

***MISSING TEXT, starting on page 10 of SEEING THE ELEPHANT***

like all of us, had been consumed by thoughts of the Grand Canyon.

“Oh, no,” my sister, Anna Esta, protested. “I wouldn’t want to miss even one tiny smidgen of this trip. It’s all too exciting, all of it.”

“Well, I just wish that *they* weren’t coming.” Mary cocked her head back to indicate the three ladies sitting on the bus seats behind us. We three were in the Striginian Club; the ladies sitting behind us were older, at least around twenty or thirty years old. At least.

Both Anna Esta and I said, “*Shh*. They’ll hear you.”

“I don’t care,” Mary pouted, “It should be just us and Mr. Reaugh. Oh, and the handsome man, Mr. Bassett, doing the driving. He *is* rather dashing, isn’t he?”

Mr. Bassett was indeed dashing, we couldn’t deny it, but we soon all became distracted by admiring the interior of the bus, which we were sure would transport us into a summer of enchantment.

Our art teacher, Frank Reaugh, was a renowned Texas artist specializing in delicate Southwest landscapes and Texas Longhorn cattle. You wouldn’t think he could be a designer and an inventor as well, but he was. He had bought a 1917 Model-T banana truck in Fort Worth and had redesigned it as an art touring bus. It was because of his own carefully drawn specifications that the truck had been transformed into something magical.

Half the bus’ floor space, down the middle, was boxed into a storage area for our luggage, limited to thirty pounds per person. As per Mr. Reaugh’s design, the long bench seats in the Cicada faced outward, toward open-air windows that ran the length of the cab’s body. There was no glass between us and the countryside; a tarpaulin was tightly rolled above the window frame, to be let down in case of bad weather. At the front of the vehicle was a half-length windscreen to protect the driver and front-seat passenger, with an upper flap that could be raised for extra protection.

The seating configuration was ideal for viewing the passing scenery of the trip, but less comfortable for conversation. As we jounced along, we were all squirming around in our seats for better looks at the bus’ interior and at our fellow passengers. As the art bus traveled beyond our neighborhood in Dallas, we were all chattering about the trip, our voices mingling with the rumble of the engine, the humming tires, and the subtle squeaks and rattles of the interior. We three girls from the Striginian Club—Anna Esta, our friend Mary, and I—were seated behind Mr. Reaugh, on the long bench seat facing the right side of the bus. On the left bench seat, behind our chauffeur, Reveau Bassett, were three women, whom we had met only briefly before boarding the bus: Mrs. Lissa Bell Carson; Miss Ada M. Clark, who was a botanist from New York, but currently teaching at the Hockaday School in Dallas; and Miss Madelaine Smith of Pittsburg, Texas.

Mary had already made snap judgments about them: cutesy, hoity-toity, and countrified. Anna Esta had a different take on the same three people: fun-loving, stylish, and sweet. I was reserving judgment until I got to know them. At the moment, I was still trying to figure out whose name went with which face.

Miss Clark, the botanist, turned to peer at the three of us. Whether she saw us as students or rare mushrooms was hard to tell. “Let’s see now...” she said, examining us one by one. “You’re Mary....” Mary nodded, and turned away.

“You are Virginia....”

“Yes, ma’am,” I conceded.

“And you...you’re Alma Esther? Is that right?”

Anna Esta winced slightly, and I could see that she was trying very hard not to make a face and roll her eyes. “No, ma’am,” she said, and she spelled her name for Miss Clark.

“It’s pronounced *AH-nah ES-tah*,” I blurted.

“Oh, poor Anna Esta.” Suddenly a musical roar, like thunder on a summer day, broke into the conversation. It was Mr. Reaugh, his grizzled beard and wild eyebrows bristling. He had turned around in the front seat to face the passengers. “She and I have similar problems,” he explained, “only hers is auditory and mine is visual. People hear “Esta” and think “Esther.” With me, my last name sounds so easy—*Ray*—but people see the name “R-E-A-U-G-H” and come up with all kinds of creative interpretations. Now, I don’t much mind being called Mr. *Rogue* or Mr. *Rough*, or even Mr. *Rug*, but I do draw exception to being called Mr. *Rouge*. He drew out the sound with his lips pursed and said, “*Rooooouge*.” “I’ve been called other names too, by golly, but we **won’t get into that.**”

“Yeah, an’ how ‘bout me?” asked Mr. Bassett...