

Molly the Brave and Me

by Jane O'Connor

Molly has guts. She has more guts than anybody in the second grade. She can stand at the top of the monkey bars on one foot.

She doesn't mind it when Nicky hides dead water bugs in her desk.

And if big kids pick on her, Molly tells them to get lost.

Molly is so brave. I wish I was like her.

Today on the lunch line Molly said to me, "Beth, can you come to our house in the country this weekend? It is lots of fun there."

Wow! I guess Molly really likes me. That made me feel good.

But I have never been away from home. What if I get homesick? What if they eat stuff I don't like?

What if there are lots of wild animals? I was not sure I wanted to go.

I sat at a table with Molly. I said, "Gee, Molly. It sounds neat. Only I don't know if my parents will say yes."

That night Molly's mom called my mom. My mom said yes. So how could I say no? It was all set. Molly's parents were going to pick me up on Saturday morning.

Friday night I packed my stuff. Later my mom tucked me in bed. "I'm scared I'll miss you," I said. "I bet I'll cry all the time. Then Molly will think I'm a big baby. And she won't like me anymore."

My mom hugged me. "You will have fun. And Molly will understand if you are a little homesick." Then my mom kissed me two times. "One kiss is for tonight. The other is for tomorrow night when you will be at Molly's house."

Molly's parents came early the next morning. I was scared, but I was excited, too. Most of all I did not want to look like a wimp around Molly. So I waved good-bye to my parents and hopped in the back seat.

Molly's dog sat between us. "This is Butch," said Molly. Right away Butch started licking me. I'm kind of scared of big dogs.

But did I show it? No way! I acted like I loved getting dog spit all over my face!

By noon we got to Molly's house. It sat all alone at the top of a hill. "This was once a farm," Molly's mom told me. "It's 150 years old."

I like new houses. They haven't had time to get any ghosts. But I didn't say that to Molly's mom.

Right after lunch we went berry picking. That sounded like fun.

Then I saw all the beetles on the bushes.

I did not want to touch them. But Molly just swatted them away. So I gave it a try too. "Hey! This is fun," I said. "I have never picked food before."

We ate lots and lots of berries. Red juice got all over my face and hands. I pretended it was blood and I was a vampire.

I chased Molly all around. "You know what?" I told her. "I am really glad that I came to your house."

Later we went looking for wild flowers. That sounded nice and safe to me. We walked all the way down to a stream. A big log lay across the stream.

Molly ran right across it. Boy, what guts! Butch ran across too. "Aren't there any wild flowers on this side?" I asked.

Molly shook her head. "The best ones are over here. Come on, Beth. Don't be scared. Just walk across—it's easy."

"Okay," I told myself. "Quit acting like a wimp." I started taking tiny steps across the log. Near the end I slipped.

Oof! Down I went. "Are you all right?" Molly asked.

I nodded, but my backside really hurt.

We picked flowers for a while. And when we left, I crawled across the log. Molly didn't tease me. Still I knew I looked like a jerk.

On the way back to the house Butch saw a rabbit and chased it into a field of corn. "Dumb dog!" said Molly. "He will never catch that rabbit. We'd better go and find him."

"Oh, rats!" I thought, but I went in after Molly. We followed the sound of Butch's barks. Boy, was that field big! The corn was way over our heads and it seemed to go on for miles.

At last we spotted Butch. Molly ran and hugged him. Then she pulled me by the arm. "This place is creepy," Molly said. "Let's get out of here."

That was fine with me! But it was not so easy getting out. All the corn looked the same. It was hot and hard to see. Bugs kept flying in our faces. It felt like we were walking around and around in circles.

"Can't Butch help us find the way?" I asked.

Molly shook her head. "Butch can't find his own doghouse."

Then Molly started blinking hard. And her nose got all runny. "Beth," she said. "We're really stuck in here. I'm scared."

Molly scared? I could not believe it! I held her hand. "Don't be scared," I told her, even though I was scared too. "We'll get out of here."

Then I got an idea. "Come on," I told Molly. I started to walk down the space between two rows of corn. I did not make any turns. I stayed in a straight line.

"Pretend this is a long street," I said. "Sooner or later we have to come to the end of it."

And at last we did! Molly and I hugged each other and jumped up and down. Woof! Woof! went Butch. "Hot stuff!" said Molly. "You got us out."

When we got back to Molly's house, her mother said, "Where have you girls been? It is almost time for dinner."

Molly told her parents about following Butch into the corn. Then she put her arm around me.

"I was scared stiff," Molly told them. "But Beth wasn't scared at all. Boy, does she have guts!"

Guts? Me? I couldn't believe my ears!

Dinner was great. We cooked hot dogs on sticks over a fire.

And there was plenty of corn on the cob. "Oh, no! Not corn!" Molly and I shouted together. But we each ate three ears anyway.

Right before bed I did get a little homesick. Molly's mom gave me a big hug. That helped.

Then Molly told me I was her best friend. We locked pinkies on it. That helped too.

Maybe Molly was right. Maybe I really am a kid with guts!