



The minute our new Girl Scout uniforms arrived a gang of us, including Sukey, Dru and Jennifer, put them on. "This is an occasion for a celebration," Mommy said. So off we drove in the station wagon to find a place she knew in her Scouting days. We stopped just past the abandoned railroad tracks, at a tall tangle of weeds and brush. It was a mess, really, but Mommy found an opening in it and led us through. Suddenly the hot, dusty road was gone. We were in a grove, a small woods that slanted downhill. There were clean white birches . . . oaks . . . bushy sassafras trees waving their mottled leaves. "How cool and moist it feels," Dru said. "Nature's air conditioning,"

BETSY McCALL FINDS A PLACE IN THE WOODS

Mommy said. "Green leaves clean and moisten the air. That's why it's always cool in the woods. Shut your eyes, everybody. Listen, and tell me all the sounds you hear." *Insects droning and clicking. Birds' wings beating the air. Leaves fluttering. Frogs.* "I hear a river," I cried. Mommy said: "Impossible," then: "*So do I!* I remember just the tiniest *thread* of a stream." Well, it's not a thread now, but a busy, burbling brook rushing over rocks past a willow tree! Whose land was this, we wanted to know, and what was it called? "It's just a place apart," she said gently, "and it belongs to nobody except the creatures in it. And the people who will love and cherish it."



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