

1952

June wants a room of her own.

She feels she should have gotten one when they built the addition for the new dining room. No one cares about her. Her bedroom is the smallest room in the house. She is sick of doing homework on her bed and deserves a room of her own not only for being the only girl, but for working at the family's store for free. All she ever got for the advertising pictures and for helping out on Saturdays is stuff from stock she would have gotten anyway, and the playroom, she feels, is a club for boys only. It's just too, too boy.

She has decided to tell the bank she wants a building loan, and then she'll hire a contractor for a one-room addition. No, she doesn't want her father to put up a divider in the playroom so she can have her own section like at school where the play yard is in two, front for boys and back for girls.

In the whole of the school there are twenty-eight more girls than boys. In her grade, there are five. She didn't make up these numbers. She counted. There are definitely more girls than boys, and if you'd like a comparison between the yard for the boys and the yard for the girls, it's like the comparison between a tablecloth or a bed sheet, and a *handkerchief*. She is not making this point because of getting into trouble, and nearly getting expelled, yesterday, for drawing a hopscotch diagram in the boys' yard, which the boys, some of whom were her own brothers, did not appreciate.

But boys can't hit girls, so there wasn't a fight. She would never hit a boy like some girls do, then run away laughing. She is honorable. Also, she's not sorry. The boys' yard is tarred like a driveway. The girls' yard is a lawn. You cannot play hopscotch on grass.

She is also in trouble for bringing classroom chalk outside, and for having stones in her pockets, which were not even stones. They were *pebbles*. You cannot play hopscotch without pebbles and she'd thought that other girls, who she thought were her friends, would join her like they promised, but they did not. She didn't mind it that she had to sit in the principal's office looking at a wall for twenty minutes. She doesn't mind it that she can't go out for recess for a month. What she minds is that, at home, when the work was being done for the dining room, no one took her side. She must have asked for an addition-room of her own a thousand times. A private study, she wants to call it. She is going to the bank tomorrow.

"Sweetheart," says Roger, "you're kind of young to apply for a loan. What would you use for collateral?"

June's face goes intense with thinking. "Is collateral what you tell the bank they can have if you don't pay back the money?"

"It certainly is."

"Can you give them humans?"

"No. That would be illegal."

"Then I'll tell them they can take my pony."

"You don't have a pony."

"But Daddy, they don't know that."

"June," says Mabel. "Stop talking. You'll make new friends when you get to high school. Go brush your hair and put your shoes on."

There is a stubborn shake of her head. Her baby curls that were corkscrews like Shirley Temple's had changed to fizzy ones for much of her childhood, before settling down in waves, yellow like a pale shade of corn. She wants to wear it short but Mabel won't let her. Mabel's been paying attention to cheerleaders. She never saw one with short hair.

"I'm not going to the game," June says. "I don't care if you and Gran want me to be a cheerleader. If you force me to be a cheerleader, you know what I'll do when I get to high school? I will flunk out."

"The prettiest girls are the cheerleaders," points out Roger.

"The cheerleaders," says June, "are cold. You can't wear a jacket. You have to dress like it's hot, when it's practically winter. You have to wear a fluffy skirt and no leggings. When you kick, your underpants show."

"They're not underpants," says Mabel. "They're part of the skirt, like what figure skaters wear, and ballerinas. And their sweaters are baggy. I bet they have jackets underneath."

"They don't. They're so tight, it's like they wash them in hot water to make them shrink. They hardly even fit, Mom."

"She's right about that," says Roger.

"Roger," says Mabel, "don't help."