

Friend on the Trail

Chapter Three - by Kay Hively

"I am a friend. Do not be afraid."

Martha was surprised to hear the Indian speak English. Not knowing what to do, she nodded her head at the Indian. As Martha looked at the Indian, she thought he had a kind face. Slowly, he removed his hand from her mouth and motioned for her to be still.

Pulling up her blanket, Martha lay back down. Before she could blink, the Indian was gone. Martha thought about calling to her father, but she didn't want to wake the baby or disturb her mother. Instead, she just lay still with her eyes wide open.

Although she didn't mean to, Martha fell back to sleep. She did not wake up until she heard her father rattling the coffee pot. It was still dark, but a thin streak of light was breaking in the east.

Martha told her father about the Indian who had come in the night. Mr. O'Connor put his arms around his daughter and asked if she was all right.

She said she was fine. She said the Indian did not hurt her, but he did scare her at first.

Mr. O'Connor put the coffee pot on the fire. Then he took a rifle out of the wagon and laid it under the wagon seat.

While Matt and Johnny helped with breakfast, Martha took care of Ruth.

Using a cloth soaked in milk, she fed the baby. Martha's father climbed into the wagon to care for his wife. When he came back out, he looked worried and told the children their mother still had fever.

After breakfast, Martha and Johnny cleared the camp and packed everything into the wagon. Mr. O'Connor and Matt took care of

the oxen. Martha checked the food box. There was very little food left. She hoped they would find a fort or trading post soon so they could get supplies.

Soon after breakfast the wagon train was moving west, toward the blue-colored mountains. Mr. O'Connor told the other men about the Indian.

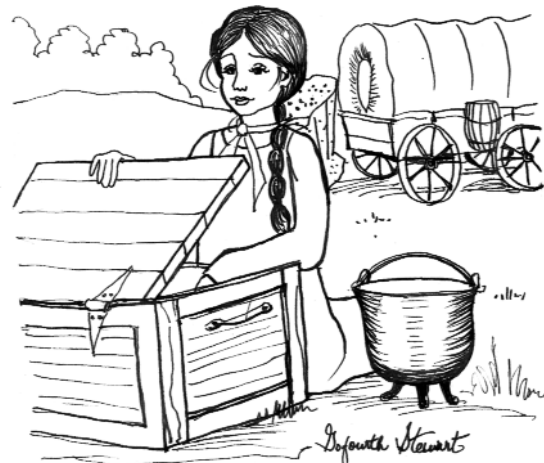
Some of the men had planned to hunt that day because a herd of elk had been seen the day before. But with the talk of Indians, the men stayed with their wagons.

Martha walked beside her father's wagon so she could hear if her baby sister or her mother cried out. The pace of the wagon train was faster than usual. Martha's father had said everyone wanted to make it to the mountains by nightfall. That meant that Martha and all the others had to walk fast.

After about an hour of walking, Martha decided to take a peek at Ruth. Just as she reached for the back end of the wagon, Martha heard her father yelling for her to get inside quickly.

As Martha was scrambling to get in the wagon box, her father appeared with his rifle in his hand. He said Indians were coming. Giving her a shove, Mr. O'Connor told Martha to get down and stay out of sight and to watch her mother and baby sister.

With all the noise and confusion, Ruth began to cry. At the same time, Mrs. O'Connor began screaming for help.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- How do you think the Indian learned to speak English? Why do you think he was in the camp?
- Do you think life is hard on a wagon train? Write a short essay showing how different it would be to drive a car to Oregon rather than go by wagon train.

STANDARDS - G1:1; G2:3; G3:5; CA7; CA4; SS6

Next Week: Chapter Four – Indians!