

# DOING SOMETHING

by R. P. MacIntyre

IT'S ONE OF THOSE beautiful days. If it was music, it couldn't be metal or rap, it'd be a great ballad with slow clean guitar riffs. The sky is blue, the trees are green, and the lake is calm as glass. It's so perfect and beautiful it makes your eyes hurt. It's the perfect day for doing something. The question is, what?

"I don't care what you do," Dad says, getting into the car, "just don't touch the boat."

"But ..."

"Don't even *think* about it," says Dad.

"And be careful," says Mom. The car rumbles off.

Mom always says that to me, ever since last summer when I broke my knee in Jansen's back yard. This is when I took up guitar. Something to do while I was hobbling around in a cast. The knee's fine now, but every now and then when I'm walking and when I least expect it, it does a vanishing act, just pretends that it's not there, and I wind up on my face. It's embarrassing sometimes but no big deal.

Anyway, everybody else is doing something. Dad and Mom have gone golfing. My sister, Karen, and her friends are practising to be movie stars (good luck). My bud, Snake, has gone north fishing with his Uncle Jack. My other bud, Jodie, is back in town going to his orthodontist. And I'm stuck here alone. With nothing to do. I can't even play guitar. It's at the shop getting fixed. Broken neck.

When I say my sister is practising to be a movie star, I'm not kidding. She and all her other 16-year-old friends have all gone gaga over these two dudes who pulled into the Stones Throw Restaurant and Motel in a black van with Sunrise Films Inc. written on it. I follow them.

They have sort of long hair and sunglasses. One of them needs a shave. They immediately started wandering around for "locations," places where the scenery is best and that sort of thing. That's what



they tell me. I tell them that around here that shouldn't be a problem because most of the scenery is like out of a movie anyway, except for the dump and Jansen's back yard.

The other thing they do is put a notice up on the board outside the Stones Throw Restaurant. It says,

*EXTRAS NEEDED*

*For Television Commercial*

*Ten females, ages sixteen to twenty.*

*One male, sixteen to twenty.*

*Apply in person for audition, Room 16, Stones Throw Motel*

*10 A.M. to 2 P.M. Tuesday, July 8.*

*Sunrise Films Inc.*

And now everybody wants to be a movie star. Except me. I won't be 15 till next month.

The two guys disappear into the motel and I wander down to the lakeshore just to see if anything's happening and to kind of look at the boat that's been declared out of bounds while Dad's not around. It's not exactly built for speed, but it goes all right with the 90 horse Merc flat out. I mean, at least it makes waves, and does a pretty good job towing skiers. But not today. There's nobody to ski with anyway. What a waste.

All that's around is a couple of little kids playing in the sand. They don't even look up, they're so into building a sandcastle. I almost want to join them. I find a good flat skipper and see how many times I can bounce it on the water. I throw. It hits. Perfect. Fourteen skips! It's got to be a record!

Big deal. There's nobody here to see it. The little kids didn't even notice. I could jump in the lake and drown and nobody would notice.

I cut through the woods to get up to the road, thinking that I might as well go to the Stones Throw. Maybe something is happening there. It's the only place to hang out if you're not at the lake itself.

In the motel parking lot sits the black van with Sunrise Films Inc. on it. As I enter the restaurant, a woman with the clipboard smiles at me



on her way out. I try to smile back but she is gone before I get a chance. So I'm actually all the way in the restaurant before I notice what I'm in the middle of.

Girls.

There's more girls here than I knew existed, I mean at the lake. I want to say they're every different size and shape, but they're not. They're all the same. The smell of hair spray just about knocks me out. I feel like I'm in the middle of a rock video without the band. All these girls, and every one of them wants to be a movie star. There's two or three guys here too. I guess they're auditioning for the 16-year-old-guy part. The girls are looking at me, like, what am I doing here? I've got to get out.

I turn to leave, I take a step, but ... my knee isn't there!

So I'm laying on the floor. I open my eyes and above me I see a blurry circle of tanned wanna-be-movie-star faces. They're staring at me like I was a car accident, when one of them leans out and says, "Oh, it's Kenny! Are you okay?" It's one of my sister's friends.

"I'm fine," I say, "I'm fine," but on the way down to the floor I guess I banged my head against the counter and I can feel the egg growing. The truth is I'm woozy as heck.

But Karen's friend is helping me to my feet saying, "Your sister's over there. I'll help you." And she does. She half hauls me across the restaurant full of wanna-be-movie-stars to where Karen is sitting with somebody in a booth.

Karen is not wearing her glasses, so she doesn't know it's me—yet. Karen is one of those people who would prefer to squint and be blind than wear her glasses and see.

When she finally recognizes that it is me, she is not pleased. I know what she's thinking. She's thinking I did this all on purpose, just to get some attention, just to wreck her day, her chance to be a movie star. She is giving me one of her Kenny-can't-you-ever-do-anything-right looks.

I sit down next to her, holding the lump on my head with my right hand. I look across the table.



And there she is, the girl of my—okay, I'm not going to say dreams, because not only is it such a cliché, but I've never seen anyone like this before, not even in my—dreams. For all future dreams, this is the face in place. Anyway, the sound you hear is probably my jaw hitting the table.

"What happened?" asks Karen.

I pick up my jaw. "Nothing. I fell." My voice doesn't even crack. Victory! A small one, I admit. I wipe the drool from my chin.

In the middle of all these wanna-be-movie-stars is a face that could actually be one. A Vision. Her angled features cut the air like drum beats cased in black hair. Her lips are like full long notes on a slide guitar. Her eyes—I can't see her eyes. She's wearing shades.

"Who is this?" asks the perfect Vision across the table.

"Oh," says Karen. "This is my brother Kenny. He's always falling."

"Yeah," I agree like an idiot. "Or slipping. I slip a lot too." Something I'm doing right now.

"Oh, I'm Cynthia," says Cynthia the Vision. "How are you?"

She presents her perfect hand across the table. She wants me to shake it. I can't believe this. *None* of Karen's friends ever want to talk to me much less touch me, willingly, with their hands. If I were a puppy dog, I'd be peeing on the floor right about now. But I'm not and I don't. Instead, I reach for her hand as calmly as I can. I grasp it, gently, trying not to sweat. Her hand is warm and dry. Golden brown. The back of it feels like butterfly wings.

"Fine," I say, but something is wrong. Something is uncomfortable about this handshake.

"Oh," she says, "the hand of a musician."

Well if I wasn't already a bowl of jelly, I'm right now a pool of goo.

"How did you know?" the goo manages to ask.

"The calluses on your fingers."

I've given her my *left* hand, the wrong hand! The one with leather-tipped fingers from playing guitar. That's what's wrong with this handshake! My *right* hand is still propping up my stupid head.