

PATRICIA ST JOHN

THE OTHER
KITTEN



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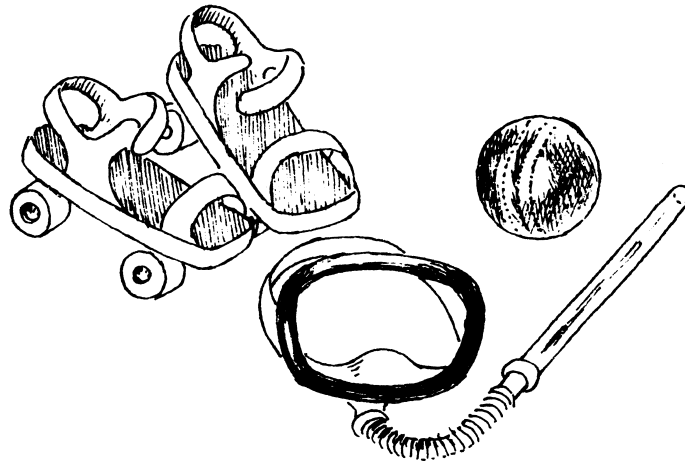
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Chapter one

Mark woke first and lay, still half asleep, trying to remember. Then he woke properly and it all came back to him. He jumped out of bed and ran to the window. He flung it wide open and stuck his head far out.

What a morning! The sun was just rising behind the trees at the bottom of the garden. The dew on the grass sparkled like silver, except for the golden patches where the daffodils grew. The birds were singing wildly, madly. Mark dressed quickly and opened his suitcase to see that nothing had been forgotten. He pushed aside the clothes that Mum had packed. First he checked the really important things: his swimming trunks, underwater goggles



and snorkel (he was determined to swim, however much Gran said it was too cold). Then he checked his roller skates and cricket ball. His bat and shrimping net would be strapped to his case and he would carry his football under his arm. Everything was in order.

He thought he had better wake Carol in case she made them late, fussing over her packing. He went to her room where she

lay asleep, her hair spread all over the pillow. He pulled the bedclothes off her and tweaked her toes. She sat up, started to be cross and then remembered too.

“It’s today, isn’t it?” she said.

“Of course, stupid! You don’t think it’s yesterday, do you?”

She ran to the window. “It’s a lovely day,” she said. “I’m going to say goodbye to the rabbits.”

Carol had already packed her things the day before, leaving her spade and bucket on top of her case. She pulled on her jeans and shirt. Then she ran downstairs and into the garden. She picked some dandelion leaves as a goodbye present and disappeared round the corner of the house. Mark was left alone.

I’d better wake Mum and Dad, he thought. We’ve got to get to Gran’s by

lunchtime and Mum and Dad take so long to get dressed! He decided to take them tea in bed. He made it very carefully, warming the pot and pouring the milk into the jug. When he reached his parents' bedroom, he kicked the door open. His mum and dad both opened their eyes, blinked and yawned.



“What on earth do you think you’re doing, Mark?” said Dad. “It’s only quarter past six!”

Mark put the cups down on the bedside table.

“You said you wanted to start early,” he said.

“I didn’t mean *this* early!” said Dad with another yawn. But he and Mum sat up and drank their tea. It was cosy and still half dark in the bedroom. Mark suddenly wondered if he wanted to go away after all.

“You’ll tell us when the baby comes, won’t you?” he said. “I hope it’s a boy. Carol’s rubbish at cricket.”

Mum laughed. “It can’t be long now,” she said. “But Carol wants a girl, so someone is going to be disappointed. Dad and I have decided to be pleased with



whatever comes. Anyhow, where is Carol?”

“Saying goodbye to the rabbits. Dad, you’d better get up, and you too, Mum. You take *ages* dressing. I’ll make some toast.”

Dad grumbled a little but decided that it would not hurt to start early. “The sooner we go, the sooner I’ll come back,” he said to Mum as he began shaving.