--generally talkative--people, asked if she might go outside.

“Certainly, Dear.”

So Winnie took one of the lanterns from the kitchen and stepped into the fresh air. Her throat smarted at the feel of the burning wind, as if someone had opened a hartshorn bottle, and it struck her, rather suddenly, how very different the climate was here in Bear Lagoon from that in Cambridge. The isolation of the coast altered her relationship with the land, or with herself, or something, for outside, with the only sounds those of the lagoon splashing as it reached the shore, she felt different.

It was difficult to walk with so much to muse about, and with her head craned upwards towards the stars and then rain drops began to fall silently from the sky, plastering her clothing to her and forcing her head down. Winnie turned, and hurried quickly towards home.

As a child she had imagined there were secret places for all unhappy children to meet and play. Perhaps they played all night long inside these grand redwood trees, safe, with thick layers of bark to protect them from coastal storms. The thought made her smile, and then, eager to rid herself of wet clothing, she ran the hundred yards towards home. Muscles she had rarely acknowledged performing in such an exemplary fashion. True, Miss Elkhart, the gym instructor had required similar exertions in order to play basketball, but that was indoors breathing the stale sweat and exhalations of twelve other girls.

Winnie soon reached Aunt Ada’s acreage, her eyes falling first upon the shadow of the barn, almost purple in the light of the moon, then upon the house. A
solitary lantern still flickered in Aunt Ada's room, and Winnie opened the door quietly, put some wood in the fire, lighted a candle for the kitchen, and sat down to dry herself. Her pulse was beating strong, and she rebelled from the idea of settling down for a night's rest.

She sat before the fire for quite some time, her eyes bright as the crackling flames and finally, calmed and dry, smelling of pine resin from the smoke, she went off in search of a book to read.

Someone was knocking on the door, a slow, steady knock.

"Say there, Winifred! Are you awake?"

It had to be Crocker. Winnie hurried to the door and shushed him.

"Did I wake you?" he said, his eyes big from hurrying.

"No."

Winnie thought that the drops of water forming at the tips of Crocker's curls enhanced his boyish look. But his face was tan and his jaw had already begun to fill out, and judging from his solid shoulders, he was well-muscled, too, so she held herself stiffly, aware that Crocker was more a man than a boy.

"I realize it's unorthodox of me to come calling on a lady at this time of night." He smiled sheepishly and Winnie told him to have a seat on the couch. He had to sort of fold his legs in order to sit down, and then he looked ungainly, more like a legume than a man.

"It occurred to me you might be looking for work. That's why most people come West."

"Work?!" Winnie's gave Crocker a look of incredible consternation, which he duly noted.

"Perhaps I will be soon," she said. "But I haven't been here long enough to determine what sort of work there is. In Boston I could be a governess or a
schoolteacher or a nurse. But I haven’t seen any evidence of a school or a medical facility. So I expect I’ll have to adapt.”

Crocker laughed and slapped his knee. “A schoolteacher? With your build? Don’t you think your students would be taller than you?”

Winnie glared.

“Seriously, Winifred. Do you think you could handle a shovel? For that’s what I’ve come to ask.”

Winnie had no use for money. Nor had she ever worked before for money. Nor had she have any desire, really to start now. But if she was going to be a suffragist, she thought, if she wanted equality, she had to be willing to do her fair share. And, she thought, with excitement, if she was ever going to ride a bicycle she would have to improve her physical fitness.

“I’m not always strong at present,” she replied. “But I’m willful, and I expect I can do anything I put my mind to.”

“A girl after my own heart.” Crocker smiled. “I know it’s unorthodox. There. I’ve gone and used that word twice in the same night, which I’m not in the habit of doing. But I hoped you might want to help widen the road to Crannell. Humboldt County doesn’t have any Chinese—or many immigrants at all for that matter. And this time of year the lumberjacks have more than their work cut out for them, so to speak, and the fishermen, too. So I expect the men would be willing to overlook your sex for a day or two. Especially if you did good work. Last year we had a woman help us wrangle at Red Flat. She pulled her weight that woman.”

“I’ve never heard of men and women laboring side by side,” said Winnie.

“This is the West, Winnie. The weaker sex has to work, too. Too much for my taste. I really wish there was a way for my Mother not to work so hard.”
"I'd prefer that you didn't refer to women that way," said Winnie in a small voice.

"What. As the weaker sex?"

"I'd prefer to be called a lady. Or a female. But the weaker sex. I don't like that at all. Words have power, you know."

Crocker shifted uneasily and looked like he was about to leave.

"No hard feelings," said Winnie. "You don't mind me speaking up, do you?"

Crocker rose and stretched. "I don't know what's wrong with being the weaker sex. It's obvious I've got more muscles than you do."

"But it's not obvious that you've got more brains. Well, you might have more brains," Winnie conceded. "But if I had a chance to learn I'll bet I'd know as much as you do."

"But why would you even care?" asked Crocker helplessly.

"Let's discuss it some other time."

"Suit yourself." Crocker smiled his relaxed smile. "Don't worry about offending me, though. I've got too much work to do to waste energy getting miffed. We'll expect you one week from today. At sun-up. A half-mile south of my place."

Crocker held his hand out and Winnie shook it.

She was very pleased, having suddenly thought of several reasons why having a job might be a good thing.

Winnie woke up before dawn, much refreshed. There were embers left in the fire so she poked at them, added some wood, then saw a light on in Aunt Ada's room and knocked.
"Thank you, Dear," called Ada, so Winnie went into the kitchen, thinking she could surprise her aunt with some breakfast.

The kitchen clock said twelve. It was dark outside. Twelve midnight? Winnie trudged back down the hall. Aunt Ada's room was now dark. So she went back to bed and slept soundly until early morning when her uncle came in, banging the front door. Then she dozed for as long as she dared, before yanking back her covers and leaping exuberantly out of bed.

Aunt Ada and Uncle Peter were strangely indifferent to the circumstances of their reunion, and had positioned themselves at opposite corners of the kitchen.

"Would you rather milk the goats or churn the butter or make the biscuits--" began Aunt Ada, her gaze friendly and direct.

"Or dig a hole to China," piped in Uncle Peter, his brown eyes suddenly cheerful. His face was so kind and good-natured at that moment that Winnie suspected she would have forgiven him anything. Including keeping the vote away from women.

"I guess I'd rather dig a hole to China than make biscuits."

"Then you've just been elected to milk the goat." Aunt Ada handed Winnie a pan. "You do know how to milk don't you?"

"Of course. Boston's got cows, too."

"Well, in California we've got goats."

"Yes, Ma'am. " Aunt Ada took advantage of Winnie's momentary confusion to clasp her arm and haul her out to the rather makeshift barn.

The paint was peeling--and, in fact, the wood had absorbed so much water over the years it had warped, making the barn rickety and asymmetrical.
Winnie stepped none too confidently into the dank interior, and splattered her stockings with mud.

"That's Josephine." Ada pointed to a black goat, with a gaunt face, a white goatee, and an intelligent stare.

"She's a dear but you have to tie her up or she runs off."

Aunt Ada efficiently tethered Josephine to a hook in the wall, and began tugging on her teats in quite the same fashion as if she was milking a cow. Milk squirted out, runny and yellow and altogether inferior—in appearance at least—to cow's milk.

Aunt Ada aimed a teat at her niece, and a stream of warm milk ran onto her cheek and hair, which she wiped away, conscious that it might dry in cakes. Not, she told herself, that there could possibly be any harm in goat's milk.

"Got it?" asked Ada.

Winnie nodded, and patted the skeptical Josephine, then squatted down and took the teat away from her aunt. And pulled. Milk landed in the bucket just as it was supposed to.

She smiled.

"Say, Winnie," said Aunt Ada, already to the barn door. "Thank you for waking me up last night. You most certainly saved my house, and I'd wager you saved my life, too."

Winnie kept milking. "You're welcome," she said. "Though you'd be more welcome if I knew what you were referring to."

"I'm saying thank you, Child, because you woke me at midnight, like an angel from heaven. I'd fallen asleep with a candle on my bed. But unlike most careless people I lived to learn of my mistake, and thank the Lord for the lesson."

"I quite honestly thought morning had already arrived," said Winnie, as Josephine bleated for attention.
"Don't be too sure your waking up was just a coincidence. You may look like a weakling, Sweetheart, but you've got your own kind of power."

Then Aunt Ada hurried off and Winnie said to the staring goat, "You obviously know I'm not powerful. Or even wonderful. But it's an interesting thought, don't you think?"

The chores seemed almost like more work than breakfast was worth, but when Aunt Ada told Winnie to get bread out of the pantry and some honey, too, she was very eager to begin to eat.

"Are you going to haul some more tanoak today?" she asked Uncle Peter, passing the honey to him.

"Yes, but just to Union Town." He met Aunt Ada's eyes and Winnie wondered again why they seemed so cool.

"I could take you to the Little River on the way if you'd like. She's a gentle river, and you could float back home and then start your chores."

"I've never been on a river," said Winnie. "Only in the bay."

"It's never too late to learn," said Uncle Peter, and Winnie jumped up to add warmer layers to her clothes, saw that the dishes needed doing, hurried to help clear the table, then ran back to her room to prepare.

"I think she takes after you, Ada," she heard her uncle say.

Winnie's health had been extraordinarily cooperative the past few days, and she was eager to experience a real adventure on the river. But she was just a little surprised by the course of events since arriving in Humboldt County. She had so far been given freedom unheard of for a woman her age, had not so much as seen
the Bear Creek Rest Resort from the exterior, and now was going to risk her life floating down an unknown river.

She would have to try to wipe the smile off her face, or someone else might notice--and put an end to--her good fortune.
Winnie could feel her bones shaking, for Uncle Peter's springless flatbed truck was made for hauling tanoak, not people. The jolting was, at first, amusing to her, but after a mile of it she was very eager to reach the Little River.

Uncle Peter began to whistle then, and Winnie gazed about. The sun shone warmed the cool air, just enough to make the damp tolerable. There was none of the usual summer's humidity she'd grown accustomed to in Boston.

In time, Uncle Peter shouted over the creaks and spinnings of his vehicle, and the snorts and clopping of his nags, that Winnie's job was to paddle downstream for about an hour and a half until the river took a sharp curve. Then she was to float underneath the bridge they'd crossed earlier today and drag the boat high on the banks there, out of the water. And walk the rest of the way home.

"You'll see the road," he said. "So there's no danger of getting lost."

Winnie didn't tell him that she had very little directional sense because she didn't want to trouble him any further. She was perhaps wise not to mention this, for her uncle was clearly in a great hurry to get away and tend to his own business.

Uncle Peter guided his horses down a steep slope, halted them, and the shaking and jolting finally came to a stop. Then he expertly pulled the tiny skiff off of the flatbed wagon, and set it into the Little River which, Winnie noted with some relief, seemed aptly named. There was barely enough water to cover the mud, and gnats skimmed its surface in swarms.

"I envy you, Winifred," said Uncle Peter. "If I didn't have a living to make, I'd join you."

He climbed back into his wagon and hollered at his horses to carry on.

"Try not to make any loud or sudden noises if you see a bear," he called back, tipping his hat, and leaving Winnie alone in the wilderness.
“Better get this trip over with,” she thought, already shivering, as the fog, ever-drifting, brought a chill to the air. She took a deep breath and stepped into the leaky skiff.

Winnie waited for the current to push her home. Save for the tiny whirlpools and gentle swirls, the river showed no movement at all. She sat in the tiny skiff, curious in spite of herself, as to what might become of her. Would she stay here all day watching the gray herons and waiting for the sun to emerge again? Would her uncle need to come back to this very same spot and drive her home again?

With patience, she found, floating did result in a kind of a gentle motion downstream and she had just leaned back to relax somewhat, when her eyes noted a movement in the forest.

“Hey! Hallo there.” It was a girl, running out of the forest, her pigtails flying after her.

“I say, hallo,” she said, and Winnie waved, noting that the newcomer wore ragged blue linen but looked otherwise respectable.

“Who’re you?” asked the girl.

“Winifred Potter. And you?”

“You’re Winifred. Winifred who did you say?”

“Winifred Potter.”

“I’ve never heard of you. I’m Lucretia Stone.”

“How do you do?” called back Winnie, as the girl loped easily along the banks to keep up with the skiff. “Have you any relatives back East?”

“I’ve only a father, and his name is Stone, and he’s from West Virginy.”

“Can I give you a lift?” shouted Winnie.
“A wink’s as good as a nod to a blind mule.” Lucretia ran into straight into the water, dove, and paddled out towards the skiff. Winnie had floated into relatively deep water, compared to the start of her journey, and watched the girl approach with just a little bit of concern.

Lucretia reached the boat, grabbed the sides and pulled herself in. “Call me Lucretia, not Lucy,” she said. “Or I’ll leave.” She shook the water out of her pigtails, then fixed her round, blue eyes on Winnie.

“If I had only one guess, I’d guess you were rich and from the city. Did I guess right?”

“Why do you say that?”

Lucretia rolled her eyes. “You’re not exactly movin’ like the heel flies are after you in this boat. And you’re wastin’ energy enough to plough a field. And your eyes. They’re too silky for a country woman. Country women have agates in their eyes.” Lucretia smiled and was onto a new subject. “I s’pppose I shouldn’t have gotten wet. Now I’m goin’ to freeze. Though, from the looks of it, your boat’s takin’ in enough water that we’ll both be wet sooner or later.”

“In answer to your question, I’m from Boston.” Winnie spoke a little nervously and Lucretia’s blue eyes still regarded Winnie with clear intelligence and a fair amount of curiosity. “Gadzooks, girl,” she said. ‘I don’t give a hoot where you’re from. Just as long as you don’t expect others to do your work with you. That’s my main complaint with city folk. I was born on the California Trail when my parents were headin’ West, and I started workin’ the very next day.”

Winnie would have responded, but Lucretia was faster. “Say, if you don’t mind my saying,” she said “you could piss on a train before you’d ever get anywhere in this river. Why don’t you let me row for a bit.”

Winnie handed over her oars, and the skiff immediately picked up speed.
"Bail!" ordered Lucretia. "That's what the tin is for. And don't expect me to row too fast when I'm pointed backwards."

Winnie bailed, and the two young women were carried downstream.

"Come on. I'll sing a song with you, and then I'm goin' to have to go," said Lucretia, her bangs beginning to dry out a little in the breeze. "Do you know *Put on Your Old Gray Bonnett*?"

"No."

"O.K. Repeat after me, then."

Lucretia began to sing, and Winnie, who had always been quick to memorize things, caught on, too, and their voices rang out over the Little River. Winnie enjoyed herself immensely.

"Well, I've got to be goin' now."

"Will I see you again?" cried Winnie.

Lucretia shrugged, and slipped back into the river, which was not nearly so deep anymore.

"I doubt it," she said, making her way through the water, which nearly came up to her waist.

"Where can I find you?" called Winnie.

Lucretia stopped her slogging and looked at Winnie once again. "Hardscrabble Creek, she said. "If you're ever that way." Winnie started to ask how far away it was to Hardscrabble Creek only, but Lucretia was always quicker. "Can I trust you with a secret?" she asked.

Winnie nodded.

"My Pa and I, we've found a vein that's deep enough to make us rich--with plenty left over for the other prospectors."

"You mean gold?"
Lucretia nodded. "I'm the one who found it. I've got intuition. Good instincts, Pa calls it. And you know what I'm goin' to do with the money. I'm goin' to get myself an education."

"That's fabulous," said Winnie. "Will you be leaving soon, then?"

"I'll need to work a few more months. And then I'm movin' to Wyomin'. By myself."

Winnie was silently approving. "I expect I'll be back in Boston by that time," she said.

"I'll see you later," said Lucretia. "I really must be going." She moved away, then called back, "It's good to know there's another female around here. We're in short supply in these parts. You've probably noticed. We're what you might call a valuable commodity."

Lucretia had made her way nearly half-way back to the shore when Winnie called at her to wait. "Look!" she said.

Lucretia, now up to her knees in mud looked just around the bend in the river where Winnie pointed. There were cows! Cows ambling up to the water's edge, and then, somehow, cows all mooing in unison.

"If you don't mind," called Lucretia moving back towards the skiff, "I think I'll ride with you for a little longer." Lucretia spoke nonchalantly, but her face was pale and when she'd climbed back into the skiff, she sat shivering.

"What are you mooing about, big beasts?" asked Winnie, the current bringing her closer to the cows. They mooed all the more urgently, low-pitched moans that rose to panicked tremolos.

So that was the problem. A cow and her calf had fallen into the river. And they didn't seem to have any way to get back up, which was what all the braying was about.
It was obvious to both of the young women that all the stranded cows needed to do was walk upstream where the river banks were flatter and drier, so they wouldn’t keep sliding down the banks and falling into the water. But the bovine creatures were too scared—or maybe too stupid—to think about a rational means of escape.

“Hey! Over there!” Winnie pointed at a dry spot.

The cow and her calf kept swimming and mooing.

Winnie looked with some distaste at the muck. It didn’t seem like a fair tradeoff to her, having to leave the relative safety of her only slightly leaking skiff, to try and help some panicked cows. However, she felt a sense of responsibility to them. In their position, she would probably welcome help.

“If you’ll get the calf, I’ll get the cow,” said Winnie.

“No way.” Lucretia took the oar out of Winnie’s hand and paddled faster. Hoping, perhaps, to bypass the cows, and then continue on her own journey home.

“But we can’t just leave them here. They might never get out.” Winnie leaned closer to the mama cow who was obviously deranged, her eyes pried wide open and rolled back into her head, her tongue dripping with thick saliva. She leaned her head further back as she saw Winnie.

“This is silly,” said Winnie. “You stay in the skiff. I’ll get the cows back up.”

She chose, sensibly, to start with the calf, and slid into the water with the two beasts.

“Come on, little one,” she crooned, swimming towards the shore. But the calf was plenty confused and scared, and when Winnie reached him to tug on his shoulders, he bleated in terror.

“Come on. Scram! It’s now or never.”
The calf resisted with surprising strength, and the mama cow fixed an evil eye on Winnie, but she pulled with all her strength, and then, because he had no choice, the calf followed her into drier terrain.

"Up you go!" she said triumphantly.

The calf turned to head back towards its mooing mama.

"Oh no you don't!" Winnie grabbed it and jerked his head towards the bank, and up he went! The other cows came running awkwardly over and mooed, not quite so urgently, what Winnie presumed were hellos.

And the Mama cow, hearing all her friends, made her way towards the dry bank too, and without a single glance at her human savior, trotted onto dry land, her tail bouncing a little as she moved.

Winnie floated the rest of the way downstream and, in what she guessed was about two hours, found herself back at home, the boat safely lodged on the bank. She was hoping she'd barge in on a Women's Suffrage League meeting but instead, she burst into the living room to find a strange man who sat across from Aunt Ada at the white table. The man rose immediately, as a gentleman would, to greet the muddy Winnie.

"How do you do, Winifred," he said, his trained eyes taking in Winnie's entire demeanor. "My name's Eldon Carroll, and I've been assigned to write a feature story about you for the Humboldt Times. May I ask you some questions?"

"Oh!" said Winnie blushing, for Eldon Carroll was not only well-mannered man, he was handsome in his blue worsted serge suit. "Of course you can. But I'll need to change into some fresh clothing, first."

"Please don't," said Eldon. "My deadline is imminent."
Winnie sat reluctantly beside him at the white table, and her aunt, with a smile at her niece, jumped up to fix some tea.

Eldon pulled a writing pad out of his satchel. "You travelled across the continent on a train?" he asked her. "Alone?"

Winnie nodded. "The railroad is very protective of its single passengers. I was perfectly safe," she said.

Eldon wrote furiously and nodded. "It's an extraordinary thing you've done," he said.

Winnie looked down at her hands and twisted them somewhat. "Thank you, Sir," she said. "I really just sat patiently and waited for the train to arrive in California."

Eldon asked her some other technical questions about the trip, but there was nothing there for a story, Winnie was quite certain.

"Is it true that your Father is a famous writer?"

Winnie squirmed. So that's what this is all about. "He writes books," she said.

Eldon smiled good-humouredly. "To tell you the truth, I don't like to read much," he said. "Perhaps I'd better not mention anything about your father for fear of looking foolish."

"He doesn't write difficult books," said Winnie politely, and Eldon quickly changed the subject.

"What are your plans in Humboldt County," he said. "Will you be having a rest cure?"

Winnie hesitated. "No, Sir. I don't think so. I've really come to get to know my aunt." She was blushing again, to her utter mortification.

"Thank you, Winifred," said Eldon closing his writing pad and nodding sincerely. "It's so good to know you. And we're so glad to have such a commendable woman
in our midsts." He rose, bowed to her, declined Aunt Ada’s offer of tea, saying he really had to start work writing, and left, leaving the air fine in his wake.

“Eldon Carroll is a fine man,” said Aunt Ada, as if reading Winnie’s thoughts.

“Yes, I suppose he is.” Winnie sounded surprised.

Winnie spent the next few days in bed, for she had expended a great deal of energy on her river trip. Her aunt did not criticize her, and on the third day even brought in a copy of the Humboldt Times. The piece about Winnie was more of a blurb, actually, and just welcomed her to Humboldt County. Now people would know who she was.

Winnie thanked her aunt for the newspaper, then fell into a doze.

After a time, she became aware of voices. Musical voices. Voices that attempted to speak silently, but grew in pitch when excited. The Women’s Suffrage League?

Winnie jumped out of bed, slowed to recover her balance, and proceeded down the hall into the living room.

Mrs. Stow had returned. The woman saw Winnie immediately and saluted.

“I’d like you to meet my husband, Amis,” she said.

“How do you do,” said Winnie to the thin man in blue coveralls whose beard quivered.

Winnie realized then that she was still in her nightclothes, so apologized, and said she’d return presently.

Aunt Ada was in the armchair by the fireplace, and Amis and Mrs. Stow, sat on the corner of the couch. Both held a cup of tea in their hands, but neither was drinking.

“How much does Winnie know about this?” asked Amis.
“Lord knows what Winnie knows, but she sure didn’t hear it from me!”

“Father always said I had big ears,” said Winnie hopefully.

“Your uncle wasn’t headed to Union Town last night. He was headed to Crannel. And he won’t be coming home for the next few days, either.”

“How come? Is he o.k.?”

“He’s not coming home tomorrow because he’s in quarantine. The whole place has scarlet fever. Last I heard there were five dead already.”

“Oh.” Winnie stared dumbly at them. “What was he doing in Crannel?”

Mrs. Stow and Aunt Ada looked at one another. Then Mrs. Stow spoke.

“I think he went to see a woman friend, Winnie.” Amis looked sad.

“Why would he want to do that?”

Aunt Ada laughed. “Come on Winnie. You’re almost an adult now. Surely there’s adultery in Boston, too.”

“No. I mean yes. I mean, maybe there is.” She stared at her with growing alarm.

“I thought you weren’t married, though,” she said. “I honestly did.”

Visibly shocked, her aunt confessed. “No, I’m not married. But Peter and I have taken our own vows, the same as any married couple.” She seemed a little confused, too. “At least I thought we did.”

Winnie didn’t understand the point of not marrying, if what you wanted was a legal husband, but she didn’t ask. It occurred to her, briefly, to wonder what she would say to her mother when she wrote her. Her mother had a way of noticing missing details.
Uncle Peter returned on Sunday and Aunt Ada calmly accepted his return. Winnie didn’t see them actually say hello to one another, but she didn’t hear any quarrelling, either, and was only too glad to stay out of their way in the hopes that no one would protest if she left home on Monday, which was road-building day. She had every intention of enjoying her freedom as long as she could, and no business becoming involved in her aunt and uncle’s personal problems—as fascinating as they might be.

So, come Monday morning she put on wool underclothing, and the same skirt she’d worn in the skiff—as it was no longer presentable for formal occasions—and a blouse, a sweater, and a coat in case of rain. She fled down the hall, aware that her uncle sat at the oak table in the dining room.

“Good-bye, Uncle Peter,” she called.

The sky was gray with the labor of dawn and fog hung thick, and Winnie had just adjusted to the fresh air when she was startled by the pounding of hooves and the blaring of a horn. She looked back and saw two foaming Belgians pulling a buggy that bore down on her.

The driver of the coach wore black pants, a white shirt, and a tophat. He had a mustache that looked like a handlebar, and looked to be either a rogue or a gentleman. However, he clearly had no intention of slowing on Winnie’s account, so she hurried off the road, and stared acidly when the driver tipped his hat to her.

Recovering her composure, Winnie walked purposefully towards her job, and by the time she arrived was both wet from the fog, and fairly energetic. Crocker’s forearms bulged as he pushed a wheelbarrow full of dirt and weeds to the side of the road. Judging from his rolled-up sleeves, and flushed face, he’d been at work for hours.

“Hi,” he shouted. “Choose your tool, Winnie, and get to work.”
Winnie moved tentatively in the direction he had pointed. She could hear someone chanting, but did not, at first listen. Uncertain which tool to select, she found herself distracted by the talk, however.

"How fair, how pleasant you are!
O Love, daughter of delights,
Your stature resembles the palm,
Your breasts the clusters."

But then the speaker stood before her, tall, handsome, and shirtless.

"Me thinks I'll climb the palm,
I'll grasp its branches.
Let your breasts be like grape clusters,
The scent of your vulva like apples,
Your palate like the best wine
Flowing (for my love) smoothly,
stirring sleepers' lips."

Winnie felt the blood rushing to her face and bent down to secure the pick-axe that looked the lightest. She had recognized the speaker as the young man who'd driven past her in his carriage. She was no longer angry with him. Instead, she was ashamed.

"I belong to my beloved, and for me is her desire," said the man grandly, standing next to Winnie and fixing his dark eyes upon her.

Crocker stopped his work and retorted sharply, "Judah's firstborn was wicked in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord slew him."

The man shrugged, and smiled at Winnie before grabbing a shovel that was leaning against the tree and starting to dig.

Crocker rolled his eyes. "Don't mind Samuel. He thinks he's some kind of a lady killer." Then he whispered a kind of a warning to her. "Besides, he owns Bear Lagoon, so he pretty much does what he pleases."
Wielding her pick-axe, she followed Crocker into the middle of the road and imitated the way he swung at rocks and roots.

“Crocker,” she finally asked, having flung her pick-axe in several rather vigorous arcs. “Who is Samuel?”

“Just a poet.” he winked. “But keep working. We’re not just working today--we’re racing. And the crew who builds the longest road takes the pot.”

Winnie attempted to apply herself, but just as when blackleading the stove, she could see no results from her efforts, and felt that her attitude was somehow defective. Concentration, in fact, eluded her.

“Crocker?” she asked again. “Who is that oriental man working behind you.”

“Charlie Moon.” Crocker was shoveling now, and, the sweat darkening his workshirt. “He’s the only Chinese man in Humboldt County--and half Hoopa Indian besides. I expect everyone in these parts knows Charlie Moon.” Crocker grunted under the load of a full shovel. “Get back to work,” he said.

Winnie kept swinging, but had one eye on Charlie Moon, whose energies seemed channelled, whose entire body was centered on the task at hand. She was fascinated by that. What power there seemed to be in centering. True, he had the advantage of a two-horse team and a big scraping tool to even out the land, but still, the rapid rate that he was clearing out roots and rock was due to determination and concentration, not tools. She tried to keep up with him. He didn’t say a word.

“How much farther do we have to build?” asked Winnie. Samuel Breedlove looked up from his work.

“Our responsibility is six-hundred yards, twelve-feet wide. Keep working. Or I won’t invite you to bring supplies with me to Hardscrabble Creek.”

“I am working. I’m just curious.”
Then Charley spoke. "I'm pleased to use my scoop scraper here, Miss, when you're ready for me."

Winnie blushed and unenthusiastically swung her axe. It felt like an anchor, and it bounced weakly when it hit the earth.

Everyone seemed to have stopped work to smirk, so she swung again, this time a little harder. And again. And again.

Charley stopped his work and showed her how to adjust her grip so the pick-axe would be lighter to swing. She tried again. Got it up above her head, watched it land lamely on the soil, saw the indentation it made, grinned.

"Be careful," called Samuel. You wouldn't want to nick your pretty white shin."

Winnie paid him no heed. Her swings may have looked wild, but they were meticulously conceived. Her shin was not in jeopardy.

And then, to disprove any sort of faith in her own powers, she fell.

Her next recollection was of opening her eyes and looking up into Aunt Ada's ashen face. Her limbs felt heavy, as if someone had wrapped her in swaddling cloth, and she lay motionless on her bed.

"What happened?" asked Winnie.

Aunt Ada smoothed the hair back from her niece's eyes. "You fainted. Mr. Breedlove brought you home, though, bless him."

Winnie wasn't sure who Mr. Breedlove was, for a moment, but then remembered him, and shuddered.

"Did he do anything?" she asked.

"Whatever do you mean? So far as I know he just lifted you onto the coach and then carried you here."
“He touched me?” she said, very much aghast. “Why didn’t Crocker bring me home?”

“You know it’s move convenient for Mr. Breedlove who has that fancy coach and who drives this way, anyway. Whatever is wrong, Winifred.”

“I just don’t like the idea of him touching me. I don’t like him.”

“He is a very respected citizen,” said my Aunt Ada, giving Winnie an odd look.

Ada left to dress for dinner, and Winnie bemoaned her fate, afraid to even get out of bed for fear of falling again. What is the point of inertia, she thought. I may WANT to be healthy, but no matter how much I wish for it, something stronger holds me back.

How, in fact, does one account for natural phenomena that has no rules. How can one explain the breeding instinct of animals, weather changes, even the adaptations of a chameleon to its environment. Or the mysterious illness of a previously healthy young woman. Dr. Mitchell was assuredly a learned man. But he had overlooked the unpredictability of the unpredictable. Had Winnie been wrong to think him arrogant, to disobey his orders?

Uncle Peter consumed his supper quite rapidly, and Aunt Ada took tiny deliberate bites as before, but Winnie was no longer entertained by her relatives’ habits at mealtime. She was trying to determine whether or not she would be able to eat her own supper, or whether she might choke, or pass out again.

Perhaps her concerns were unwarranted. She was feeling much better, after all. And according to the pattern so far, there is a respite after something awful happens, and the awful had already happened.

“I take it you weren’t resting today, Winnie,” said Uncle Peter shoving a new potato rather ungracefully into his long-lipped mouth.
Winnie looked at her aunt for a signal, but Ada's eyes were cast downwards.

"Not exactly," Winnie admitted.

"So are you going to rest tomorrow?"

"I hope not," she said. "I feel better when I'm active."

Aunt Ada looked down at her plate and Winnie had a horrible suspicion she wouldn't like what was to come next.

"Winnie," said Aunt Ada stiffly, her eyes averted. "I regret to inform you of an error in judgement. You were sent here to rest and recover. Dr. Mitchell's precise instructions were for you to rest for an hour after every meal. And to limit your intellectual thought to two hours a day--"

"Indeed," interrupted Uncle Peter. "And since you've not been following these instructions and since you have just collapsed, which is what we've feared most, we will have to enforce the rest cure in the future. Your aunt and I have furthermore decided that you will benefit from treatment at the Bear Creek Rest Resort, as well, which boasts an admirable success rate, and which, if you'll recall, was part of your original recovery plan."

Winnie was immediately resistant to their words, having, in the past few days, experienced her first real taste of freedom. After years of submission and a tutelage so exacting that she feared she was no longer capable of accepting pleasure, she had done something of her own volition, and more pleasing still, had enjoyed herself. She had experienced the joy of good health.

Her subsequent collapse, she knew, was due to overexcitement not to some sort of organic malady, and she told her relatives so.

They were resolute and unbending.

And so she declared her position.
"When my parents tell me what to do, I do it," she said. "This is a matter of the highest honor and principle--"

"Be silent, Winifred," said Uncle Peter.

"But you don't understand. You are both the victims of a misunderstanding, and you threaten to make me a victim too. It is wrong to listen to the words of an unknown doctor whose examination of my condition was cursory at best, whose prognosis was tempered by irrational ideas about the nervous temperament of the American female."

"That is enough, Winifred," said Uncle Peter. "I have listened long enough and only wish I had come to my senses sooner and sent you to Bear Creek." He looked at Aunt Ada and Winnie feared he was going to say more that was unkind. However, all he said in reality was that he would help Aunt Ada with the dishes so Winnie could rest in bed. And that she should rid her mind of intellectual thought.

Winnie made one last plea for justice. "You don't even believe in rest cures," she said to her aunt.

This time Aunt Ada looked as stern as Uncle Peter, and Winnie was momentarily silenced.

Sleep was difficult for Winnie, perhaps because she had retaliated against her uncle's decree by attempting to engage herself in intellectual thought, even when in bed. Once begun, it was rather difficult to stop. And certainly unsatisfying, since her brain had lost much of its reasoning skills.

So she attempted to write her mother an honest letter, where she confessed to her that Aunt Ada's home was not all Mother had claimed and believed it would be. But she had not the strength to hold the pen.
Then she attempted to read a "Humboldt Times," but could not focus, could not make sense of the words. It was not until she had stared at a picture of a rather beautiful woman for nearly an hour, that she was able to make sense of anything at all.

It was the name that she was finally able to encode. Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

"I know her," she thought. "She's the woman father is so fond of, who wrote the "Women of To-Day." She stared into Charlotte's newsprint eyes. Even distorted by the ink, and by Winnie's illness, the eyes were compelling. Charlotte was one of the Beecher clan, and all the Beechers were well-respected.

Winnie, encouraged that she had been able to read--and comprehend--that Ms. Gilman was going to speak in Eureka about the limits of political equality found herself, at long last, asleep.

In the morning, Winnie essayed to sweep the kitchen, but could not summon up the strength. She lay on the floor, instead, and wept, and by some misfortune, her aunt, carrying a pail of fresh goat's milk chose that moment to enter the kitchen.

"Come on, Winifred," she said briskly. "It's time for you to stop feeling sorry for yourself. You must combat your lazy impulse with the impulse for cleanliness and then, I am sure, you will feel quite better."

"Yes, you're right, Aunt Ada," said Winnie. "I know you're right, and I try not to feel sorry for myself. In fact, I'm quite sure I have stopped grieving. But I have lost my mind. That is the problem. I haven't the strength to do anything. Anything at all."

Aunt Ada sighed. "Then you'd best go to bed and rid your mind of evil thoughts."

Winnie obeyed. She didn't even ask her aunt why she had betrayed her. The young woman was, perhaps, too distraught to try reasoning.
She fell into a restless sleep, and upon waking, had no recollection of her desire to see Charlotte Perkins Gilman. She crawled under her bed, in an effort to keep the light out of her eyes and fell asleep again.

When she woke again, she was moaning, and Aunt Ada helped her back into bed.

Winifred Potter's melancholy, like her disease, was mysterious. Winnie was frightened by the thought that there might be no cure. She, who had once been lively, witty, enthusiastic, eager to please and to help her fellow humans, had been reduced to one giant and convulsive headache. She could not bear the thought of herself. And she was convinced that her once eager mind would never again know the joys of rigorous application to a logical problem.

It was several days later that Uncle Peter took a trip to Weaverville to get some supplies. He would be gone for an entire week. It was, perhaps, not coincidental that Aunt Ada came into Winnie's bedroom, where she was lying in satiated stupidity, and spoke to her.

"I'm sorry, Winifred," she said. "It's obvious that you've been suffering and I hope it's not my fault."

"Good gracious no," said Winnie. "I don't know what's harming me but it's coming from the inside, not the out."

She would have said more, but there were no words to speak, so she lay restfully in her bed, her green eyes, still sweet, but glassy with sickness.

"Bless your good nature, Child," said Aunt Ada. "I don't know that I would be so forgiving in your spot."

Winnie didn't comment.
"The Woman's Suffrage League is going to listen to Charlotte Perkins Gilman speak in Union Town on May 16. If you think you'll be feeling well enough by then, we'd love to take you with us. Miss Gilman has been a strong advocate for years."

Winnie looked dumbly at her aunt. "The Woman's Suffrage League? You mean it's real?"

"We try, Winifred," said Aunt Ada. "Sometimes I think we might all be dreaming, but we try to be real. Miss Gilman you'll find is real enough. She's all fire and never speaks her opinion unless she's got plenty of evidence. She's a controversial speaker because of it."

The day of the lecture Winnie felt particularly awful. Prominent among the many suggestions of her suffering brain was the phrase, "I am numb. I am numb. And nothing else." She knew her pained stares must appear foolish and so tried to smile at her aunt as she helped her into the carriage, and she said hello to Mrs. Stow and to Amis, and then fell asleep.

When she woke up Charlie Moon was stepping into the carriage. He nodded at Winnie, who said hello, completely confused now. What was Charlie Moon joining them for, with his big brown face washed clean and smooth. Why was he wearing his work clothes. Were there men in the Women's Suffrage League? Winnie said hello to him and looked around some more. Mrs. Stow wore her kilt and trousers, but she was, as always quite striking. Her blond bangs, rather daring for a woman, accentuated her lively blue eyes. And Amis, gentle, as always in his slim, introverted way, looked quite distinguished in a blue suit with a flower in his lapel. Winnie ran out of steam when she saw the flower, so did not happen to notice her aunt's unusual excitement.

In time, Winnie was able to ask the question that was on her mind.
“Um, Aunt,” she said quietly. “Are we all members of the Women’s Suffrage League?”

“So far as I know. There are some fifty-one members in Humboldt County alone. Fifty-two counting yourself.”

“I see,” said Winnie, and would have asked more but the jolttings of the coach had caused her great pain and she lay back against the leather seat to rest, sometimes closing her eyes, sometimes opening them to stare straight ahead. She was a little baffled by the men. What did they want with women’s suffrage? If she were a man, she wasn’t so sure she’d want her wife out voting. Who would take care of the kids?

Every suffragist in Humboldt County seemed to have turned out for the talk—and the hecklers, too. Miss Gilman did not seem to mind the way some of the people talked to one another instead of listened to her, nor did she flinch when a rude man shouted at her that she was a traitor to her family. Winnie’s discomfort grew, and she nearly fainted when a man stood up and threw a tomato at Miss Gilman. It hit her square on the shoulder and stained her lovely dress.

Miss Gilman interrupted the lecture, then, long enough to comment that it really was a shame to waste a tomato that wasn’t yet overripe.

Charley Moon rose threateningly and chaos seemed imminent, but the tomato-thrower left the auditorium on his own accord, and Miss Gilman resumed her talk, focusing most of her attention towards the front of the audience. Since Winnie happened to be in the front, she stared back at her, not always comprehending, but with genuine interest.

(say something here, from Women and Economics.)
After the talk, Miss Gilman hurried over to Winnie, recognizing her, perhaps, from old pictures, and said that Mr. Potter was the one man in the country whose literary opinion she valued, and could she inquire what Winnie thought of her ideas about the vote not being enough for women. With their current social status, they wouldn't have the intellectual skills necessary to vote.

Aunt Ada hurriedly explained that Winnie wasn't well.

Miss Gilman looked keenly into the young woman's vacant eyes, understanding immediately.

"This is one mystery I have first-hand knowledge of. But very little insight into."

Aunt Ada hastily assured her that Winnie would be fine soon, because she was being treated by one of the finest doctors in the United States, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell.

"Good heavens," exclaimed Charlotte turning white.

Winnie stared at her whiteness, intrigued by the way her skin had drained itself.

Miss Gilman recovered some of her composure. "And who are you?" she inquired of Aunt Ada, who replied that she was Winnie's mother's sister. Miss Gilman shook her head in disapproval.

"Elinor should know better. She's a weak one herself." She turned to Winnie. "I wish I'd known this sooner," she said. "I am utterly appalled."

Winnie shrugged, as ignorant as a clam, and Miss Gilman took her cold hands in her own and rubbed them.

"I promise you will be all right," she said.

"Will I ever be able to laugh?" asked Winnie.

"Yes," said Miss Gilman. "Sooner than you'll ever have thought possible, you'll be laughing."
Winnie did indeed begin to recover her spirits and was back to helping with the chores and going on long walks in the forest when she was summoned by Tuna Jackson at the post office. Mrs. Stow and Sally Bell were due any minute for a Women's Suffrage meeting, so Winnie ran eagerly to the post office, hoping to make it back to the meeting in time to participate.

Aunt Ada warned her before she left that Tuna Jackson would talk her ears off if Winnie gave her half a chance.

Tuna Jackson, never predictable, spent the first few minutes of their encounter scrutinizing Winnie from head to foot. Then she disappeared into the back room and emerged, seconds later, pushing a crate as large as she was.

"I suppose you'll be wanting to open this right away." She reached beneath the front counter and pulled out a steel lever.

"Thank you, Ma'am," said Winnie, prying open the front of the crate with some difficulty, and letting the wood drop on the ground.

Inside the crate was some sort of a machine. And small package, which Winnie grabbed and tore open, only to find she had been given a book. How to Get Strong and How to Stay So, by William Blaikie. Inside the book was a sheet of pink paper, which she pulled out to read, hoping it was from her parents.

Indeed, the gifts were from Charlotte Perkins Gilman who had written, "Please take comfort in knowing that I was able to recover from the same horrible disease that has so afflicted you. And please ride this bicycle. You will find there are no limits to imagination on a bicycle. Love and strength to my new young friend,

CPG"

A bicycle? Did she dare believe it? Was that tangle of metal really a bicycle to ride anywhere she pleased? Would she really be able to ride it?"
Winnie turned the crate on its side and pulled out the bicycle. Tuna Jackson gave a moan of despair. “This is the devil’s doing,” she said, her head tilted towards the heavens for some support.

Winnie was too joyous to heed Tuna Jackson. Her shiny, metallic steed was much too majestic for anyone to own. The metal was smooth and cool, the machine was strong and graceful. She couldn’t wait to ride it!

Of course, getting it home posed its own sort of problem. Winnie was not foolish enough to try to ride the bicycle in public view, for what ridicule might then ensue. On the other hand, walking it home made her a visible figure, too, and the idea was to avoid undue attention. So, she made a kind of a hood out of what was left of the crate, asked Tuna Jackson to hold the door of the post office open for her, and then pushed her bicycle home from behind. This way if people noticed, at least they wouldn’t know what Winnie was pushing.

Winnie had hidden the bicycle in a bush in the forest behind the house, and hurried down the hall to the living room. Her eyes were fairly exploding with excitement, which her aunt, on any other occasion would surely have noted. However, on this occasion, she was reading aloud to Mrs. Stow, and Sally Bell, who sat on either side of her at the square table.

Winnie wanted to tell them about her gift, which had surely already attracted attention to her. But she didn’t want to disrupt the proceedings. And she realized that she needed to talk to her aunt alone, the first time. So she stood beside her aunt uncertainly. Naturally Aunt Ada stopped her reading and then Mrs. Stow said hello and asked how Winnie was feeling.

“Better, thank you.” Winnie still stood. “I’m afraid I’ve got some chores to do, but I’ll hurry right back.” Amazed by her own flightiness, Winifred walked as fast as she
dared—without attracting attention to herself—to her room, and endeavored first to
write Miss Gilman a note of thanks. Her penmanship was round, and schoolgirlish,
but she persevered.

Dear Miss Gilman,

I received your most-kind gift today and am comforted by your own story and
encouraged by the excitement I feel—the first in weeks—over the prospect of
learning to cycle. I have wanted to experience the wind in my hair and the muscles
in my legs ever since I saw the first Ordinary bicycle in town a few years ago. I
knew, of course, that it would be too dangerous for a woman to ride. But I also knew
I would love to!

It has been difficult for me to keep atop of my studies. I have, in fact, been
something of a dullard these past weeks. But I do recollect something that you once
wrote, and I paraphrase you as best I can, by way of reinforcing its importance, and
thanking you with my utmost sincerity.

This has to do with "Rules to Live by":
1. Good food and plenty of it.
2. Good rest and plenty of it.
3. Fresh air and plenty of it.
4. Good clothes and as few as possible.

I will try to live by these rules and see what happens to me. I think I used to live this
way, before I got sick. And now that I have abandoned these rules I am much
sicker.

Thank you again. A thousand thank yous. Perhaps I can ride my bicycle to visit you
some day, and thank you in person.

Yours sincerely,
Winifred Potter

The letter struck Winnie as inadequate, but she could think of no other way to
share her gratitude with the woman.

Of course, the problem with her relatives still remained, since Uncle Peter had
decreed that she was supposed to be resting, and had threatened to enroll her in
the Bear Creek Rest Resort if she didn't make satisfactory progress at home. She
surmised, therefore, drawing from common sense she hadn’t even known she possessed, that it would be best to keep the existence of her bicycle quiet. Aunt Ada’s heart was in the right place, but she had not been trustworthy of late.
The next few nights Winnie dreamed of cycling next to the ocean, skimming the ground like a shorebird. And then, when she could no longer bear her dreams with the real thing so close by, she made her way, with the stealth of a well-practiced spy, to the woods behind the house. There she mounted her machine and tried, in a clearing, to learn how to make it mind her. On one occasion she was able to remain upright for a half-second, and it was that half-second victory, that taste of what lay in store, that gave her the strength to persevere.

Naturally she felt tremendous guilt about her obsession, being unused to deception. And she worried that one day her aunt or uncle might see her astride her metal steed and that then, there would be no reparations she could make. She worried someone might notice the bruises on her arms, or the rips and tatters in her clothing, that her secret would then come forth.

But her aunt and uncle had their own secret: they were going to split-up after a ten-year union. Wrong as it is to exult in the misfortunes of others, their discord gave Winnie the opportunity she had so long awaited. She became less timid. After attempting countless times to ride, and either falling immediately due to clumsiness, or wobbling for a few seconds before falling, she lay down in the meadow and finally cried. To possess the object so long desired, and to find herself unworthy.

Uncle Peter had apparently told Aunt Ada she could keep the house, perhaps so that she would keep silent about his recent sins. And Uncle Peter said he would move out, just as soon as he had time to paint the barn. And Winnie spent some of her hours in their company, but many more admiring and polishing, and even attempting to ride, always in the privacy of the forest, her beloved bicycle.
The day her uncle transformed the barn was the day she performed her own act of desperation. First she gathered up her skirt’s hem. No one appeared to stop her. Then she attached more buttons so that the dress could be made into a kind of a trouserdress. No one seemed the slightest bit concerned. Soon she had widened her skirt and buttoned it to a side-garter suspender, and was grinning, unobserved, from ear-to-ear.

When Uncle Peter had painted the barn—all except for the trimmings around the door which he wanted to paint black—he had to pack his belongings into crates and burlap sacks and Aunt Ada had to prepare his last meal. Then it struck Winnie that she had been insufferably self-centered, that her uncle was leaving, probably for good, and she hadn’t been the remotest bit interested. It worried her. Perhaps Mother was right about the bicycle. Perhaps she would become worthless, if she haven’t already become so, with such a machine to distract her. Alas, there was no turning back now.

Aunt Ada was close to tears throughout the entire lunch. She was grieving about Uncle Peter’s imminent departure. Winnie stared at my uncle, who was eating hurriedly and without any visible signs of distress. He gulped down a glass of milk, stood, clapped Winnie on the shoulder, kissed Aunt Ada’s cheek, and left to hitch up his horses. Aunt Ada sat stiffly at the table and there were tears in her eyes and Winnie wished she had half a brain so she could think of something to say.


“Yes, Ma’am.”
Long after Winnie had washed and dried the dishes, Aunt Ada sat at the white table, staring at the fire, and occasionally writing some of her lugubrious thoughts on paper. Winnie picked up Blaikie’s book and began to read. The house was even quieter than it usually was when Uncle Peter was gone.

“What are you working on, Aunt Ada?” Winnie asked presently.

“I’m still plotting out Marietta’s campaign. I’m trying to figure out what’s most important. It’s nearly impossible to figure out.”

“I guess it would be,” said Winnie. “Anything in particular that you’re trying to choose between?”

Aunt Ada sighed. “I’m afraid it’s everything. But here’s one for you. Miss Gilman doesn’t think we should give women the vote until they have equal opportunities for education. I rather think she’s right. But without the vote--or even the prospect of a professional life--what sane woman would ever want to be educated?”

“That does sound dreadfully complex,” said Winnie. “Can’t you just write a campaign that sounds good and let the details work themselves out?”

Aunt Ada laughed. “I don’t know, Winifred. I have to admit it’s a rather intriguing suggestion. But to be honest, I think it’s timing that’s at stake here. We’re only going to have one chance, and we’re going to have to say the right words to the right people at the right time if we’re going to ever make any progress.”

“How do you know that? Sometimes people have to think about something for a long time before they’re able to change. It might be that way with women and the vote.”

“I’m afraid not.” Aunt Ada spoke quietly and with little of her usual passion.

“Where the law is concerned, change has to happen before people have time to think. For every one citizen convert, there’s one angry legislator closing doors.”
“I’m afraid I don’t know, then,” said Winifred.

She tried to read her book in the silence that ensued, for it was about good health and quite fascinating, but she would honestly have preferred to talk to her aunt. Winnie suspected that her aunt was in a similar frame of mind. Losing a husband surely makes concentration hard.

“Aunt,” she said. “I have a rather awful confession to make.”

Ada set her quill pen on the table and turned to her guilty niece.

“I have a bicycle,” said Winnie.

“Is that the confession?”

Winnie nodded worriedly. “I would have told you sooner but I was afraid you and Uncle Peter might tell me I had to rest, so I kept it a secret. I’m terribly sorry. I wasn’t trying to disobey.”

“Nonsense, Child. You were disobeying and rightly so. I have to confess I knew about the bicycle. It’s not the sort of hobby you can hide.” Aunt Ada resumed her writing for a bit then set her pen down. “I’m the one who should apologize,” she added. “I didn’t want to risk telling your uncle.”

Aunt Ada looked ruefully down at the paper she was working on and then crumpled it. “A fine suffragist I’ll make.”

Winnie started to protest but Aunt Ada silenced her with her hands. “I suppose I should be thanking you, Child. I have to say your riding that bicycle—despite our opposition, not to mention your illness—has given me plenty to think about. It’s hard for an old lady like me to change my ways. To know that my thoughts are right and to stand up for them. I’m afraid it’s much easier, often, to create an ideal world—perhaps detached from what’s really possible or really happening—than it is to live your convictions.”

“Well,” said Winnie. “I think I know what you mean—"
"The truth be told I've lived a foolish life. But I'm willing to pay the price. And I'm glad, quite honestly, that you're here, Winifred. I've learned from you, Child. I promise you there will be no more seriously-enforced rest cures while you're in my care."

"But Aunt," said Winnie. "I don't know anything at all!" She was truly distraught.

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Ada. "You know enough to know your own desires. It's a rare gift I'm afraid."

Winnie jumped up to embrace her aunt, who hugged her tight.

In the morning Winnie put on her new trouserdress and hurried out to her bicycle with a clear conscience. She was still bruised from her exertions of the previous day but the bicycle shone smoothly all over.

She led it carefully out to the highway, for she hoped the firmer ground would prove amenable to travel, and she now had her aunt's sanctions to do so. In fact, Aunt Ada had warned that many people might think cycling was unfeminine, but that she thought Winnie had a lovely feminine spirit and it was obvious that her critics would be wrong.

Winnie felt weightless in her trouserdress, and didn't have to worry about being caught in her chain, or about having her bicycle taken away, or about having to stay in bed.

Instead, she mounted her bicycle, determined to keep her composure. "I am centered," she thought. "Like Charlie Moon." And so, when the bicycle began its predictable wobbling, she was ready for it and tightened her biceps without tensing her fingers, all the while looking about three feet ahead. She forced herself to keep pedaling and with a feeling of fear began to comprehend that this was it. This was riding. It didn't matter that she couldn't stop without falling over, because she was
doing it. Riding her bicycle—suspended in the air, like a tightrope walker. Her muscles working in harmony with her machine.

It was nearly impossible to contain her enthusiasm, and Winnie burst in on Aunt Ada to tell her she could ride. She had to tell someone. Aunt Ada had returned to her bedroom so the pink-cheeked Winnie knocked eagerly on her aunt's door.

"What is it, Child?"

"Can I come in?"

Aunt Ada paused and sighed and gave her assent.

Winnie was too exuberant to notice that anything was amiss, but she should have seen how pale and tentative her aunt seemed and she should have wondered why she neither praised nor maligned her niece's new "active wear."

"Shut the door, will you, Dear?"

Winnie obliged.

"How's your health?" Aunt Ada asked.

"Getting better all the time! Why, Aunt, I feel so energetic I could run all the way back to Boston. And then I might be calmed enough to sit down and read Father's entire library, book by book, cover by cover. Can't you tell?"

"You do look brighter than I've seen you yet," she agreed.

"So you're going to stay in bed all day?" asked Winnie.

"For just a little while longer."

"Do you need anything?"

"Please," said Aunt Ada. "Could you read me something from The Bible? Job would be nice."

Winnie picked the Bible up off the bedstand. Aunt Ada had obviously been reading it lately.

"Just read whatever passage it opens to."
"I will say unto God," began Winnie. "Do not condemn me; shew me therefore thou contendest with me. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked."

Aunt Ada interrupted, saying that she'd had enough already. "She sat up a little and looked at Winnie with a serious expression. "Did you know that, according to Saint Augustus we all enter the world between the feces and the urine?"

"No, Ma'am."

"God surely forgives us our sins, knowing how ungracefully we came into the world." Aunt Ada paused. "Why don't you read me a bit from one of your books."

So Winnie, by this time, quite worried by her aunt's unexpected mood swings, hurried off to her room, for she knew her aunt would like to hear what Mr. Blaikie had to say. His book was on her nightstand where she'd left it, and she hastily perused the opening chapters for something that would be of interest to her aunt. For such a small book, it sure had a lot of wisdom in it.

Winnie did not offer a preface, just began to read. "Ordinary house-work brings the hands of those who indulge in it a good deal to do, even though the washing and the ironing are left to the hired help."


"I am," said Winnie, and kept on. "But far too often both the house-work and the looking after the children are sources of great exertion. Were the woman strong and full of vigor, she would turn each off lightly and still be fresh and hearty at the end of the day."

Winnie beamed at her aunt who looked exasperatedly right back.
“I can see through you,” she said. “And I am too despondent to exercise. I’ll leave that to you.”

“I just think it’s interesting,” said Winnie. “My health has turned into a part of me—so long as I don’t overdo. Instead of sleeping all the time I am full of great possibility.”

Aunt Ada didn’t argue, so Winnie flipped through her book.

“Listen to this,” she said. “The body can be educated, as well as the mind or the moral nature. The body will, when properly trained, directly and materially aid them...such training will pay, and most handsomely at that.”

“I’m listening to you, Winnie. But you’re giving me ideas and right now all I want is for something good to happen.”

“I think it’s going to,” said Winnie.

“Give me time to grieve,” said Aunt Ada.

Winnie set her book down on Ada’s bedtable, and told her aunt there was a section on home gymnasi-ums if she wanted to read it. She told her to stay in bed if she so inclined, too, for she would be happy (and vigorous enough) to do the chores.
Aunt Ada spent the next few days in her room. She seemed to have lost interest in WSL now that Uncle Peter wasn't around needing to be outsmarted. Winnie, knowing that her bicycle awaited her, was only too happy to milk Josephine twice a day, feed the chickens in the morning, brush and blacklead the stove at least once a day, and, of course, to sweep the floor, and wash clothes that absolutely needed washing. This was not enjoyable, for she then had to carry the washwater to the creek, and the only muscles she needed to develop for cycling were her leg muscles, not her shoulders!

As for the paraffin lamp in the living room, she was deathly afraid of it, and so, instead of cleaning and trimming the lamp each morning, she simply didn't use it.

The sun was the brightest she'd yet seen it, and she knew she might need to protect her skin from its rays before too long. However, optimistically clad in her trouserdress, she eagerly jumped atop her bicycle, and began to ride.

It was only three miles to the Stow's house, but the road was pitted and loose gravel functioned in the same manner as quicksand, so it was difficult going. Winnie was in fact, so focused on the ground, so determined to stay astride her bicycle, that she failed to note the ocean to the west, or to pay proper attention to the dust she vaguely noted ahead.

"Ouch!" She looked down at her shin and saw a tiny drop of blood. Then a pebble hit her on the head. She was actually more puzzled than hurt, but when pebbles, accompanied by derisive laughter, began to rain down upon her like hail, she became enlightened. And enraged.

"Put some clothes on, Lady," said a boy a little younger than she. "You're embarrassing us, and you're embarrassing your sex."
Winnie turned red as a beet but her instinct was not to respond. There were four boys in all, and they looked to be in their early teens, and not intrinsically dangerous or evil.

It was slow going, though, and the boys soon stood before her, their faces contorted in anger.

"Jim was talking to you, Lady," said one of the boys. "And I think it was extremely kind of him to talk to you, seeing as how he gave you a chance to explain yourself."

Winnie was forced to discontinue her pedaling, so stood, still straddling the frame. Though she was angry, her face revealed her fear.

One of the boys said something she couldn't hear and all of his friends laughed.

"He said, we don't want to know you've got limbs. So why don't you keep them to yourself."

Winnie got off her bicycle, horrified that the boys were watching and seeing perhaps more of her skin than she wanted them to. She began to push her machine, figuring that they wouldn't dare to stop her from walking. And that the worst that might happen would be their heckling her all the way to the Stows'.

"If you feel us staring at you it's because we are," said another one of the boys who had hitherto remained stiff-faced and silent.

Naturally, Winnie was stricken. She knew her legs were not feminine under the best of circumstances, due, primarily to their lack of shape. And it naturally concerned her that others thought so as well.

However, she was also struck by the boys' rude behavior, and still angry with them for throwing pebbles at her.

"Surely you're not serious," she said to the boys.

Jim, the one who had thrown the pebbles spit at Winnie. "You may think you're a man in your trousers but you just look like an ungainly woman."
"Is he serious?" Winnie stared at the other boys.

"Come on, let's just leave her be," said the one who'd said they were staring at her for a reason. "She's obviously not all here."

Winnie took the liberty of re-mOUNTing her bicycle and riding on. They did not follow.

It is true that tears came to Winnie, the first tears, in fact, that she'd shed since leaving Boston. She didn't cry entirely in sorrow, but also in perplexion. She didn't understand why the boys had said what they did to her. Or what they had meant to communicate to her. She had heard that women in the West were revered. Why did no one revere her? Did they think she wasn't a woman?

The encounter had also stolen the joy of her ride from her. She wasn't wearing trouserpants to reveal her legs. Only to be better able to move, only to be better able to feel the air on her skin as she pedaled. But she was suddenly conscious of how she must look to others. And as pleased as she was to be moving with some grace down the road, she could not regain the harmony she'd felt with her bicycle.

"Winifred Potter. How nice to see you!" said Amis, who was in front of his house, tending to his dahlias. "Don't tell me you rode that machine all this way!"

Winnie nodded.

"More power to you, Child. I'm afraid I'd collapse if I attempted such exertions."

"It's not that hard," said Winnie. "At least the exercise part isn't that hard. It is, of course, a little tricky learning to stay upright, but it is of considerable help to have a lot of imagination and faith."

"Sensible words. Why don't you come in. Mary Ellen is planning some scheme with Sally Bell. I'm sure they'd be glad to see you." He smiled at Winnie, and
seeing his honest face and friendly expression gave her a much-appreciated burst of confidence.

She opened the front door and stepped inside. She had not yet been to the Stows' house. The hall walls were fresh with white paint, and decorative paintings, mostly of pastoral scenes, provided the only color. The ceiling was a low one, and so the house, though clean and new, felt a bit temporary, like a hut or a shanty.

"Winifred, Dear. Please do sit down." Mrs. Stow looked up from the couch in the living room. "Sally and I were just trying to finalize our plan of action before the June 28 speeches. We've decided to storm the proceedings and demand that we be heard."

"Yes, Ma'am," said Winnie and sat down in a chair. Sally, on the couch, nodded curteously.

"I wish Aunt Ada had come," commented Winnie. "She's developed rather a lot of strategies that she's based upon the success of women's suffrage in Wyoming."

"You can offer us what insights you have, Winifred. That's one nice thing about political work. It forces us to make the most of our brains."

It was difficult for Winnie to listen to the day's proceedings for many reasons. For one thing, she didn't approve of storming the speeches. It seemed more advisable to receive an invitation, just like any political party does, or to hold their own gathering to promote their causes. However, having just arrived, she didn't feel she had the power (or right) to speak.

"We need at least ten women and their husbands in the front rows to clap when I walk up to the microphone," said Mrs. Stow. "Then Samuel Breedlove will be forced to let us speak. The problem is, I can only think of five women with the gumption to stand up in front of a crowd, and not all have sympathetic husbands."
Then Amis walked in and sat down beside Winnie, making a full table. Something about having him beside her was reassuring.

"Can't you just tell Sam Breedlove that the Equal-Rights Party requires twenty minutes to speak, just as every other party does?" said Amis calmly. He always spoke with conviction and wisdom behind his words. Even the simplest statements seemed to have a kind of authenticity to them. He reminded Winnie a little of her father in this way, though her father tended to be more abstract in the way he led his life than Amis did.

"I can't tell Sam Breedlove anything!" said Mrs. Stow. "Every time I try to talk to him he tells me I'd look more feminine in a corset. If I can get him away from that he tells me the Equal-Rights Party is just taking away votes from the Republicans. And that he'll give us no support."

Amis shook his head in sorrow. "I'm inclined to think you're right. He's not likely to change his position. But maybe Sam Breedlove isn't the only one involved in this."

"You know darn well Sam Breedlove owns all the money in Bear Lagoon. He's got all the Republicans, at least, under his thumb."

Amis was thinking, and Winnie stole a look at Sally Bell, then asked, "What do you think, Sally? Is it really going to be impossible to make our pleas?"

Sally Bell did not speak, Amis was still thinking, and Mrs. Stow seemed content to wait, so the room was silent, save for the aspiration of its inhabitants.

"I'm an old woman," said Mrs. Bell. "Too old, myself, to change."


Sally Bell looked directly into her eyes, and she fell silent.

"When I was eleven," said Sally Bell, "I thought I had learned all there was to know." Her voice trembled but her words were clear. "I was in a Juniper bush,
watching white men slaughter those who remained of my people. A boy about your age," she nodded at Winnie, "pointed his gun at my brother and shot him in the head. Then he shot my sister in the stomach.

When the white men had left, I came out of the bush. My two siblings were dead. I stood before them, and saw that they were every bit as dead as they looked. Then I cut out my brother's heart, which I put in this pouch." She pulled a leather pouch from underneath her blouse.

"Then I cut out my sister's heart, too, which I put beside my brother's heart in this pouch.

"I have carried their hearts on my chest since then. I carry the spirit of my people with me."

Sally Bell stopped talking, but no one, least of all Winnie, wanted to say anything. She thought of the boys throwing pebbles at her earlier and felt foolish for having been so upset by the encounter.

Sally pulled the pouch off her neck and offered it to Mrs. Stow. Winnie thought it looked too small to hold human hearts in it.

"I give this to you," said Sally Bell.

Mrs. Stow accepted the pouch, somewhat reluctantly.

"My brother and my sister do not fear the white men anymore," added Sally Bell.

"I will share their hearts with you."

Mrs. Stow put the pouch around her neck, asking, "Are you sure you don't need this?"

Mrs. Bell shook her head. "It will bring you strength," she said.

Mrs. Stow touched Sally Bell's hand, and Sally Bell touched her hand in return. And Amis seemed to come out of his trance.
“I’ve got it!” he said. “Charlie Moon and I will talk to every man in Humboldt County to find out how they feel about women’s suffrage, racial equality, widows’ rights, world peace, and--” he looked confused for a moment. “Is that the platform you’d decided on?”

Mrs. Stow nodded. “It is indeed the platform we’d decided on. But I think we’d better just ask for women’s suffrage now. Most men aren’t ready to take us seriously yet, and I think we can have that work in our advantage. They might give us the vote as a kind of token gesture, for example. Once we have the vote we can lobby for equal rights and world peace.” She seemed to glow now. “And I suppose we’ll have to say something about more equitable taxation, too.”

Amis nodded. “A sensible plan, though I know it may seem like a sacrifice. I’ll begin tomorrow. And every man who shows an interest will be invited to participate in the proceedings. If it turns out the Republicans are all for the Equal-Rights Party, we might be able to change the Republican platform. If that doesn’t work, why we may just have to stand behind our new platform with all our convictions!” Amis smiled around the room at everyone, then patted Winnie on the shoulder.

“Why, you can lead the way, Winifred. Riding your bicycle at the head of the parade!”

Mrs. Stow laughed and Sally Bell smiled.

Winnie did not, however, feel very amused herself.

“I might do more harm than good,” she said. “Most of the women I know say it’s important to look like a woman. And I’m afraid I’m just not willing to do that most of the time.”

“By golly! If you keep riding your bicycle, you might develop bicycle walk!” exclaimed Mrs. Stow.
“Or bicycle face!” suggested Amis. The two laughed and Winifred found herself teary-eyed again, for no obvious reason at all.

“Winnie,” said Mrs. Stow, sounding more impatient than comforting. “You don’t believe we’re serious do you? We’re joking! Neither ailment has any scientific basis. Surely you know that. You’re a perfectly normal young woman.”

Winnie nodded and wiped her eyes, embarrassed to be crying in front of Sally Bell.

“Some boys threw pebbles at me today,” she said. “I expect they thought I had bicycle face from the way they treated me.”

Mrs. Stow sighed and leaned down to put her arms around her distraught young friend.

“When Sally Bell grew up,” said Amis, his deep voice seeming to fill the room, “she learned that she had to trust her instincts. If white men told her she was a heathen, she knew she couldn’t afford to believe them. I expect that’s one lesson you’re going to have to learn.”

“I can’t just ignore what people say,” said Winnie. “If don’t want to be the only person in the world to feel or think a certain way about something.”

“I know how you feel,” said Amis. “But give yourself time.” Then Mrs. Stow rose to put some hot water on.

The meeting resumed and everyone was resilient with purpose.

Winnie said good-bye, and had already made it out into the front yard when Mrs. Stow came dashing after her.

“Winnie! I’ve got something for you. I plumb forgot! Here!” She handed her a light, canvas bag, and Winnie looked into it, and pulled out some green satin material, which shone transparent in the sun.
"Bloomers!" she cried. "They're beautiful. Thank you, Mrs. Stow. Thank you! I shall be the fastest cyclist in town with these bloomers on."

Mrs. Stow was positively beaming.

"Where did you get them?" asked Winnie.

"They were a gift from my cycling club in San Francisco. But I'm afraid I've given up cycling since becoming a politician."

"You can wear them any time you want," said Winnie.

"I've got my own bloomers. I want you to have these."

Winnie gave Mrs. Stow a huge hug, and felt enormously better than when she had arrived. However, she did not feel any desire to put on the clothing, and was relieved when Mrs. Stow did not ask her to.
Winnie discovered a wonderful trick on the ride home. If she pedaled faster than felt safe, about one hundred rotations per minute, she was able to generate enough momentum to negotiate the pits and rocks in the road.

Besides making her ride safer and faster, Winnie thought her discovery had other possibilities. If motion is a way to combat obstacles, for instance, then it followed that lack of motion, like a rest cure, was one sure-fire way to succumb to obstacles. It supported her idea that her aunt's exhaustion could best be cured by activity, rather than rest. Aunt Ada didn't need a day in bed. She needed a day campaigning for WSL! And a bicycle!

Winnie was fully prepared to deliver this information to her aunt when she returned home, and, in fact, dashed into the house shouting hello, but Ada didn't respond. Winnie knocked on her door and called to her. No answer. Winnie checked the living room, the kitchen, even walked out to the barn. Not only was Aunt Ada nowhere to be found, Josephine was gone!

Winnie came back inside a note on the white square table in the living room.

"My dear Winifred,

Please don't think I'm an old fool, for I've gone and done it. I've checked into the Bear Creek Rest Resort. I confess it is partly from curiosity, and partly from my innermost desire to experience peace.

I know you're probably feeling outraged, having suffered through your own illness so recently. But my sickness is different than yours. I feel I might never recover. There is no cycle to my sickness, only a constant downward struggle. I have worked with no wages for most of my life and have exhausted myself. It is time for me to rest. This is the only kind of rest I believe in, so don't think I have betrayed you.

I may come home tonight, or the next day, or the next. I cannot tell you more until I learn more about the Bear Creek's treatments.

I rest easier knowing you are in my home. Please help yourself to my belongings, and please don't forget to weed the garden--which is rapidly turning into a jungle--daily.

I remain yours,
Winnie held the letter tightly, and considered reading it again. She was not pleased, however, and re-reading the letter would give her no pleasure. So her aunt had run off to the Bear Creek Rest Resort. What was she, Winnie, to do about it. Was there anything she could do? Short of write her own mother and break the news to her that her sister was unreliable as a feather. Which, of course, even angry, Winnie wouldn't want to do.

So Winnie propped open the front door with one of her shoes and wheeled her bicycle into the house. If her aunt was leaving her alone, she could establish her own rules. And that meant her bicycle was going to receive better treatment from now on.

Then Winnie tore off a chunk of bread and hurried outside to search for her delinquent goat.

"Josephine," she called, hurrying towards the barn. "Josephine!"

The goat, like her aunt, remained silent. Winnie peered futilely into the barn again, but Josephine's tether hung goatless from the wall.

Winnie began to chew her bread, and walked slowly towards the road, expecting Josephine to jump out from behind a redwood tree at any moment.

It did occur to her that she'd had a rather physical day--having ridden close to ten miles and now going out on her walk-- and that she ought, perhaps, to eat more than a chunk of bread for supper. Three weeks ago the thought of getting out of bed would have made her collapse from exhaustion, and she didn't want to do anything to jeopardize her new vitality.

"Josephine!" Winnie knew the goat was clever and doubted that she would respond to her calls, but what else could she do?
Winnie decided that Josephine, being a sensible goat, might have trotted down to the beach, and so she made her way to the path alongside the road, stepped around the ferns that blocked the beach path, and then began her descent.

The ocean, glittering blue and vast appeared below, the giant red round ball of sun bigger and redder than it ever was on the East Coast, ready to dip into the sea for the evening. Seagulls called to one another, and Winnie breathed in the salty, seaweed smell of the beach.

Having reached the sand, she took great delight in the way her boots sunk with every step. "Josephine!" she called.

It was low tide, so it was possible to access the rocks that jutted out of the sand. Perhaps she would have a better view of the entire beach that way. Winnie ran to the Princess Rock and began to climb. The rocks were wet and crumbly, and Winnie knew that sneaker waves could, at any moment wash her away, just as they washed away logs and shore debris.

The higher Winnie climbed, the more detached she felt from her feet, and subsequently, the slower she actually moved. Winnie sat back into a crag when she’d neared the top, and looked around the beach, swatting at the nimbus of mosquitos circling her head.

The beach was deserted save a lone fisherman, who was after surf fish by the looks of him. His silhouette had already grown dark against the ocean. Winnie looked beyond him. The only other movement was the rustling leaves of the alder trees, and the swaying of the water.

"Have you come to watch the sunset, too?"

Winnie craned her head back to see who was talking, and found that Sally Bell sat high atop the Princess Rock. Her face was stern, as it always was, and she wore the same button-striped shirt she’d worn earlier in the day.
"I'm looking for our goat," said Winnie.

"You look like you're watching the sunset to me," observed Sally. "It is good to be a part of the life of the place." She was silent, then added that the man scooping a thrashing fish out of the water was her husband Tom.

"No one obeys the rules anymore, so the fish don't often run."

Winnie would have climbed higher to carry on the discussion with Sally Bell, but it was rapidly growing dark, and it would be enough of a challenge to get down from this height.

Perhaps moved by the beauty of the beach, by the rightness of the sun's downward movement, by the subtle darkening of the surf, Sally kept speaking.

"Princess Okelta was promised to an Indian Brave from the rancheria at Little River. She was in love with another man, though, so she came here, and hurled herself off of this rock to escape marriage."

"I didn't know that," said Winnie. "I thought the rock was just shaped like a princess." She paused. "What happened to the Indian brave then? Did he kill himself like in Romeo and Juliet?"

Sally answered flintlike. "A Sinkyone dies. The others live their lives in appreciation of the dead one, and in appreciation of what the dead one left for them. If a squaw is lovesick, it is up to her man to keep his head clear of her foolishness. He must, after all, be able to hunt and fish."

Winnie was reluctant to leave, but she dared not stay. Too, Sally's husband Tom was approaching, wearing deerskin fishing boots. He was an old man, apparently an Indian, too, and the fish he carried on a line were the same color as his hair. Sally said they had to go rinse the fish and nets in the creek and scrambled nimbly down the Princess Rock to join her husband. Winnie watched them walk together
back towards their home, then hurriedly climbed down the rock, too, jumped into
the sand, and walked towards her own home.

Winnie searched for some friction matches for help in lighting up the house, and
this took some deduction, since she had remembered incorrectly that they were
near the fireplace. They turned out, in fact, to be in the larder. She was then able to
light a candle in the living room, which she carried with her down the hall and into
her own room. On her nightstand were six letters! There was no telling when
they'd been mailed, but presumably Aunt Ada had placed them on the stand earlier
today. Winnie was enormously relieved, too, for she recognized her mother's
handwriting, and gathered from the sudden onslaught of letters that Humboldt
County was just a remote enough spot for the mail to have to sit in San Francisco
for months before there was enough of it to justify a trip north. She set the candle
on top of my letters and changed into her night clothes. She felt strange being
alone. She had never in her entire life spent the night alone in a house, and pulled
her covers up around her, partly for psychological comfort. Then she opened the
top letter, which still retained the scents of home. Both sides of the papers were
covered with her mother's careful, flowery script.

My Dearest daughter,

You have been gone for a month now, and I can only hope the rest has done
you some good. I must say, if it weren't for Bear Creek Rest Resort's reputation,
and my convictions that family ties run deep, I would not have been brave enough
to send you away. I do hope you have forgiven me. There have been times in my
life when I have felt powerless. I did not feel I had the power to tell Dr. Mitchell he
couldn't send you away, or to stand up to your father. How could I do so. I know so
very little.

Dear Winifred, it occurs to me you have been so good-natured about this trip,
that you may not know why I am so pained as I write you. I ask you to forgive me for
any suffering you may have to undergo, and to place your faith, as I have, in the
decisions that have already been made.
I take great comfort in knowing you are in a stable environment. Your Uncle Peter is a well-respected man, and I know your aunt would do anything in her power to make you comfortable.

I must confess, Daughter, that I am planning my own trip West to join you. I would like to see my sister again--it has been fifteen years since we last spoke and the circumstances under which we spoke were not entirely friendly. I will need to make final my plans before speaking more of it. Perhaps I can even convince your father and brother to join me.

There were two other pages, and Winnie, out of sheer exhaustion, was beginning to nod off to sleep--the warmth of a soft feather bed can have that effect on a tired body--when she came to something very interesting, and sat up so as to better take it in.

My sister has made some grave mistakes in this life. It is not my place to tell you her secrets. I do ask, however, that you tell her I am no longer angry with her. That I hope her behavior will be more proper in the future, but that I forgive her for her mistakes in the past. I have to credit your father with convincing me that I must learn to forgive Ada, but having been convinced, I agree that it's a good idea. I am rather eager to repair our relationship. Surely Ada knows I wouldn't entrust you in her care if I hadn't already begun to forgive her, if I didn't already know in my heart that she can be trusted. Please pass along the word, Dear Child.

How was Winnie supposed to sleep now? Thoughts of home flashed through her brain like tiny shots of lightning. She sighed and put the letter back in its envelope, then opened the other one.

It was from her brother, which was most odd, since James was not, to Winnie's knowledge, a practiced letter writer. And for good reason. He had better things to do with his time.

His message, nonetheless, was a friendly one and, to Winnie's utter surprise, contained the news that she had won a bicycle at Harris and Son's for guessing there were 1,040 seeds in the squash. James wrote that Mother had given him the bicycle, but he knew how badly Winnie wanted one and was saving up the money to ship it to her.
“P.S.,” wrote James. “Arthur Johnson’s sister Lottie (you know, the beautiful one) rides a bicycle, too.”

Winnie smiled and fell soon after to sleep.

Despite all the exercise, Winnie had vivid dreams that night. In one dream she held a candle up to Aunt Ada’s already melting face, and the tears her aunt cried dug grooves in her skin. She was reaching out to Winnie with her hands, her face looming much bigger in its melted state than it ever had in real life, and then she had to lie down so that Sally Bell could cut open her heart, and then her tears hit the floor and turned into tiny black demons and Winnie ran screaming from the room, with Sally in hot pursuit saying she had to keep Aunt Ada’s heart with her, had to remember her spirit.

Winnie woke in the morning knowing full well that the dream hadn’t been true, but feeling poorly rested and cranky, anyway. It was with a great show of will that she leapt out of bed, and she was glad she had, for the utter absurdity of leaping out of bed on such a grim day gave her some cheer. She pulled on her chore clothes, got some grain and a stale loaf of bread out of the kitchen, and then stepped out into the fog. The grain dish she set in the barn, just in case Josephine decided to return, and the bread she fed to the chickens.

On her return trip, Winnie efficiently yanked unwanted weeds from the vegetable garden.

Chores accomplished—in a haphazard but adequate fashion—Winnie was ready for the day.
Despite the fog that sill hung thick around the lagoon, Winnie put on her satin bloomers first off. They felt so smooth and light that she felt naked in them and hurriedly took them off, her face scarlet, pulling on her trouserdress, instead. The coarse, heavier material felt much humbler, and she was quite content with it. Then came her sweater and overcoat, and she had to lace up her boots which was always difficult, even when her fingers were awake.

All that Winnie knew about how to get to the Bear Creek Rest Resort was that she'd have to get to the other side of the Lagoon, and that there was a path somewhere off of the road that led to it. So she set out, her legs a little too stiff to appreciate the rapid pace she was forced to endure in order to keep from falling in the sandy gravel.

She breathed in the burning morning air and felt a burst of energy in return. What joy! Wherever the Bear Creek Rest Resort might be, it was obviously in her powers to find it. And then she need only convince her aunt to come home, and perhaps to accompany her to the WSL meeting later today. Everyone interested in promoting the Equal-Rights Party's platform had been invited to the Stows' at three. Winnie, blessedly, felt cheered by all this excitement ahead of her, and did not miss her bed—or lament the loss of sleep—in the slightest.

She was already past Nagaicho Beach when some inner voice propelled her to look over her shoulder. She saw a cloud of dust, heard the pounding of hooves, and knew she was being run off the road. "Dadgummit!" She swore, veering off into the honeysuckle.

"Whoa Rum King," shouted the driver, and the horse, magnificently muscled and spirited snorted and foamed, tugging against his reins. But he slowed.

"Hello there, Winifred."
“Hi.” She stared glumly at Samuel Breedlove who sat in his coach, a carnation peeping out of his black lapel. He knew more about Winnie than she wanted him to, and she knew enough about him to know there were better ways to spend her time.

“I haven’t had the opportunity to inquire about your health,” he said. “I was so distressed to see you fall the other day.”

“I’m feeling much better, thank you.” Winnie began to walk back onto the road, lifting her bicycle with some difficulty, for she didn’t want it to encounter any more thorn abuse than it already had.

Then he smiled. “You’re bleeding,” he observed. “You should wear more suitable clothing if you’re going to ride that thing.”

“If you hadn’t come tearing down the road--” began Winnie, but then recollections from Amis, Mrs. Stow and Sally Bell began to alter her thoughts. She became strangely calm, sizing up this big dandified man who had become her nemesis--and the nemesis of WSL, too.

She didn’t think he was actually cruel. Just a little confused about women. If he thought she would become unfeminine if she rode a bicycle, thought Winnie, then, by golly, she’d become unfeminine!

Besides, Amis had said that she had to learn to trust her instincts and Winnie knew intuitively that the members of WSL wouldn’t want her to antagonize Samuel Breedlove in just any old arbitrary way. Rather, if she was to quarrel, she had to have a plan in mind. A plan like feigning bicycle-related diseases, just to point out how stupid he was being. She could not simply react to the injustice of having been run off the road, and verbally abused.
"Your horses are quite lovely," began Winnie. "I used to have a horse but I caused such a scandal when I rode her into town without a saddle that my parents had to sell her. I was foolish then."

Samuel Breedlove smiled, which was unexpected. "Rum King is a Belgian work horse but I like to hitch him to the buggy sometimes."

"Do you think I could drive him sometime?" asked Winnie.

"Indeed not," said Samuel Breedlove. "I'll not have my horses corrupted by the likes of you."

Winnie's face fell into a quite unnatural gloom, and in the spirit of her resolve, she crossed her eyes just the slightest bit, and opened her mouth just the slightest bit, too. She didn't want to be overly obvious about it, but didn't think Samuel was an overly observant person, either, so felt her idea just might work.

"It's just as well. I rather prefer my bicycle, anyway. Did you know that I can ride my bicycle faster than I can ride a horse? Why, I bet I could ride faster on my bicycle than you could on your horse. Not that I'd want to try it, of course." Winnie opened her mouth a little wider, and crossed her eyes even more dramatically.

"Good heavens. Whatever is wrong with your face?" cried Samuel Breedlove. "Your eyes are twitching like a witch's, and your mouth hangs open like a dullard. Are you o.k.?"

Winnie quite ignored him. Instead she leaned her bicycle gently against the road and went up to Rum King and patted his cheek, uncomfortably aware of Samuel Breedlove's looming presence.

"Get away from my horse!" said Samuel Breedlove. He came closer to Winnie, and grabbed her arm. She opened her mouth even wider, and crossed her eyes as much as she dared, not wanting them to become stuck that way.

"You're as daft as they say," said Samuel.
"I'm not daft at all. If you're referring to my facial expression, it's just one side-effect of riding my bicycle. When I've had some time to rest, I will recover my normal face."

Samuel shook his head sympathetically. "I must say you're making a grave mistake riding your bicycle. I've heard women cyclists cannot bear children."

"You are truly concerned about me, aren't you," said Winnie icily. "That's very kind of you."

Samuel nodded.

"How about it then?" said Winnie. "Do you want to race? It might be a good strategy for your election. Though I daresay you've enough votes as it is, without a race gimmick."

"I daresay you're right."

Samuel Breedlove tipped his hat and Winnie walked a few steps in her best "bicycle walk" fashion, shoulders stooped down, legs bowed like an ape's. She felt a little guilty, but was also trying very hard not to laugh. So this was what trusting your instincts was all about! Why, there was no one who could push her around so long as she was her own boss.

Winnie gracefully re-mounted her bicycle and continued on her way.

Winnie's muscles had grown strong, though not more noticeably more visible in the weeks since she'd begun riding, and she found herself pedaling quite regularly. The road seemed smoother about a mile past Nagaicho and so she began to speed, attempting to achieve an epicycle so rapid its momentum would outdo her exertions. In fact, she had generated such speed that she completely forgot to look for the Bear Creek Rest Resort sign, and it wasn't until she'd begun
panting and sweating and thinking it was time to rest that she recalled having passed a sign of one sort or another.

So, she circled back, pedaling much more conservatively, and relocated the sign approximately where she'd thought it might be, nestled between some redwood trees.

Her heart beat fast, for, never having showed up for her original treatment, she was something of a villain, and feared everyone in the place would immediately recognize her. Winnie coasted down the long, narrow road to the resort, slowing her bicycle so as to brush the dust off of her trousers and generally regain her composure. It was a good thing, for a cross woman wearing ruffles up to her collar chose that moment to come out of the house and approach Winnie.

"Is this the Bear Creek Rest Resort?" asked Winnie with what she hoped was pleasing innocence.

"It is, indeed, and I'll thank you to leave your velocipede on the road."

"Yes, Ma'am. I've come to visit my aunt."

"No outside distractions are allowed," said the woman. "The women here are in need of peace."

Winnie looked panicked at the long log building. Suddenly, a thin, tan girl with braids came running out of the facility, and Winnie was shocked to recognize her as Lucretia Stone.

"Miss Genevieve," said Lucretia. "Can I please go play by the river. Doctor says I'm well enough."

"You know the answer--"

"Say," interrupted Lucretia, looking suddenly at Winnie. "That is one beautiful bicycle. Do you suppose I could ride it?"
"Of course." Winnie dismounted hurriedly before the cross woman could intervene.

Lucretia winked and took the bicycle. "I'll just take it out to the road," she said. "Why don't you go in and have some lunch."

The cross woman looked tense and uncertain. It occurred to Winnie that she probably wasn't the boss.

"I must talk with Dr. Hogshead," she said, and that is how she found herself escorted into the Bear Creek Rest Resort.

The front door was made of thick wood, and was so heavy she feared the cross woman might not be squashed between it and the door frame, but Winnie lent her a helpful hand, but the cross woman made no offerings of thanks.

"The doctor will be having lunch," said the woman. "Is he expecting you?"

"He has been for some time. I'm Winifred Potter."

The woman's face showed no sign of recognition, but she seemed sufficiently reassured of Winnie's good intentions to point her towards the dining hall.

Winnie opened the door gently, and walked in, at first not looking at anyone.

But when she did look up, it was at some twenty pale, well-dressed women, white as spectres, who stared at her from their lunchtables. Delicious scents of roast duck and gravy wafted her way, and she was quite awed by the splendor.

The doctor was easy to spot, being the only man in the place, and Winnie naturally avoided him, instead edging her way to a round table in the far corner of the room. The pale women continued to stare, and Winnie looked down at her exposed knees seeing that she was the only one so scantily-clad.

"Winnie Child! Would you join us?" Aunt Ada was seated behind a rather large woman wearing all white, and Winnie, eager to be out of the doctor's eyesight,
moved gracefully over to her aunt's table. She was surprised at how brown she was in comparison to these women.

"I am so glad you've come," said Aunt Ada. "These are my cohorts in rest and relaxation, only I'm the only one here of my own volition." Winnie nodded at each of the women at the table, noticing that that these women, relative to the rest of the women in the room, seemed rather more alert and energetic.

"I've just been telling them about your bicycle, and Marscha here wanted to know if she could ride it some time."

The others made room for Winnie at the table, so she sat down, telling Marscha she could ride her bicycle anytime. Then she turned to her aunt, and inquired about her health.

Aunt Ada sighed. "It's so hard to say. There are occasions when I feel like a spring chicken again. Other times I'm so nauseous and weak I fear I might die."

She winked at Winnie. "I don't care much for the massages, though."

"How can you say that Ada?" asked one of the women. "I am tired through every fibre. Every membrane in my body aches as though I carried the world on my shoulders. Without my massage, I fear I might pass out from sheer pain."

"Perhaps there is something to the rest cure," said Ada. "The rest works for me. The massage works for you. If Winifred hadn't achieved such a rapid recovery without it, she might have found hydropathy helpful."

Aunt Ada lifted the platter with the duck on it with relative ease, and offered her niece a portion, which Winnie gratefully accepted.

"Did you ride all this way alone?" asked a mousy-looking woman next to Aunt Ada.

Winnie nodded.
“I think that’s marvelous,” said Marschia. “This is the Wild West, after all. A woman needs more than one sphere. Why not wheels, too!”

“Weren’t you scared?” asked the mousy-looking woman.

“Not until I saw Samuel Breedlove.” Winnie lowered her voice. “He’s always travelling full-speed with those horses of his, and I often think he wouldn’t lose sleep over running me over.”

The mousy-looking woman’s eyes rounded.

“But it was o.k., really,” said Winnie.

“Some boys stoned Winnie the other day,” added Aunt Ada cheerfully.

All the women at the table stopped their chewing to gape.

“It sounds much worse than it was,” said Winnie. “They didn’t know what they were doing. As a matter of fact, I think it rather strengthened my resolve to keep riding.”

Just then Lucretia Stone came leaping ecstatically into the dining hall, and the enraged doctor stood up to scold her.

“Oh, piss off,” she said, and all the women gasped.

“That does it Lucy Stone,” declared the doctor, whose voice, had unfortunately never fully deepened. “You are no longer permitted on these premises. You have exactly twenty-four hours to pack your bags and leave.”

“That suits me fine,” said Lucy. Her dress, Winnie noted, had ripped, and judging from the dirt streaks on her face, she’d had a time falling off of the bicycle.

“That machine of yours Winnie. It’s dynamite!” said Lucy. “I think I’ll get one of my own and ride around the world on it! Perhaps I can be the first woman to cycle around the world.”
Naturally, the occupants of the room were quite intrigued by these events, and when Lucy said that a gasp sounded, so rich in tone it did give credit to the acoustics.

"Out!" shouted the doctor. "I want you out now! You have been a poor patient from the beginning!"

After that, Lucretia flounced out, the room was in an uproar, and Winnie was better able to talk with her aunt, who explained that her illness was not so serious as she had at first feared, and that the atmosphere at the Bear Creek rest resort was just what she needed.

"I'm relieved to hear it's just nerves, then," said Winnie. "I rather like this place, too. Do any of these women have husbands who might be interested in voting for Mary Ellen Stow for supervisor?"

Aunt Ada laughed. "That's one thing I intend to find out."

And so, Winnie prepared to make her departure, only vaguely worried that Lucretia had destroyed the bicycle on her test ride.

"Let me walk you out," said Aunt Ada, rising from the table. The doctor once again stood and scolded her.

"I will nap for an extra hour this afternoon," responded Aunt Ada. "But I must say good-bye to my niece in a proper fashion."

The doctor, if the truth be told, looked like he needed a rest cure himself. Winnie thought it unfair that one person would have the entire responsibility for caring for an entire group. She certainly didn't envy him, nor was she surprised that his hair seemed to be falling out.
By the time Winnie arrived at the Stows' house her inner thighs were raw and chafed, and her neck was tight from over-vigilance. She was, in fact, almost too conscious of her own pains to appreciate the joy of human-powered motion.

She parked her bicycle on the front porch and went off in search of the privy. Clearly she was not the first to arrive, as several carriages had already been parked on the front lawn, and she could hear the horses snorting and blowing in the barn. The fancy Stanhope buggy had to belong to Samuel Breedlove, but she didn't pause for contemplation on the matter.

Just as Winnie had remembered, the privy was located alongside the house, right in front of Amis' junk pile, and had been erected out of tree bark. Its door was constructed of wooden street signs, presumably collected from San Francisco and carried north, and it was unlike any privy Winne had ever seen before. But then, this was to be expected, considering its owners.

Winnie next made her way into the Stows' cool, still hall. She could smell the roses that Mrs. Stow kept in abundant supply, and she could hear the low rumble of voices in the living room, which, as it turned out, was packed full of people, the majority of whom were men.

Winnie stood in the back and searched for a familiar face. Mrs. Stow, wearing magnificent black satin trouserpants beneath her kilt lectured from the front of the room, and sitting calmly in the front row listening was Charlie Moon. Sally Bell and Amis sat on the couch in the back of the room, so Winnie slid down beside Sally. It was a fortunate move, for she then caught a glimpse of Samuel Breedlove who stood resplendently against the wall, his suit freshly ironed and his arms folded. He was talking with Eldon, the reporter, who had presumably come to report on today's talk. Winnie was immediately irked, for in the first place, Samuel Breedlove, who
was the Republican candidate for county supervisor had no business being here, and in the second, he had no business talking with the reporter!

"And so, proclaimed Mrs. Stow, her steely eyes big and intent, "on the basis of the Republican Party's unwillingness to recognize the right of women to vote, the very same women who have been working side-by-side with men for progress, whether as wives or professionals, I am proposing that we all join to support a new party. The Equal-Rights Party. A party committed most of all to voting equality for all citizens of the United States, regardless of their sex. A party organized to promote the causes deemed most important by those everyday Americans, who by daily toil and struggle, have, with little recognition, made this nation's existence possible. A party organized to promote the causes deemed most important by those everyday Americans who have worked for the prosperity of all people, regardless of sex, or race, or wealth. And I remind you that the the only Americans who are not given voting privileges are lunatics, idiots, criminals." She looked down, as if musing.

"And women."

Winnie squirmed a little in her chair, worried that Mrs. Stow might be thought insulting by some of the men.

"Is this just? Is this right? Do you--" Mrs. Stow looked around the room again, her eyes like hot irons, "believe that your wives, your mothers, even your sisters and lovers are in the same class as a lunatic when it comes to making a responsible decision? Do you believe that your wives, your mothers, even your sisters and lovers--like those who have committed the heinous crimes of murder and bestiality--should be denied the right to vote?

"The message we must all understand today is that the Republican Party does not recognize that women, who make up half of the population, and who do at least half of the work, share the same right to vote as men. This is unjust."
"The Party fears that by recognizing white women's right to vote, they will be forced to recognize black women's right to vote, a recognition that would be politically damaging. This too is unjust." Mrs. Stow was quieter and sadder than Winnie had ever seen her look before. "It is true that the Equal-Rights Party cannot expect justice immediately. Our journey will be a long and difficult one.

"And that, my friends, brings me to my final point. The Equal-Rights Party will not rule by fear. The Equal-Rights Party will not say 'it can't be done.' The Equal-Rights Party needs only the inspiration and faith of its members in order to persevere, in order to make one small change, then another, then another, until we have achieved every one of our goals.

Winnie snuck a glance at Samuel Breedlove, who was still talking to Eldon and appeared not to be listening at all. His arms, however, were now placed defiantly on his hips.

"Today is the beginning of our fight," continued Mrs. Stow. "We have won our first victory by launching our own party, a party that will remain responsible to the voice of the people, a party whose members share in the conviction that equal rights may be won."

Then Mrs. Stow stepped back and smiled, and the room was silent. Even Samuel Breedlove, who probably didn't agree with what she was saying must surely have felt the force behind her words.

Then everybody was clapping, and Eldon said something to Samuel Breedlove, and Mrs. Stow smiled, and beamed, relieved that she had remembered everything what she wanted to say.

But then Samuel Breedlove called out that he wanted a chance to speak, too.
“We will hear what you have to say on July 4!” said Mrs. Stow firmly. “The Republican Party will have its chance to speak then, at the fair. As will the Equal-Rights Party. As is just.”

“May I remind you Mary Ellen,” said Samuel, “That if the people of Bear Lagoon do not recognize the existence of the Equal-Rights Party, you will not be allowed to speak at the fair. And that as of today, it is the official policy of the Republican Party to consider your platform ridiculous, to consider your party, from an official standpoint, non-existent.”

“Allow me to point out to you, Mr. Breedlove, that every one of the eighteen people in this room has a claim to existence, that your denial of our existence is biased and ignorant, that you simply cannot deny the existence of something that already exists. We have more than forty signatures on a petition asking that the Equal-Rights Party be recognized. And that, moreover, by coming to this meeting, which has been organized for the benefit of those who are interested in learning more about the Equal-Rights Party, you have inadvertently revealed that you recognize our existence. Furthermore, I have just demonstrated to you that I, an emotional female, am also capable of exercising logic in the same manner that a man is.”

Samuel Breedlove did not seem to be at all perturbed, and now Eldon was taking pictures of him.

“If I must recognize your existence in order to speak than I recognize your existence. Now will you let me speak?”

“Let him speak, Mary Ellen,” said Charlie Moon in a calm voice. “We may as well hear what he has to say now.”

There was a general rumbling of assent.
Mrs. Stow nodded. “You have three minutes,” she said. “You’ve already upset our schedule.”

Samuel bowed to her, then walked to the front of the room. Mrs. Stow moved over by the side window, and, still standing, gravely fixed her attention on him.

“My thanks for your courteous attention,” began Samuel. “My platform for supervisor is opposed to women’s suffrage for several logical reasons, which I wish to share with you.

“First, as we are all aware, women’s work is in the home. Energy, as we are all aware, is a closed system. I therefore see no need for women to waste valuable time and energy keeping up with current events, when that energy could be better spent raising their families.”

“Excuse me Mr. Breedlove,” Mrs. Stow interrupted. “But your basic assumption that energy is a closed system has come under debate. Moreover, that argument overlooks the education of the children. An educated woman is clearly better able to educate her children than an uneducated woman, and a woman who feels a sense of participation in the community--”

Samuel interrupted Mrs. Stow. “If I only have three minutes you’ll have to hear me out. This is not a debate.”

He shot her a grim look and looked to Charlie Moon for support. Charlie Moon’s face was impassive.

“It is the role of the husband to provide for the family,” he continued. “And the woman’s role to support him in his efforts. The woman who asks for the vote is sending a message to her husband that she doesn’t trust him. She is thereby violating the marriage contract.”

“Not all women have husbands!” Mrs. Stow’s tense stance had grown fiercer, her strange garment lending credence to the power of her feelings.
"I must thank you for that outburst," continued Mr. Breedlove, "for my next point is that women are more emotional than men. It is obvious that women allow their emotions to interfere with their reasoning, and they should therefore be denied the vote."

Mrs. Stow sat seething in her chair, but the man next to her whispered something in her ear, and she smiled at him, so Winnie knew there was no cause for alarm yet.

"I realize I am interfering with your meeting, but you must hear me out," said Samuel. Winnie thought him dreadfully arrogant and wondered why any of the Equal-Rights Party wanted to listen to what he had to say, but she listened. It was hard not to, under the circumstances.

"Consider, every one of you, with your reason and your heart," said Samuel, really quite eloquently. "that realistically, practically, and from the beginning of time, a woman's responsibility has lain with her family. If women are given governing power, they may be inclined to abandon their families, and this would be a grave disservice to our young people, to the future of our nation. This new woman, this woman who wants to have the same rights as a man, is a dangerous creature. I will not give her a chance to unleash her evil on the world."

Samuel's cold eyes settled on Winnie. He paused with his speaking.

Winnie felt others must be watching her too, and wished he would look at someone else.

"This young woman," he gestured towards Winnie, "I daresay, is a new woman." He came closer.

"Are you going to be married soon?" he asked.
Charlie Moon stood up this time, his black hair in need of a cut, but not unattractively so. "We have given you the opportunity to speak your views. But you do not have the right to attack members of this audience."

"I am merely asking a simple question," said Samuel Breedlove.

Winnie could not answer him, not with everyone staring at her. She was wearing her trouserdress, too.

"Obviously you are not planning on getting married," said Samuel Breedlove. "You are more interested in riding that machine you call the bicycle than in contributing anything to your community. I do not have contempt for you, young lady. Only sorrow."

"Your three minutes are up," announced Mrs. Stow. However, even Mrs. Stow couldn't have stopped what came next.

"I pity you, Miss Potter, because on the day that you decide you are ready to have children, you will find it impossible. Riding a bicycle, as the medical community has been quick to point out, can destroy a woman's child-bearing abilities. You may feel a new woman now, Miss Potter. You may feel free and manly astride your steed now. But three years from now when you grow up, you will curse your bicycle and you will curse the permissive society that allowed you to ride. That is all I have to say."

Winnie was tense in her chair, her blood rushing through her, and her thoughts racing. She wished she knew what to say to Samuel just then, short of that he was a despicable man and that she didn't want the likes of him voting on matters that concerned her. She wished she knew what to say to all the others in the room, who surely expected a response from her. Could she justify her actions to them?

Amis then spoke, softer than anyone else had. "May I say something before we return to the agenda?" he asked his wife.
Mrs. Stow nodded, and eased into an armchair by the window. "If Mr. Breedlove can have three minutes, I am obliged to offer the same treatment to any others who wish to speak."

Amis stood, and took a visibly deep breath. "Many of you perhaps think of me as the junk man." He smiled, and some people laughed nervously, for everyone knew he liked to collect junk and everybody had seen the pile of wagon wheels and metal scraps and assorted bottles and tins out back.

"When I'm not being a junk man, I'm a doctor. In fact, as some of you know, I practiced medicine for twenty-six years in San Francisco before moving to Humboldt County, and I am particularly interested in women's illnesses. This interest, in conjunction with the close proximity of the renowned Bear Creek Rest Resort, has recently lured me to Humboldt County." Everyone was certainly giving Amis their full attention. Samuel looked, for the first time, uneasy.

"I have in my possession several studies about the effect of the bicycle upon its riders, and I can say that, where both sexes are concerned the effects are mostly beneficent. I would be happy to write an article for your paper--" he nodded to Eldon "or to answer any questions you people may have about the bicycle. However, in response to Mr. Breedlove's concerns about the bicycle and a woman's ability to bear children, I must offer a contrary view. From the upper corners of the womb, you see, extends a string, which is of great importance in maintaining the uterus in its proper position."

Winnie perked up at this, for her Mother hadn't ever mentioned any string that kept the uterus in its position.

"This very same string," explained Amis, "has been proven to strengthen with exercise, including cycling, and physicians of to-day have been able to conclude
that a woman whose muscles have developed from use, is better able to bear children than her weaker sisters."

Winnie felt an enormous excitement inside. Her uterus was not going to fall out—and bicycling was good for her! She wanted to tell her mother immediately.

"Many physicians were at first concerned about the side effects of cycling," said Amis, speaking much faster now, "which may be where Mr. Breedlove has formed his opinion. However, we have now reached a consensus that cycling is a wonderful panacea for many ailments, as it brings fresh air into the blood, helping to increase circulation and thereby purify the organs."

"And I say women are the weaker sex!" Samuel Breedlove's black sideburns were blacker than Winnie had ever before seen them. "Women who exert themselves lose their power to conceive children, no matter what the physicians of to-day have to say. Miss Potter herself will be the first to testify that she is too weak to even shovel for a day without fainting. I daresay her weakness is directly related to the energy she wastes cycling."

"You've had your speak, Samuel," said a short man whom Winnie had never seen before.

Yet everyone still looked at Winnie. She did not know how she appeared to them, but she feared that some of what Mr. Breedlove had said was true. She knew she would not be a good wife or mother, not with a bicycle to distract her. And she was weak. And she did pass out and take to bed when overstressed. But she was not ashamed. Amis had said her muscles were better prepared than other women's because she was physically fit. She had been right to want to ride a bicycle!

And so she managed to say to Mrs. Stow that she'd like to speak, too, if there was time.
Mrs. Stow smiled at Winnie and told her to proceed. Winnie stood, acutely aware that her way of life, her style, so to speak, was on trial. She could feel Charlie Moon and Amis giving her their good will and support, and that helped.

Winnie knew she probably looked about twelve, her eyes were so big.

"There is a lot I could say in response to the observations Mr. Breedlove has made about my character in particular and that of women in general," she said, her words so soft everyone in the room had to strain to hear her.

"However, I think the best response of all is my challenge: I challenge Mr. Breedlove to a race. I on my bicycle, and he on his favorite horse. I believe I will be able to prove myself as strong as his horse, and thereby fit for raising children."

The room was bedlam then! She sank back into her seat, trembling.

"I accept the girl's challenge," shouted Samuel Breedlove. "On the condition that, should she lose, she will consent to confiscation of her bicycle, and will agree never to ride again."

The condition worried Winnie, naturally, but she didn’t hesitate when she responded. "I will agree to your condition, Samuel Breedlove, on the condition that you will allow the Equal-Rights Party twenty minutes to speak on July 4th, the twenty minutes directly following speeches by the Republican Party."

Samuel Breedlove nodded quickly. "It's a fool's bet," he said. "And I'm not entirely sure that your unquenchable interest in your bicycle qualifies as a conflict about equal rights. But I welcome the opportunity to put you in your rightful place. I accept your challenge."
Winnie was thoroughly exhausted when she finally returned home, and was chilled to the bone. Riding up to the doorstep, she saw someone had left her a note, so she pulled it off wearily, opened the front door, and wheeled her bicycle inside.

It was too late to build a fire, so Winnie just warmed up some hot soup and sat down close to the oven, to read the note. Crocker was going to bring supplies to the miners at Hardscrabble Creek tomorrow, as planned, and said that if Winnie wanted to join him she’d have to be ready to leave at sun-up. He’d be by to pick her up.

Winnie had forgotten all about this rendezvous. In fact, she could see little reason to accompany Crocker, for she had no interest in becoming a miner, and she did have a bicycle race to train for.

Unable to make any decisions in her current state of exhaustion, Winnie simply consumed her soup, left the pan on the stove-top, and toppled into bed. Her last thought was that she’d have to try to wake up in time to decline Crocker’s invitation. Sleeping in would be horribly rude.

“Winnie!” She was hurriedly pulling on my long underwear, having just finished her chores and observed the ascent of the sun. “Winnie! Hurry up, Woman. They’ve found oil at Christ Episcopal Church. Seeping into the cellar! I want to hurry back before it’s all spoken for.”

Winnie somehow couldn’t bring herself to tell Crocker that she wasn’t coming, not after he’d made a special trip to pick her up. She looked sleepily at her trouserdress, which lay rumpled in her chair, and the look itself was an admission
that she was going to go to Hardscrabble Creek today, in spite of her better judgement.

Winnie thought it made sense to wear her trouserdress on a lengthy walk like today’s. But she also wasn’t sure how the miners would react to it, so she put on the summer clothes she would normally have worn in Boston: a cotton undershirt, panty waist and panties, a cotton petticoat, and a dress with long ribbed stockings.

“i’m coming!” She hollered to Crocker. “Come in why don’t you. I’ve just got to lace up my boots.”

“Don’t you even care about the oil?” shouted Crocker, still outside.

“No! You can’t drill for oil at a church.”

Crocker laughed. “You can do anything if there’s money involved.”

The truth be told Winnie was too preoccupied with the chaotic form her life had taken to really respond to what Crocker was saying.

Instead, she laced up her boots tightly, and hurried down the hall and thrust open the front door.

“I told you to come in,” she said impatiently.

She saw, however, that she spoke to a brown-eyed, long-lashed burro and to -- Lucretia Stone! Crocker was tightening the packs on another burro, and he looked up a little curiously, but did not seem at all perturbed by Winnie’s piquishness.

“Do you promise not to collapse on me?” he asked.

“I have no way of knowing when I’ll next collapse,” said Winnie. “But I feel strong, and I do promise that if I collapse I won’t expect any help from you. I’ll crawl home if need be.”

“Spoken like a woman after my own heart.” Crocker grinned and gave his burro an affectionate pat. “But I wouldn’t leave you alone in the woods. I’d just sling you atop one of my animals and carry you home like a deer carcass.”
And so, the three began their walk.

“Hi Lucretia,” said Winnie. “You look well.”

“I am extraordinarily so. I’m excited to be returning home, of course, but only because I’ve discovered what I want to do with my life. I’ve you to thank for this, I must confess.”

Crocker raised his eyebrows. He was walking loosely to Winnie’s right, holding onto his burro’s reins lightly. The two other burros followed good-naturedly.

“You are going to bicycle around the world then?” asked Winnie.

“I am indeed. I know it will be frightening. Especially in Turkey. But I can think of no better way to spend my life than exploring, and I see such possibility in the bicycle.”

“I commend you for that,” said Winnie. “I’d cycle around the world, too, but I doubt if I’d have the fortitude to do so. Besides, I feel I can be better invest my time in the community.”

“Oh pooh Winifred.” Lucretia tossed her braids impatiently. “Am I the only sensible woman in this county. Everyone’s all fired up about equality. Well I say pooh on equality. Just do what you want to do and there’s nobody with the will to stop you.”

“I don’t think it’s quite that simple. Really I don’t,” said Winnie.

“I’m inclined to agree with Winnie,” said Crocker. “It would be rather strange for a woman to cycle round the world, when there was plenty of work to be done at home.”

Lucretia did not look at all distressed. “I refuse to talk with you close-minded people any more on the subject,” she said. “If I’m the only one who knows what’s right, then I’ll be gratified that there’s at least one sane person in the world.”
And so the three friends made their way east. The path through the trees was well-traveled enough so that they didn't have to make their way around too many obstacles like felled trees or decaying logs. Though the forest was sufficiently virgin that it felt dark and cool, Winnie wasn't entirely comfortable walking in it. Fortunately, there were clearings where the sun shone hot and bright, providing necessary warmth and comfort.

The mosquitoes were out, but Crocker took off his shirt, anyway. Winnie was stuck in her proper summer clothes. And the more she walked, the hotter she got. It wasn't fair. Crocker could take off his shirt and she had to be a mummy, and Lucretia was too intent upon her inner thoughts to take precautions about her dress or to even notice the weather. In fact, Lucretia began to walk briskly, and finally turned and announced that she wanted to walk the rest of the way alone.

"It is my express opinion that we should stick together," said Winnie in response. "I'm not in the mood to play pink and white pinto filly games," said Lucretia. "But I'll keep you in sight."

"Meander then," said Crocker. "But wait for us if you wander too far. We need to arrive together for appearance's sake if nothing else. Your father would run me out of town if he thought I'd neglected you."

"Don't worry. I'm certainly not goin' to." Lucretia picked up her pace, and disappeared from view.

The climb gradually became steeper, and Crocker and Winnie finally stopped to eat at Redwood Creek. Crocker had brought along some apples, prize apples from Edersburg. He offered Winnie one and she declined it, though her eyes nearly burst out of their sockets it was so huge.

"Crocker?" she said. He was sitting, his long legs stretched down towards the river, and Winnie marveled momentarily at how relaxed he was.
"I have to ask you about something."

"So I figured." Crocker took an enthusiastic bite out of his apple and grinned as the juice squirted out and landed on Winnie's arm.

"Crocker," said Winnie. "I have a rather awful confession to make."

"These are the juiciest, tangiest apples I've ever laid eyes upon. Are you sure you don't want one?"

"Do you want to hear it?"

"Your sins are your own affairs," said Crocker leaning back and groaning in the sun. It was no use, really, for Winnie to talk to Crocker about the predicament she was in. His mind just didn't operate that way. A problem was when your fields flooded. In which case all you could do was wait for next year and figure you'd probably have better luck next time.

"How long are we going to be here for, Crocker?"

Crocker smiled at Winnie with what seemed to be genuine affection.

"Another half hour--what do you think? I want to go swimming and luxuriate in this sun."

"Suits me."

So Crocker stripped down to his underwear, and Winnie stopped paying any attention to him just in case he took it into his head to strip completely. She'd never seen a man actually stark-naked and didn't intend to today what with all the other things that were already on her mind. Instead, she began to think of how she could reply to her mother's letters.

Perhaps it would be sensible to tell her mother that she was welcome to come for a visit. That she would never again see a place as beautiful as Humboldt
County, with its redwood trees, great blue ocean, all the ferns, and now the Trinity Alps!

I'm glad you feel good about my being in California with Aunt Ada and Uncle Peter. I agree with you that I'm in good hands, but feel I must tell you that California is much different than Boston. For one thing, it is impossible to rest here. There is so much work to be done. Even at the Rest Resort the women seem to want to work. And the Panic seems to affect the rural people more than the city people, which I suppose, if you think of it, makes a fair amount of sense.

Mother, do you love Aunt Ada? When you write me back, could you tell me what she was like as a little girl? Do you think she was much like me?

I love you. And I will be so glad to see you and Father again.

Your loving daughter.

Winifred

Winnie lay back in the long grass and stared at the sky. She knew she'd have trouble getting the letter right. It would be hard to be sincere without being dishonest. She gave up thinking about it in favor of relaxation. The sun was so magnificent the way it was warm up high, then made the water gleam and shimmer, the way it made people, even worried people like Winnie, relax.

Suddenly she realized she was staring at Crocker. And he had no clothes on! She was so intent on her musings her eyes had just sort of caught hold of him. He was brown all over.

And, to tell the truth, Winnie thought that he looked good that way, it was his right form. She felt that perhaps, in her clothes, she was the one who looked ridiculous.

Crocker didn't seem to mind Winnie staring—or to even notice. Perhaps people in California had a different attitude towards nudity than those in Massachusetts, who naturally avoided public displays.

"You coming in?" asked Crocker.

Winnie knew that the right thing to do was to say no. But she wanted to! She was mostly still a girl in body. Being so thin, her body hadn't had a chance to develop
overmuch. It was something she was strangely proud of. Most of the women she knew took secret delight in the way their bosoms swelled out into the wind. Not Winnie. There was plenty of time for that. She was just going to enjoy being only partially developed for as long as she could.

So she pulled off her boots and stockings, her petticoat, her undershirt, her panty waist, and her panties, and lay them all atop one another. Her intention was to keep them from blowing away.

Crocker reached out a wet hand to steady Winnie when she stepped on a wobbly rock. He didn't look like at all embarrassed, but Winnie was, beyond any shadow of a doubt, blushing bright red. She wondered what her Mother would say. "Dear Mother. Crocker and I took off all of our clothes in order to go swimming today. But don't worry. It was perfectly proper."

And then she sank her naked body into that shimmering green, wonderfully refreshing water. After the initial shock of the cold, the water felt like a cool blanket.

Winnie felt the blanket envelop her head, and kind of knew what it was like to be dead. You would just keep sinking as air and time surrounded you. You would get warmer, more relaxed, feel how gentle the wind was, learn that the wind was just the spirits of the dead, that the wind welcomed you. She leapt out of the water, shaking droplets of water on Crocker.

He let out a roar and jumped on top of her. She screamed and choked on water, but punched him and he let her come out for air. He was grinning and laughing. And it occurred to Winnie that he perhaps thought of her as an equal. Was this right? Shouldn't a male treat a female like a female? She splashed him again for good measure, but went to lie out in the sun so she'd dry off. She sure had gotten used to being naked fast. It helped, of course, that there weren't any people around.
Winnie and Crocker lay in the sun for nearly an hour, for Crocker said they'd have to be completely dry before continuing their walk. Hardscrabble Creek was at least at a 2,000 foot elevation, and there was often snow there this time of year.

Hearing that, Winnie was eager to be walking again. She didn't want to have to climb up a mountain at night.

Crocker walked faster than Winnie did, by nature, and she didn't really have a lot of energy—not the sort of energy to do bursts of activity, anyway. But she felt very good about walking 15 or so methodical miles that day, and it encouraged her that she might be able to race ten on July 3.

In fact, walking seemed to free her spirit somewhat, and, having grown accustomed to the grade, she began to speak about some of her most deep-rooted worries, some of which had previously seemed to be unspeakable. For the unspeakable seems less dreadful in the woods, less awful when the body is tired and peaceful.

"Do you think I'm attractive?" She asked Crocker. "I'm only asking you because you're a male and males might have a different view of women than I do."

Crocker kept walking like he hadn't heard, but Winnie knew he had.

"I'll answer you," he said. "but tell me, Winnie, what earthly difference does it make?"

"I'm worried, Crocker. Samuel Breedlove says I'll be a terrible wife and mother. Not that I care what Samuel Breedlove thinks, but I'm not very talented in any conventional way. Which means the only thing I have left to be is attractive."

"If you weren't attractive, you'd have to find something else to be good at, is that what you're saying?"

"Not necessarily. Forget it."

"You got your eyes on someone? I won't tell."
“No.”
Crocker slowed his walk a little to look Winnie in the face.
“You’re not a kid anymore, are you. I’m sorry, Winnie. I’m just used to thinking of you as a little sister. You’re a great little sister.”
“That’s fine,” said Winnie. “Sometimes a person just wants to know where she stands, that’s all.”
“You’ll break plenty of hearts in your time,” Crocker vowed.
Winnie sighed. “Who wants to break hearts? Please forget I brought it up.”
But since she had secured his attention, she found myself asking still another ridiculous question. “Do you think anyone’ll ever want to make love to me?”
Lucretia chose that moment to leap out from behind a pine tree. “I’m with you two now. Father’s so close I can smell him!”
Crocker grinned and urged on the burros, and Winnie looked around her in wonder, at the patches of snow in between the pines. The snow was thin and full of twigs and pine needles. Then they came upon the camp.
“Crocker!” A prospector, with a long gray beard and brown, weathered skin that had, at one time been white like Winnie’s, was cleaning some trout. Crocker waved, then stopped by the cook oven just long enough to unload Meriwhether, then he fumbled with the packs until he’d found what he needed, and moved on.
Lucretia took Winnie’s hand and Winnie smiled at her, for she could see that Lucretia was scared.
“Here I’m just a slave,” she said. “I lied when I said I’d discovered a vein of gold. That’s father’s job.”
“It’ll be o.k.,” whispered Winnie, looking around her all the while. There were at least twelve men in the camp who had stopped their work to smile and stare. “You have the will, remember. Your will is greater than anyone else’s. You’ll get your
education. Why you could even become a lepidopterist and travel around the world doing moth studies. Maybe you’ll even meet a man who wants to do the same!”

Lucretia smiled and said thanks, but she was obviously uncomfortable in the camp atmosphere.

“Hey Lucy! Who’s your friend? Is she a boy dressed in women’s clothes?” The man talking looked malnourished and grisled.

Lucy whispered that some of the men were as “worthless as a four-card flush,” and not to listen to them, but Winnie felt uncomfortable. More uncomfortable than she’d felt all day, in fact, including when she’d been skinnydipping. That, at least, had been her choice.

“No boy blushes like that! We’ve got ourselves a gen-u-ine female! And Lucy’s come back! Jim—go tell Johnny Stone his daughter’s come home.”

“I’ll tell him,” said Lucretia, her cheeks pink and her lips tight. “Is he down at the river.”

“He is Mrs. Stone. He thinks today might be the day he strikes it rich.”

Lucretia nodded and walked stiffly towards the creek. Winnie’s heart went out to her. She was so strong away from this place. And seemed so helpless now that she’d returned.

Suddenly everyone wanted to help Winnie sit down, drink a cup of coffee, apologize for all the dirt.

“Did Montgomery Wards send you West on approval?” asked one whose whiskers were thick, and pepper-colored.

“I came to help Crocker.”

“Seems like a long walk just to do a good turn.”

“I was interested, too. I’ve never seen this part of the country before.”
The men all roared with laughter. Winnie kept her chin up, and asked if they knew where Crocker had disappeared to.

"He's probably fixing the ice cream, answered the quiet thin man, who stood bandy-legged as he shucked beans into a huge kettle. "Do you know how to make huckydummy?"

Winnie shook her head and said she had to go find Crocker. She knew he wouldn't have gone too far, so walked down towards the creek calling his name.

"Over here!"

"Where?"

"Over here."

They kept calling to one another until Winnie found him, standing proudly behind four buckets of milk, which had each been placed in a mound of snow.

"I hope the men didn't give you too hard of a time," he said.

"No. I'll have to get used to their loudness, though. Is that the ice cream?"

"It's just milk with sugar and vanilla right now. Give it some time to cool."

Dark moved in as fast as the tide and Winnie felt very grateful to be in such a rugged group--with dinner on the way. The bandy-legged man named Jim was fixing some "immigrant butter" on a makeshift oven. Winnie would have just called it bacon grease and flour, but immigrant butter did sound rather more appetizing. Another man whose name Winnie didn't know was peeling some potatoes. Lucretia was nowhere to be found. Perhaps she and her father had found their gold mine.

"Sure you don't want to make the huckdummy," said Jim.

"I don't know how," said Winnie.
After dinner a few of the men got out their fiddles and played some polkas. Others got out their liquor. A short, well-built man named Harry, who had bright black eyes had his own bottle and offered Winnie some, and she took a cautious swallow. Which was apparently the right thing to do, for the next thing she knew, Harry was asking her if she wanted to dance. She accepted, aware that Crocker was watching her.

She hadn't polka'd since a fourth of July celebration five years ago.

"Just follow my leads." Harry said patiently. "Shift your weight to right, to the left, to the right, to the left."

But it was no use. Winnie couldn't figure out what he was doing, and furthermore couldn't seem to get the beat. When the musicians started playing "My Pretty Quadroon," Harry kept right on dancing.

"No thanks," Winnie said, and ran after Crocker, who was heading back down towards the creek. Harry followed and it wasn't long before all three found themselves at a shelter, a big, square, A-frame kind of a place that looked a bit like a barn. Some of the other men had already arrived, and a few of them were in their long johns. This was obviously the place to sleep, but Winnie wasn't sure if she would be allowed to sleep with all the men. Then she saw Lucretia, who was making up a bed by the door. Lucretia waved and gestured that this bed was for Winnie.

"You don't mind used hay do you?" asked Jim anxiously.

Winnie said no, and hugged Lucretia for fixing her bed. Then she lay down. No one told her to leave. Somebody put a blanket over her. She was asleep.
"Winifred Potter. We want you Winifred Potter" the voice moaned and creaked, and at first Winnie refused to believe she was really hearing it. "We want you Winifred Potter." Winnie felt a sudden cold draft, and then something splatted on her face, and she shrieked and ran out of the barn.

She immediately wished she hadn't, for the men were more comfort than the dark night, and she would have gone back inside, but she remembered the feel of being splattered and shivered for a little while longer, by herself, in the night. She edged her way hesitantly back to the barn, and was surprised to hear men arguing.

"Harry, you've got to stop spooking the womenfolk. What if she hurts herself."

"I want you to go find Winnie and apologize." Winnie recognized Crocker's voice. "And do it before she gets into any trouble."

Winnie stepped back, for unless Harry was a mischievous ghost, the flesh and blood Harry, feigning a spooky voice, had just played a prank on her.

She should have seen through him immediately. But that wetness. She shuddered to remember it, and walked a little farther into the night, assuming that Harry would come and find her.

She didn't have long to wait. She simply sat on the ground, her arms folded for extra warmth, and her head down.

"Excuse me, Miss Potter."

Winnie looked up, calmly. She could see Harry in the moonlight. "What is it, Harry?"

"Would you come back inside, Miss Potter? Please?"

"I can't come back inside," explained Winnie patiently.

"But you have to. I'd never forgive myself if you spent the night out here and something happened to you."
Harry reached out to touch Winnie's shoulder, and Winnie could see that he was genuinely distraught. "Please come back inside. It was me that you heard. Sometimes I play jokes on people and realize afterwards they aren't funny. Please don't be angry with me for long."

"I didn't hear you. I heard a ghost," insisted Winnie, shuddering.

"There aren't any ghosts in Hardscrabble Creek," said Harry. Winnie could tell from his posture and his tone of voice that he was genuinely concerned about her.

"Come back inside," said Harry, putting his arm around her and pulling her closer. Winnie reluctantly followed him back towards the barn.

But before they could enter it, Harry stopped and asked Winnie if she was still angry with him. She was rather too confused by his sudden charm to know what to say, and when he kissed her--on the lips--a warm, soft kiss, she was shocked.

"You're a lady. A real lady," said Harry heavily, and close enough that Winnie could smell the rum on his breath.

Before she could pull away, he was kissing her harder, almost desperately, and she was scared.

"Relax," he said, and removed his lips long enough that she could get her breath back and see that he meant her no harm.

When his lips found hers again, she decided to kiss him back--just to see what it was like to have a man make love to her. After all, she wanted him to. She was old enough to know what making love was all about.

"What do you know! The woman's a kisser," said Harry.

And then his hands began to roam and he was breathing harder. Winnie pulled away, and ran inside the barn, Harry standing helplessly outside.

"That you Winnie?" called Crocker.

"Yes," she said.
“Good night, then.”

In the morning, Crocker looked at Winnie’s pale face curiously, and asked if everything was all right. She was feeling glum, but since her virtue was still basically intact, she said yes. “Harry didn’t mean to embarrass you. In fact, I think he likes you,” said Crocker.

“Fine way of showing it,” retorted Winnie.

Winnie wanted to talk with Lucretia, before leaving, but she was busy filling the wreckpan with pots and pans. So she whispered, instead, that she’d come see her again, and that she’d try to get a bicycle to her.

“I lied,” said Lucretia. “I’ll never be anything but a cook.” Her face was drawn, her expression one of helplessness not self-pity.

“Please don’t say that, Lucretia,” said Winnie. “You’ve got to believe in what you want to do. I’ve got an idea, myself, about the Rest Resort. I think the women should begin doing calisthenics, and perhaps even cycling. If I could convince the doctor of that, maybe you could teach there for a time.”

“Winnifred Potter that is the most ridiculous idea I’ve ever heard. Dr. Hogshead may be gettin’ long in years but his horns haven’t been sawed off yet. Offer exercise to a woman at rest? What’s wrong with woman, from a doctor’s view, is that she’s weak. The best way to cure that is to treat her like a lamb.”

“But we have help!” said Winnie. “The Equal Rights Party, and the National Assembly of Woman’s Suffrage Association--”

“Lucy get to work!” The man speaking was gray, stern, and humorless. He looked like he needed a bath and a good night’s sleep.
So Winnie gave Lucretia a quick hug and joined Crocker and his burros. They hiked easily down the steep trail.

Crocker gave Winnie a pat on the shoulder and laughed. “You sure were a hit with the men. They thought we were sweethearts.”

“Yah,” she said numbly.

“Don’t you want to know what I told them?”

“I don’t care.”

Crocker punched at her shoulder. “I told them I was waiting for you to grow up.” And they told me not to wait too long or somebody else would snatch you away.”

“I don’t think anybody’s going to snatch me away,” said Winnie, and paid more attention to where she put her feet, because it was getting to be rockier terrain.
Winnie sprinkled the vegetable slop much too lethargically for the hungry chickens, and could not summon the energy to rake all the old sawdust, so left the chicken coop only partially tended. Why had she allowed Harry to kiss her? Was she such a cynic, at fifteen years of age, as to disbelieve in love? Her parents certainly loved one another, had learned perhaps, through much hard work, to respect each other for their differences. Not only might no man every love her--the man who might love her might not love her if he learned of her recent unvirtuous behavior. Winnie shuddered. She didn’t know what had gotten into her. Perhaps skinny dipping with Crocker had corrupted her somewhat, had aroused her carnal desires in ways that she wasn’t old enough to understand.

Winnie checked the barn, which she always kept open in the hopes that Josephine would return, but wasn’t really surprised to find it empty.

The truth be told, she had only been the slightest bit interested in Harry’s advances--interested in a physical sense that is. Her behavior had been motivated primarily by intellectual curiosity.

Winnie took some small comfort in thinking that her intellectual curiosity was to blame, for this way her misdeeds had a sort of separate identity from her self. Intellectual curiosity, she told herself, is not the right vehicle through which to attain emotional happiness.

In the meantime, she had six days to train for the race. Or else to back out of it.

Winnie planned to ride as hard as she could to the Stows’, but put an extra sweater on over her already bulky figure anyway, in case of rain or fog. Pedaling required conscious attention, for she really would have preferred to lie in bed, motionless. Moreover, her muscles were stiff and resistant to exertion. However, the gravel and sand on the road made it desperately hard to stay upright, and she
had to maintain a fierce kind of concentration to avoid a fall. Winnie put her head
don down and grimly pedalled. She knew she looked a sight—grim, pale-faced, and
wobbly.

Her spirits improved somewhat as the gravel turned into hard-packed sand, and
as she was therefore able to regain her rhythm. She thought of her parents, who
would soon be traveling to Cape Cod for their summertime holiday, and who
would, no doubt, share her appreciation for the West if they could come here
instead. The Cape lacks the fearless beauty of the California Coast, for the Atlantic
never crashes upon the rocks. Rather its warm swells creep softly onto the sandy
shore, and even the faint-hearted feel safe swimming in it.

Winnie’s enthusiasm grew in increments, even she was forced to lower her
head somewhat, being in the vicinity of Samuel Breedlove’s home. The white
mansion, itself, was deserted save the flies and gulls who seemed to have made
Samuel’s carefully-landscaped front yard their home. She rode a little farther south,
where she found herself captivated by his horse collection. Quarter horses and
Belgians, grazed side by side, their tails only twitching to rid themselves of an
occasional buzzing insect. Winnie stopped pedalling and walked her bicycle
closer to the fence. The horses all looked up in surprise. Winnie was standing west
of the field, with the rugged ocean still farther west. To the east of the field was an
opulent, octagonal barn.

The horses quickly lost interest in Winnie so she called softly to them, so
pleased to see them, proper in their health, in their outdoor quarters, in their
independence. Two of the quarter horses came trotting over first, nickering. They
both pushed their soft noses up over the fence, and Winnie tried to pat them only
they reared back, in play it seemed. Then the whole collection of horses trotted
closer, tossing their proud heads and manes, kicking their legs, acting every bit as carefree as Winnie had begun to feel.

She re-mounted her bicycle and rode it down the road. The two quarter horses ran after her. She grinned at them, and pedalled harder, concentrating on efficient epicycles. The two horses whinnied and snorted; the others returned to their grazing.

"Can't beat me," Winnie called out, bending over her handlebars the way she'd seen "Mile-a-Minute Murphy" do it.

For two-hundred feet or so Winnie imagined she was racing the horses, and then they rounded the curve of their field, and she was forced to admit that they were actually racing one another. So she continued on her journey, cycling hard, eyes vigilant as she scanned the road for hazards. She supposed she still believed that, even today, with her small body, without the benefit of training, but with the advantage of wheels, it was theoretically possible to race--and beat--a horse.

She heard the crack of a whip, the rattle of a carriage, and the clatter of horses' hooves behind her, loud as they thundered closer, and her very heart gulped in fear for they didn't sound like they were slowing and she didn't dare look behind for fear of swerving, and she knew she couldn't possibly ride any faster. So she jerked her bicycle to the right, was catapulted onto her head and rather painfully implanted in a blackberry bush along the side of the road. The clip-clop of the horses softened, and she thought she heard the driver shout at her to "Get a carriage!" but she was too concerned about her bicycle to dwell upon this invective.

Instead, Winnie pried herself away from the thorns of the berry bush, a shaft of pain shooting through her knee and she stumbled, caught herself, and then hobbled toward her bicycle. She gave it a tentative push, whereupon she heard the ghastly clank of metal upon metal, and groaned in utter dismay. The front forks
that connected the steering column to the wheel had cracked, and metal now scraped against the spokes of her wheel. The bicycle was unrideable.

Small tears welled in Winnie's eyes, but she was determined not to cry, for she could, herself, have very easily concussed, or broken a leg. The bone, obviously, heals itself, while the bicycle requires expert attention.

She limped back up to the road favoring her good knee, and holding her bicycle gingerly to avoid further damage to it. Walking with deliberate care, Winnie found herself more sympathetic towards the fog, as she would have resented being unable to enjoy the brightness of the sun.

Winnie found she was not angry at the coachman who had run her off the road, for he probably believed it was his road. What right had she, after all, to cycle along it and scare his horses? Had she not toppled over, she could have indirectly caused his horses to run away with him. And that would have been much more dangerous, as runaway horses could--and do--collide with other people. Winnie knew she was taking a chance to ride, and she would accept the consequences of her decision with no regrets.

No one answered when Winnie knocked, so she went around to the back, passing the Stow's privy, which seemed every day to have more decorations on it. Amis was bent over tugging on a scrap of chicken wire. Winnie carefully lay her bicycle on the ground.

"Need some help?" she asked.

Amis jumped a little, then turned to Winnie, his lean face friendly, the gray hairs on his beard looking particularly well-groomed.

He did not respond, just looked at Winnie with great concern in his eyes.

"Whatever happened to you, Child?"
Winnie shrugged. “I guess I had a little accident.”

He shook his head. “What a day this has been. First Mary Ellen is arrested, then you turn up looking like you’re going to bleed to death if you don’t keel over first.”

“I’m just a little scratched, Amis,” said Winnie. “Honestly. I’ll just have to mix up a salve to ease the swelling and I’ll be fine.”

Amis resumed tugging on the chicken wire, which finally came free from the stack. Stepping back, he began to coil it.

“Has Mrs. Stow really been arrested then? She’s gone to jail?”

Amis nodded. “I wouldn’t mind so much if she’d done something wrong. After all, if men and women are to be equal they both ought to have equal access to the law. But I’m afraid her crime was rather a marginal one.”

“She’s in jail?” said Winnie. Boston jails were full of confidence men and other scoundrels, people more dangerous to your pocketbook than to your person. But the jails in Humboldt County, from what she’d heard, were full of outlaws, and were constantly under siege as the convicts tried to escape.

Amis smiled gallantly. “She is indeed in jail, but I’m certain she’s quite fine. She’s probably talked half of the prisoners into reforming so they can vote for woman’s suffrage by now. And I wouldn’t be half-surprised if she’s finagled herself some cold food, too. She founded a cold food cult in San Francisco, you know.”

Amis set the coiled wire on the ground and brushed his hands on his wool trousers. “Why don’t you come in?” He looked curiously at Winnie who was rather pale and startled looking.

“I wouldn’t trouble myself over Mary Ellen if I were you, Winnie. She’s a woman who gets stronger with every fight. I’m sure she’s anything but pleased about this, but you can be sure she’ll return unscathed.”

Winnie hoped she could believe this.
Amis handed Winnie a stack of papers. She sat at the kitchen table to read them, and he stepped back to the kitchen counter.

"Courtesy of Mary Ellen--and of "Mile-a-Minute-Murphy," he said, beginning to measure out some flour. "She wants to make sure you win."

"I'm beginning to doubt my chances of winning. I was not just outrun, but overrun by horses today--which is how I managed to fall off of my bicycle." Winnie flipped through the pages Amis had given her, trying to pretend like she wasn't upset. Recipes for food--she hadn't really considered that proper diet was necessary for athletic events. And training schedules.

"Do you know Mile-a-Minute-Murphy?" she asked.

"Sure do." Amis smiled and began slashing at the pie crust he was making with his knives. "He's what you might call a one-dimensional man. He eats so he can bicycle, sleeps so he can bicycle, trains so he can bicycle...you might say that he rides so he can live."

"If I could ride a mile a minute that's all I'd do, too."

Amis cocked his eyebrow at Winnie, and began shaping the dough into a ball.

Winnie rose to heat some water. The Stows' kitchen was always quiet and peaceful, and today, with the shutters open, Winnie felt she had found a sanctuary from the fog. But she also knew she'd have to leave soon.

"What's preying on you, Winnie," asked Amis presently. "I've never seen you look so pensive."

"Right now I'm wondering how I'm going to get home," she confessed, purposefully keeping her voice steady and even. "My bicycle's certainly not rideable."

"Nonsense. Bicycles are indestructible."
“Not mine,” said Winnie. “The metal’s cracked on it. It won’t hold my weight.”

Amis, more imperturbable than Winnie had ever before imagined, kept smiling as he rolled out the dough.

“Let me finish this crust and I’ll have a look at it,” he said. “You’re not a mechanic on the sly are you? You won’t be offended?”

“Heaven’s no.”

Amis began expertly pinching the corners of the dough into the pie dish.

Just as I suspected,” said Amis, who then wheeled and trotted to his outhouse, emerging in seconds with a handsaw, some carving tools, and an adjustable wrench.

“Now let’s see here,” he said. “If I remember correctly the threads on these Rovers run clockwise.”

Winnie watched in astonishment as Amis unscrewed about seven huge screws, and her bicycle was suddenly in two pieces. It hadn’t occurred to her that bicycles could be taken apart.

Amis started whistling, and told Winnie to look for some mahogany in the wood pile. She obliged, but before she’d located any, he was already sawing at a log, and measuring the socket where the forks belonged so he wouldn’t saw away too much wood.

Winnie sat down and watched him intently so she’d be able to perform the repair the next time, if there were to be a next time.

In time, Amis had built a new pair of wooden forks, and then, with the certainty of a conductor, had jammed them into their sockets, and riveted them in place.

“That ought to do it,” he said, pushing on the bicycle to make sure it would hold.
Winnie's bicycle looked unique, to say the least, three-quarters metal with a mahogany front. But she trusted Amis, and if he thought it was rideable, it probably was.

"Anything else you need to know?" he asked.

"I'd probably better be returning home," she said. "Thank you very much, Amis."

"Do you know how to fix a flat?"

"A flat? I have pneumatic tyres. They don't get flats, do they?"

"Winifred, my Darling, pneumatic tyres have air in them. Which means they go flat when punctured."

Amis picked up a wrench off of the ground and began unscrewing the front wheel.

"If you're going to be free," he said, looking up with a kind face, "you'll have to have the accoutrements of freedom. And that's competence."

Then he began to pry off Winnie's tyre. She could feel darkness moving in, the fog growing thicker and damper.

"Next time I'll let you do this," said Amis. "But for now, I just want you to remember the basics. The best way to fix a flat is to carry a spare inner lining with you. Simply exchange the new one for the old, then replace the tire. Got it?" asked Amis.

Winnie nodded, and Amis hurriedly reassembled her front wheel, reattached the wheel to her bicycle, and saluted.

She waved good-bye to him and pedalled home to do her chores. Amis watched her leave. They would both be the only ones in their homes tonight.
Five days to go, but Winnie had her spirits back, and planned to follow Mile-a-Minute-Murphy’s training suggestions with the diligence of a diva. Which would leave her with very little time for worrying or socializing.

She had just begun her morning chores--she needed to weed, too, before her true activities could begin--when she had some unexpected visitors. She saw the line of people walking up the front walk, but as she was quite determined to weed, she chose to ignore them.

"Winifred Potter," called one of the people.

Winnie kept walking.

"Winifred Potter. I’m Clarissa Carlyle from the Eureka Children’s Service Center. I’d like to talk with you."

Winnie stopped, and looked back at the group. They were a well-to-do bunch of people, and most had prim mouths.

"Glad to meet you," said Winnie. She stood uncertainly, wanting to continue on with her chores, but not sure these people would permit that. "Would you like to come inside?"

The people--there were only five of them, but they all wore gloves and bustled enough for twenty--walked confidently onto Aunt Ada’s front porch, opened the door, which chose that moment to squeak, and entered.

"Do my eyes deceive me," asked Clarissa Carlyle in a kind of a cooing voice. "Or is this a bicycle in the living room?"

The others focussed their gazes on Winifred.

"Can I get anyone some tea?" she asked.

"No thank you, Child. That’s what we’ve come to talk to you about," said Clarissa.
“It's been brought to our attention that you've been living alone,” said a woman in a fur coat. “

“That you're in need of supervision,” threw in another woman, this one with flowers in her hat.

“And proper clothing,” said another woman who had a birthmark on her right temple.

“Not to mention food, and someone to protect you from harm,” said the only man in the bunch. He wore big workboots, and had a thin mustache, and if Winnie had had to guess she'd have said he owned a mill.

Clarissa cleared her throat, and sat down on the couch beneath the bayview window. The others all crammed themselves down next to her, and Winnie noted how uncomfortable they must feel to be in such close proximity to one another.

She brought a chair over and sat down before them.

“Of course, we're all very pleased to finally be meeting you,” said Clarissa, “having heard so much about you.”

Winnie wished fleetingly that she'd combed her hair with more care that morning.

“The point is, Miss Potter,” said the man. “We're worried about you. A nice girl like you on your own. Away from home. Getting herself into predicaments.”

The others nodded knowingly.

“I've talked with Dr. Hogshead at the Bear Creek Rest Resort,” said Clarissa. “And he tells me he can give you a scholarship--$50 towards each monthly billing--if you went there for care.”

“Thank you, Ma'am,” said Winnie. “That's very kind of you.”

They all looked at one another, except for the man, who looked at Winnie, who stood up.
“Thank you very much for your visit,” she said. “I’ve got to be doing some of the chores, before my aunt comes home. She’s expecting me to look after the place.”

“There’s something else, Miss Potter,” said the man. And he was blushing like a schoolboy. “Oh Dear,” he said. “I’d better leave this to the womenfolk. I’ll wait outside.” He tipped his hat to Winnie. She said good-bye to him and sat back down.

“Winnifred, Dear,” said Clarissa. “We’ve heard a rumor. You know how it is in small towns. And we feel it is in your best interest to know what people are saying about you.”

Winnie regarded her quite calmly, though she was feeling a little unsettled.

“People are saying you’re a gambler and a half-wit, and that you’ve agreed to race Samuel Breedlove. On that!” She pointed to Winnie’s bicycle. “Of course, we know none of it’s true, but we’re worried about you, nonetheless.”

“I’m not in the habit of gambling,” said Winnie, “and my heredity is quite favorable. But it is true that I’ve agreed to race Samuel Breedlove on a bicycle, and I can assure you I am appropriately distressed at the thought. However, I am also determined to follow through with my promise.”

“Don’t you know how dangerous bicycles are?” said Clarissa, a sudden shaft of sunlight glancing off of her spectacles, and creating a rainbow over her friends, who were perched precariously on the edge of the couch, their eyes the size of sand dollars.

Winnie stood up again. “Thank you. I’ve heard some of the debate about bicycles,” she said. “And I’ve decided that my bicycle will have no serious harmful consequences as far as I am concerned.”

“You’d better tell her, Hetty,” said Clarissa to the woman with the birthmark.
"I'm terribly sorry to seem rude," Winnie continued. "But I must tend to my chores. You're welcome to make yourselves at home. There is a remote chance my aunt will choose to return today, in which case you can certainly speak with her."

And she made her way down the hall and opened the front door, feeling utterly confused and horribly rude. She nearly collided with Amis, who was just reaching up to knock. He carried a pie in the other hand.

One look at Winnie's shocked face was all Amis needed, and he walked her back down the hall.

"Hello Mrs. Carlyle," said Amis, nodding to her and offering his greetings to the other women.

"It is a pleasant coincidence to see you," he continued. "For I am interested in knowing what the county has to say about temporary guardianship of young adults. I feel great affection towards this young woman, you see," he nodded towards Winnie, "and for the next few days until her home life returns to a normal state, I would like to oversee her well-being. Would like to lend a hand with the household work, for instance. And to see to it that she is generally taken care of."

"Why Dr. Allen," trilled Mrs. Carlyle. "What a splendid idea." The other women, who had leaned back a little further in the couch, looked rather incredulous, and did not seem to share Mrs. Carlyle's enthusiasm.

"Frankly, I wish I'd thought of it sooner," said Amis. He paused, and Winnie wondered if he might soon mention that his wife was in jail, but all he said was that he thought it would make sense for him to move into the guest room at Aunt Ada's house. And that he'd already raised four daughters—all of them married—so he thought he would be a match for Winnie's, er, strong temperament.

And that explains how Amis—and his horse and carriage—came to stay with Winnie five days before the race.
When the women had gone, leaving behind them the scent of beeswax soap, Amis apologized.

"I didn't know how to fend off Mrs. Carlyle--she is a true humanitarian, you know." He smiled at Winnie, his blue-gray eyes merry. "So I expect you're stuck with me for a few days."

"That's wonderful Amis!" cried Winnie. "I have so many ideas of things we can do. Just so long as Mrs. Stow won't mind."

"Psshaw," said Amis. "I think she's rather proud of my versatility. I'll just be a father for a few days."

"Do you think you could be a craftsman, too?"

"In good time, my dear Winifred." Amis then pulled out a folded and yellowed map and handed it to Winnie. She opened it, as he explained.

"Mile-a-Minute Murphy trains on hills a week before his race. And then rides a hundred miles a day for the next three days. And then works on fifteen-minute sprints for the next week, this riding all on a flat surface." Winnie saw the map showed which roads led as far north as Grants Pass in Oregon, and as far east as Willow Creek in California.

"Since your race will only be six miles--" continued Amis. "and since you've only got five days instead of three weeks, I thought you might want to combine the hills with the distance, and then spend Thursday and Friday on sprints."

Winnie nodded.

"Off with you then. I'll tend to the housework." And Amis gave her very careful instructions.

She nodded again. "Thanks, Amis." He had already started to whistle, so she wheeled her bicycle down the hall.
"Amis?"

"Hmm?"

"How far am I supposed to ride today?"

"Eighty," he said. And then eighty tomorrow on your way home. And then we'll start the sprints."

"Eighty miles?" said Winnie. "You mean I'm supposed to camp somewhere overnight?"

Amis said he'd plumb forgot, and before Winnie knew what was happening he'd fashioned a rack onto her bicycle and packed on some supplies.

Winnie was nearly to Crescent City and felt like she was at the bottom of a waterfall the rain fell so hard. Her coat was only waterproof for the first drops, and she was thoroughly wet, with little else to do but pedal. She worried, too, somewhat, that her wooden forks might swell and crack from the water.

Being wet distracted her somewhat from the reality of riding. If the road signs were correct, she still had four miles to go, which seemed interminable, but she simply pedaled, and each motion brought her a little closer to her final destination. Which, as far as today was concerned, was the Wheelman's Inn in Gasquet. Amis had told Winnie not to talk to anyone, as it was a place for well-to-do vacationers, and as they might try immediately to adopt--and reform--her.

The hills were steep but well-graded, and Winnie climbed the last hill into Gasquet at a slow, steady pace, stopping whenever she became short of breath.
"You look like a drenched rat," said the innkeeper, handing Winnie a towel and a key to her room. His face was good-humored and he stood straight, as if he might have been an athlete.

"I guess I do at that," said Winnie. Some men were singing in a big room and she hurried past them. She must have had a signal on her that said, "I'm the only woman in the inn," because before she knew it a tan, bearded man whose legs positively bulged out from underneath his exercise costume was inviting her to dine with him.

"I don't know," she said. "I must first dry myself."

"Where did you ride from?" he asked, following her down the hall to her room.

"Bear Lagoon."

He wrinkled his brows in concentration. "Bear Lagoon? That's Redwood Country!"

Winnie nodded. "I'll be riding that way myself tomorrow," he said. "I confess now that my trip is nearly over I'm beginning to feel a little morose."

Winnie had arrived at room number 27, which matched her key.

"Where have you ridden from?"

"I've just ridden around the world," he said. She couldn't help looking back down at his legs, for now their unusual shape made a little more sense.

"Would you like to dine with me?" he asked.

"I must dry off first."

Amis had packed food in waxed burlap, and it had stayed remarkably dry--drier than her own insides, in fact, but Winnie wanted to eat with the man who had cycled around the world, partly because she was ravenous, and partly because she'd never met anyone who'd cycled around the world before.
“Do you know most of the solitary cyclists I’ve met on my travels have been women?” said Winnie’s companion. They were seated at a round table underneath a chandelier, and the innkeeper had brought them both some bread and cheese to get their meal started.

Winnie said she hadn’t known that, but it was quite interesting.

“Oh do forgive me! I haven’t introduced myself. I’m Charles Stephens,” said the man.

“How do you do. I’m Winifred Potter. I’m not really a cyclist but it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

He looked at Winnie shrewdly.

“You’re not running away from home are you?”

“Oh no!” she said. “I’m just preparing for a race in exactly four more days. “It’s rather a long story.”

Charles took a big bite of bread, by way of telling Winnie that he was willing to listen, and so she told him, in bits and pieces, and gradually more completely, just how she had come to find herself at the Wheeler’s Inn in Gasquet.

In the morning, Charles rode next to Winnie, and she was pleased to be able to act as a navigator, as well as to be riding in fog instead of rain. She had to pedal extremely fast to keep up with him even when he was only coasting, but he seemed content just to coast and to talk and to tell Winnie about his travels.

Winnie learned on her ride home that in Africa people take blue pills for dysentary and red pills as aphrodisiacs. And that they have no sewage systems and that Charles had dysentery there and almost died.
She also learned that Charles went 200 miles an hour down the Himalayan Mountains, and that he was shot at in Turkey.

"I could only conclude that the Turks don't like Americans," he said.
There was no sort of intrigue between Charles Stephens and Winifred Potter. He was nine years older than she, in the first place. However, Winnie did feel that she recognized a bit of herself in him, and that he, perhaps, recognized a bit of himself in her. Accordingly, she invited him to spend some time with her in Bear Lagoon if he wanted to rest before cycling down to San Francisco.

Charles was hesitant, not wanting to offend Amis, but Winnie assured him there would be no problems. At least not from any of her friends. And she thought he was going to agree to stay the day in Bear Lagoon, for he was quite interested in WSL and in the Bear Creek Rest Resort and even in her imminent race, but when they stopped on the middle of the bridge across the Klamath to look at the view, he reached over and took her hand.

"I've got to be on my way," he said with great solemnity. "It has been truly a pleasure cycling with you."

"Oh," said Winnie, looking down.

"Good luck," he said, with great sincerity, looking deep into Winnie's eyes. "I've got a feeling you're going to win your race." He reached over to her hand, which clutched her handle bars, and patted it.

"Thanks," said Winnie. Then Thomas pedalled on ahead, and she called out good-bye, for doubted there was any way for her to catch him.

When she woke the next morning, she felt as fresh as if she'd been resting for the past few days. But tiny bursts of pain told her that her insides had somehow been injured, and there was blood on her nightgown. She was bleeding from the inside out. She examined her bed for additional clues, but found no sort of tissue that would indicate her uterus had, after all, fallen out.
So now what? Winnie didn't know whether to stay in bed or to carry on with life as usual, for her strength seemed not to have been affected; however, Amis settled that by bringing in a tray of cold food with a stop watch beside it.

"Do you think you can ride six miles in thirty minutes?" he asked.

Winnie nodded.

The sprints during the next two days had caused Winnie's bleeding to continue, and as she lay stricken in bed the night before the race, she worried that perhaps she was going to die after all. Maybe bicycling had distracted her from her original illness, had created the illusion of good health, but now that she'd been overdoing, she had begun to bleed inside. She was restless and worried and excited all together.

At about midnight, Winnie tiptoed into the kitchen to prepare a cold compress of stirred egg yolks and salt and, strange as this may sound, affixed it to her underclothing. Perhaps, by determination and proper medical attention, she could cure herself.

In the morning, Winnie removed the compress and examined her underwear. She was still bleeding. But she was also still alive, which was a good sign. And she felt physically quite good. Quite capable in most respects of racing a horse, in fact!

She had to fashion a sort of a rag to soak up the blood in a hurry, and having done so, there was barely time to check the air in her tires before she heard Charlie Moon knocking on the door.

The race, he informed them, would begin officially on the newly-widened Main Street, but the course would take Winnie up Azaelia Hill, and then six miles around Bear Lagoon.
“It’s lucky for you, Winnie,” said Charlie. “You wouldn’t have a chance on any other kind of a surface. Not against a horse.”

Winnie agreed, since the roads were all well-packed, and she had the feeling she could ride up Azaelia Hill faster than Samuel Breedlove in his Stanhope buggy.

She cycled slowly and carefully, riding ahead of Charlie Moon and Amis, who seemed deep in conversation. Her chest felt tight, and she persisted in worrying that she might be soon to die.

However, neither of them seemed to notice her affliction, and as she didn’t see anything wrong with leaving this world in style, so to speak, she consequently determined that so long as she did not experience pain, she might as well continue on with the proceedings.

Winnie waited for Charlie Moon and Amis at the stop sign that Samuel Breedlove had just put in on the corner of Main Street and Breedlove Road.

“Do you think I’ll look like a boy in these bloomers?” she asked them.

“Public opinion is the incubus of domestic conformity,” replied Charlie with a wink.

Samuel was racing Manly, who was a Hambletonian trotter. The stallion snorted and danced sideways crashing into the groom beside him, and jerking the carriage, too. Samuel pulled back on the reins, looking precarios and tense in his driver’s seat, and Winnie allowed herself a momentary feeling of pleasure, for she could see that Samuel Breedlove did not understand his eager charge.

Winnie rode slowly around the town square, simply to warm up her muscles and ease her tension. Townspeople arrived like flocks of sheep at feeding time, some
from as far away as Union Town. Her wheels spun rapidly on the smooth surface, and the only cause she found for concern was the south wind—which meant she'd have a headwind at the end of the race. Otherwise, short of getting trampled, or losing her balance, she couldn't foresee any other pitfalls.

Winnie rode up to the starting line, keeping herself a safe distance from Manly. Pelted by the mixture of hoots and cheers, she grew tense, and rubbed the smooth texture of her handle bars for comfort.

In her embarrassment, Winnie almost missed the women from the Bear Creek Rest Resort. Every one of them wore white, and her aunt's friends waved signs in the air. One sign said "We," another said "support," another "Winnifred," another "Potter," and so on. She grinned at them. It was nice to have some supporters. She felt more like a hero and less like a ridiculous person, with her limbs exposed, and the possibility of a humiliating defeat looming near.

Everyone waited expectantly for the judge to make his way nearer so he could start the race. Manly pranced and danced, his ears were flinching every time Samuel shouted at him. Winnie's bicycle stood cool and sturdy beneath her. The crowd grew silent, and Charlie Moon hurried up to the starting line to whisper some encouragement.

"Manly has poor vision," he whispered, "and shies at branches. And he also doesn't like to be told what to do. Samuel's likely to get excited and whip him too hard, in which case that horse is likely to stop dead in his tracks. So hang in there. No matter what!" He clapped Winnie on the shoulders.

"Thanks Charlie," said Winnie as the judge hollered at everybody to clear the tracks.
She caught a glimpse of Samuel looking cool as an ice pitcher in his knickers, long socks, and soft white shirt, and then the starter lowered his flag, and they were off. Manly bolting away immediately, as it's easier for a four-legged beast to find his momentum than it is for a terror-stricken girl on wheels.

Winnie was pedaling hard, leaning over the handlebars the way she'd seen the racers do it and already she could feel her circulation warming her, and was she glad to have on bloomers. At least her legs could move unrestrainedly. Manly was pulling steadily ahead, but Winnie told herself not to be overly concerned about it. Azaelia Hill was coming up.

Manly was already half-way up the hill when Winnie got there, and she started her upward climb in a state of panic. Her machine wasn't responding properly to her commands, and her body felt weak, too. It was as if she had somehow left her body, and was forced to ask it to work, though she was no longer a part of it. Pedalling with sheer will power, Winnie made it halfway up to the top of the hill. She could see Manly waving his tail, and felt just a little sickish behind him.

Then Winnie was back in Boston. Her father was bleeding, spouting blood, really, having severed his artery while sharpening a knife. Winnie had had her hand in the oven at the time, and was counting to twenty to determine whether or not she oven was warm enough for the pie, when he walked in, every heartbeat like a newly released fountain of oil.

Horrified by the gruesome spectacle of her father, she had pressed a napkin against his wound and told him not to move.

Winnie somehow managed to pedal her bicycle, despite the image of her bleeding father, and her own panicked face, that distracted her. She was scared, though. And part of her was imagining that race bareback to find the doctor, urging the horse on, knowing it wasn't fast enough.
At the top of Azaelia Hill, Winnie's breaths came fast, and she was crying in frustration. Gradually the terrain flattened, and the image of her father, astonished and bleeding, began to lose its urgency. Winnie, who had found the doctor in time to save him, purposefully tried to recall how her father had looked with his stitches, and then, her muscles began to obey a little more readily.

Winnie pedaled harder down the street, speeding past the Bear Lagoon Saloon, enormously relieved that her bicycle was beginning to respond, to feel her own strength course through her veins. It was as if her father had somehow sanctioned this event. He was a generous man where others were concerned, and though Winnie had known that he wouldn't, at first approve, she felt comforted that she could somehow make him understand.

Winnie was beginning to think she'd have to settle for making a decent showing, for coming in close enough to make her point, for Manly was still at least three hundred yards ahead, and his dust had already settled by the time she reached it.

But, though she wasn't moving fast enough, she still had enough power to persevere. She wished she hadn't volunteered herself, though, wished she could just enjoy life without seeking stimulation to the extreme, wished, in fact, that she could abandon the Women's Suffrage League and go back to being a normal young woman.

Winifred Potter, she told herself sternly. This is not the time to have these thoughts. You must concentrate.

At the half-way mark Winnie found new wind. The faster she pedaled the more exhilarated she felt, and for the first time, the faster she moved. And she could see Manly again, only 200 yards ahead. As she pressed hard on her pedals, she saw him visibly slow down. He was resisting Samuel, tossing his head and fighting the reins, and even dancing sideways as Samuel whipped him.
Winnie searched her muscles for additional speed, and Manly, as if on her side, stopped dead in the middle of the course, then reared back, spinning and bucking, and fighting his reins. Samuel was hanging onto the reins for dear life and for a minute Winnie was tempted to stay and watch, but she had a race to win.

And she did. She saw the startled faces of her friends and neighbors, the startled faces of people she'd not yet met, the cheering women from the Bear Creek Rest Resort, as she coasted a hundred or so yards to a stop.

Her official time was twenty-nine minutes and fourteen seconds. Which seemed to her to be quite respectable under any condition.

Manly came trotting effortlessly in at twenty-one minutes and thirty-four seconds, his owner airing his lungs with no dignity. Winnie was disappointed, in a way, not to have beaten him fair and square. But the crowd seemed suddenly to have become her friend, and Amis and Charlie Moon were both waving and clapping and smiling proudly at her. She wheeled her bicycle over to them.

Samuel, jerked back on his reins sharply. Mighty Mo's tongue seemed to be caught beneath the bit, and she could tell he was as riled as his owner.
When Winnie returned home that night, she found a note from Tuna Jackson at the post office, saying that a package as big as an elephant had arrived for her. She was pretty certain she knew what it was, and Amis said he’d do the chores if she wanted to go to the post office first thing in the morning.

When she walked towards the post office the next day, Winnie was painfully aware of others’ stares. She used to just be a visitor from Boston. Now she was “one of those new women,” and people gawked, looking for clues as to her true character.

Samuel Breedlove posters had at least tripled since yesterday, and it was quite apparent to Winnie that the new posters had been freshly printed. “A vote for Breedlove is a vote for virtue,” was his slogan, and besides supporting more road building (to Willow Creek), a modern sewage system, and a reservation for the Yurok Indians, he claimed he would keep women away from the voting boxes. This latter claim had heretofore been implicit, and never voiced as a promise. Winnie shuddered. Mrs. Stow was still in jail. She had won her the opportunity to speak, but she would be unable to do so. Samuel Breedlove’s viewpoints would go uncontested today.

Tuna Jackson gave Winnie a rather piercing look.

“A man came looking for you today,” she said, tugging on a big crate. “I told him you was probably sleeping after the big race. He didn’t know what I was talking about. Seemed like a nice fellow.”

Winnie shrugged. “I don’t know who he could have been,” she said, as Tuna Jackson shoved the crate closer. “Do you mind if I open it in here?”

“I confess I’m dying of curiosity.” Tuna Jackson grinned, and handed Winnie a steel lever to pry open the crate.
The wood obediently parted and Tuna Jackson started chuckling.

"Well, I'll be!" she said. "As if you aren't in enough trouble already. Now you've gone and got yourself another one."

"It's not what you think," said Winnie. "This is a gift for someone else." She drank in the beauty of the black machine. A Rover. With pneumatic tyres and brakes.

"I admire you, Girl. But I think you're taking this bicycle thing too far. You're singlehandedly making people take sides. We are now a community divided into those who believe women should vote--and cycle--and those who believe women should not vote--and not cycle."

Winnie shrugged, though she was not as offhanded as she perhaps appeared.

"People would have begun wondering without me," she said.

"You can leave your crate here. I'll use it for firewood."
Winnie wheeled her new bicycle out, knowing she'd need to consult her aunt about WSL strategies, in light of Mrs. Stow's recent incarceration. It was a warm day already. A perfect day for election speeches. And to make things even better, she had stopped bleeding sometime in the morning. Perhaps she simply had some sort of an ulcer that flared up when tensions flared.

Riding to Bear Creek proved more difficult than she had ever expected, and she marveled at her own aplomb, as every carriage that passed her did so in an aggressive manner, as if they wanted to drive her off the road. She held her ground, though, and concentrated upon keeping upright.

As she approached the Bear Creek turn-off, Winnie pedalled faster, eager despite the long day ahead of her, to drop the bicycle off and speak with her aunt. However, the sounds of hammers and nails rang out in the air, and she could even hear the throaty sounds of women singing with early morning joy.

She coasted down the gravel path, slowing, as she had the last time she'd visited the Bear Creek Rest Resort. Was she surprised to see her aunt and several others hammering a huge edifice, all engaged in song. In front of the construction site were some beds, and in these beds, some women languished blissfully, unconcerned that their skin might grow dark in the sun.

"It's Winifred!" The women stopped singing and began applauding, and Lucretia Stone, who had been the first to notice Winnie, put down her hammer and ran towards her.

Winnie walked the Rover closer, and waved, wishing everyone would stop clapping. She had been foolish to race Samuel Breedlove. Had perhaps caused much more trouble than had she not raced him. And her victory was due to some amazing luck, and not to skill or competence on her part. It was embarrassing enough without having these women mistakenly clap for her.

“You’ve run away from camp?”

“No. My father sent me right back to have a rest cure, and Crocker had to come and get me, and Father said I had to ride on a mule this time, so as not to overexert myself, and Crocker and I got to talking about the oil they discovered at Christ Episcopal Church. And seeing as how Father and I weren’t going to strike it rich in the near future—and if he did, I doubt I’d get very much of the money—and seeing as how I had a lot of dreams that required money, Crocker and I decided to go over and talk to the pastor to see if we could drill, or have a share of the oil, and the pastor said yes. Can you believe that?”

“It sounds strange to me,” said Winnie. “You can’t drill for oil at a church.”

“But that’s just it. The church is being abandoned. They’re rebuilding in Fieldbrook on donated land. And so the pastor told us that we could have the oil for ourselves. That he would sell it to us for twenty dollars. I’ve saved up seven, and Crocker borrowed some of his family’s money, and we bought that land, and before we could drill on it, some San Francisco tycoon came by and offered us $1,000 for it!” Lucretia was extraordinarily excited.

“But you’re not going to sell it are you,” said Winnie. “Not when the pastor wanted you to have it.”

“He doesn’t care what we do with it! He’s friends with Crocker’s family, and he knew I wanted to go on to school, so we are going to sell. And I tried to buy the rest resort from Dr. Hogshead only he wouldn’t sell because he doesn’t like me. But Dr. Mitchell is being sued. A class action suit filed by twenty women, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman. For causing insanity. Which makes the rest cure business look rather shaky.” She paused and smiled at Winnie, then added, “Dr.
Mitchell's defense is that women fake their weakness. So the rest cure is just reverse psychology and not something anybody should take seriously. What do you think about that? It sounds like we have a good case!"

Winnie looked around her. She had never seen so many women so galvanized into action before.

"Well--" she said.

"So since Dr. Hogshead wouldn't sell to me," Lucretia rushed on, "but since I knew he had to sell, if he wanted to get out of the business with any sort of profit at all, I talked to Charlie Moon and asked him if he would buy the business. He said Dr. Hogshead wouldn't sell to a Chinese man.

So we decided to create a person, and say he was one of Amis' rich doctor friends from San Francisco. It's legal, you know, so long as somewhere there are records of him not being real. So we bought this place for Amos John. And it really belongs to the Equal-Rights Party."

"Well, I'll be!" said Winnie, looking down at the Rover, which seemed rather insignificant in light of all the recent events.

"I brought this for you," said Winnie. "Maybe you'll want to donate it to the Equal-Rights Party, so women can ride when they come to the Bear Creek Resort."

Lucretia hugged her friend tight. "Winnie, I'm excited about all of this. But I still plan to go to school in Wyoming. Do you suppose I could keep the bicycle for myself? And ride to Wyoming on it. I met a wonderful man who's just ridden around the world, and he said he'd ride with me to Wyoming if I wanted company. You'll teach me how to ride, won't you?"

Winnie nodded, fairly certain the man Lucretia spoke of was the same one she'd so recently encountered.
“I’ll bet Amis would make some bicycles,” Winnie said thoughtfully. “I’d originally planned to ask him to do so, anyway.”

Lucretia nodded. “We have plenty of money to pay him with. In fact, we don’t need to spend any of our capital, because all the women who come here pay enormous sums of money! Five-hundred dollars a month. They put the money into the Equal-Rights fund, and we’re self-perpetuating.”

Winnie felt herself almost uncomfortable by the women’s excitement, particularly since the news she bore was not entirely good.

Aunt Ada handed her the hammer and asked her if she wanted to take over her work for a while, and she declined.

“I need to talk,” she said. She nodded, hopped down from the scaffolding, and brushed the dust off of her hands.

“Frankly, my Dear, I would do anything to avoid further work. I’m all for equal rights, but I am here, after all, to rest.”

Winnie grinned at her aunt. She looked pretty healthy, if the truth be told, her cheeks flushed with the same excitement that had impelled the other women outdoors with their hammers and songs.

“Did you know Mrs. Stow is in jail?” she asked.

“Good heavens, no.” Aunt Ada laughed. “I can’t think of anything worth getting arrested for prior to the elections.”

“That’s just it,” said Winnie. “She owns land in San Francisco, which used to be illegal. So she had to run away to avoid being put in prison. And now, even though it’s permissible for a woman to own land, she’s wanted for evading the law. The judge told her she would have to put the land in Amis’ name as a gesture of
contriteness, and she won't do it. And today are the speeches. And tomorrow is the election."

"Oh, Dear," said Aunt Ada. "I don't think Sally Bell would be much for making speeches. And you're too young and too controversial with that get-up of yours." Aunt Ada gave Winnie a warm embrace. "By the way, I think you look terrific. So that leaves me. I must say I'd rather give a speech then hammer all day. Though I'd prefer to rest best of all, of course."

"But do you know what to say?"

"I expect I do. I've had my whole life to think about it," said Aunt Ada.

So she went back into the old Rest Resort to change into some more elegant clothes, and Winnie went to the stable to see about borrowing a carriage.

The biggest shock of the day came when they went to sit down in the front seats, which had been reserved for WSL, and found themselves next to non-Uncle Peter, who looked healthy and well-fed. He nodded politely.

Aunt Ada did not seem to be upset though. She and Winnie took their seats and Ada whispered that the day Peter MacRae goes into politics is the day that women get the vote.

"He has no interest in politics," she said. "He doesn't even know who the President of the United States is."

Winnie nodded, for non-Uncle Peter was always more interested in the immediate, in that which he saw beneath his nose, so to speak, than with issues, or causes, or campaigns.

One of the democrats was speaking about why he'd be the best man for the job. Winnie sat back in her stiff chair and tried to listen to him, but he spoke in a monotone, and there was nothing that he said that interested her.
Aunt Ada seemed to be concentrating fiercely, and Winnie assumed she was mentally preparing a speech in her head. She sure looked fine with her feathers and furbelows. And intense, too. Like a hawk.

Then Samuel Breedlove spoke, and he got the most applause, especially when he said that the Republican Party would not endorse equal-rights for women or other minorities. Winnie felt awful. If she were Aunt Ada she wouldn’t be able to get up and talk after that, would see the crowd as being hostile.

But Aunt Ada rose and walked gracefully to the front of the crowd. Her dress was splendidly low-cut, and she looked every bit a woman as she stood before the men. Winnie hoped it wouldn’t work against her. After all, if the men had reservations about the ability of a woman to make decisions, then allowing her curves to curve in full view, might not be the best of strategies.

Everyone listened so intently that the ocean could be heard in the background. Winnie snuck a look at non-Uncle Peter, and he, too, was listening, his face serious.

Aunt Ada began her speech. “Thank you everyone for allowing the Equal-Rights Party to speak today.” She smiled a wonderful smile at the audience. “Our platform is designed for the benefit of everyone, for the women and the children, for the workers, for the men, for the poor, the helpless, the educated alike.”

“Excuse me, Ada,” said Samuel Breedlove, his mustache looming before the crowd. “I was under the impression that Mrs. Mary Ellen Stow would be speaking today. Could you offer an explanation?”

Little red spots appeared on my Aunt Ada’s cheeks. “Mrs. Stow has requested that I speak on her behalf today. We are equal partners in this campaign, and though I lack some of her talents at elocution, I think I can speak with the same honesty and intelligence. I’ll thank you to hear me out.”
Samuel Breedlove nodded. "I must point out, for the benefit of the crowd, however, that you say you are both honest. But Mrs. Stow, as I understand, is in jail. Which is the main reason she couldn't attend today. A detail you mistakenly left out."

"That Mrs. Stow is in jail is of no consequence to the audience. Her crime would not have been a crime were she a man, which is one motive, perhaps, for the formation of the Equal-Rights Party. How many of you own property?" Aunt Ada looked around the audience. "I'd guess a good 80% of you own your own property, and I'd say you own it because you know it'll keep you secure, will be good to have for your children's sake, for your wives' sakes, for your grandchildren's sakes. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I assume you all agree that owning your own land is good business." No one protested.

"Mary Ellen Stow bought her own land in 1853 in San Francisco. And now, forty years later, she has married, and found herself imprisoned for her crime. A crime which, were she a man, would be considered good business."

A thin man with thin hair and a scowl rose from his chair.

"Men take care of women," he shouted. "Why are you causing such a ruckus over nothing?"

The crowd was then bedlam, and the red spots on Aunt Ada's cheeks darkened even further.

Aunt Ada motioned that everyone be quiet, and she started to speak, but people were still much too loud for her to continue.

Samuel Breedlove rose. "Silence!" he thundered, for it was his job to make the proceedings run smoothly. The crowd quieted, though a few mutterings could still be heard.
"I plead guilty," said my aunt. "I am a woman, and I have no man to take care of me. But I ask that you listen to what I have to say. Women breathe the same polluted air as men, drink the same contaminated water, suffer the same long-range effects of social problems that men do. And so I suggest to you that I deserve the same political influence as a man does. That my sisters deserve the same political influence that a man does. And that, furthermore, men and women can and should work hand in hand in the political sphere, as they do in the home."

Non-Uncle Peter jumped from his seat like a fox in a forest fire, and though Aunt Ada continued to talk, most people seemed to be listening to him. Besides, he was shouting louder than Aunt Ada was. "I must point out that the woman who has just suggested men and women work hand in hand in the home is morally opposed to marriage."

Everyone knew this, but to have Uncle Peter pointing it out, as if Aunt Ada was a hypocrite, added to the drama of the situation, and people stared at her, some in shock, others in anger. Uncle Peter sat back down immediately.

Then Charlie Moon stood up. He was situated in the middle of the crowd with all the other members of the Equal-Rights Party. Winnie didn't know how she could have missed them.

"May I point out," said Charlie Moon, "That the woman who has just suggested that men and women work hand in hand in the home, and who was, some time in her past opposed to marriage, has accepted my hand in marriage. And that her previous mate was guilty of sins that I will do him the courtesy of not mentioning. And that so long as there are imperfect men, and so long as women are slaves to these imperfect men, there will be injustice in the world. Listen to Ada speak. The equal-rights party wants nothing new. We only want what was promised to all citizens of the United States. Justice!"
Then everybody was clapping. People love to hear talk of marriage, and they seemed to feel much more friendly towards Aunt Ada because of it. Though they listened to what she had to say, Winnie knew her aunt was having to hold her tongue. Some opponents of WSL had said that women would vote for the most handsome candidate if given the vote. And Ada had wanted to ask why women married the men that they did, if looks were the criteria that forged their allegiances. But she and Winnie had decided just minutes ago in the coach, that Aunt Ada must keep her argument friendly. And that she did.

Aunt Ada returned home with Winnie that evening. Charlie would be moving in with her tomorrow, and they would be married in a October. Amis came, too, to get his belongings so he could return home and prepare for Mrs. Stow to get out of jail.

Alas, sitting on the front porch was a man with flowers. Judging by the way the flowers drooped, and by the rather unenamoured hello he gave Winnie, he had been there for quite a while. She stared at him. It was Harry Blair. She'd somehow forgotten that Harry Blair was real. Perhaps conveniently so.

"Would you like to come in," said Aunt Ada, looking shrewdly at her niece. Harry stared at Winnie's clothing. She was wearing her trouserdress and was no longer self-conscious in it. She looked down at her legs. They were more muscled than they'd ever been. She looked back at Harry. He looked stricken, and handed her the wilted flowers.

"Thanks," said Winnie. "Let me put these in some water."

"We'll leave you two alone," said Aunt Ada. "Why don't you sit in the living room while I see about fixing up some supper. You'll stay, won't you?" she said to Amis, moving briskly in the house like she'd never been gone.
Winnie showed Harry to the couch, then put his flowers in a vase and sat in a chair as far away from him as would be polite.

Harry shifted uncomfortably. Winnie was surprised by how old he looked.

"I had to tell you--" he said. "I talked with some of the fellows. They said you had to treat a woman like a woman. Gentle-like. And so I came here to apologize."

"Long walk, wasn't it?" asked Winnie.

Harry looked sheepish. "Now don't you get the wrong idea Mrs. Potter. I'm just stopping in to set things straight with you, and then I'm off to buy some land."

"But the office closes at five o'clock. And it's surely past four already."

"I won't be staying long." He didn't appear to want to leave, however.

"I accept your apology," said Winnie. "I acted poorly myself."

"I just want you to understand. I don't know much about women, and at the rate I'm going I never will, and then you came along hanging onto my every words with your big eyes--a man could get lost in your eyes, Miss Potter--and you seemed like a potential friend. So please give me another chance. I've learned my lesson. And I'd like very much to be your friend."

"Harry," said Winnie firmly. "I said I accept your apology. And I believe you that you've learned your lesson. I've learned mine to be sure."

Harry still sat.

"O.K.," she said reluctantly. "Let's be friends."

Harry got a huge grin on his face and blushed and said he had to go buy some land. He asked if he could hug Winnie and she said no.

"Okay, okay," he said. "I'll go slow. Thank you Miss Potter. Much obliged."

Winnie walked him to the door.

"May I say," said Harry then, "that your pants do not suit you at all. They make you look like one of those new women."
Winnie smiled at him. "Indeed!" she said.
Winnie spent election day with Amis and Mrs. Stow. Mary Ellen had been released on judge's orders, and was not nearly so tense as Winifred.

"Don't be silly, Dear," the woman said. "I don't have a prayer of winning the election. My job is to bring issues to the surface, not to win!" She smiled at Winnie. "Do you know I was rather bored in jail? There was only one woman opposed to women's suffrage there, and she was a bank robber. Too addled to want on our side if you ask me."

"But what if you did win," persisted Winnie. "Aunt Ada was phenomenal when she spoke for the Equal-Rights Party. And afterwards everyone clapped."

"Samuel Breedlove is a well-respected citizen, and the citizens of Bear Lagoon have no reason to vote against him," said Mrs. Stow.

"Relax, Child. Change happens slowly in this world." Mrs. Stow gave Winnie a pat and rose to put some hot water on.

And as Winnie sat there, wondering why it was that every time she thought she knew something someone had to disprove it, she felt a haze come over her, rather like the one that had almost lost her the bicycle race. It was a more gradual haze this time, but large enough to consume her. She may or may not have looked about her. She did not recall. She simply ceased to exist, sunk into some sort of murky world where clarity had no meaning.

"Her disease is eminently treatable." Winnie opened her eyes, knowing without looking, that Amis was talking. Mother sat on the bed, her face solemn and concerned.
“But surgery sounds so ominous.” said Mother. “Are you sure it’s necessary.

“I’m afraid so,” said Amis, seeing that Winnie was awake and reaching down to touch her. “One secondary symptom of a pancreatic cyst is chronic interstitial pancreatitis. Which is deadly. And preventable if I operate now. All I need to do is make an incision in the cyst and drain it.”

Winnie was neither scared nor shocked because she had known, in some dark recess of of her brain, that Amis was right.

“But Dr. Mitchell said Winnie just needed to rest,” said Mother.

Amis patted her hand. “Cysts are difficult to find,” he said. “Winnie is lucky hers is of the pancreas, for such cysts have no epithelial lining and are generally quick to respond to treatment.”

Mother nodded. “It’s just so hard to believe. I’ve never seen her look so well. Her cheeks are flushed even as she sleeps.”

Amis caught Winnie’s eyes. “She is well in most respects. She’s quite a remarkable young woman.”

The door to Winnie’s room opened suddenly, and in strode a purposeful man who nodded curtly to Mother and then fixed his attention on Winnie.

“I’m sorry to hear about your illness, Miss Potter,” he said.

He spoke with urgency and both Mother and Amis stepped back to let him closer to their charge.

“Where’s Lucretia?” asked the man. “I need to know if you’ve seen my daughter.”

Mother moved in closer, as if to protect Winnie from his emotion.

“Lucretia.” repeated the man. “I want to know where Lucretia’s gone to.”

“Don’t strain yourself, Dear,” said Mother to Winnie. “She’s very stick,” she added to Mr. Stone, for that, of course, is who he was.
Winnie pulled herself up a little in bed, easing up against the headboard, as Mother offered her a hand. Her brain was cloudy but her logic was intact.

"Wyoming, I think," she said.

"No she's not in Wyoming. She left her blasted bicycle in the blasted camp. She was waiting for her blasted cycling friend--and for the wind to become more 'accommodating'."

Lucretia's father stood before Winnie, his eyebrows arched uncomfortably, his hands twisting, his bland features transformed with worry and helplessness.

"I don't know," said Winnie, as silence--and her bed--once again, consumed her.

Mother and Aunt Ada both sat with Winnie after the surgery, though never both at the same time. Mother, it seemed, was irate to discover that Aunt Ada had been so derelict in her responsibilities, and even blamed her for Winnie's collapse.

Amis, too, spent many hours by Winnie's bed, and the young woman recovered steadily. One day it occurred to her to ask who had won the election.

Mother looked to Amis for an answer.

"No one," he said. "No one won."

Winnie stared uncomprehendingly.


"Lucretia has drowned," continued Amis. "Mr. Breedlove has been, er, implicated in her death."
“Hurry and get well,” Mother would say to Winnie so many times in the next few days. “So we can leave this place.” And Winnie would ask her what happened to Lucretia.

She said she didn’t know.

Mrs. Stow arrived one day with Amis in tow, ostensibly to see how Winifred was, but clearly eager to have a WSL meeting. Winnie approved of the idea, and despite her Mother’s protests, quickly followed into the living room and sat down beside her. Mother had no choice but to sit at her daughter’s side.

“Samuel’s two hundred votes could go either way,” began Mrs. Stow. “Wouldn’t it be an irony if I ended up winning this race! I’ll have to completely reevaluate my life.”

Mother, her arms folded, glared at Aunt Ada, as if to say, so this is how my daughter has been corrupted. Aunt Ada, however, seemed unflappable where Mother was concerned.

Then Sally Bell walked in, the air, as always, seeming to part for her. She wore her checkered shirt and looked very much the same as she had the last time Winnie had seen her. Only today the leather pouch had returned to its place around her neck.

“It is such a shame about Samuel Breedlove,” said Mrs. Stow, browsing through some notes.

“Who would have thought,” commented Aunt Ada. Winnie stiffened, wanting to know more about the horrible truth that had been kept from her for too long.

“Do you think we ought to use it in our campaign? If the men who oppose suffrage all have secrets like Sam Breedlove—” said Mrs. Stow.
“No.” said Sally Bell. “Women’s votes having nothing to do with men’s secrets.

Winnie sat in her seat, her Mother restless beside her, both too polite to interrupt the proceedings.

“What do you think, Winnie?” asked Mrs. Stow.

“I don’t know.” Winnie looked down at the table, and then, for some unknown reason, she decided to look out the window, and there, peering into the house, was a black goat with a white goatee.

“Josephine!” Winnie walked as fast as she dared over to the window.

“Josephine’s come back!” she cried, and then went to get her some grain and lock her in the barn. The meeting, she assumed, would proceed very well without her insights. Winnie walked outside, fairly oblivious to her mother’s cries to be careful, and scolded the goat.

However, having given Josephine some grain, Winnie found herself having to make a decision. Did she want to lock Josephine back up? Or just close the door enough so that no predators would come in after her.

The goat, her whiskers brushing against the ground, consumed her food entirely oblivious of Winifred’s dilemma. So Winnie decided to close the door, but not lock it. That way if Josephine took it into her head to run away again, she could. She also decided to double check with Aunt Ada to make sure that was an acceptable solution.

Upon returning to the meeting, Winnie found that Aunt Ada had announced she would use Bear Creek as a meeting house for the Equal-Rights Party and Mrs. Stow was going to revise her platform to perfection—with Sally Bell’s and Winifred’s help. It seemed that, for the first time, their chance of actually winning an election was real. The Republicans had suffered greatly from Samuel’s treachery,
whatever it was he had done. The Democrats had lacked much backing in the first place.

"Do you think I'll ever have a husband, Mother?" asked Winnie. Her Mother had come to tuck her daughter in, which seemed to Winifred entirely unnecessary, but not entirely unwelcome.

"Of course, Winifred," said Mother, with careful composure. "You're a perfectly attractive young woman when you choose to be."

"I think I'm a little different," said Winnie. "Did you know I raced against a horse?"

"No, Dear," said Mother, in a distant voice.

Winnie lay in bed, wishing Aunt Ada would return from her honeymoon with Charlie Moon. Ada had waited for her niece to get well before she left, but now Winnie found herself wanting to talk with her.

Winnie came, quite by accident, upon the bicycle she had given Lucretia. A Rover. Same size. Scratch on the stem. Sitting in front of the post office.

Then Mr. Stone emerged from the post office. He was thin, thinner than when she had first seen him, and carried an adjustable wrench.

He looked up and Winifred, who stood beside her own bicycle, felt acutely alive. She said hello.

"Hello." His eyes were tired and glassy.

"I'm sorry," said Winnie. "Lucretia was an incredible person. I miss her."

He nodded curtly, bending over the Rover. He was going to take it apart.

"Did she. Did you. Was there a funeral?" asked Winnie.
Lucretia's father was taking off the front tyre. He was turning the nut the wrong way. Winnie could see that, but didn't want to embarrass him.

"A week ago," he said.

Winnie stood stiffly. Lucretia's father's shirt was blowing in the wind. His hair was wisping, too. Winnie didn't know what to say to him.

"What are you doing with the bicycle?" she asked.

"Shipping it to San Francisco. Man I know wants to buy it."

"But it isn't yours!" she cried, completely without forethought.

"Would you be silent please," said Lucretia's father, "and let me finish this so I can get back to camp."

"What happened to Lucretia?" asked Winnie. "I don't believe she drowned. She's a good swimmer."

"What is it with you," said Lucretia's father, finally figuring out how to get the wheel off and straightening up.

"There's no crime in wanting to know what happened to your friend!" said Winnie. She wouldn't have been so forward, but no one was telling her anything, and she knew Lucretia would have wanted her to speak up.

Mr. Stone set the wheel down and then he stepped on it with a vengeance. His face was impassive, except for his eyes, which were full of agony. The wheel remained intact. He stepped on it, harder and then jumped on it. The spokes snapped.

"It's your bicycle?" he said. "Keep it then."

Amis told Winnie that Samuel Breedlove had used Lucretia's body for his own pleasure ever since she had first arrived in Humboldt County. And that Lucretia
couldn't find the words to speak about it. That she'd drowned herself because of her secret, fearing no one would ever believe her, living, always, in shame.

Winnie would have believed her.

Amis told Winnie that Samuel's earthly life had already been ended by a gunshot.

“I'm staying here,” Winnie told Mother after she'd leaned down to kiss her. “I want to help Mrs. Stow with her campaign. I like it here.”

“But Winifred. It's like a ghost town. You must return to Boston.”

Winnie shook her head vehemently. “I can't,” she said. “I can't go back to Boston.”

Mother surprised her then. “What will I tell your Father?” she asked.

“Tell him I've already found a job. A well-paying job that I like. Tell him that I'm with family.”

EPILOGUE

It seems best not to reveal whether Winifred Potter ever married, for that's another story altogether. But it won't hurt to say that, early in September of 1893, Aunt Ada and her new husband Charlie Moon, and Winifred all took Winnie's mother to the train depot. Mother and Aunt Ada sat next to one another in the carriage and exchanged quiet words. This communication, however insignificant, seemed to Winifred to be a miracle, and when she said good-bye to her mother, she was surprised by the sorrow she felt, and promised, utterly sincere, that she would do a better job of writing. She kept this promise, writing one letter a week,
and telling her mother a great deal that was happening in her life. The distance proved a useful buffer, for before Mrs. Potter could formulate an appropriately distressed response to any of her daughter's escapades, they were long over.

Aunt Ada and Charlie Moon began lecturing for equal rights all around the country. They were a strangely moving combination, both outcasts of sorts (through no fault of their own), both with respect for one another and their listeners.

And Winnie became the manager of the new Bear Creek Resort, and, with Amis' help, built and bought forty new bicycles to have available for clients. Most all of the old rest resort patients stayed on, preferring, it seemed, to put the finishing touches on the new gymnasium than to return home. None of them knew whether Lucretia would want the gym named after her, but everyone decided they had to. Her memory had become a sort of a symbol to them, a symbol of a woman trying, against a cacophanous background, to find her voice. That gym was, to them, a place where they could respect themselves. They wanted it for themselves, and how they loved to use it! Winnie thought Lucretia would have understood.

Mrs. Stow, of course, became the first woman supervisor in Humboldt County. Her campaign was handled enormously well, as one might expect, but Winnie thought Lucretia's death left its impact, too. People suddenly began to listen to what Mrs. Stow had to say. They were too shocked not to.

Josephine became a mother soon after she returned, and Aunt Ada jokingly said her baby was the first "freely-born" goat in the history of California, for Josephine was never again roped to the barn, nor was her door ever locked.

Eighteen years later, California legislature gave its women full suffrage rights, and Winnie was among the celebrators.
And yes, she wore bloomers to her dying day, but always took pride in keeping one dress—that revealed her rather-improved, even shapely figure—to wear on special occasions.