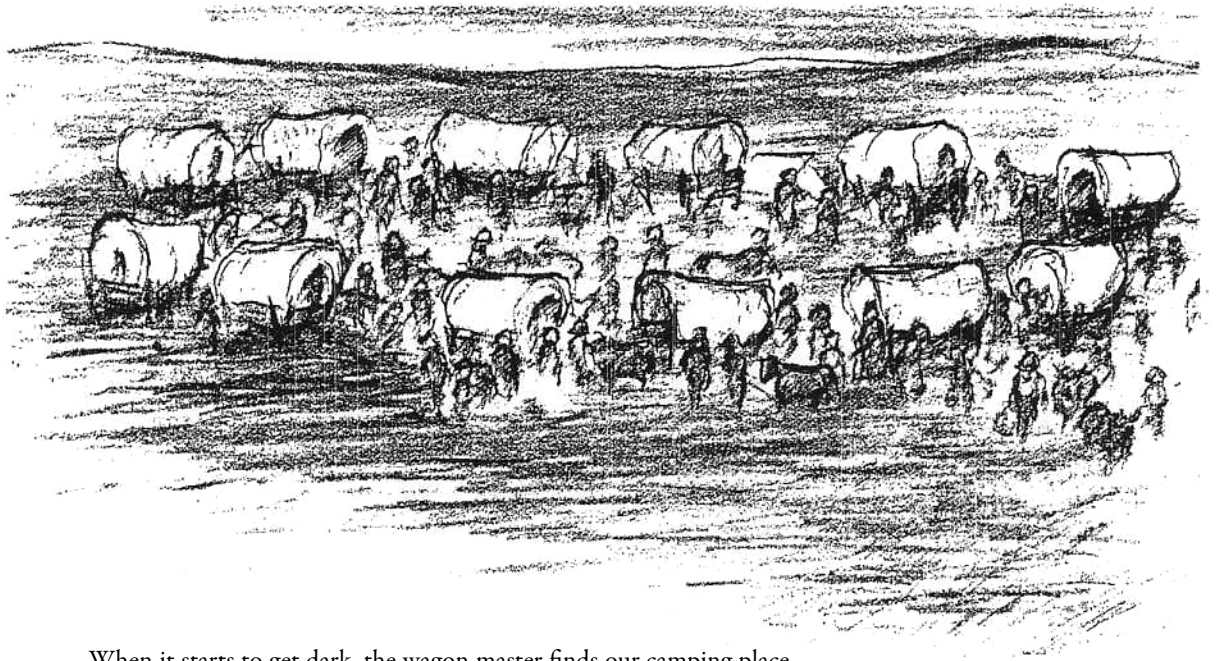


We have to travel between fifteen and twenty miles a day if we want to reach Independence Rock by the Fourth of July. We've heard that if you don't reach Independence Rock by then, you might get trapped in the mountains later when the snow comes.

Mama rides in the wagon, but my brother Plato and I like to walk behind it until we get tired. Our job is to pick up buffalo chips. There isn't wood on the prairie, so we use chips for our fire. If I turn in a circle, I see a carpet of flowers of every color all around me. The sunbonnet Mama makes me wear flaps in the wind, and the wild geese sing high in the sky above us.

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When it starts to get dark, the wagon master finds our camping place, and we all turn in, one wagon going to the right, the next to the left, until the wagons are in a big circle. Then everyone piles out of the wagons. The younger children run around and play, but we older ones have to work. Plato gets to help Papa water and feed the animals and put up the tents. I have to help Mama make the fire and cook supper. I wish I were Plato. I hate to cook.

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