

Six young friends sat in a circle beneath a giant oak tree. They were planning their summer vacation. Their parents were going to take them to Yellowstone National Park, their favorite location for camping and sightseeing. They were anxious to explore everything and do some shopping.

However, the friends shared a common problem. They would need spending money. Purchasing t-shirts, key chains, or baseball caps for keepsakes was expensive. They thought working together and creating a plan to make money might be a quick way to solve the problem.

They decided to contact neighbors who might like to employ them. An hourly fee was agreed upon. Making and distributing a flyer with a list of jobs was their first order of business. Two of the friends volunteered to mow lawns. Two others preferred to earn spending money by walking dogs. The remaining friends wanted to wash cars and windows.

All of them discussed the plans with their parents. The parents agreed with a few reservations. They could not go out alone, so the friends divided themselves into two groups. Their parents reminded them how important it was for them to be polite.

The six friends hadn't realized how much planning was necessary. Yet they decided it was worth the trouble. If they all worked very hard, they would accumulate sufficient funds to have a great vacation.

The early spring night was unusually cold. Wrapped in hooded sweatshirts, two adventurous students were searching for butterfly cocoons for their science project. Silently, the children crept closer to an enormous redwood tree in the woods behind their home. All of a sudden, a shrill sound interrupted the stillness. They were sure the sound was coming from somewhere above them. Was it a tiny tree toad, or could it be a giant mountain lion? They were embarrassed about being scared. They secretly hoped a toad was making the noise.

The students moved the beams from their flashlights up and down the monstrous redwood. A pair of fierce, glowing eyes reflected their lights back at them. With a great whoosh and flutter of wings, a fantastic, screeching owl ascended into the sky. Its piercing shrieks only made matters worse. The two startled friends looked at each other and then laughed nervously. By now, their knees were knocking. As they talked about their predicament, they determined their backyard was a more practical source for butterfly cocoons.

Moving slowly across the grass, a rustling sound in the bushes caused them to stop dead in their tracks. The friends agreed if they had one more scare they would make a beeline for the house. No sooner said than done, their flashlight batteries quit. Frightened, the anxious children ran straight home. They agreed to forget about the cocoons. Instead, they decided to write about the stars brightly twinkling in the blue-velvet colored sky.