



SWIFT ENTERPRISES PRESENTS

Phyllis Elizabeth Susanne Newton— Farewell Shopton

By T. Edward Fox

Somewhere between *The New Tom Swift Jr. Adventures* and *Tom Swift Lives!*, young, vivacious, brunette Phyllis Newton disappeared from the upstate town of Shopton, New York. It was almost as if she had never existed. Hmmm?

In one parallel universe she and Tom Swift were boyfriend and girlfriend—although she was just about the most chaste girl since Nancy Drew—and eventually, to nobody’s surprise, they married.

In my *favorite* universe, she either never existed, or—as we find out in this story—her family moved away from Shopton when she was fourteen. She knew Tom Swift but they were never very close.

Tom remembers her although he still thinks of her as “all wet,” and a bit of a prude. He grew up to date, marry and have children with the even more beautiful, raven-haired Pakistani girl, Bashalli Prandit.

This is the story of the Phyl Newton who lived there for a while, but moved away from Shopton and never returned!

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This book is dedicated to the memory of people we once knew but who have left our lives. For whatever reason we are maybe better for their disappearance. Perhaps we are the worse. But, unless someone finally figures out that parallel universe jumping device thing, we will never really know. Farewell, Phyllis. We hardly knew ye!

Phyllis Elizabeth Susanne Newton— Farewell Shopton

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FOREWORD

There is no way to tell who is, or would have been the better girlfriend for Tom Swift. While he once knew this Phyllis, he never had any romantic inclinations toward her; he could barely stand her. She was a very late bloomer having been raised by parents who spent almost no time helping her gain the skills necessary for growing up and being around boys.

Tom eventually found a delightful girl, settled down with her, made four beautiful children, and lived a long and wonderful life. This isn't about them.

This is the story of Phyllis' final months in Shopton as she first finds out that her father has been transferred to Wyoming, and then she spends her summer saying goodbye to the people she will miss most.

Her best friend since they were both four has been Sandy Swift, daughter of the famous inventor, Damon Swift, and the sister of Tom. Sandy knows that Phyllis has always had a thing for young Tom, but has wisely steered clear of trying to push anything between them.

So, Phyllis has contented herself with clothes, her hair and even experimented with makeup (when she was certain her parents wouldn't find out!). As she prepares to move on to a new life, her only regret is that she will miss the Shopton Yacht Club and their monthly dances.

Victor Appleton II

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CHAPTER 1/**Just a Typical Day**

PHYLLIS NEWTON sat on the front porch of her parent's house on the outskirts of Shopton, New York. She was savoring the memories of her fourteenth birthday just the day before. It had been a wonderful party with the house filled with friends from school, streamers, balloons and the enticing aroma of coconut frosting on her vanilla cake.

Phyllis loved the smell of coconut and vanilla. *Some day*, she often told herself, *I'll have a perfume factory and we'll make coconut vanilla perfume. Yum!*

Neatly stacked next to her on clean pieces of tissue paper were the many gifts she had received. There were several sweaters, more than a dozen 45 rpm records with many of the hit tunes currently playing on Shopton's WSHN station—although there were several duplicates that she would need to exchange on Monday when Beasley's Music Shoppe opened—and three boxes of candy.

Phyllis pursed her lips as she contemplated the candy. Her grandmother had told her many times that "A moment on the lips means a lifetime on your hips!" Phyllis was quite pleased that her hips were just the right width for the rest of her body.

In fact, Phyllis was very happy with the way her young teenage body was shaping up. While she didn't have quite the bosom development of her best friend, Sandy Swift, she was no slouch either.

Clothes just naturally hung well on her. This made Phyllis a happy girl. Clothes were very important to her. So much so that she and her mother had come to an agreement two years earlier that let Phyllis choose all of her own clothes. Before that, her mother would pick out most of her outfits, a few that Phyllis' critical eye found somewhat ugly or mismatched.

"Maybe," she told her mother one evening, "I'll become a fashion designer and only make beautiful clothes for pretty girls!"

Her mother had tilted her head down and looked at Phyllis over her reading glasses, then slowly shook her head. Although she would never use such words to describe her own daughter, she felt that Phyllis was often more than a bit shallow.

As Phyllis sat on the porch, the sun came around a branch on the big oak tree in the Newton's front yard. Squinting at the sudden brightness, she carefully picked up all of her gifts and headed back inside.

"Not staying out to enjoy the sunshine, dear?" her mother inquired.

"No, Mom. I don't want it to fade my new clothes or melt the records and chocolates. I'll be up in my room." With that, she climbed the fifteen stairs—she always counted them as she walked up and walked down—and went down the hallway to her bedroom.

As she walked in, Phyllis stopped short and looked at her bed. On it were several piles of clean clothes her mother had placed there after doing the laundry earlier in the morning.

Phyllis sighed.

As usual, her mother had mixed up all of her underwear into one jumble.

She placed her gifts on the desk in one corner of her room and set about the task of sorting and folding each piece of intimate apparel so that all of the whites were together and all of the blues were together and all of the cream-colored ones were together.

Once they were placed in their proper spots in the top drawer of her dresser, she folded all the undershirts put them into the drawer as well. Seeing that one of the shirts already in the

drawer was a different folded size, she removed it and refolded it to match the rest.

At least, she thought as she returned her attention to her gifts, *Mom hung up my blouses and skirts in the right places*. She had checked her closet to make certain that she didn't have to rearrange anything.

During the party she hadn't had the time to actually try on any of the clothing she received. She unbuttoned her white blouse and hung it on a hanger in the front of the closet, then turned to her new things.

The sweaters fit like a dream. As Phyllis was a perfect size four it was always easy to fit into clothing of that precise size. Her only concern was that the one given her by Becky Carpenter was almost the exact color of one her grandmother had given her the year before. But, as she reminded herself, she was a full three inches taller now and was developing a fuller figure. Grandma's sweater would be too small within the next several months anyway.

I wonder if I should tell her that I've outgrown hers, or just let her assume that this one is the one she gave me? Oh, wait. The collars are different and the buttons aren't the same. Nuts!

She carefully folded her new sweaters, smoothed out a few wrinkles, and put them into the cedar chest at the foot of her bed. It would keep moths from ruining them for many years.

She sat back on her bed and looked through the records. After placing the duplicates into one pile she sorted the rest by the name of the band or singer. Pausing to consider something, she pulled one of the 45's from this stack and set it with the duplicates. It was from a new rock and roll band that was a little too loud and frenetic for her. She would trade that one in as well.

She had just removed the first of the 'keepers' from its

protective sleeve and set it on her record player when there was a little knock on her door.

"Come in," she called out cheerfully.

Sandy Swift poked her blond head through the door and entered.

She stopped and gawked at her friend.

"Phyl! You're practically naked!" she stated seeing the brunette sitting on the bed in her bra.

Looking down, Phyllis blushed and pulled her pillow over her front. "Sorry, Sandy. I was trying on clothes." She smiled and quickly retrieved her blouse and pulled it on.

"Gee. Phyl," Sandy told her. "I was only kidding. Loosen up. It isn't like I was Tom or any boy you know."

This resulted in another blush. Phyllis had really liked young Tom Swift ever since she first met him. He had been with their mother when she arrived to collect Sandy from the kindergarten she and Phyllis attended.

Those feeling had changed as she approached her twelfth birthday. Suddenly, the now thirteen-year-old boy wasn't just cute, he was *really* cute. And things she had once found slightly annoying about his behavior had recently become interesting and unique character traits.

Phyllis wasn't sure why her attitude had changed, but the end result was that she knew she had always liked Sandy's brother.

Too bad, she thought, *that he doesn't seem to have any time for me*.

"Thank you for the pink sweater, Sandy," she told her friend. "I have an older pullover but wanted a cardigan style one for a long time. It's just what I wanted!"

She gave her friend a little hug.

“I came over to see if you would like to come to my house tonight for a barbecue, Phyl,” Sandy told her. “Mom is making a huge mess in the kitchen right now, but it will eventually be rib eye steaks, baked potatoes, her green bean and tiny onion dish and a deep dish cherry pie for dessert. Please say you’ll come.”

Although Phyllis liked everything Sandy had mentioned, she wasn’t sure she wanted the huge portions that seemed to be served at Swift family functions.

But, after a moment she agreed to be there. “What time?”

“Well, if you come by around four we can try on some new clothes I have in my closet. I’ve got a really darling poodle skirt that I’m saving for next month’s dance at the Yacht Club, but it’d look wonderful on you!”

The two girls spent the next half hour talking about several of the other girls at the junior high school, two of which would not be joining their classmates at Shopton High School the next school year. One had failed most of her classes the last term because of “family issues” while the other had been caught stealing makeup from the Shopton Department Store and had been in juvenile jail for several weeks.

Both Phyllis and Sandy knew that she was a “bad girl,” and resolved to never become like her.

CHAPTER 2/

We’re Moving to *Where*?

THREE WEEKS later Phyllis returned home around 3:00 after visiting the library only to find her father sitting in their living room. This was strange as it was a Thursday and he was never home before six on weekday evenings. Unless he was ill.

“Are you feeling poorly, Father?” she asked as she gently kissed him on the forehead. It wasn’t warm.

“No, Phyllis. I received a bit of news today and wanted to come home to share it with you and your mother. How has your day been, dear?”

“Fine, Father. But, what’s this news? Have you told Mother?”

He laughed softly and patted the arm of his easy chair. “Sit down, Phyllis. Belinda,” he called out toward the kitchen, “Phyllis is home. Come on in here. I need to tell you both something.”

Moments later, wiping her hands on the clean tea towel she always kept next to the sink, Phyllis’ mother came into the room.

“What is it, dear?” she asked.

He motioned for her to have a seat on the sofa.

“Well, you know that we came here about ten years ago. Before that, we lived in Buffalo, but the plant expanded and we ended up here. And, I’ve been the manager for the past six years, ever since old Mr. Greene retired.”

Something dawned on Phyllis. “Oh, no. You’re not retiring are you, Father?”

Now, he laughed out loud. “No, darling. I’m certainly not

retiring. I've still got a good twenty years in me before I even consider taking *that* drastic step. No, not that. Not now."

He stopped and looked at the two women in his life. Both were sitting forward in anticipation of some news. He hoped they would take this as being good news.

"The company has decided to close the original Buffalo site starting in a couple months. Everything is being moved out of the plant and the administration buildings a few weeks before the official closing."

"Is the company folding, dear?"

"Anything but that, Belinda. Anything but. In fact, we are doing so well that the company needs to expand. It's just that several factors mean that Buffalo isn't practical anymore."

He knew he was about to drop a bomb on them. He took a deep breath.

"In fact, the Shopton offices are closing as well. Now before either of you panic or say anything, let me finish. As I say, the Shopton offices are closing at the same time. Everything is being moved to the new corporate headquarters. Everything all in one place. No more two-day business trips for me. No more extra hours spent waiting for a delivery company to bring vital paperwork here from the main offices."

"Where?" Phyllis and her mother both said in unison.

"Uh... a beautiful small city called Casper. I understand that it is nestled in a beautiful valley and has about fifty thousand people in it. That's twice the size of Shopton."

"Father," Phyllis said, "I'm very good at geography. Especially New York. I've never heard of a city called Casper out here."

"Where is it?" his wife asked looking none-too-happy.

Mr. Newton swallowed hard. "It's out in Wyoming—"

"*Wyoming!*" the two women chorused.

"That's practically on the other side of the country," his wife stated.

"It's not fair. It isn't fair at all!" Phyllis sobbed as she jumped up and ran to her bedroom.

"Is there no way to stay here in Shopton?" Belinda Newton asked her husband.

"unless I thought I could find a job like I have now, and at the very advantageous salary I have been offered if I take this move, then no."

"You never mentioned what you would be doing. So?"

"I will become the President and chief manager of the entire company," he told her. "I will be in charge of everything. Many of the changes I've made here have not gone unnoticed. In fact, many of them have been adopted by the main office and have kept this company well in the black. This is a reward for me. I hope you can see how good it will be for all of us."

His wife shrugged. It would be the third time they had moved in the sixteen years of their marriage. *It could be worse*, she told herself as she returned to the kitchen. *He could be in the military and we'd move every two years like I did when I was growing up.*

Upstairs, Phyllis was having a good cry. Her pillowcase would have to be changed, of course, before she could go to sleep later that night, but for now she had no qualms about soaking it with her tears.

How could her father be so callous to take her away from her friends? How could his company be so mean to close everything down and force them to leave Shopton? What if none of her beautiful clothes were right for whatever weather

they had out in Wyoming? What if all the girls out there were prettier than she was?

She lay there for many minutes feeling most sorry for her plight. Then, a thought hit her and she rolled over and sat up. Wiping the last tears from her face she pulled out a volume of *Encyclopedia Britannica* and flipped to the pages pertaining to the state of Wyoming.

She desperately flipped between the three pages trying to find the information she needed. It wasn't there. She grabbed another volume and looked through five additional pages. No reference was made to Wyoming there, either.

Phyllis picked up her hairbrush and ran it through her brunette tresses trying to put them back into some semblance of order.

She went to the small bathroom off of her bedroom and dampened a washcloth that she used to wipe her face. Moments later she went back downstairs.

"I absolutely refuse to move to stinking Wyoming unless you swear on the bible to me that they have electricity!" she demanded, standing in front of her father with hands firmly on her hips.

Realizing how serious she was, Ned Newton fought to keep from smiling. He composed himself and counted to ten before answering.

"Yes, Phyllis, they do have electricity there. In fact, our plant will be one of the larger concerns using electricity. We had to ensure that there were sufficient facilities there before we ever made the decision to move."

His daughter relaxed slightly. Nodding, she turned and marched back upstairs counting the steps as she went. She sat on her bed for almost an hour going over the many reasons why they should not move. Finally, she took out a notebook of ruled paper and her favorite ballpoint pen. Sitting back on the

bed she made a list of all her best reasons then wrote greater details for many of them on other pages.

She would ask Sandy Swift to check her work and to provide additional reasons why her father's company should just stay in Buffalo and Shopton.

Dinner that evening was a very quiet affair. Ned Newton knew that both his wife and daughter needed time to contemplate his news, and now was not the time for chit chat.

The next morning, Sandy Swift was surprised when the side door of their kitchen opened as she sat eating breakfast and in walked Phyllis.

"We have to talk, Sandy!"

"Can I finish my cereal, please?" the blond asked.

Giving a huge sigh, one that even Sandy recognized as being overly dramatic, Phyllis nodded and sat down across the table.

"Oh, good morning, Phyllis. What a pleasant surprise," Anne Swift commented as she walked into the kitchen. "Can I fix you something?"

"No thank you, ma'am," Phyllis replied. "I'm too tense and bothered to eat anything."

Anne Swift understood that both her own daughter as well as her friend had become exceptionally skilled at being dramatic about even the most insignificant things, but she sensed that there was something more serious going on, so she only nodded and left the room.

Taking the last spoonful of her puffed oat cereal and draining the last of the sugar sweetened milk from the bowl, Sandy finally said, "So, tell me what's going on. You've really got something going through your mind. I can tell."

A small tear cascaded down Phyllis' right cheek. Sandy could

see more of them welling up in her friend's eyes. She reached out and took Phyllis' hand, gently pulled her up from her chair and led her upstairs.

The Swift's home only have fourteen stairs, Phyllis noted and not for the first time. There were an additional eighteen down the hall to Sandy's bedroom door.

They sat on Sandy's bed and Phyllis poured out her heart, beginning with the terrible news of the impending move. Finally she looked Sandy in the eyes and asked, "Isn't there some way your father could hire my father to manage the Swift Construction Company or your new Swift Enterprises? They've known each other practically forever!"

Sandy could only shake her head. "Enterprises is daddy's job, Phyl. He won't leave there until he retires, and Jake Aturian, daddy's business partner, is in charge of the Construction Company. I'm so sorry."

Phyllis accepted the offer of Sandy's handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes. Her own handkerchief had long since become too wet to be of any use.

She excused herself and went down the hallway to the guest bathroom where she used some bathroom tissue to blow her nose. After running her fingers through her hair she returned to Sandy's room.

They talked about all of the things they absolutely had to do before Phyllis moved away, including attending every dance at the Shopton Yacht Club as well as needing to organize a private going away party for Phyllis.

Before going back to her own house, Phyllis let Sandy give her a big hug. It felt nice to have someone holding her. It helped her forget how miserable she wanted to feel.

CHAPTER 3/

Goodbyes All Around

THE NEXT week in Phyllis' life was a roller coaster of emotions. Sometimes, she found herself getting excited at the prospect of what a move to the larger city could mean.

Better shopping, more kids at her school—perhaps with some boy she might hold hands with and who would ask her to dances—and even a new room with a larger closet.

This last one was, she knew, only a dream. They would be moving into a new house but the plans her father brought home didn't have enough details for her to tell how big her room might be. All she knew was that her little, private bathroom in their current house was not going to be a reality in the new one. It was down the hall. She wondered how many steps it would be.

A lot of her time was spent feeling sad. She would be leaving many good friends behind. Sandy, Becky, Dianna and Lisa were just four of the girls she had become close to, especially this last year or two.

Of course, her absolutely favorite friend was Sandy Swift. Sandy was also the source of some small jealousies, too. Phyllis knew that she was a cute girl, but she didn't get the attention from boys like Sandy did. Sandy was always so easygoing around boys where Phyllis felt awkward and unsure of what to say or do. And, though Sandy had never told her, Phyllis was fairly certain that the blonde had already kissed a boy!

Plus, Sandy was very athletic where Phyllis was more demure and "girly," as one of her aunts once commented.

Phyllis spent an entire day making lists of who she needed and wanted to tell of the upcoming move then ordered and reordered the names by who should be told first.

Obviously, even though she liked Dianna, everyone knew that Dianna March was a blabbermouth! Tell Dianna something on one side of the schoolyard, and then run at top speed to the other side only to have the story already there. Terribly distorted to be sure, but this had gained the girl the—secret—nickname of ‘lightning lips.’

In the end, Phyllis decided to ask her mother if she could have a small afternoon party the following weekend. She intended to invite the top twenty girls on her list and tell them all at the same time.

“We have plenty of room in the back yard, dear,” her mother had told her. “Don’t you want to invite more? Maybe some boys?”

Phyllis shook her head. “No. I’ve gone through my lists several times and these are the girls I want to invite. I’m sure that the boys will find out. If they even care.”

Belinda Newton worried about her daughter. She was a beautiful, shapely fourteen year old who currently showed only minimal interest in boys. But, she knew that different girls—and boys for that matter—matured at different rates. She shrugged and smiled at Phyllis.

“Okay. What did you want to serve them?”

They discussed the possible menu items and quickly reached the decision that this would be more of a ‘tea’ than a meal. Sodas and tea along with finger sandwiches, little pizza squares, and some cut vegetables with Green Goddess dip—Phyllis actually preferred plain mayonnaise but gave in to her mother’s suggestion that others probably liked the more flavorful dips. This would all be finished with small desserts like cookies and cupcakes.

Phyllis asked for permission to use the phone to call her invitees.

“Why, certainly, Phyllis. Just try to be finished by the time

your father comes home. Alright?”

Phyllis made the first call to Sandy.

“Sandy? I’ve decided to have a party here at our house to tell all the girls I’m moving. Can you come next Saturday? The twenty-fifth?”

“I’m pretty sure. Let me ask my mother.” Sandy covered the mouthpiece of the phone and called out. Phyllis could hear the muffled conversation but made nothing out. A minute later Sandy came back on. “She says I can come, Phyl. She wants to know what I can bring.”

“I think mother has everything handled, but I’ll ask.” Now it was Phyllis’ turn to cover her mouthpiece and call for her mother.

“Mother says she’ll call your mom later to discuss it. She can’t think of anything right now. Maybe some Kool-Aid or Fizzies. Is that okay?”

“Yes. Absolutely.”

They talked about the attire and it was decided that comfortable summer dresses or even slacks would be fine.

By the time the party was scheduled to start, nineteen of the invited girls had been at the Newton house for almost a half hour. They sat on the front porch waiting for the final guest.

The final attendee arrived right on time.

“Hi, Dianna,” the girls all called out as the petite redhead got out of her father’s car. She smiled and waved, then turned back to the car and said something to her father. He smiled, waved at the collection of teenage girls and called out, “Have a great time, kids,” before driving off.

Everyone had fun talking and gossiping—lead by Dianna—for the first hour. Mrs. Newton brought out trays of glasses and

pitchers and the girls drained them several times before food was served.

Phyllis's father had borrowed a couple large picnic tables from his company and they were set with paper plates and a new brand of disposable plastic tableware. The food was set out on a card table and everyone served themselves.

While everyone else ate, Phyllis sat there biting her lower lip. She was suddenly very nervous about making her announcement. Sandy saw her face and made a "get on with it" motion with her head and eyes.

Finally, after taking a large gulp of the cola she had been drinking, Phyllis stood up and called out for people's attention.

"Hi. I want to thank all of you for coming today. I know we see each other at school all the time, and we even go shopping and to movies sometimes in the summer, but this is the first time we are all together—"

Her voice faltered as the emotion of what she was about to say caught up with her. She took another gulp of her drink.

"Most of us have known each other since the first or second grade. A couple of you, like Sandy, I've known since I first moved to Shopton ten years ago." She looked around at the faces of her friends. Most were looking expectant but she noticed that Becky Davis and Amanda Jones were looking miserable.

"Anyway, my father works for a company here in Shopton that has decided to close its doors and move. And," she took a deep breath, "that means that my family has to move."

There were seventeen stunned faces looking at her and two that suddenly seemed to be relieved. Plus Sandy.

Phyllis opened her mouth to continue, but a belch escaped from all the cola she had consumed. Turning red, she slapped her hands over her mouth. All of the girls were laughing. Not, Phyllis realized, *at her* but as a relief from the tension and

emotions they were feeling.

She smiled. "Sorry. So, at the end of next month, a few weeks before school starts back up, we are going out to Wyoming."

There were many girls who looked sad at the news and some looked at others then asked where Wyoming might be, but most nodded.

Becky stood up and came over to Phyllis. "We're moving too, Phyllis," she told her host. "Not to Wyoming, but down to Albany. My dad has a new job there starting in three weeks. I didn't know how to tell anyone."

Dianna also spoke up. "We're moving to Wyoming as well," she informed the group. "Dad works for the same company as Phyllis' so his position is moving. Guess you'll still have to put up with old lightning lips, huh?"

Everyone laughed, especially Phyllis and Dianna.

The rest of the party was spent with everyone making impossible promises to keep in touch every day and to visit every summer and to always, always remain friends!

As they began leaving an hour later, the girls all hugged Phyllis, Dianna and Becky, and then hugged everyone else. In all, the hugs took more than ten minutes and nobody was left with dry eyes.

Phyllis helped her mother clear up everything while they talked about the party and the upcoming move.

"You know, Phyllis, you can come back for a visit next summer if you like. I've talked to your father and we agree that we have friends back here that we would like to keep up with. We are thinking about coming out for two weeks in maybe July. Would you like that?"

Phyllis nodded vigorously as tears began flowing down her cheeks.

Oh to be young and full of confusion and hormones and ideals, Belinda Newton though as she took her daughter in her arms and hugged her.

A few minutes later they let each other go and returned to the task of cleaning up the serving dishes.

Her mother told Phyllis that they would all be going out to Wyoming the following week for a two-day visit. The ladies would go see their new home and make the plans for what would go where while Ned Newton would be working with the advance team setting up the new headquarters and allocating work and office space for all of the different departments.

They drove down to New York City and took a sleek Boeing 707 jet from LaGuardia field out to the airport in Denver, Colorado. They took a smaller propeller plane to Cheyenne, then a rental car for the last part of the trip. Although she had once flown in a DC-3 between Albany and Portland, Maine as a youngster, she had never been in anything as large as the jetliner and as fast before. She spent the entire trip out and back with her face pressed against the window, watching the world go by below her.

They quickly noticed that Casper had the same sort of friendly people they were use to in Shopton, but that many men and teenage boys wore cowboy hats and spoke in an accent Phyllis associated with western movies.

Some of the boys, Phyllis noted, were kind of cute. One very handsome teenager smiled right at her. She had blushed, but smiled right back at him.

By the time they returned to Shopton, Phyllis Newton had set her mind to making the most of this move.

CHAPTER 4/

A Final Dance

AS WAS usual, the Shopton Yacht Club held a big dance and dinner on the final Saturday of each month. Members, like the Newtons and the Swifts, were fixtures at these events.

Tonight's dance was to be the last one before the Newtons headed out west.

Once they spotted each other, Sandy and Phyllis marched arm-in-arm to the refreshment table and got cups of punch from the children's bowl. Phyllis had once taken a sip of her mother's 'parents' punch. It had tasted vile, and she couldn't figure why adults would drink something that burned and smelled like that punch had.

The day before, when they were up in Sandy's room trying to decide what they would wear, Sandy noticed Phyllis looking at the pink poodle skirt hanging in her closet. She had been thinking about wearing it herself, but knew that her best friend would look better in it.

"Would you like to borrow the poodle skirt, Phyl?" she asked. "I don't think I have a good top to go with it and you have that darling black blouse that would."

Phyllis was looking in surprise at Sandy. She could scarcely believe that Sandy was offering to lend her that beautiful skirt. Coming back to her senses, she asked, "Which black blouse, Sandy?"

"The ruffled one with the three-quarter sleeves. You wore it to the spring fling dance at school. Remember?"

Phyllis nodded. She hadn't taken her eyes from the skirt. She could almost see herself in that skirt. And, now that Sandy mentioned it, that black blouse and perhaps a light scarf would

make her the belle of the ball.

“Yes, please,” she finally answered her friend’s question.

Now, standing near the side of the large room at the Yacht Club, she did indeed look fetching. Several young men, most juniors or seniors in high school, gave her more than a quick glance.

“When the music starts, you absolutely have to go out and dance with someone,” Sandy insisted. She could see the excitement in Phyllis’ eyes and wanted her friend to have a good time.

“Well...” Phyllis started, beginning to look around nervously.

“There is no well, Phyllis Newton. You are going to dance with someone because I just have to see that dress spinning on the dance floor!”

It only took a few minutes before the band began playing and people started heading onto the dance floor. By the time the second number was striking up, a boy Phyllis recognized as being a year ahead of them walked over and smiled nervously.

In a slightly breaking voice he asked if Phyllis would dance with him.

She looked at Sandy with “Should I?” written on her face. Sandy nudged Phyllis in the ribs and mouthed, “Go!”

Two tunes later another boy tapped the first on the shoulder and asked if he could cut in. Though the first boy looked sad, he nodded and moved off allowing the larger, and one year older, boy to swing Phyllis around the floor.

Two quick songs later and Phyllis thanked her latest partner and returned to where Sandy had been standing. But, the blond was nowhere to be seen. Phyllis scanned the floor and saw Sandy dancing with the first boy she had been with. They looked like they were having fun so Phyllis decided to wait.

She only had a respite of two minutes because a trio of boys approached. The tallest one was shuffling his feet and looking at his shoes, but his friends pushed him forward.

“He wants to dance with you,” one of them yelled over the noise of the band. “Tell her!” he commanded his shy friend, giving that boy a poke in the back.

“I, uh, that is, I, uh, think you look mighty pretty, Miss Newton,” he stammered. “I, uh, don’t suppose you would dance with someone like me?”

She looked at his face. He had a little acne and his features were a bit too angular for her liking, but she immediately took pity on his discomfort.

“Of course I’ll dance with you,” she yelled back, and grabbed him by the hand, dragging him onto the floor.

They danced five tunes in a row, including the first slow dance of the evening. She could feel his damp, nervous hands on her back. He was still slightly shaking and his fingers were icy, but he could keep up with the beat and never once stepped on her feet.

They parted as the band took its first break. He had a huge, silly grin on his face and looked like he might try to lean in to kiss her. She quickly took his hand and shook it. “I had a nice time. Thanks you,” she told him and them turned right into Sandy who had come looking for her.

They moved off the floor and walked out of the building and onto the wood deck that surrounded three sides of the clubhouse.

“Well,” Sandy said, “you and Kevin were sure burning up the dance floor.”

“Oh, stop it, Sandy,” Phyllis said. She told her friend about the boy’s cold and clammy hands. “I’m sure my back is quite damp from them.”

“Just don’t let that stop you from dancing with every other boy that asks. Okay?”

“We’ll see,” was all that Phyllis would commit to.

By the time the dance was almost over, she had only missed four songs and was exhausted. She wasn’t sure why she was so popular. Many boys had come back asking for second and even third rounds. This had never happened to her.

Sandy cornered her about the time the bandleader was announcing that they had just three final tunes to play before leaving for the night.

“I’ve got someone who is going to dance with you, so don’t accept any more invitations., He isn’t here just yet but I spoke to him on the phone a half hour ago and he promised me he would get there. “

The two girls stood to one side watching the thinning crowd and fending off several offers for dance partners. Sandy was looking a bit nervously around the room, but brightened as she saw who she was looking for.

Waving and standing on tip-toe, she finally got his attention.

“Hey, San, Hello, Phyllis,” he said as he approached them.

“Hey, big brother,” Sandy greeted him. “I told you that Phyllis’ folks are moving away in a few days. You’ve been spending far too much time at Swift Enterprises since Daddy gave you that job, so I thought you could come here, relax a little and even dance the last dance with Phyl. Okay?”

Her last word was punctuated with a look that Tom knew he would not be able to deflect. When Sandy gave anyone that look, it said that she meant what she said and she would not take “No” for an answer!

“Oh. Yes. Phyllis, can I have this dance?”

It was more than she could have expected. Phyllis was practically stunned into silence. To be asked to dance, even though prompted by Sandy, by Tom Swift promised to be the capper on a great evening.

She nodded and took his offered hand.

The arrived on the dance floor about fifteen seconds before the penultimate song finished and the band quieted down and began playing the Hoagy Carmichael hit, *Stardust*.

All too soon the music stopped and Tom led her off the floor and back to where Sandy was waiting. Tom gave his sister a lop-sided grin as they approached.

“Thank you, Phyllis, for the dance. I guess I should have come a little earlier; maybe we could have had a couple more. Sorry. I hope your move out west goes well.”

Phyllis thanked him and went up on tip toe and gave him a chaste kiss on the cheek.

They both blushed, and then Tom excused himself.

“Well?” Sandy asked looking meaningfully at Phyllis.

“Well... I had a nice night. Thank you for being here.”

“I mean, well, what was that little kiss all about?”

“Oh. Well, he is your brother and all. It was sort of a goodbye kiss, that’s all. I guess.”

Sandy rolled her eyes. Sometimes Phyllis Newton could be exasperating!

CHAPTER 5/**B C N U**

THE FINAL three days of Phyllis Newton's residence in Shopton, New York, were a whirlwind. She had already packed everything in her room taking great care to neatly fold all her clothes to fit exactly into the boxes the moving company had provided.

Three times she had to go back to the store to purchase more tissue paper so that she could wrap each article so that it didn't get dirty.

Her collection of stuffed animals had been the only things she hadn't individually wrapped. Her mother had provided several pillowcases into which the bears, dogs and kittens could all be placed, and the tops of which could be tied shut with twine.

They would be driving out, a trip that would take four days, so she had packed five outfits into her suitcase.

Then, she had unpacked everything and swapped out several of the clothing items. In the end, her father had taken her suitcase and locked it into the trunk of the car. "No more playing around, Phyllis. You are now fully packed and that's the end of it," he had told her over her protestations that she just wanted to make certain she had the "right clothes for each city they would stay in."

Three moving men had spent these days carefully packing up the kitchen items, the china and crystal ware from the dining room and all of the items in Mr. Newton's little workshop in the garage.

Everything in storage in the attic had been taken down, sorted through, a few items given to charity and the rest packed into boxes or wrapped in blankets.

That last morning they arrived to disassemble things like beds, take legs off of tables and the piano, and to pack everything into the large van that would arrive in Wyoming a week later.

With each box or wrapped piece of furniture that disappeared into the truck, Phyllis grew sadder and sadder. She wasn't sure but felt that some sort of reprieve might come through at the final moment telling them that the whole Wyoming thing had been a horrible mistake and that the company was staying right there in Shopton.

Now, she knew better. They were definitely going and the departure time was rapidly approaching. She glanced at the silver watch on her left wrist. 11:42 it told her.

That meant they would climb into the car in less than three hours.

She was sitting to one side of the front porch, trying to remain out of the way of the moving men, when a car pulled up across the street. Because the truck was in the way, she couldn't see who had arrived until Sandy came around the front of the truck. The car that had dropped her off sped away.

"Hey, Phyl," she called out as she walked up the path to the steps. Sandy had a flat, square box in her hands. As she climbed the five steps Phyllis got up and came to greet her.

"Hi, Sandy. I'd say it's great to see you, and it really is, but it's also kind of sad. This will be the last time we see each other until we come back next summer for vacation."

Sandy looked right at Phyllis. "Phyllis Elizabeth Susanne Newton, don't you dare cry or we'll both end up in little puddles right here!"

Sniffing back what had promised to be a good set of tears, Phyllis sat down on the top step. She patted the wood next to her and Sandy dropped down beside her.

“Brought this for you as a going away present,” Sandy told her placing the box in Phyllis’ lap.

“What is it?”

“Open it, silly. You’ll see for yourself!”

Phyllis pulled the end of the ribbon that was holding the box closed. It untied and came away from the box. She carefully pulled her hair back and wrapped the ribbon around it, knotting it so that she was soon sporting a ponytail like Sandy’s.

It was only then that she opened the box.

Her eyes went wide and she let out a little gasp.

“Oh, my gosh!” She pulled the contents out and stood up. Holding the pink poodle skirt up to her waist she looked at her friend. “You mean this is for me?” she asked, unbelievably.

Sandy smiled and nodded. “Yep. You looked so good in it at the dance the other night. Better than I look in it. I’m too—” she looked down at her own chest, then though better of what she was about to say, so she added, “—I’m not girly enough to pull it off. You look wonderful in it. It was obviously meant for you!”

Phyllis didn’t know what to say. She had coveted the skirt from the first day Sandy had shown it to her. Now, evidently, it was hers.

She dropped back down next to Sandy and put her arms around the other girl’s neck. “Thank you,” she whispered.

They had to move to one side to let the men past with the sofa, but sat on the porch, sometimes talking and sometimes in silence, until it was time for the Newtons to leave.

“I called your mom, Sandy,” Mrs. Newton said. “She should be here in one minute.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Newton.”

The last of the moving men came out of the house and handed Mr. Newton a clipboard. He signed a form and the men got into their truck and drove away calling out, “See you in Wyoming this time next week!”

Anne Swift pulled up almost in the same instant they vacated the space in front of the house. She got out and went to Mrs. Newton.

“Belinda, you take care.” They exchanged a few more words while the girls said their goodbyes.

“Sandy? Can you tell me something? Honestly?”

“Sure, Phyl. Anything.”

“Why doesn’t Tom like me?”

Sandy was momentarily taken aback. “It isn’t that he doesn’t like you, it’s just that...” she knew she should choose her next words carefully.

“It’s that he thinks I’m all wet. Right? I’ve heard him say that many times. What does that even mean?”

“I think Tom means that you are just a little too girly for him. Maybe a little, um... oh, Phyllis. He thinks you’re a prude. I’m so sorry. I just can’t put it any other way. Don’t hate me!” Sandy implored. “And, don’t hate Tom.”

Although shaken, Phyllis already knew that would be the real answer. In fact, she *was* a bit of a prude. Where many girls wore open collar blouses, she still wore things that kept her completely covered. Even her black blouse that she had worn at the dance—her most daring because of its loose neck—had been kept covered by a scarf. She had roasted on the warm dance floor for the sake of hiding a few inches of skin.

Reaching out a hand and placing it on Sandy’s shoulder,

Phyllis told her, “He’s right. I am. I’ve always been. Even right now I can’t believe that I actually kissed him on the cheek that night. Maybe this move will give me the chance to change myself and my image a little.”

The two hugged for more than a minute before a chorus of coughs from the three adults reminded them that it was time for Phyllis and her parents to go.

“Be seein’ you, Sandy,” Phyllis whispered into her friend’s ear.

“Be seein’ you, Phyl.”

As the car started to pull out of the driveway, Phyllis leaned out of the window and shouted out, “Farewell Shopton! See you next year!”