

# CAMPING OUT

## Mum Feared the Worst - and Her Fears Were Realised

WHEN Alec came home with a fortnight's leave and what he said was a jolly good idea Mum feared the worst, because Alec's jolly good ideas were generally all right for Alec but little short of devastating for the rest of the family. Anyway the idea this time was that Dad Mum and Alec should pack up and go on a camping holiday. Think of the joys of nature said Alec sneaking a mince pie when his mother wasn't looking and speaking out of the side of his face like a gangster in an Edward G Robinson film so she wouldn't know his mouth was full.

And Dad said well for once you're talking sense and anyway I'm a bit fed up of going up to Aunt Minnie's for Christmas year in and year out. And Alec said we can borrow Uncle Harry's tent and get those two stretchers down from the attic. And that's what they did and they borrowed Cousin Gordon's little primus stove which he loves with a love that is stronger than death, and which he only gave to Dad when Dad asked him because he owed Dad ten bob and thought if he lent him his little primus stove Dad might forget about the ten bob.

Well the first day or two wasn't so bad and if it hadn't been for the sandflies and the little primus stove going up in flames every time she looked at it and the way the stretcher seemed to be made of corrugated iron and the weta she found in her tea Mum would have had quite a good time because really after the breakfast and the morning tea and the lunch and the afternoon tea and the dinner and the cup of coffee they had before bedtime had been seen to there really wasn't much for her to do and quite often she found herself with a whole hour that she could call her own.

### The Blonde in a Bathing Suit

Alec was getting quite lyrical about the beauty of the early morning and the beauty of the stars and Mum was beginning to think perhaps he had a streak of the poet in him after all when she saw the blonde in the royal blue bathing suit and all was revealed you might say and she told herself that she might have known that the beauties of nature all by themselves would have very little attraction for Alec. Well anyway even blondes in blue bathing suits couldn't stop

Alec from finishing his holiday as he had planned so they left Waikikamukau and went on to Imakokitu. The roads round that part of the country aren't too good and what with the pot holes and the bumps and the bends the run that day wasn't a very good one especially as Mum had discovered half-way through lunch that that pot of raspberry jam she couldn't remember where she had put had been all the time nestling quite happily in the crown of her best hat.

### The Winterless North

And when they got to the motor camp it looked like rain. At least Mum thought it looked like rain but Dad and Alec said non-

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sense this is the winterless north and Alec said don't be such a wet blanket you sit down and enjoy the untrammelled countryside. Well untrammelled was right. Mum thought she hadn't seen anything quite so untrammelled for a long time, not since Aunt Minnie who weighed all of fourteen stone suddenly appeared on Lyall Bay beach in one of those new bathing suits with the tops and bottoms and nothing in between. Alec said how about rustling some grub while Dad and I put up the tent so Mum started rustling away like anything but what with the grass and the bidibidis and the little primus stove behaving as though it were possessed of a devil and the onions getting in the tea she got round to thinking that if this was a camping holiday she might as well be at home because it was pretty much the same old grind only not so comfortable.

She cut the bread and butter and noticed that the wind was getting stronger and if it hadn't been the winterless north where it never rained she would have sworn that the big drop of moisture that landed in her left eye was rain. Anyway it would have been rain if it had been in Wellington. And then in time even Alec and Dad had to admit that it was rain. And the wind came up stronger and the rain



came down harder but they got the tent up like the sons of pioneers that they were and after eating bread and butter that smelt of kerosene and drinking nothing because the little primus stove wouldn't work they went to bed Mum and Dad in the tent and Alec in the car.

### Heigho, the Wind and the Rain

But what with the rain and the wind and the leak in the tent Mum couldn't sleep and she kept thinking well if this is one of the joys of camping out give me the misery of home life every time and really there must be something in telepathy after all because after they had put up with the rain for three days (and believe me the winterless north may not have any winter but when it rains it rains) well after they had put up with the rains for three solid days Dad got the idea too and he said we might as well be home going to the pictures as sitting here in this blooming tent.

And Alec was so subdued by this time what with the wind and the rain and the crick in his neck getting in and out of the tent to see if the rain had stopped and wondering if the blonde had really fallen for him or if she had already forgotten his existence and was going out with that fat faced Johnny from Christchurch that when Dad suggested packing up he only argued for a mere half hour and then gave in and said they might as well and life was hell anyway. And when the last bundle was tied on the car the caretaker came and said what going already and Dad said something about it being too wet and the caretaker said wet you ain't seen nothin yet you wait till the winter. But Dad said he didn't think they would and in a few days they arrived home sadder and wiser men. And Alec forgot all about the blonde in a week because Betty Spears had a cousin from Australia staying with her and you know what those Australian girls are like and when Cousin Gordon came to get his little primus stove back he asked Dad if he thought of going camping again and Dad said well you never know you know but we've always gone to Aunt Minnie's for Christmas and it would be a pity to disappoint her and Mum sat up all night listening in to the wireless and making cakes just to get the feel of a civilised cooking stove back into her bones and that as the novelists say was that.