

## Janet POV

Janet was too absorbed in studying the animal track to acknowledge the slender dark-haired boy watching her.

“What are you looking at?” His voice drifted across the silent woods as if carried by a breeze.

“Scat,” Janet answered without looking up. She was surprised to hear his footsteps retreat. “Hey where are you going?” She looked up to see the back of the khaki-clad figure frozen in mid-step.

The boy turned slowly. He pushed his dark hair out of his face. His almond-shaped eyes studied her. “You told me to scat.”

Janet rolled her eyes. “Not scat. Scat. Come, take a look,” she said motioning like her teacher Mrs. Ballard.

Janet was aware that his feet did not scuff or rustle the leaves as he walked toward her.

He squatted next to her. “You mean the dog poop?”

“The scientific term is scat,” Janet said, trying to sound like Mrs. Ballard. Janet sniffed the air. “And from the scent, I’d say Red Fox.” Janet caught the look of surprise and respect in the boy’s hazel eyes. “I’m Janet. What’s your name?”

“Tracy. We just moved here. To the Mountain Grove.”

“Oh the apartment complex,” Janet nodded. “We live in the big white house about half mile down the road.”

“The place that looks like a big farm?” Tracy’s eyes widened.

“Yeah. It’s been in our family for almost 200 years.”

## Tracy POV

Tracy studied the slim figure in the brown T-shirt and blue jeans. The cropped mahogany-colored hair made it impossible to tell if it was a boy or a girl. "What are you looking at?" he asked.

"Scat," the high-pitched voice said, without looking up.

Tracy started to walk away.

"Hey where are you going?" the girl called.

Tracy froze in his tracks. Girls made him nervous. They talked about a million different subjects and he never knew what to answer. He turned slowly. "You told me to scat."

The girl had a pixyish freckled face. She rolled her deep blue eyes. "Not scat. Scat," she said. "Come, take a look." She sounded like Tracy's teacher, Mrs. Warren.

Tracy couldn't keep himself from walking over and stooping next to the girl. "You mean the dog poop?"

"The scientific term is scat." She sniffed the air, adding "and from the smell, I'd say Red Fox." Tracy was stunned. A cross between Mrs. Warren and a tomboy, this girl seemed to belong to these woods. Tracy had always been curious about the natural world wherever he lived.

"I'm Janet," her voice brought him back to the present. "What's your name?"

"Tracy. We just moved here. To the Mountain Grove."

"Oh, the apartment complex," Janet nodded. "We live in the big house about a half mile down the road."

"The place that looks like a big farm?" Tracy asked, astonished.

"Yeah. It's been in our family for almost 200 years."