

Friend on the Trail

Chapter Six - by Kay Hively

Martha was so happy to hear her mother's voice that all she could do was jump up and down, squealing in delight. Martha's father jumped right into the wagon. Matt and Johnny ran to the back of the wagon and held onto the back board.

Not to be left behind, Martha squeezed in between her brothers. Sure enough, Mrs. O'Connor was sitting up in her bed with her husband's arms around her. Even little Ruth knew something good was happening. She cooed and waved her little arms.

As Mrs. O'Connor looked to the back of the wagon, all she could see were the three smiling faces of her children. Tears of happiness rolled down her cheeks.

There was great joy around the campfire that night. Even though everyone was tired from the long hard day, their hearts were light. The cooking chores and the care of the animals didn't seem at all like a burden.

As Martha worked around the campfire, she could hardly take her eyes off the wagon. Her father had moved her mother's bed to the back of the wagon and Mrs. O'Connor was sitting there holding Ruth. Too weak to do much, Martha's mother was happy just to talk to her family and watch them from the wagon. As she watched Martha cooking, Mrs. O'Connor kept telling her to be careful around the fire.

There was another reason for everyone to be happy.

The wagon master had said there would be no travel the next day. Because they were going into the mountains, he said everyone needed extra rest. He told the men to make any wagon repairs that were needed. He said to be sure the axles were well greased.

As the O'Connor family sat around the campfire eating their

supper, Mr. O'Connor made plans for the next day. He said everyone should get a good bath in the stream. He told Matt to help Martha wash all the bedding and the extra clothes. He said that all the work should be done in the morning so everyone could rest in the afternoon.

Martha's father said that he and some of the other men would go hunting in the afternoon. He said they needed enough meat for a few days.

He told Matt and Johnny to empty the big water barrel and just fill a small jug and the two canteens. The mountains had many streams, he said. Everyone would be able to get plenty of water for drinking and cooking, and for the animals. He said an empty barrel would be less weight for the oxen to pull up the mountain.

As the family sat and talked by the fire, a visitor came to their camp. It was Joe. Everyone was glad to see him. They all thanked him for helping Mrs. O'Connor get well.

Joe said that most of the people who had been sick with fever were much better. Rest and good food would make them strong again. He told everyone to rest and be ready when it was time to move again. He said the route over the mountains could be very dangerous.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- Why didn't the chores around the camp that night seem like work? Pretend you are Martha or Matt and write a page in a diary, telling about what happened on this day.
- Martha and Matt were told to wash clothes and bedding tomorrow. How will they do that?

STANDARDS - G4; G1:9; CA4; SS6

Next Week: Chapter Seven - Cold Water