

**DAN CARTER**  
**AND THE**  
**HAUNTED CASTLE**

**MILDRED A. WIRT**

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Title: Dan Carter and the Haunted Castle

Author: Mildred A. Wirt

Release Date: November 2, 2012 [EBook #41259]

Language: English

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“DAN CARTER AND THE HAUNTED CASTLE”

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# **Dan Carter and the Haunted Castle**

by  
**Mildred A. Wirt**

Illustrated

CUPPLES AND LEON COMPANY  
Publishers    New York

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DAN CARTER AND THE HAUNTED CASTLE

Printed in the United States of America

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## **Dan Carter and the Haunted Castle**

## CHAPTER 1

### A Prize Contest

A stir of excitement swept the room, causing the Cub Scouts to shift restlessly in their seats.

The monthly meeting of the Pack was nearing its end. Not a Cub from either Den 1 or Den 2 had failed to attend, for Sam Hatfield, their leader, had promised the boys “a real surprise.”

Now, as a break came in the regular program, the Cubs sensed that the moment for the long awaited announcement had arrived.

“Something worth while is in the wind, that’s sure,” whispered Brad Wilber. The Den Chief spoke to a sandy-haired boy whose nose was buried in a book. “Mr. Hatfield has kept his secret from everyone. What do you think is up, Dan?”

“Huh?” demanded Dan Carter, coming suddenly to life. Reluctantly he closed “The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood,” a volume obtained a few minutes earlier from the Webster City Public Library.

“Oh, don’t bother that book worm,” laughed Midge Holloway, another Cub in Den 2. “He never hears anything that goes on at a meeting, even if he is the official Denner.”

“I resent that slur,” retorted Dan goodnaturedly. “I hear every word.”

“Sure he does,” declared Chips Davis, coming to the defense of his friend. “Dan’s just smart enough never to waste any of his time.”

A loud, offensive snicker greeted this remark. Looking quickly across the cave, the Cubs of Den 2 saw that the offender was Ross Langdon, a tall, gangling boy in Den 1.

Now Dan and Ross always had been athletic rivals. In a recent swimming contest the Den 2 boy had soundly defeated the older lad. Ross hadn't taken it too well. Whenever an opportunity afforded, he made belittling remarks.

The Cubs of Den 2, Brad, Red Suell, Chips, Midge and Fred Hatfield, the son of their leader, were in no mood to "take" anything from Ross. So they pinned him with hard glares, and Midge muttered: "Quiet, you!"

"I didn't say a word," retorted Ross, pretending innocence. "You were the one who remarked that Dan never hears anything."

Midge would have uttered a sharp retort had not Dan given him a nudge in the ribs. He was willing to overlook the snicker, because he'd made up his mind to have no trouble with Ross.

Fortunately, the Pack meetings came only once a month unless Mr. Hatfield called the gang together for something special.

At the regular weekly gatherings of Den 2, everything went smooth as silk because Ross never attended. However, the Cubs of Den 1 reported that their sessions sometimes were a bit rough as a result of the older boy's desire to boss everyone.

Before Ross could pass another remark, Mr. Hatfield took the floor. Signaling for silence, he said:

"Fellows, I have an interesting announcement to make. I don't know how this will strike you, but a sporting goods firm—Fielding & Jones Corp.—has offered a substantial prize to the organization putting on the best play."

"What sort of prize?" demanded Dan quickly.

"A complete archery set. Practice and tournament targets, bows and arrows—everything. All first class equipment."

"Sounds okay," nodded Brad. Thirteen years of age, the Den Chief was also a Boy Scout and very dependable for his years.

"How many organizations will compete?" inquired Midge.

“That’s hard to guess,” the Cub leader replied. “I know several church clubs are entering the contest. Now, I thought if the fellows are interested, we might make it a joint Den 1 and Den 2 project.”

“Swell!” approved Chips Davis. “That way, we’ll have a bigger field from which to draw acting talent.”

“Let’s do it!” approved Midge, while the other boys in Den 2 nodded vigorously.

“Suppose we hear from Den 1,” said Mr. Hatfield.

With the exception of Ross Langdon, all the other boys were in favor of joining forces to try to win the prize. Ross remained noncommittal, thinking it over.

“Now that it’s settled we’re to make the play a joint affair, I’m open to suggestions,” Mr. Hatfield resumed. “Any bang-up ideas?”

“Let’s make it an Indian pow-wow!” proposed Ross. “We’ve got a lot of costumes already sewed that we can use.”

Mr. Hatfield nodded and waited for other suggestions.

“An Indian script would be old stuff,” protested Dan. “It’s the first idea that pops into one’s mind. Probably a dozen other organizations will come up with the same thing.”

“Maybe you’ve got a better idea!” Ross scoffed.

“Well, no, I haven’t at the moment,” Dan admitted, and then his gaze rested for a moment on the Robin Hood book. “Yes, I have too!” he announced.

“Let’s hear it, Dan,” invited Mr. Hatfield. “If we’re to win first prize, we need the best idea we can get.”

“Why not build our play around the adventures of Robin Hood?” Dan proposed. “Remember? He was the famous archer who lived with his men in the green glades of Sherwood Forest near Nottingham Town.”

“That was in the time of King Henry the Second, wasn’t it?” Brad asked, taking up with the idea. “The forest setting would be dandy, and we could have green



costumes!”

“And throw in a little real archery,” added Fred. “Wasn’t Robin Hood expert at it?”

“The very best,” Dan declared, paraphrasing the book he had just been reading. “No archer ever lived that could speed a gray goose shaft with more skill than he.”

“Who wants to do Robin Hood?” Ross cut in. “An Indian pow-wow would be more fun.”

“Indians are old stuff,” Chips Davis said. “Tell us more about Robin Hood, Dan.”

“That would take some doing, because it’s a long book. I’ll tell you how the story begins though. One day Robin Hood came upon a group of foresters who twitted him about his ability as an archer. Robin Hood won a wager with them by shooting a deer. The foresters were jealous and turned upon him. One of the men shot an arrow at Robin Hood, who returned the shot. Unfortunately, he killed the man, and became an outlaw.”

“Nothing in that idea,” broke in Ross. “I’m in favor of the Indian pow-wow.”

“Oh, peddle your feathers somewhere else,” cut in another member of Den 1. “Dan’s idea sounds good! Tell us some more.”

“Robin Hood always befriended the poor people,” Dan explained. “The book would provide any number of exciting scenes, including a big archery tournament.”

“What characters could we have?” demanded Red Suell.

“The main part would go to Robin Hood. Then we could have the Sheriff of Nottingham, Little John, foresters, the tinker, the king, Eric O’Lincoln, the cook, Allan-a-Dale, the merry friar, and a dozen others.”

“Let’s do it!” urged Brad. “The play would be a lot of fun and give the fellows a chance to practice with bows and arrows.”

Mr. Hatfield brought the proposal to a vote. Ross Langdon was the only Cub who held out for the Indian pow-wow.

“I’m willing to go along on the Robin Hood idea if I can have his part,” he said grudgingly.

“Modest, aren’t you?” Midge twitted him.

“Ross probably has a good reason for wanting the lead part,” said Mr. Hatfield quickly. “How about it, Ross?”

The boy flushed and looked a bit ashamed. “Oh, I don’t want to be Robin Hood just to have the lead part,” he defended himself.

“Then why not settle for one of the foresters?” demanded Red.

“I figure the one who plays Robin Hood should be the best archer in the Pack. Well, that’s me.”

“You are a modest little guy!” Midge snorted. “I bet you can hit the bull’s-eye every time at three paces back!”

“I’m good and you know it!” Ross insisted.

“You’re good and *you* know it,” Midge growled. “Of all the conceit—”

“Never mind, boys,” said the Cub leader, breaking off what promised to be a lively argument. “We’ll not quarrel about who has this or that part. When the time comes, they’ll be assigned.”

“But don’t you think Robin Hood should be good with a bow and arrow?” Ross demanded. “In the tournament scene, wouldn’t it be something if he couldn’t hit the target?”

“I agree that the part of Robin Hood should be played by the Cub most skilled with a bow and arrow,” Mr. Hatfield said. “We’ll determine that by having a preliminary contest.”

“Suits me,” grinned Ross, pushing back his chair. “I’m the same as Robin Hood right now!”

“Oh, one more surprise,” Mr. Hatfield said, as the boys started to leave their places. “One of the Den Dads, Mr. Holloway, has a moving picture camera. He will make a movie of the play as we work it out.”

“Where will we take the pictures?” Dan asked. “Here at the Cave?”

The room which the Cubs used in summer time for their meeting place was high over the beach, reached by a long flight of stairs. Barely large enough to hold all the boys at one time, it never would provide a suitable background for the Robin Hood play.

“We’ll have to find ourselves a forest primeval to double for Sherwood Forest,” Brad chuckled. “I know just the place too.”

“Where?” demanded Dan.

“Out west of the city near the Haunted Castle.”

“The Haunted Castle!” repeated Midge with keen interest. “Never heard of such a place. How’d it get that name?”

Brad admitted that it was one he had made up. “The forest adjoins an old place that resembles a deserted castle,” he explained. “When last I visited the area, no one lived there.”

“Is it really haunted?” asked Chips.

“Now what do you think?” laughed Brad. “I’ve yet to meet an honest-to-goodness ghost. But if there were any, the Castle would be an ideal home for the old boy.”

“Suppose we investigate the Haunted Castle and the forest,” proposed Mr. Hatfield. “The setting sounds first class to me, if we can get permission to use the grounds. Who owns the place, Brad?”

“I don’t know sir, but I can find out.”

“I wish you would before our next meeting. If we’re aiming to win the prize, we’ll have to get busy on the play right away.”

“I’ll look into the matter today,” Brad promised.

Enthusiastic over the prospect of acting in Robin Hood, the other Cubs urged Mr. Hatfield to call another Pack meeting that coming Saturday.

“I’ll tell you what,” he consented. “Let’s have a hike. How would you like to go out to the Haunted Castle and look over the place? If Ross cares to bring along his archery set, we might get in a little practice.”

“Sure, I’ll fetch the equipment,” Ross offered willingly enough. “You’ll see I wasn’t boasting when I said I can hit the bull’s-eye.”

“We’ll give you a thorough test,” Mr. Hatfield responded dryly.

The hour had come to close the meeting. After singing one of their songs, the Cubs said good-bye to Mr. Hatfield and started off in little groups.

Descending the steps to the beach, Brad and Midge walked with Dan. Just ahead, they could hear Ross complaining to a Den 1 Cub that the Robin Hood idea wasn’t nearly as good as the one he had proposed.

“Oh, forget it,” the other boy advised. “Indians are stale.”

“I suppose the Robin Hood idea is original,” Ross retorted.

Brad, Dan and Midge knew Ross well enough to realize that he was not likely to let the matter drop.

“I have a hunch he’ll make trouble before we’re through,” Brad said in an undertone. “If he gets to be Robin Hood, he may go along. If not—well, he’ll kick up a lot of dust.”

“Let him try,” replied Midge.

“Chances are Ross will win the part fair and square,” Dan said. “We all know that despite his boasting he probably handles a bow and arrow better than anyone in the Pack.”

“If he gets the part, the play is the same as ruined,” Midge predicted.

Brad, however, refused to take such a pessimistic view.

“Maybe Ross won’t win,” he said cheerfully. “It hasn’t been proven yet that he’s the best shot. Wait until Saturday. Once we get to the Haunted Castle he may whistle a different tune.”

## CHAPTER 2

# The Chimney Niche

Early Saturday afternoon found the Cub Scouts of both Den 1 and 2 hiking briskly along a deserted road leading to “The Castle.”

Immediately after the previous week’s Pack meeting at the Cave, Brad had inquired as to the ownership of the property, learning that the Webster City Savings Bank held title.

Further, he had been told that the mansion had been built twenty-two years earlier by Gorman Lubell, a millionaire who had lost his fortune in the stock market.

The unusual dwelling had been built of massive stone to resemble a miniature English castle. The interior never had been completely finished. Year after year, the Castle had stood deserted. Periodically, the bank cut the weeds and trimmed back the shrubbery, but of late even this duty had been neglected.

“Brad, you obtained permission for us to visit the property, didn’t you?” Mr. Hatfield asked as the boys trudged along.

“The bank president was out of the city,” the boy answered. “I talked to his secretary though. She said she was sure it would be all right.”

“Even if we find the grounds unsuited as a locale for our play, we can get in some archery practice,” Mr. Hatfield remarked.

To make certain that equipment would be available, Mr. Holloway, one of the Den Dads, had driven on ahead to set up a target. He had borrowed several bows for the occasion, and Ross had brought his sets.

“Ever do any shooting, Dan?” Brad asked his friend as they presently

approached the bank property.

“A little, but it was more than a year ago. No chance I’ll give Ross any competition for the Robin Hood role.”

“Oh, maybe you will,” the older boy encouraged him. “You’re good at most games requiring skill.”

“Ross has had more practice than any of the Cubs.”

“I know,” Brad admitted. “He may win the role. I hope not.”

Ross, apparently sensing that he was being discussed, approached the two boys. Brad and Dan immediately fell silent.

“Plotting something?” Ross demanded suspiciously.

“Of course not,” Brad replied. Of all the Cubs in the Pack, Ross was the only one who rubbed him the wrong way.

“I heard you say something about Robin Hood,” Ross declared. “I guess you figure you’ll nail the role for someone in Den 2.”

“Don’t be stupid!” Brad exclaimed impatiently. “You heard Mr. Hatfield say the part will go to the best archer.”

“Who will be chosen through an elimination contest,” Dan added.

“I’ll win too, if the competition is fair and square!”

“Say, you give me a pain!” Brad exploded. “You know very well it will be on the level. Maybe you think you were cheated when Dan beat you in the swimming meet last summer?”

Ross flushed and shifted the archery equipment to another hand. The lost swimming meet was a sore subject with him.

Dan had defeated him soundly in a fair race. Ross remembered too that after the contest the younger boy had been kidnapped by a crook who had previously tangled with the Cubs. This adventure has been recounted in the volume entitled,

“Dan Carter and the River Camp.”

As a result of his experience with water front thieves, Dan had gained considerable attention in Webster City. Ross, who liked the limelight, had rather resented the younger boy’s gain in popularity.

Hence, he was more than ever determined that Dan should not win the leading role in the Robin Hood play.

The Cubs presently arrived at the old Lubell property.

“Mr. Holloway’s here,” Dan noted, observing the familiar car parked by the roadside. “He’s set up the target too.”

Beyond the clearing which the Den Dad had selected for an archery range, rose a heavily wooded area.

“Just like Sherwood Forest in England!” Dan exclaimed. “Say, this place should be all right for our play!”

“That castle has atmosphere too,” Brad agreed, highly pleased.

The building was a large, sprawling structure of many towers and turrets. A luxurious growth of vines covered the walls and blocked off some of the windows.

“They say that building has thousands of dollars’ worth of imported marble in it,” Brad said, staring at the desolate dwelling. “It’s just a big white elephant now. A pity it never was finished.”

“Mr. Lubell ran out of money?” Dan asked.

“Yes, he lost every penny he owned and was on charity at the time of his death. The bank never was able to find a buyer.”

“Unless the property gets some care pretty soon, it will fall into complete ruin,” Dan remarked.

His attention had been drawn to a smashed window pane. He noticed also that the foundation of the house had been damaged in several places. Walls remained



in excellent condition however, and also the tall chimneys.

“Say, I’ll bet that place has some dandy fire places!” he commented.

The other Cubs had gathered about and were eager to explore.

“Maybe we can find a ghost,” chuckled Red, gazing with keen interest at the castle cupolas. “Let’s see what the place looks like inside, fellows.”

“Well, I don’t know,” the Den Chief replied doubtfully. “I didn’t say anything at the bank about exploring the interior.”

“It’s easy enough to get in,” Red urged. “All one has to do is reach through one of those broken window panes and unlatch the catch. From the look of this place, plenty of folks have been in there ahead of us.”

“The bank might not like it,” Brad said, holding back.

Before the Cubs could discuss the question further, Mr. Hatfield and Burton Holloway called them together.

“I’ve been looking over the grounds,” Midge’s father declared. “This place will make an almost perfect Robin Hood setting for our movie. The castle gives just the background touch needed, and will fit in with the story.”

“A brook runs behind the castle too!” announced Fred, who had made a brief inspection tour. “The remains of a draw bridge still is there.”

“We can use it in the first scene of our play,” Dan declared enthusiastically. “The one where Robin Hood meets Little John on the narrow bridge and neither will give way to the other. They fight with cudgels until, after hours of struggle, Robin Hood topples into the water.”

“That ought to make a corking scene,” approved Midge. He added darkly, “Especially if Ross is Robin Hood.”

“I don’t see why Robin Hood should be the one to get a ducking,” Ross protested as he strung his bow ready for target practice. “Why not have Little John be the one to lose out?”

“Because it wasn’t that way,” Dan told him. “Little John proved himself a fine fighter and a good shot, so Robin Hood and his merry men allowed him to join the band.”

“Let’s elect Ross the Sheriff of Nottingham,” chuckled Chips, in jest.

“Like fun!” Ross retorted. “Just bring on your target and I’ll show you I can hit the gold band every time.”

Eager to try their skill, the Cubs lined up ready to take instruction from Mr. Holloway. With the exception of Ross, Dan and Midge, the other boys had never tried archery.

“The first thing we learn is how to face the target,” the Den Dad instructed. “Look straight ahead and extend your left arm out to the side. Heels together. Relax!”

“Kindergarten stuff,” muttered Ross impatiently.

Ignoring the boy, Mr. Holloway explained the fundamentals of the sport. He told the boys to draw the string with their first three fingers of the right hand, avoiding the use of thumb or little finger.

“When you have the arrow on the string, sight over the arrow point,” he advised. “Don’t look up until you hear the arrow hit the target. If you do, you will miss.”

Midge took his turn first. He drew the string back to his chin, closed his left eye and let the arrow fly. Ping!

It struck the target but on the lower rim. After his father had told him how to correct his aim, Chips took the bow. On the first shot he hit his left arm with the bowstring, receiving a painful bruise.

“Remember your fundamentals and that won’t occur,” Mr. Holloway said. “Elbow bent, wrist straight, shoulder low, index finger under the jawbone and the string to the center of the chin.”

Dan’s turn came next. His form was excellent despite lack of practice. Two of his arrows went in the gold and the other four in a group in the next ring.

“Not bad, Dan!” Mr. Holloway approved. “Let’s see you beat that, Ross.”

Ross confidently took his place in front of the target. With easy grace he sent an arrow winging on its way. It struck the bull’s-eye, causing the Cubs to cheer lustily.

“See, didn’t I tell you?” Ross demanded.

He shot two more arrows. Both missed the target completely.

“I’m a little out of practice,” Ross muttered. Instead of shooting the remainder of his arrows, he handed the bow to a Cubmate from Den 1.

For nearly an hour the boys practiced, some acquiring the art readily and others finding it difficult to catch on to the trick of relaxing.

“We’ll definitely assign parts next time,” Mr. Hatfield told the boys. “Off hand, I think Fred will make a good Friar Tuck and Brad could act the part of Little John.”

“Do I get to be Robin Hood?” Ross demanded.

“That will be decided later,” the Cub leader replied, a trifle annoyed that the Den 1 boy should make such an issue of the role. “We’ll need a good actor for the part.”

While some of the Cubs remained to practice archery and pose for camera shots, Dan, Brad, Midge and Ross set off to explore the castle.

Long shadows extended from the forest to give the castle a shadowy, eerie appearance.

“Gosh, the place does have a spooky look,” Brad remarked, pulling at the vines which half-covered one of the lower windows.

“Let’s climb in,” proposed Ross, gaining a foothold on one of the stone blocks.

“I don’t think we should—” Dan began, but Ross cut him short.

“Oh, the place is wide open. Why shouldn’t we go in?”

Reaching his hand through the broken window pane, he unlatched the catch. The leaded window swung back on creaking hinges.

Ross climbed in and helped the others through.

The Cubs found themselves in the central living room. One wall had been paneled but the others never had been finished. The main point of interest was a huge fireplace ornamented with imported tiles in an old English hunting scene design.

Crossing to the hearth, Dan gazed curiously up the deep chimney.

“Filled with old bird’s nests,” he reported.

Dan ran a stick part way up the chimney, knocking down some of the debris.

“Hey! Quit it,” Ross commanded. “You’re stirring up an awful dust.”

Dan’s stick had lodged between two loose bricks.

To free it, he reached up and moved the bricks slightly. Much to his astonishment, one of them pulled out.

“This old chimney is falling apart,” he said. “Either that or—”

“Or what?” Brad demanded.

Rather excited, Dan thrust his arm far up the chimney and groped about.

“Find anything?” Brad demanded eagerly.

“I’m not sure,” Dan murmured, as his fingers continued to explore. “Yes, I think that brick was set loose on purpose. Sure as shooting, I can feel a deep niche in the chimney—a hiding place!”

## CHAPTER 3

# Robin Hood's Strong Box

Excited by Dan's discovery, the other three boys clustered about him.

"Let me look up that chimney," Ross said. In his eagerness to see, he rather rudely shoved Dan aside.

The Den 1 boy thrust his arm far up the dirty flue, groping about in the niche.

"Nothing here," he reported in disgust. "Not a thing."

"I could have told you that if you'd have given me a chance," said Dan, still annoyed by the older boy's lack of manners. "It's a dandy hiding place though, and deserves a name. Let's call it Robin Hood's Strong Box."

"You and your kid games!" Ross scoffed. "It's just a hole behind a loose brick."

Brad had taken his turn at examining the niche.

"I'm sure it was built into the chimney as a hiding place," he declared.

"At any rate, it would make a good one," added Midge, siding with Dan. "What better name for it than Robin Hood's Strong Box?"

"All in favor of that name say 'aye'," directed Brad.

Ross voted a very loud "no" which the other Cubs ignored.

"The ayes have it," Brad announced.

As he spoke, the Cubs distinctly heard footsteps in a corridor adjoining the room where they stood. They listened a moment, thinking that another Cub had

followed them into the house.

But the footsteps, instead of coming closer, receded.

“Who’s there?” called Brad. “Is that you, Fred?”

There was no answer.

Certain that someone had been in the house, the boys quickly went through the lower rooms. All were deserted.

“That’s funny,” Dan said, deeply puzzled. “I was sure I heard someone.”

“It sounded as if whoever it was might have been sneaking up on us too,” Midge added uneasily.

“Oh, you guys have been reading too much Robin Hood,” Ross muttered. “I’ve seen enough of this old place. Let’s explore outside.”

Dan and the others would have preferred to roam through the mansion for a while longer. However, to avoid an argument with Ross, they gave in to him.

Leaving by the same window through which they had entered, Brad fastened the catch behind them.

“I wonder if the bank knows this window is broken?” he remarked. “I think I’ll drop in there tomorrow and tell them.”

“A good idea,” approved Dan. “Prowlers could do a lot of damage here.”

In returning to the archery range, the Cubs chose a by-path which led past a narrow, pebbly brook.

The ribbon of water was spanned by a narrow bridge constructed from two logs.

“Say, this place is made to order for our Robin Hood movie!” Dan exclaimed as he saw the log bridge. “Just the props we need for a scene between Robin and Little John!”

“You’ll be Robin Hood, I take it?” Ross cut in, annoyed that the younger boy should think of all the ideas.

“Oh, pipe down, Ross!” Brad silenced him.

“You heard Mr. Hatfield say that role will be chosen after we have an archery contest.”

“Oh, Ross may play the bridge scene if he wants to,” Dan said with a chuckle.

“Mighty generous of you,” Ross retorted. “You know I’ll win the part anyway.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” Midge cut in. “If I remember correctly, you made that same boast—that you would win—the time we had the swimming meet. Remember? Dan didn’t have much to say, but he came in ahead and won the cup for the Den.”

“Aw, I was off form that week,” Ross muttered. “I won’t even need to practice to beat all the Cubs at archery.”

“Modest, aren’t you?” Brad grinned. “Well, time will tell.”

The four boys returned to the archery range where Mr. Hatfield was instructing the Cubs. He warned them that one might be injured by thrusting the breast into the way of the bowstring, or by overdrawing.

“While you are learning, it is better never to practice unless Mr. Holloway or I can be with you,” he advised.

He added, however, that Ross, Dan, Brad and Midge, who understood fairly well how to handle a bow, might be excepted from the rule.

“We’ve had enough practice for one day, I think,” Mr. Hatfield ended the session. “Now to assign a few of the roles—tentatively, of course.”

“Am I Robin Hood?” demanded Ross.

“We’ll not select that role today,” the Cub leader replied. “Probably before the final choice is made, several boys will be tried out in the part. Acting ability as well as archery skill is required, you know.”

Mr. Hatfield then announced that Brad had been selected for the role of Little John. Midge would be Friar Tuck and Chips would play Allan-a-Dale.

“I want to take at least one scene this afternoon to test out lighting effects,” Mr. Holloway told the boys. “The film probably won’t be used in the final screening, but it will point up some of the defects we must overcome. Any ideas for a test scene, boys?”

“Dan has one,” grinned Brad.

“Let’s have it,” Mr. Holloway invited.

Dan described the brook with the log bridge. “The setting would be perfect for a prologue scene between Little John and Robin Hood,” he declared. “But since Robin Hood hasn’t been selected—”

“I want to play the part,” Ross broke in. “Dan can take his turn trying out later on. I want to do the first scene with Brad.”

“All right,” agreed Mr. Holloway, his eyes twinkling. “Suppose you describe the scene, Dan. Tell us what happens.”

“Robin Hood meets Little John at the bridge. Both seek to cross first. To settle the dispute, they cut themselves cudgels and duel with them on the log bridge.”

“Little John gets pushed in?” Ross asked with relish.

“Oh, no,” chuckled Dan. “Robin Hood is the loser in this contest, and tumbles into the soup. Then he blows three blasts on his horn and all the members of his band swarm out of the forest.”

“I don’t think Robin Hood should get a ducking,” Ross protested quickly. “That’s not in keeping with the star part.”

“It’s in keeping with the story,” Mr. Holloway assured him. “We must keep our script true to fact, you know.”

“Well, I’m not keen to take a ducking,” Ross announced. “Dan may do the first scene. I’ll take my turn later.”

“Oh, no you don’t!” Chips said quickly. “You asked for the part, so you get it.”

“We can omit the ducking today,” Mr. Holloway settled the matter. “Well, let’s



go!”

He brought his moving picture camera equipment from the car and joined the boys at the bridge. Brad and Ross armed themselves with sticks cut from branches of a tree.

After the scene had been fully discussed, the two boys took their places on either side of the bridge. The other Cubs from both Den 1 and 2 remained in the woods, ready to swarm out when Robin Hood should blow three shrill blasts on his horn.

“We’re minus a horn today, but by our next practice we’ll have one,” Mr. Hatfield said. “Also, the Den mothers have promised to help us out by making Lincoln green woodsmen costumes for all who act in the play.”

The filming of the scene began. Repeatedly Ross had to be warned by Mr. Hatfield to “take it easy.”

Although the script called for him to be tumbled into the water, he seemed determined that Brad should be pushed off the log.

Back and forth Brad and Ross whacked with their sticks as the film recording was made.

Mr. Holloway was on the verge of signaling the end of the scene, when the Den 1 boy made a quick lunge at Brad. The latter moved sideways, failing entirely to parry the blow with his own stick.

Caught off balance, Ross fell slightly forward and lost his footing. Before he could save himself or Brad could offer a helping hand, he fell sideways into the shallow water.

As Ross sprawled amid the lily pads, the watching Cubs burst into laughter. The day was warm and the creek waters exceedingly shallow. The ducking, they knew, would do the boy no harm, and was a fate quite deserved.

“Are you all right, Ross?” Mr. Holloway asked.

Putting aside his camera, he ran to help the boy.

Still chuckling at the mishap, the other Cubs gathered around.

“Brad did that on purpose!” Ross said, angrily pulling off a lily pad which had plastered against his face. “Look at me!”

“You’re a little dampish,” Brad grinned. “I’m sorry you slipped. I didn’t touch your stick, you know.”

“This scene is stupid!” Ross fumed. “I’ve had enough of Robin Hood for one day! I’m going home.”

“I’ll take you,” Mr. Holloway offered sympathetically. “You should get into dry clothes right away.”

As the two walked toward the parked car, Ross made a sorry sight indeed. His shoes and trousers were caked with mud and a lily pad still clung to the back of his shirt.

“That was a ripping scene,” Brad laughed, once Ross was beyond hearing. “Falling into the brink may cure that know-it-all of wanting to hog the best scenes. I thought I’d die laughing when he fell in!”

“You weren’t the only one,” said Dan in an odd tone of voice. “Did you hear laughter from the woods?”

“From the woods?” Brad echoed, rather mystified. “The other Cubs, you mean?”

“No,” Dan replied soberly. “The laughter came from far off. It was a strange, almost ghostly laugh. I think it came from the general direction of the castle.”

“That is queer, Dan. None of the Cubs were over there during the filming of the brook scene.”

“I know,” Dan admitted with an uneasy chuckle.

“Who do you think it was?”

“I don’t know,” Dan replied. “It seems though, that our castle may be haunted. And by a ghost with a keen sense of humor!”

## CHAPTER 4

# Laughter from the Woods

“I didn’t hear any laughter from the woods,” Brad said, gazing thoughtfully toward the fringe of trees beyond the castle. “You’re sure you heard it, Dan?”

“Positive,” the younger boy replied.

“Maybe it was one of the Den 1 Cubs.”

“Everyone was right here watching the filming of the bridge scene. I checked to make certain.”

“Well, I don’t see anyone in the woods,” Brad said. “We might take a look around.”

This proposal appealed to Dan. However, before the two boys could leave the creek, they heard an automobile drive up from the main road.

To the surprise of the Cubs, the car stopped nearby. A stout man in a gray suit alighted and came toward the group.

“It’s one of the bank officials, I’ll bet a cookie!” Brad murmured. “Now what?”

Curious to learn what the stranger wanted, Mr. Holloway and Ross rejoined the group of Cubs. The man approached them, addressing Sam Hatfield.

“Good morning,” he greeted the Cub leader, “I am Grover Kain, sent out by the bank to inspect the grounds here. I see you’re getting in a little archery practice.”

“That’s right,” agreed the Cub leader. “We need a longer archery field though.”

Mr. Kain nodded as his gaze roved over the grounds which had grown up with

bushes and were cluttered with brush.

“I trust you’ll be careful about starting fires,” he remarked. “The season is unusually dry and brush presents a hazard. If a fire should start in this area, it would be most difficult to fight it because of the scarcity of water.”

Mr. Hatfield assured him that the Cub Scouts would be careful.

His answer did not entirely satisfy the bank official, who walked about the premises making note of work that needed to be done.

“Someone should call that broken window to his attention,” Dan suggested.

“I’ll do it,” offered Ross. “Having it fixed will spoil a lot of our fun though.”

Mr. Kain spent nearly ten minutes looking over the property and then returned to talk to Mr. Hatfield and Midge’s father.

“I don’t want to put a damper on your good times here,” he said apologetically. “But in looking over the grounds I am more than ever impressed with the fire hazard. Boys don’t mean to cause trouble, but they are careless with matches.”

“Not the Cubs,” spoke up Mr. Hatfield. “They know and practice the rules of safety.”

“So much dry brush is a distinct danger. I dislike to say the Cubs can’t use this property, but—”

“I have an idea,” proposed Mr. Holloway, well aware that the bank official intended to forbid the Cubs from filming their picture on the grounds. “The boys will pitch in and clear out some of the brush.”

Mr. Kain was both pleased and astonished by the offer.

“That would be fine!” he declared. “In that case, we have no objection whatsoever to the property being used.”

The three men discussed what work should be done before Mr. Kain returned to the city.

“Let’s get at it right away,” proposed Brad. “We can map our areas and have each Cub responsible for a certain section.”

“Why doesn’t the bank clean its own rubbish?” Ross growled. “I can’t help because I’ve got to go home and get into dry clothes.”

“I’ll take you,” Mr. Holloway offered again. “We’ll pick up rakes and return by lunch time.”

The proposal rather displeased Ross, who never liked to work. But knowing that the other Cubs would call him a quitter if he made an excuse for not returning to the castle grounds, he scowled and made no reply.

After Mr. Holloway and Ross had driven away, the others marked the area into sections and then set about clearing away the debris.

Loose brush was accumulated in a large bare spot near the road ready for burning. The Cubs worked with a will and by the time Ross and Mr. Holloway came back with garden tools, were fairly well along.

“Ross, your section is that area behind the castle,” Brad gave him his assignment.

“My section? Say, I’m all tired out from archery practice and chasing back and forth. What does that bank guy think we are anyhow? Work horses?”

“We gave our promise to clean up the grounds and we’re going to do it.”

“Well, I’m tired,” Ross said sullenly, flinging himself on the ground. “Besides, it’s almost lunch time.”

“You can clean your section later,” Brad consented. “Just so you get the job done in the next day or so. By the way, you told Mr. Kain about the broken window?”

“No, I didn’t.”

Then, as Brad fixed him with a disapproving gaze, Ross added with a flare of temper: “I didn’t get a chance to do it. I’ll tell him the next time he comes around.”

“Don’t bother,” Brad replied shortly. “I’ll tell him myself when I see him.”

As the sun rose higher, all the Cubs began to look forward to lunch. Unaccustomed to such heavy work, they felt the need of a rest.

“All right, fellows, knock off,” Mr. Hatfield advised them. “You’ve put in a big morning. Rest awhile and then we’ll eat.”

Dan and Brad took advantage of the lull to roam around the castle. Both boys were fascinated by its unusual design and old-world appearance.

“It’s queer about that laughter I heard from the woods,” Dan commented thoughtfully. “We’ve seen no one, and yet I’m sure someone was watching us.”

“Maybe it came from the castle,” Brad suggested, gazing up at the shadowy turrets. “With that window broken, any tramp could get inside.”

“How about taking another look?” Dan proposed. “We’ll have time for a quick search through the house before lunch.”

“Okay,” Brad agreed after a slight hesitation.

Unfastening the window latch, the boys climbed through.

As he straightened up, Dan sniffed the air suspiciously.

“Say, I smell something!” he announced.

Brad also had noticed the odor. “Smoke!” he agreed. “Something’s burning! It’s inside the castle too!”

Thoroughly alarmed, the boys darted from room to room. Running through a butler’s pantry they came to a huge kitchen with row upon row of shelves.

At one end of the room was a fireplace. To the amazement of the boys, a fire had been built there. A few of the larger sticks still smoldered.

“Someone has been in here since we came!” Brad exclaimed.

“Do you suppose one of the Cubs could have built the fire, Brad?”

“The fellows all have been working,” Brad replied, deeply puzzled. “Besides, everyone heard Mr. Kain warn about starting fires.”

Dan had lowered his voice. “This just goes to prove that I was right,” he declared. “I did hear laughter while we were filming the creek scene. Someone was watching us—either from the woods or this castle.”

“The bird still may be here too, Dan. Let’s look around.”

Quietly the boys went from room to room. No one could be found on the lower floor. Yet as they climbed the circular staircase to the second floor, Dan again thought he heard faint laughter from below.

“You imagined it, Dan,” Brad insisted.

“Maybe, but this house has a dozen and one hiding places. It would be easy for anyone to keep out of our way.”

“I wouldn’t want to go through this place at night,” Brad said with a shiver. “It’s spooky enough by daytime. The bank will be smart to get that window fixed and board up the place.”

Decidedly uneasy, the boys tramped from one bed chamber to another. All the rooms were large and at least half of them had fireplaces. They found no further evidence that anyone was in the dwelling.

“Whoever the person was, I think he’s taken himself off by now,” Brad said finally. By this time they had examined every room, including the circular towers at each corner of the building.

“I guess so,” Dan agreed in relief. “Let’s go back to the kitchen.”

There, the two boys carefully stamped out the dying embers of the fire.

Then, after again inspecting the lower floor, they let themselves out through the window.

“I hope to see Mr. Kain tomorrow,” Brad said as he walked back toward the archery range. “That broken window should be repaired.”

“Tomorrow’s Sunday,” Dan reminded him.

“That’s so. Well, I’ll make a point of seeing him Monday then. The window has been broken for a long while, so I suppose another day won’t matter too much.”

The Cubs had spread out their lunch at the base of a large elm tree. Brad and Dan joined the group and began to eat their sandwiches. As usual, the conversation reverted to the archery competition.

“If the Pack expects to win a prize for having the best play, it means we’ve got to dig in and work,” Mr. Hatfield warned the Cubs. “Our acting is rough, and a lot of detail has to be worked out.”

“Not to mention our archery,” added Brad with a laugh. “We can stand plenty of target practice!”

The Cubs finished lunch, rested for a half hour, and then voted to return to the archery range.

“Dan, you have a chance to win the part of Robin Hood,” Midge encouraged his friend. “Why don’t you get to work and show Ross Langdon you can beat him a mile!”

“Easier said than done. He is good and we both know it.”

“Sure,” Midge admitted grudgingly. “But don’t forget he’s lazy. He’s so certain of winning the part, I’ll bet he doesn’t do much practicing.”

“I’d like the part,” Dan said. “I intend to work hard to improve my shooting. All the same, I haven’t much hope.”

The two Cubs were the first to reach the archery range and so had their choice of bows.

Dan shot first, placing four of his arrows within the black of the target. Only two struck the outer rim.

“You’re getting more accurate every time, Dan!” Midge approved, stepping up to take his turn.



Three of his arrows missed the target completely. He shot the next three more carefully, managing to get them on the rim.

“Friar Tuck would blush with shame if he could see me,” Midge laughed ruefully. “Wow! Am I lousy!”

The two boys trotted down to the target to retrieve their arrows.

Midge glanced at the very center of the target face and gasped in astonishment.

“Dan, you made a bull’s-eye! Your shaft went right to the heart of it!”

“What?” Dan demanded. “Impossible!”

“Well, look at the arrow!”

Dan saw for himself that an arrow had pierced the target padding at its very center. The shot was a perfect one.

“Midge, that couldn’t have been my shot.”

“Well, it certainly wasn’t mine.”

Dan had examined the arrow carefully after removing it from the target.

“Neither of us shot it,” he announced. “See, it’s larger than those we used.”

“The shaft is longer,” Midge agreed in awe. “Also, we shot six arrows apiece.”

“Nine should be in the target, Midge. Instead, there were ten.”

“But who shot the tenth one?”

Dan had no answer for the question. “It must have been there when we started shooting,” he said slowly. “Probably we didn’t notice.”

“Maybe it’s one of Mr. Holloway’s arrows. Or worse luck—from Ross’ bow.”

“Could be,” Dan agreed as they picked up their arrows and left the range. “All the same, I wonder—”

His gaze roved toward the surrounding woods.

“You wonder what, Dan?”

“I don’t believe that arrow was shot by any of the Cubs or Mr. Holloway either,” he announced with sudden conviction.

Midge stared at him in amazement.

“Who else could have shot it, Dan?”

“Well, I don’t know,” the other boy admitted lamely. He was reluctant to tell Midge about the fire inside the castle until after he had talked with Mr. Hatfield.

“You’re keeping something to yourself,” Midge accused.

“I’m not sure of a thing,” Dan replied, moving off in search of the Cub leader. “I wish though that we could find the person who shot that arrow! He’s a natural for the role of Robin Hood!”

## CHAPTER 5

# Competition

The following Sunday all the Cubs and some of their parents gathered at the castle grounds to continue work on the play and movie.

“It’s well that the Robin Hood theme was chosen,” Mr. Hatfield told the boys as they set up the archery target. “I’ve learned that at least twenty organizations are entering the contest. Furthermore, about half of them are working on Indian scripts.”

The boys had entered into play acting with tremendous enthusiasm. Everyone craved to have the Robin Hood role, but it was generally conceded that it would fall to either Dan or Ross.

Mr. Holloway took several movie shots of the two Cubs at target practice. He told them that if they would drop around to his house a few nights later, all of the films would be run off.

“It will give us an idea of how we’re coming along,” he remarked. “We have a lot of work ahead of us before the play can be whipped into shape for the final filming.”

Mr. Hatfield explained to the Cubs that as the script was being written, a shooting match at Nottingham would be one of the outstanding scenes.

“We can’t film this scene until nearly last because we haven’t settled upon who is to be Robin Hood,” he declared. “For that reason, it will be necessary to skip around in the story, shooting a scene whenever we can. Later on we’ll prune out many of them.”

“This preliminary work is more or less to get a line on acting ability,” Mr. Holloway added. “The roles are only temporary.”

“What scene will we film first?” Midge asked his father.

Mr. Holloway said he had thought of doing one in which the sheriff played the leading part.

“You know the story,” he refreshed the memories of the boys. “At the shooting match in Nottingham, Robin Hood disguises himself and wins out over some of the best shots in England. But after tricking the sheriff, he wishes to let him know that it was he who had been victorious.”

“Oh, I remember that scene!” cried Dan. “Robin Hood sends Little John and Will Stutely into the town. While the sheriff and his men are at dinner, they shoot an arrow onto the table. A scroll is attached to the shaft. The message reveals that it was Robin Hood who won the shooting match, disguised as the tattered stranger.”

“We’ll have to modify the scene somewhat,” Mr. Holloway said. “For one thing, it will be taken outdoors instead of inside the castle.”

“We could make it inside,” interposed Ross.

Mr. Holloway shook his head. “We have no permission to enter the building,” he reminded the Cub.

“What will we use for a banquet table?” inquired Brad.

The Den Dad told the boys he had noticed a roadside picnic table and bench along the highway, which would serve.

“I asked permission of the State Highway Dept. to borrow it for an hour,” he said. “We can move it up here, so we’ll have the castle for a background. Then when the scene is finished, we’ll carry it back again.”

Brad, Dan, Chips and Fred Hatfield started off to get the table and bench.

“Coming, Ross?” Chips asked him.

“Oh, I’ve got to do something else,” he replied vaguely.

“I’ll go,” offered Red Suell.

Several of the Den 1 boys also offered their services. No comment was made on Ross' reluctance to help. Each Cub, however, secretly was annoyed by the other boy's laziness.

The long wooden table and bench were set up on the brick terrace in front of the vine-covered castle wall.

Food and dishes then were brought out from the picnic hampers.

"We'll shoot the scene two or three times, using different boys in various parts," Mr. Hatfield declared. "Brad will act the role of Little John for the first filming. We'll try Ross out as the sheriff—"

"But I'm to be Robin Hood," the boy broke in.

"That hasn't been decided yet," the Cub leader reminded him. Ignoring Ross' scowl, he went on: "Chips will take the part of Will Stutely. The others will be knights gathered at the festive board."

"I don't want to be the sheriff," Ross muttered.

"Oh, forget it, will you?" Brad demanded, losing patience. "A Cub is supposed to be cooperative."

The filming of the scene began. Still grumbling at the role which had been thrust upon him, Ross took his place at the head of the picnic table.

As the camera began to grind, Brad, from the nearby thicket, shot an arrow. His first missed the table completely. On the second try, however, it dropped squarely amid the dishes.

"Whence came this?" Ross demanded, speaking the lines which had been assigned him.

He picked up the arrow, and removing the scroll, read the message.

"Thou didst give the prize to Robin Hood," he read aloud. And he added with gruff hostility: "Wait until I lay my hands on that sneaking coward!"

"Cut!" called Mr. Holloway. "Well done, boys!"

The Cubs praised Ross, for he had spoken the lines of the sheriff naturally. Also, his sullen manner had suited the character perfectly.

“You make a swell sheriff,” Red praised him.

“Oh, yeah?” Ross retorted. “Well, don’t think you’re going to unload that role on me! I’m going to be Robin Hood.”

Mr. Holloway filmed a scene with Brad and Chips as Little John and Will Stutely. He then tried out several of the Den 1 boys in the part of the sheriff.

However, everyone agreed that Ross had acted the role better than anyone else.

“Dan, you ought to be Robin Hood,” Brad told him as the two rested under a tree. “You’re a natural for that part, just as Ross is in the role of sheriff.”

“Try to make him think so!”

“It’s up to Mr. Holloway and Mr. Hatfield to assign the parts.”

“Sure,” Dan agreed, chewing at a blade of grass, “but it was decided Robin Hood should be played by the Cub who proves to be the best shot. And we both know Ross is tops.”

“It hasn’t been proven yet,” Brad insisted. “I noticed while you were practicing a while ago, you’re improving fast, Dan. Ross hasn’t touched a bow all day.”

“I’m working hard,” Dan admitted. “Honestly though, I think Ross will win the part.”

“He doesn’t deserve it with all his boasting.”

“Maybe not, but he’s handy with a bow. And that’s what counts. Say—”

Dan, who was sprawled comfortably on the ground, suddenly sat up. He gazed steadily toward the bushes behind the castle.

“What’s wrong?” demanded his companion.

“Nothing, I guess,” Dan admitted with a laugh. “For just a minute, I thought—”

“You thought what, Dan?”

“Well, I caught a flash of green over there amid the bushes. I thought I saw someone peeping out.”

“One of the Cubs probably.”

“It could have been, only it didn’t look like any of the fellows.”

“The parents are roaming around the grounds too,” Brad reminded him.

“I know,” Dan admitted, “it couldn’t have been anything. All the same, it gave me a start for a second. I had the feeling someone who shouldn’t be here was watching the filming of our play.”

“The ghost of the castle, for instance?” Brad asked, giving him a sidelong glance.

“Quit kidding me.”

“You did think you saw someone.”

“Sure,” Dan said soberly. “It might have been one of the Cubs, only I didn’t think so. You know, Brad, I’ve had a queer feeling ever since we came here.”

“As if someone were watching us?”

“That’s right, Brad. I know it sounds silly.”

“It isn’t silly,” the older boy replied soberly. “I’ve had the same sort of feeling myself.”

“I suppose my imagination was stirred by finding a fire inside the castle,” Dan said. “And then that arrow in the target. It never did match any of the ones we were using.”

“Someone is hiding out here all right,” Brad admitted with sudden conviction. “Suppose we amble around and see if we can find anyone. No use worrying the other Cubs.”

Without attracting attention to themselves, the two boys walked over to the

bushes where Dan had seen movement.

No one was there. Brad found a few footprints. There was no way they could tell whether or not they had been made by one of the Cubs. For, as Dan pointed out, the boys of Den 1 and 2 had been everywhere on the grounds.

“We’ll be smart not to say anything about this to the other fellows,” Brad advised. “No use getting them excited. Especially as it may not amount to anything.”

“I’ll keep mum,” Dan promised. “All the same, I’d like to track down our castle ghost. So far, he’s proven as elusive as Robin Hood himself!”



## CHAPTER 6

# Ghost of the Castle

The Cubs of Den 2 worked hard the next week making “props” for their Robin Hood play. Dan assisted Mr. Holloway in blocking out scenes for the movie, and was told he had done an excellent job.

“We should have a chance to win first prize in the contest,” the Den Dad declared late one afternoon as the boys met in their clubroom.

The meeting room of Den 2 was the envy of all the other Cub Scouts in Webster City. Situated high in a natural cave above the beach, it afforded a fine view not only of the shoreline, but also the distant Boy Scout camp on Skeleton Island.

“Yes, the play is rapidly whipping into shape,” declared Sam Hatfield. “Right now, our crying need is for costumes.”

“I thought the mothers were going to help us out,” Dan remarked.

“They have agreed to,” the Cub leader answered. “That is, they’ll sew the costumes. However, there’s a little item of buying materials.”

“Can’t each Cub provide his own?”

“I was going to suggest that,” nodded Mr. Hatfield. “I feel though, that the money should be earned by each boy. It wouldn’t be fair to ask the parents to pay for our costumes—especially as some of them will be rather elaborate.”

The Cub leader explained to the other boys his plan and no one raised any objection. Chips and Red however, were uncertain how they would earn the necessary money.

“Well, you might try cutting lawns, gathering papers, or running errands,” Mr.

Hatfield suggested. "Give it a little thought. I'm sure you can come up with some idea."

"How soon must we have the money?" Midge asked.

Mr. Hatfield said he thought it should be turned in not later than a week.

"The mothers will need the materials to start sewing the costumes," he declared. "Deadline for the contest is the twenty-fifth of the month."

After the meeting broke up, Brad and Dan sauntered down the street together, discussing how they would earn their money.

"My Dad has been after me to clean the basement," Brad remarked. "Maybe I can get fifty cents for that job. It will be a start."

"All the odd jobs around our place are cleaned up," Dan said thoughtfully. "It looks as if I'll have to get out and hustle."

That very afternoon, he called on several neighbors, offering to wash windows or the family car. In each instance, he was politely but firmly turned down.

Rather discouraged, Dan then appealed to his mother.

"Maybe I can think up some job if you give me a little time," she said to encourage him. "Off hand I can't think of a thing. Usually, you're two or three jobs ahead of me."

When Dan went to the drugstore at six o'clock to get a newspaper for his father, he met Fred.

"How you coming on earning money?" the boy asked him.

"No luck yet," Dan admitted. "Jobs seem to be mighty scarce."

"I ran an errand and picked up a quarter," Fred told him. "But that's all I've been able to earn so far. Red and Chips are having a tough time too."

"Webster City must suddenly have been hit by a depression, Fred. I wonder how the Den 1 boys are getting their costumes?"

“Dad told me they’re earning their money too.”

“Well, I hope they have better luck than we’re having.”

As Dan spoke, a voice behind him demanded: “Better luck at what?”

Dan and Fred turned around to see Ross Langdon standing behind them. His bicycle was parked outside the drugstore. Over his shoulder was slung a paper carrier’s sack.

“We were talking about earning money for our Robin Hood costumes,” Fred explained.

“The trouble with you fellows is you don’t have any hustle and get-up,” Ross taunted them. “Now me—I’ll have no difficulty raising any amount.”

“Your father will give it to you, I bet!” Dan said.

“Not on your life. I’m earning it.”

“How?” demanded Dan and Fred together.

Ross tapped the canvas case over his shoulder.

“I’ve taken on a paper route,” he explained. “I start with eight customers. Probably by the end of the week, I’ll have twenty or thirty. That will give me a nice profit.”

Despite themselves, the other two Cubs were impressed.

“How long have you had the route?” Fred demanded.

“I just started. My father got it for me through a friend.”

“Gee! You’re lucky,” Dan said without envy. “Wish I could land one too. Any chance?”

“Not the slightest,” Ross answered loftily. “You have to think up your own ideas.”

“Sure, I guess so,” Dan admitted goodnaturedly. “Well, I’m glad you’re all set.

Running a paper route should be profitable, but it will mean hard work.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Ross shrugged. “On my bike it shouldn’t take long to make deliveries. It’s a cinch! And watch the money roll in. I’ll buy myself a super Robin Hood costume that will knock your eye out! No home-made affair for me! Not on your life!”

Having delivered himself of this, Ross smiled in a superior way and ambled off.

“Even if that guy is a Cub, he makes me sick!” Fred muttered when the boy was beyond hearing. “He won’t last long at a paper route.”

Dan did not think so either. But he pointed out Ross probably would stick to the job until he had acquired enough to buy the Robin Hood costume.

“If he’s able to buy a good one, and I come up with a make-shift, that cinches the role for him, Fred.”

“Don’t kid yourself,” the other returned. “Dad won’t give the part to Ross just because he can dig up the best costume. He’ll have to prove he’s the better actor and archer.”

Dan paid for the newspaper and the boys left the drugstore together.

“Don’t forget we’re to go to Mr. Holloway’s house tomorrow night,” Fred reminded as they parted. “He’s promised to run off those first movie scenes we took at the castle.”

“I’ll be there,” Dan promised.

The Den Dad had invited all the boys of both Den 1 and 2 to his home. On the following night not a single Cub was absent from the meeting, for all were eager to view the films.

“How’d they turn out, Mr. Holloway?” Dan asked eagerly.

“Not bad,” the Den Dad replied. “In one of the scenes though—a mystery has cropped up.”

“A mystery?”

“I’ll let the boys discover it for themselves,” Mr. Holloway replied. “We’ll see whose eyes are sharp enough to spot it!”

Deeply puzzled by the Den Dad’s remark, the Cubs plied him with questions. To all he made the same answer: “Wait and see.”

Mr. Holloway had hung up a screen in the downstairs recreation room. The boys gathered in a semi-circle in front of it and waited impatiently for the showing of the film.

The room was darkened. After testing out the focus, Mr. Holloway ran through the first scene that had been taken at the creek.

The Cubs howled with laughter as they watched the duel between Brad and Ross. As the latter tumbled into the water with a mighty splash, their mirth could not be controlled.

“Heck! I don’t think it’s that funny,” Ross protested.

Mr. Holloway ran off other scenes in rapid order. The Cubs remarked that Dan’s acting was especially good and that Brad too had acted his role well.

“What’s that mystery you were telling us about?” Midge demanded when only one more scene remained to be shown.

“Wait and see,” smiled Mr. Holloway. “Watch sharp now.”

Again the room was darkened. Mr. Holloway began the showing of the banquet scene with the castle and forest as background.

“Say, Ross is good as the Sheriff of Nottingham!” exclaimed Midge. “It’s a natural part for him.”

“Like fun!” growled Ross. “I’m to be Robin Hood.”

So engrossed were the boys in watching for themselves in the scene, that almost before they realized it, the film had been run off.

“Well?” inquired Mr. Holloway. “Who caught it?”

“Caught what?” asked Red in perplexity.

“I didn’t notice anything,” declared Chips.

Dan spoke quietly. “I’m not sure, Mr. Holloway. The film went so fast. But I thought I did see something unusual.”

“Aw, you’re making that up!” challenged Ross. “What did Bunny Bright Eyes see?”

“It wasn’t in the foreground,” Dan said slowly. “Just for an instant, I thought I caught a flash of a face back in the bushes.”

“So what?” demanded Ross, getting up from the floor. “Cubs were all over the place.”

“This didn’t look like one of our boys. The face wasn’t clear, but I’m sure it was no one I’d ever seen before.”

As Ross was on the verge of making another jibe, Mr. Holloway said quickly:

“Dan is right. The camera lens picked up an extra character.”

Dan and Brad exchanged a glance, as the same thought occurred to them.

“Then I didn’t imagine that someone was hiding out in the bushes watching us!” Dan exclaimed. “It must have been that crack-shot—the ghost of the castle!”

## CHAPTER 7

### A Mysterious Arrow

Dan's observation about seeing an extra person in the background of the film greatly excited the other Cubs.

"Show the scene again," they begged Mr. Holloway.

The Den Dad re-threaded the film into the projection machine and ran it through at slow speed.

"There he is!" suddenly exclaimed Dan, catching the first glimpse of the unfamiliar face in the scene.

Before he obtained a definite impression of the person, the figure had ducked back into the bushes.

"Golly!" exclaimed Red in amazement. "Where did *he* pop from?"

"Couldn't it have been one of the Cubs from Den 1?" demanded Fred.

Dan reminded the boys that during the filming of the banquet scene all of the Cubs had taken part.

"Someone was watching us from the bushes," Brad confirmed the younger boy's opinion. "Too bad we didn't get a clearer impression of him."

At the request of the Cubs, Mr. Holloway ran through the film a third time. However, it was impossible for anyone to identify the stranger in the scene.

Mr. Holloway, Dan and Brad were of the opinion that the intruder was another boy. The others thought he had looked older and might be a man.

“At any rate, we know there’s a little substance to our ‘ghost of the castle,’” Dan laughed. “Maybe next time we’re out there, we can catch him. I don’t like the idea of being spied on.”

Mr. Holloway and Mr. Hatfield devoted some time to discussing the various scenes of the play with the boys, pointing out where improvement could be made.

“For the movie we’ll need titles,” the Den Dad explained. “Also, it will be necessary to do a great deal of editing and cutting in the final version. We’ll need a committee.”

“Make Dan chairman,” suggested Brad. “He knows the Robin Hood story better than anyone.”

“I’ll appoint Dan, Red and Chips,” Mr. Holloway said. “There will be plenty of work to do because we must start the final filming by next Saturday.”

“Which reminds me that we’ll have to speed up the archery contest,” added Sam Hatfield. “To avoid argument, the winner of the match shall have the role of Robin Hood.”

“Fair enough,” grinned Dan.

Aware that costumes for the play would be needed in a hurry, the boys promised to turn their money in as quickly as possible so that materials could be bought.

During the early part of the week, the Cubs of both Den 1 and 2 canvassed the neighborhoods, seeking odd jobs.

As Dan already had observed, they were discouragingly scarce.

Except for Ross Langdon, not a single Cub was certain of earning the amount needed within a short period of time.

“What we should have is a project all the boys can work on together,” Brad declared one night as he and Dan discussed the problem.

“We might gather and sell papers.”



“The market has collapsed. I’ve already investigated that job possibility.”

“At this time of year, all the odd jobs are taken,” Dan said gloomily. “It’s so dry, even the lawns hardly need cutting.”

“I know,” Brad agreed. “City Council has warned folks to go easy on using water. The pressure is low. Every vacant lot with so many dried weeds presents a hazard.”

Dan stared at the older boy, as an idea suddenly came to him.

“Say, maybe that’s the ticket!” he exclaimed.

“What is, Dan? I don’t follow you.”

“Why, maybe the Cubs could get a job from the city cutting weeds!”

“The city has its own crew.”

“Sure, but not half of the outlying areas have been mowed. I read in the paper yesterday, the city is having trouble finding workers.”

Brad thought the matter over. “We never could sell our services to the city,” he said. “But we might get individual jobs for the Cubs—especially from real estate men who have considerable vacant property.”

“There’s a lot of it near the castle,” Dan recalled. “We might be able to round up a few jobs in that area.”

The two boys discussed the matter with the other Cubs. Very few of the organization members had been successful in earning enough money. Everyone except Ross Langdon immediately favored the project. Ross declared that to cut weeds would inflame his nose and bring on an attack of hay fever.

“Anyway, I have more than enough money now for my Robin Hood costume,” he said smugly. “No weed cutting for me.”

“Okay,” Brad shrugged. “Suit yourself. Don’t forget though, that you have a section of ground at the castle to clear before next Saturday. We gave our promise to the bank that it would be done.”

The next morning, Brad and Dan set out to see how many jobs they could obtain for the Cubs.

After trying four places, they were given the promise of one small one. With all the Cubs working, Brad calculated it would not take an hour for the boys to clean up the premises.

“We’ll need at least another sizeable job to make it worth while,” Dan commented as the two boys paused for a moment on the highway. “But where will we get it?”

Brad had noticed a well-kept property directly ahead on the right-hand side of the road. Orchards were surrounded by an artistically built wooden rail fence.

However, tall dried weeds had grown about the rails. Should a fire start from a dropped match or cigarette, not only the fence, but the orchard as well might be damaged.

“Let’s try that place ahead,” Brad proposed. “We could grub out those weeds by hand in two or three hours. It would make the grounds look better and eliminate a fire hazard.”

The boys could not see the house from the main road.

Seeking it, they followed a winding lane through attractively laid out grounds. Presently, they came within view of a large white house with two pillars supporting the veranda.

In their immediate path was a small one room shack which evidently served as a gardener’s tool house.

“Well, I hope someone is home,” Dan remarked. “We’ve had a long, hard walk.”

Even as he spoke, a short, wiry man in overalls came out of the gardener’s house.

“You boys want something?” he asked, blocking their way.

“Why, yes,” said Brad. He explained that he and Dan were Cub Scouts in search of odd jobs for their organization.

“Well, there’s nothing here for you,” the man answered briefly.

“We’d like to talk to the owner of the property, if you please.”

“You can’t see him. The master doesn’t like visitors.”

“Who is the owner?” inquired Dan curiously.

“Never mind. The point is, you’ll find no work here. I attend to all the odd jobs.”

“You do fine at keeping the property in order,” declared Brad, his gaze roving over the well-trimmed shrubs. “But we noticed one little thing you overlooked.”

“Oh, you did, eh?” Despite Brad’s polite manner, the gardener was growing more and more irritated.

Trying to be as diplomatic as possible, the boys told of their need to earn money for costumes. They then mentioned the uncut weeds along the front fence, stressing the danger of fire.

“I have enough to do around here without pulling those weeds!” the man exclaimed. “What’s more, I won’t take it on.”

“That’s where we come in,” said Brad. “For a very moderate fee, the Cubs will do a good job of cleaning them out.”

“Oh, no you won’t!” The gardener now was very angry. “You’re trying to make me look bad with the boss. Well, you can’t see him! Now get out of here before I let the dogs loose!”

“You have us all wrong,” Dan protested. “We’re not trying to get anyone into trouble. But the work should be done and—”

“Get out!”

Dan would have stood his ground, but Brad pulled him away.

“Come on, Dan,” he said quietly. “We’ll find another place. No use stirring up trouble.”

Feeling very annoyed at having been so rudely dismissed, the two boys started

away. They rounded a point in the road which blocked off their view of the gardener and the tool house.

“That stupid lug!” Brad snorted. “He’s afraid we’ll make him look bad!”

As the boy spoke the words, an object whizzed through the air. Flying high above his head, it lodged in a tree at the side of the lane.

“What was that?” Brad demanded, startled.

“An arrow!” Dan exclaimed. “Say! Someone is using us for a target! We’d better take cover!”

## CHAPTER 8

# Expert Shooting

Rather alarmed, Brad and Dan looked quickly behind them.

The roadway was clear. Nor could they see anyone hiding in the bushes. They were certain however, that the arrow had been shot from that direction.

“It’s a joke, I guess,” Brad said a bit unnerved. “Either that, or the gardener is taking this way of getting even.”

After a moment, the boys went over to the tree and pulled out the arrow from the tree where it had lodged.

“Say!” Dan exclaimed. “This looks like the arrow that was shot into our target the other day at the castle!”

“It is the same size and shape!”

“We’re not far from the castle grounds either, Brad.”

“That’s so. You know, I don’t like the idea of anyone shooting over our heads, Dan. The arrow may have been aimed high on purpose, but it’s a dangerous trick.”

“It sure is. Do you think the gardener would do a trick like that?”

“He certainly wanted us to leave. We didn’t make any trouble about it though. So I can’t see why he’d shoot an arrow.”

“Even if he didn’t, he may know who the archer is,” Dan said, slipping the shaft into his pocket. “Let’s go back to the tool house and ask him point-blank.”

“We-ll—”

“This is a free country,” Dan argued. “No one has a right to be shooting arrows at us.”

“All right, we’ll ask him,” Brad consented. “We are trespassing though, and he’s within his rights to order us off the property.”

Uncertain of the reception they might receive, the two boys rapidly retraced their steps to the tool house. In walking they kept a sharp watch of the bushes. Once Dan thought he heard a giggle from the shadowy woods. But he saw no one.

As the boys reached the tool house, the door suddenly swung open.

The Cubs again found themselves confronted by the gardener.

“Back again?” he demanded unpleasantly. “Didn’t I tell you to get on the move?”

“We started all right,” Brad replied. “Then someone shot at us from behind!”

“What d’you mean? Shot at you?”

Dan produced the arrow.

“Oh, that,” the gardener shrugged.

“Maybe you’ve seen an arrow like this before?” Brad inquired.

“Maybe I have,” the man answered unpleasantly. “Then again, maybe I ain’t. Now will you get off this property, or have I got to call the police?”

“We’ll go, but first we want to know about this arrow,” Dan said stubbornly. “Did you shoot it?”

“No, I didn’t,” the gardener retorted. “I got other things to do than shoot arrows.”

“Maybe you have a son—” Brad began, but the man interrupted.

“No, I don’t have a son,” he said. Uneasily the man glanced toward the veranda

where an elderly looking gentleman had appeared. “Now get going, or I’ll call the police! This is your last warning.”

Thoroughly disgusted, Brad and Dan moved away. At the bend in the lane, they glanced back and saw that the elderly man remained on the porch, watching them. Evidently he was the owner of the property, they thought.

“We should have appealed to him,” Brad said. “For some reason, Old Sourpuss didn’t want us to talk to his employer. Probably he’s afraid we’ll drop a word to the master about how he’s allowed the weeds to flourish.”

Approaching the place where the arrow had been shot, the boys walked warily. Nothing happened. Nor did they see anyone hiding amid the bushes.

Safely, Dan and Brad reached the main road.

“Who do you suppose shot that arrow?” Dan speculated. “I don’t believe it was the gardener, and he said he has no son.”

Brad could not venture a guess. He agreed with Dan, however, that the arrow appeared to be identical with the one that had been shot into the target at the castle grounds.

The meeting with the gardener had discouraged the two boys. After talking it over, they decided to abandon looking for work that day.

“We have one job lined up at any rate,” Dan declared. “That will keep the Cubs busy and provide a little money.”

On the following day, the boys of Den 2 joined forces to clear away the weeds and dry grass at the Wilkinson estate. So well did they do the work, that the owner engaged them to clean another larger area for him.

By the end of the day, the Cubs had netted enough to buy the materials for their costumes.

All that week Dan spent as much time as he could on the archery range near his home. He and Midge practiced too at the Holloway home, with Mr. Holloway offering expert instruction.

“You’ve improved remarkably,” the Den Dad praised Dan. “Just don’t get excited Saturday, and you may yet win the role of Robin Hood.”

On Saturday, not only the Cubs of both dens but the parents as well, gathered to witness the shooting contest.

Mr. Holloway had brought along his movie camera and planned to record the match.

“We’ll run the contest off as much as possible as it was done at Nottingham Town,” Mr. Hatfield announced. “However, the winner shall have the role of Robin Hood.”

“Review the scene for us, please,” Midge requested the Cub leader.

Mr. Hatfield explained that the Sheriff of Nottingham had planned the shooting contest as a trick to capture Robin Hood. Because the outlaw was known never to miss an important match, it was believed that he would not fail to appear.

“On the sidelines we have the sheriff and his men,” the Cub leader said. “When the herald blows a blast, the archers take their places. How many are to compete for the role?”

Only four boys had decided to try for it. Besides Dan and Ross, Midge and Clyde Jennings, a boy from Den 1, had finally asked for a chance at the part.

“Each boy will shoot only six arrows,” the Cub leader instructed. “And the one having the highest total is the winner.”

Clyde Jennings stepped to the line. His first three arrows missed the target entirely. The final three barely caught in the outer rim.

“That finishes me,” muttered Clyde, deeply humiliated. “I never did that bad before. Having so many people watching, made me nervous.”

Midge’s turn came next. He drew his bow quickly but did not take as careful aim as he might have done. The arrow netted him only three points.

On the next five shots Midge used more care. Even so, he wound up with a total of 20 points.



“I’m out of it,” he whispered to Dan. “Unless you can come through, Ross will be Robin Hood.”

The crowd became quiet as Ross picked up his bow. His first two arrows landed squarely in the gold of the target.

Ross grinned at his own success and winked at one of the Cubs.

But his next shot was wild, barely catching the outer rim of the target. On his fourth arrow he recovered form somewhat, managing to net seven points.

His total score read: 991753 or six arrows shot for a total of 34 points.

“Nice going, Ross,” praised Dan. “I don’t think I can better it.”

The Den 1 boy’s response was a proud smile. He too felt that Dan couldn’t beat him.

“Shoot as well as you can, Dan,” Midge whispered into his ear. “Our play will be ruined if Ross is made Robin Hood.”

Dan deftly fitted the feather of the arrow to his bowstring. Taking aim carefully, he let speed the shaft. Straight it flew, but missed the target by a scant inch and nose-dived into a hillock.

The Cubs of Den 2 emitted a loud moan. Ross smiled broadly. He was confident now of victory.

Outwardly unmoved, Dan again took aim, deliberately lowering his sight. Again the arrow flew straight from his bow, landing in the gold.

“Nine points!” shouted Midge, tossing his cap into the air. “Keep ’er up.”

Dan shot twice more in rapid succession. Both arrows landed in the yellow. The boy now had shot four times for a total of 27 points.

“Do it again, Dan!” yelled Red.

Dan, however, was less sure of himself on the next shot. The arrow dug into the target on the rim of the gold.

Lest there be any argument, Mr. Hatfield ruled that it had fallen within the next band of color. Dan was awarded 7 points.

“That ties the score!” whooped Midge. “You’ll win easily now, Dan.”

The words unnerved Dan. As he raised his bow to make the final shot, he could feel his arm tremble. When he finally released the arrow, it missed the target.

“Buck fever,” Dan laughed, putting down his bow. “I guess I deserve to lose out to Ross.”

“But you haven’t,” Mr. Hatfield informed him. “You’re both tied with 34 points. Now you’ll have to shoot again.”

Ross had jumped up from the grass. “I don’t want to do that,” he protested. “My arm is sore. I hit the target every time while Dan missed twice. Doesn’t that prove—”

“Not a thing,” said Mr. Hatfield. “Well, Ross, if you’re unwilling to shoot again, suppose we settle it by drawing lots?”

“Okay,” the boy agreed after hesitating a moment. “I’m pretty lucky.”

“How about you, Dan? Are you willing to settle it by drawing cuts?”

“That’s fair enough,” Dan agreed. “For that matter, I’m willing to give the part to Ross. Honestly, I feel he’s the better shot.”

“Ross will make an excellent Sheriff of Nottingham,” returned Mr. Hatfield, preparing several strips of paper for the “draw.” “So we’ll decide the matter by lot.”

The Cub leader told the boys that the one who received the shorter stub of paper should be declared winner.

Ross took his turn first. After studying the slips which Mr. Hatfield held half-concealed in his hand, he finally drew one forth.

In length, it appeared fairly short.

Dan's turn came next. Thinking that Ross already had won, he selected a slip carelessly. To his astonishment, it was a stub end—at least two inches shorter than the paper the other boy had drawn.

“Dan wins!” cried Chips gleefully.

Ross was too crestfallen to speak. He started to say that the contest hadn't been fair, but choked off the words. After all, he had protested at shooting a second time, and had favored drawing lots.

“I'm sorry, Ross,” Dan said, noticing the other's keen disappointment. “If it means so much to you, keep the role.”

Ross shook his head and tried to grin.

“No, you won the part and it's yours for good,” he said.

“Well spoken, Ross,” said Mr. Hatfield, clapping him on the back. “A Cub has to be a good sport about losing out. You'll be an asset to the play as the Sheriff of Nottingham.”

“Oh, sure,” Ross murmured, smiling weakly.

The Cubs started toward the target, intending to retrieve their arrows.

Before they could cross the range, three arrows were shot in rapid succession over their heads. Each lodged in almost the center of the target.

Amazed, the boys whirled around. The archer who had sent the arrows winging had drawn his bow from a long distance away. But he was nowhere in sight.

“Who shot those arrows?” Mr. Hatfield demanded. “That was real shooting!”

“I think they came from that clump of bushes to the right!” Brad exclaimed. “It must be that mysterious fellow who's always taking shots over our heads. Let's nab him.”

Thus urged, the Cubs made a dash for the clump of foliage.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **A Neglected Duty**

Surrounding the area from which the arrows had been shot, the Cubs closed in.

But, after whipping through the bushes, they were unable to find the mysterious archer.

“The fellow knew we would be after him,” Brad remarked, carefully looking about on the ground for telltale clues. “He must have run off the moment he shot the arrows.”

“He’s good too,” spoke up Ross. “Better than our champion, Dan Carter.”

From the Den 1 boy’s tone, it was evident that he still smarted under loss of the star role in the play. Dan, however, refused to be annoyed.

“He’s a lot better shot than I am,” he agreed.

“We ought to find him and let him take the part,” Ross went on, determined to make the Den 2 boy feel uncomfortable. “He’d show us some real shooting.”

“I wish we could trail him,” Dan replied. “He’d be an asset to our play.”

“He must be a youngster too,” added Brad, pointing to several footprints he had found beside a bush. “See, his shoe is shorter than mine.”

The cluster of footprints appeared in a tiny clearing which gave an unobstructed view of the target.

“He must have stood here when he shot those three arrows,” Brad said. “The question is, which way did he go?”

Some of the Cubs were for combing the entire wooded section. However, Mr. Hatfield, who had followed the boys, advised against such action.

“The person easily could elude us, for apparently he knows the trails well,” he declared. “Furthermore, we have work to do. Now that Dan definitely has been chosen as Robin Hood, we must begin to whip our play into shape.”

“How about the other roles?” asked Midge. “Who is to be the Sheriff of Nottingham?”

“We’ve decided to give that role to Ross.”

“I knew it!” Ross muttered. “Why can’t I be Allan-a-Dale?”

“We’re not ready for the scenes in which that character appears,” the Cub leader explained patiently. “You’ll make a fine sheriff. Besides, Mr. Holloway tells me we’ll be able to refilm the banquet scene with no change except the addition of costumes.”

“Oh, fine!” Ross grumbled.

Returning to the clearing, all the Cubs worked hard for the next hour and a half. As the archery contest had been the main attraction, many of the parents began to drift away.

By mid-afternoon, only the Cubs and a few of their fathers remained. The boys were reacting a scene which had given them trouble, when Red called attention to a car that had driven into the grounds from the main road.

“Why, that looks like Mr. Kain,” Dan remarked. “I guess he drove out to see what we’re doing here.”

“He probably wants to make certain we aren’t doing any damage,” added Red.

Mr. Kain alighted from his car and sauntered over to the group. After speaking to several of the boys, he asked for Mr. Hatfield.

“He went off somewhere for a minute,” Brad replied. “Anything we can do?”

“Well, I merely drove out to see that everything was under control here,” the

bank employee answered. "I see you've cleared away this area in front of the castle very efficiently."

"Yes, sir," agreed Brad, pleased by the praise. "A Cub always keeps a promise."

"I'll look around a bit. Don't mind me, boys. Go on with whatever you were doing."

Mr. Kain wandered off in the general direction of the castle and vanished from view. Belatedly, it occurred to Brad that he had neglected to tell the bank man about the broken window.

"I'll do it before he leaves," he thought.

The scene upon which the Cubs were working finally was finished. Satisfied with the filming, Mr. Holloway told the boys to snatch a brief rest.

Brad took advantage of this period to go in search of Mr. Kain. The man had been gone so long that the boy wondered what had detained him.

As he rounded a corner of the vine-covered castle, he came upon the bank employee. Mr. Kain was gazing at the broken window.

"Well!" he remarked, seeing Brad. "When we gave the Cub Scouts permission to use this property, we assumed they would exercise care."

"We did, too," replied Brad, ready to defend the organization. "If you're referring to that broken window, we didn't smash it."

"No? I don't recall seeing that it was broken when I inspected the premises a few days ago."

"It was though," Brad assured him. "I meant to tell you about it, but forgot."

"Indeed?" Mr. Kain spoke coldly. "It seems the Cubs forget quite a few things."

"I don't know what you mean," Brad said. "It's the truth, we didn't smash the window. When we first came here, we found it broken. Vines covered the panes, so it wasn't noticed."

“Since then, the Cubs have been going in and out whenever they felt like it.”

“I guess we did roam around a bit inside,” Brad admitted. “But no harm was done. I’m sure of that.”

“I’ll see that the window is repaired. However, there are other matters that concern me. Your failure to keep a promise, for instance.”

Brad was dumbfounded. “My promise?” he echoed. “Why, I don’t know what you mean, Mr. Kain.”

“A promise was given me that if I allowed the Cub Scouts to use this property, all the dead brush would be cleared away.”

“We did the job too,” Brad said indignantly. “You said yourself we worked very efficiently.”

“You did as far as clearing space for an archery range. I’ll admit that the grounds look very well out front where they show. But the area behind the castle hasn’t been touched. And the fire hazard is greater there than elsewhere.”

“Why, I thought all the work had been done,” Brad said in dismay. “Show me the place you mean.”

“Gladly.”

Mr. Kain led the Den Chief to the section of the estate which had been assigned to Ross to clear.

“I don’t wonder you’re annoyed, Mr. Kain,” Brad said as he viewed the untouched accumulation of brush. “This area was assigned to one of the boys from Den 1. I thought the work had been done.”

“Unless the Cubs keep their promises, I can’t allow them to continue to use the grounds.”

“The work will be done no later than tomorrow,” Brad promised grimly. “I’ll give you my word.”

The Den Chief’s straightforward manner impressed the bank employee.

“Very well,” he said, satisfied by the promise. “The Cubs may continue to use the grounds here, provided the work is done by tomorrow night. If not, I’m afraid I’ll have to put my foot down. The truth is, some of the bank officials aren’t much in favor of the Cubs roaming around here. If any damage should be done, we’ll have to ask you to leave.”

“We’ll take precautions,” Brad promised again.

Mr. Kain did not wait to see Mr. Hatfield, but went directly to his car. As he bade Brad good-bye, however, he warned once more that he would be back within a day or two to make another inspection.

Scarcely had the car driven away than Dan sought his friend to learn what was wrong.

“Plenty!” Brad snapped. “That lazy Ross Langdon really has fouled us up this time! We’re apt to get bounced from here, and all because he didn’t attend to the work assigned him.”

“Golly, if we had to leave here with only part of our play filmed, we’d be sunk,” Dan murmured. “Let’s put the bee on Ross right now.”

The two boys sought the Den 1 Cub, who at the moment was being measured for his sheriff’s costume. His paper route had provided a substantial sum for the purchase of materials which Mrs. Holloway had offered to sew.

Ross, however, could not make up his mind whether he wanted a home-made costume or one he might purchase.

“I think I could make you a very nice outfit,” Mrs. Holloway told the boy.

“I want a jerkin and seagreen hose,” Ross declared. “Also a cap with a feather.”

“Don’t you think we should omit the feather?” Mrs. Holloway suggested. “After all, it won’t do for you to look too much like Robin Hood.”

“Yes, but I want a feather,” Ross argued. “Can’t I have it?”

Before Mrs. Holloway could answer, Brad and Dan came up.



“If the fitting is over, we want to see you a minute,” Brad said to the boy.

“What for?” he demanded suspiciously.

“Oh, you’ll find out,” Brad said.

Mrs. Holloway, whose patience had been worn by Ross’ insistent demands, declared that she had finished taking measurements. Rather reluctantly, the Den 1 boy followed Brad and Dan across the clearing.

“Where you taking me?” he asked.

“Just come along,” Brad returned shortly.

As the boys rounded the castle, Ross began to catch on to what was in store.

“Oh, you’re going to rag me about not getting the brush cleaned up,” he guessed. “Well, I’ve been too busy with my paper route. Three customers kicked yesterday because their papers were delivered late. I’ve no time to be doing grubby work out here.”

“The rest of us have work too,” Brad retorted. “By not doing what you were supposed to, you got us in bad with Mr. Kain.”

“Unless the brush is cleared away by tomorrow night, the Cubs stand to lose the use of this property,” Dan added severely.

“Wouldn’t that be too bad?” Ross drawled. “Then you wouldn’t get the role of Robin Hood!”

Brad whirled around to glare at the Den 1 boy.

“You’re acting like a spoiled brat, Ross!” he said curtly. “You promised to clear your section of land and you’re going to do it or get out of the Pack! We don’t want a Cub who doesn’t do his part or keep a promise.”

The words shocked Ross. “You wouldn’t kick me out—” he stammered, and then with more confidence, he added: “You couldn’t anyhow! You haven’t the authority.”

“Wait until Mr. Hatfield hears about this!”

“So you’re a tattler, Brad?”

“No, I’m not,” the Den Chief replied hotly. “I just want to bring you to a realization of your responsibility to the organization.”

“Aw, you’re taking it too seriously.”

“It will be a serious matter if we lose this site after all the work we’ve done here.”

“Oh, keep your shirt on!” Ross retorted. Angrily, he turned and started away from the two boys.

“You’re refusing to do the work?” Brad called after him.

“Who said I was?” Ross flung over his shoulder. “It will be done. Just don’t rush me.”

## CHAPTER 10

### Checking Up on Ross

Ross' exasperating reply left Dan and Brad as much in doubt as ever.

Was the Den 1 boy merely putting them aside, or did he intend to do the work assigned to him?

"Let's report him to Mr. Hatfield," Dan proposed. "He's stalling."

Brad was unwilling to trouble the Cub leader about the matter unless he found it impossible to reason with Ross.

"I think he intends to clean up the brush," he said. "He only wants to keep us uneasy about it and guessing."

"Why don't we do the job ourselves?"

"Because that's exactly what Ross is hoping we'll do."

"I suppose so, Brad. But we gave our word to Mr. Kain the work would be done. I'd rather let Ross have the laugh on us than break a promise."

"So would I, Dan. But I have a hunch Ross is only playing possum on us. Tell you what! Let's let the matter go until tomorrow. If he hasn't done the job by then, we'll do it ourselves and report him to Mr. Hatfield."

"Suits me, only I'm in favor of reporting him right now."

"We could," the Den Chief agreed reluctantly. "It seems a little like tattling though. Also, if Mr. Hatfield finds out how Ross has acted, he might ask him to resign from the Cubs. That would be tough on him. Ross wants to stay in the organization, even if he does do a lot of crabbing."

“Okay, give him another chance,” Dan consented. “He isn’t a bad sort except for being lazy and conceited.”

The boys agreed to meet the next afternoon at 2 P.M. at Brad’s home. If unable to catch a ride they would hike to the Castle grounds.

“It shouldn’t take the two of us more than three hours to clean up the section, if Ross fails to do it,” Dan declared. “Suppose we’ll run into the Ghost of the Castle?”

“Say, that reminds me! I want to compare those arrows that were shot into the target today with the one we picked up at the gardener’s place.”

“I already have, Brad.”

“Do they match?”

“Perfectly.”

“The same person who shot at the target today must have hidden out in the woods at that other estate.”

“The place isn’t far from here,” Brad remarked, gazing thoughtfully toward the woods. “I wish we could find out who is spying on us.”

“We know a couple of things about him,” Dan said with a laugh. “He’s a dandy shot with the longbow, and besides, he’s something of a show-off!”

Presently the two boys rejoined the other Cubs. Ross, they learned, had complained that he was tired, and had caught a ride into Webster City.

“Tired, my right eye!” Dan snorted. “He was afraid we would nail him on that job, and wasn’t taking any chances.”

Since the day of their encounter with the unfriendly gardener, Brad had sought without success to learn who owned the estate. Reminded of his lack of information, the boy made inquiry of Mr. Holloway.

“I did hear who is living there,” the Den Dad said, trying to recollect. “The place is rented, I believe, to a retired army colonel. Someone told me he is seriously

ill.”

“You don’t recall his name?”

“Can’t think of it now, Brad. It may come to me later.”

“I wonder if the owner has any children?”

“Not that I heard of, Brad. But then, I never had any particular interest. Anything on your mind, Brad?”

“No, I was merely curious about our neighbors. I’ve been wondering too, who that mysterious archer may be.”

“Whoever he is, he’s an expert with the bow,” Mr. Holloway declared. “I wish we could catch him though. Accurate as he is, he shouldn’t be shooting whenever the urge strikes him. He might hit someone.”

Presently the Cubs brought their day’s rehearsal to a close. Mr. Holloway told the boys he would develop the films and have them ready for a showing by the following night.

“We’re getting along well,” he praised the Cubs. “I hear though, that some of the organizations competing for the prize are spending considerable on scenery and costumes. So we’ll have to work hard if we hope to win.”

The next morning Dan and Brad spent several hours working with Mr. Hatfield to improve the script for their play. That job completed, they went to their separate homes for lunch and then met again at Brad’s home.

By this hour the weather had turned very sultry, but with no indication of rain.

“It’s going to be a hot, dusty walk out to the Castle,” Brad remarked as he and Dan set off down the highway. “I thought maybe Dad would drive us out, but he had some other work to do.”

“The worst will be if we get out there and discover Ross hasn’t cleaned up the brush,” Dan added.

Fearing the worst, both boys had equipped themselves with large rakes and

cutting tools. The articles were cumbersome to carry. Before they had covered three-quarters of the distance, both Brad and Dan were covered with perspiration.

“This day is a scorcher,” Dan declared, mopping his forehead. “The paper this morning warned householders to go easy on using water. The shortage is acute.”

Brad had spied a roadside stand a short distance ahead.

“I’ll treat you to a bottle of pop,” he invited. “That will revive us so we can get to the Castle without wilting.”

“I can sure use a little moisture,” Dan accepted readily. “Lead me to it.”

A woman in blue gingham operated the stand, selling vegetables and a few soft drinks.

The boys bought and paid for their pop, sipping the cool liquid slowly. A friendly individual, the woman asked them about the Cub Scout organization, its aims and purpose.

Brad politely explained that Den 1 and Den 2 were included in a larger classification known as the Pack. Cub advancement, he pointed out, was based upon the completion of a set of achievements.

“When a boy finishes Wolf requirements, he is awarded the Wolf Cub rank and badge,” Dan carried on the explanation. “As soon as a Wolf Cub is ten years old, he works to complete the Bear Cub achievements. Upon reaching his eleventh birthday and after being a Bear, he may become a Lion Cub.”

“You’re a Lion?” inquired the operator of the stand.

“A Bear,” Dan corrected. “Brad, though, is a Boy Scout as well as Den Chief. He keeps the younger boys in line for Mr. Hatfield.”

“I try, you mean,” laughed Brad. “As far as one Cub is concerned, I’ve not been very successful.”

“Meaning Ross,” grinned Dan. “Well, keep trying. You may soften him up in the end.”

“If he hasn’t done his work out at the Castle, I’m going to adopt drastic methods,” Brad threatened. “Finished your drink, Dan? Let’s move along before it gets any hotter.”

The cool drinks scarcely quenched the thirst of the two boys. Before they had walked another quarter of a mile, they were as miserable as before.

“No drinking water at the Castle either,” Dan remarked. “We should have brought our canteens.”

The boys passed a farmhouse and rounded a hill. From the summit, they were afforded a clear view of the wooded castle area.

The stone building with its many odd-shaped towers and turrets appeared as a dark blot against the sky. Behind it, the horizon seemed misty.

“Say, is that haze or smoke?” Brad demanded, halting on the brow of the hill.

“It’s smoke!” exclaimed Dan. “And it seems to be coming from the woods directly behind the Castle! Maybe Ross is out there burning up the trash.”

“If he is, the fire has gone out of control!” Brad cried in alarm. “Come on, Dan! We’ve got to get there quick!”

## CHAPTER 11

### Fire

The two boys dashed down the hill, climbed a fence, and raced across a cleared field toward the castle property.

As they ran, they were increasingly alarmed to observe that the column of smoke rapidly was growing blacker.

“It’s coming from directly behind the Castle!” Brad cried.

“That’s the area where Ross was supposed to clean up the brush,” Dan panted, hard at his heels. “You don’t think he was crazy enough to try to burn the stuff?”

“Don’t know,” Brad returned, leaping over a small ditch. “Everything is so dry, it will be hard to stop a fire once it gets any sort of start.”

The boys were dismayed as they drew closer to see that the Castle was enveloped in a wispy smoke which seeped out from the woods.

Furthermore, a light breeze was blowing toward them.

“The Castle will be sure to go unless that fire can be checked fast!” Brad gasped.

The boys now were close enough to be certain that the smoke did not come from a brush pile.

“Dan, we’ve got to work fast!” the older boy directed, halting abruptly. “We can’t do anything here alone and without equipment. We’ve got to call a fire department.”

“The city engine won’t come this far out.”



“Then call Mr. Hatfield and Burton Holloway! Have them round up the cubs, and bring all the equipment they can muster.”

“The nearest phone must be at that farmhouse we passed,” Dan recalled. “I’ll get there as fast as I can.”

Brad ran on alone toward the Castle. As yet he could see no flames, but the air was acrid with fumes.

“Ross!” he shouted, thinking that the Den 1 boy might be somewhere in the woods. “Ross Langdon!”

His call went unanswered. But now Brad distinctly could hear the crackle of flames.

Following a path which led from the rear of the stone building into the woods, he found the smoke thicker.

Then ahead, he saw a fiery, uneven line of flame.

Dried grass and leaves had ignited. The flames already covered an area nearly twenty feet across and were spreading rapidly.

Tongues of fire licked greedily at the bases of the trees, but so far had not eaten deeply into the wood.

The smoke and heat halted Brad. He realized his utter helplessness.

No water was available. He had no tools or anything with which to fight the fire.

“I’ve got to do something!” he thought desperately. “But what?”

Brad moved back into the cleared area by the Castle. The grass was green here and free of brush and leaves. If the fire could be checked at the edge of the woods, the building would be spared.

On the other hand, should the tall trees catch, nothing could stop the fire until it had done untold damage.

Sparks borne by the wind now were flying toward the stone dwelling. One fell

into a tiny pocket of leaves and began to blaze.

Brad pounded out the flames and scattered the leaves with his rake. But other sparks were beginning to drop.

“The Castle will go unless I can get help fast!” he told himself. “May be someone at the adjoining estate has some equipment.”

Brad started at a run across the cleared space and then on into a field of stubble.

Unexpectedly he tripped over a pile of boards and fell flat on the ground. His extended hand groping over the top of the boards, encountered only yawning space.

Scrambling to his feet, Brad saw that the fall had saved him from a much worse disaster. The loose boards only half-covered a deep pit.

“Gosh! That was a narrow escape!” he exclaimed. “I could have tumbled in.”

Brad gave a quick glance down into the pit and then did a double take. Water!

“It’s an old well!” he thought. “Now if only we had buckets—”

The boy started on, running toward the estate where he and Dan so rudely had been dismissed by the gardener.

Reaching the road, he was just turning into the lane when a truck halted beside him.

“Say, buddy, where’s the fire?” the driver asked him.

Brad saw that it was a telephone company truck bearing five or six linesmen in addition to the man at the wheel.

“There’s a brush fire over behind that stone house,” he informed, pointing toward the area of billowing smoke. “I need help and I need it fast!”

“Hop in!” directed the driver.

The truck roared down the road and turned in at the castle grounds. Smoke now was so dense that the building scarcely was visible.

“We’ll never get it stopped now!” Brad cried.

“Maybe we will,” the truck driver encouraged him. “A trench may be the ticket. We’ve got a couple of spades somewhere in the truck.”

“But if those trees get a good start, the entire forest area will go,” Brad pointed out. “Those estates farther down the road will be in danger too.”

Piling out of the truck, the linesmen ran to the scene of the fire.

“The smoke is heavy, but the fire hasn’t spread too far—yet,” the truck driver appraised the situation. “The flames are thin and could be beaten out with blankets—if we had ’em. Or water—”

Brad told him about the well.

“Fine, but we have only one bucket in the truck. That will be about as much use as spraying with an atomizer!”

As the telephone men were getting what equipment they had from the truck, Dan Carter came running up.

“Did you get hold of Mr. Hatfield?” Brad demanded.

“Yes, and Mr. Holloway too. They’ll be out here pronto with all the equipment they can get on short order. But it looks pretty hopeless.”

“I’m afraid so,” Brad mumbled. “Oh, it makes me sick to stand helplessly by and see the Castle destroyed. We may get the blame too.”

The linesmen, having no blankets, had made use of a heavy canvas carried in the truck to protect equipment.

With it, they beat at the flames which were moving steadily closer to the stone building. Seeking to add their bit, Dan and Brad took turns carrying water from the well.

The pit was shallow. By attaching a rope to the bucket handle they could lower and dip the container. The work, however, was slow and discouraging.

“We need a dozen buckets to make any progress,” Dan declared, thoroughly disheartened. “Brad, it’s no use!”

“Yes, it is!” the older boy encouraged him. “Isn’t that a car coming this way?”

“It looks like Mr. Hatfield’s automobile!” Dan agreed, straightening up. “Oh, I hope he brought buckets!”

The boys ran to meet the car. Mr. Hatfield and a neighbor sprang out, and began to unload fire extinguishers. Chips and Red piled out of the back seat.

“Jeepers!” the latter exclaimed. “How did that start?”

Without answering, Brad demanded if the fire fighters had brought buckets.

“You’ll find several in the rear compartment of the car,” Mr. Hatfield instructed him. “Some spades, old blankets and everything I could get on short order. Mr. Holloway is following with more helpers and equipment. Without water though, there’s not much we can do.”

“We’ve found a well,” Brad told him. “I don’t know how long the water will last though.”

Mr. Hatfield and his neighbor seized fire extinguishers and joined the toiling linesmen. He ordered the Cubs, directed by Brad, to carry water.

“But don’t get too close to the fire,” he warned. “Your job is just to keep those buckets moving.”

With the additional supply of buckets, and other Cubs to help, Brad and Dan were able to keep a fairly steady flow of water in the hands of the fire fighters.

The smoke remained dense. But as Dan carried his fifth bucket of water, he noticed that the fire line among the trees had receded.

“We’re making a little progress,” Mr. Hatfield exclaimed jubilantly. “If the water only holds out we may win!”

In an endeavor to prevent the fire from spreading toward the Castle, the men had dug a narrow, wide trench.

As Brad earlier had noted, the fire, though widespread, had so far fed itself only on dry grass and brush. The fighters became increasingly hopeful that it could be put out before the trees ignited.

Within ten minutes Mr. Holloway arrived, bringing more equipment and extra helpers. In addition to two men, Midge and Ross Langdon were with him.

“Golly!” the latter exclaimed as he saw the black smoke. “Look at ’er burn!”

The remark infuriated Dan.

“And whose fault is it?” he demanded, wiping a smudge off his cheek. “If you had cleaned away the brush the way you were supposed to, the fire wouldn’t have spread so fast.”

“I did clean it up,” Ross said defiantly.

“When?”

“Last night.”

“All by yourself?”

“All by myself,” Ross repeated. “I worked nearly two hours and half killed myself.”

Dan allowed the matter to pass. Ross might be telling the truth. Since he claimed to have worked alone, no one could prove or disprove his assertion. In any case, it didn’t much matter now, for the damage had been done.

“Grab a bucket, and get to work!” he advised. “It’s going to be nip and tuck to check that fire.”

For once, Ross made no protest at being asked to work. He seized the bucket and ran back with Dan to the old well.

Brad had just raised another bucketful which was only a little over half-filled.

“The water level is going down fast,” he said. “I don’t know if we’ll have enough to see this thing through.”

“The fire’s almost licked,” Dan encouraged the others. “More help is coming too.”

Smoke had drawn a number of motorists and nearby residents to the scene. Many of the curious had remained to help.

The Cubs carried water until they no longer could get enough out of the well to make it worth while. But by that time, the fire definitely was under control. Beating at the flames with blankets and canvas, the men finally were able to extinguish the last spark.

“We’ve done it!” Mr. Hatfield exclaimed, sinking down on the grass to rest. “Dan, if that fire had had another ten minutes start, we never could have saved the Castle.”

“I wonder how it started?” the boy remarked.

“That’s what I was asking myself. I hope—” Mr. Hatfield did not finish what he had intended to say.

Dan, however, guessed at his thought.

“You hope it wasn’t one of the Cubs,” he completed with a questioning inflection.

“I started to say that, Dan. Then I realized that the remark would be unfair. None of the Cubs were out here today until you and Brad spotted the fire.”

“Not so far as I know,” Dan agreed. “Last night—”

This time it was the boy who did not finish his sentence. It struck him that it would be very disloyal even to hint that Ross might have been responsible for the fire. Certainly he had no proof that the Den 1 boy had been careless in clearing away brush.

“Well, we’ve saved the Castle and we can be proud of ourselves,” Mr. Hatfield declared, getting up from the ground. “The Cubs really pitched in.”

Brad and Dan asked the Cub leader how much damage had been done.

“It’s hard to tell,” Mr. Hatfield replied. “Some of the shrubs have been killed. But I don’t believe many of the trees have been damaged. As soon as the smoke clears a little, we’ll make a thorough check.”

Brad had noticed a familiar automobile driving into the grounds.

“We’ll have a little help too,” he muttered uncomfortably. “See who’s here now!”

Dan and Mr. Hatfield turned around to see that it was Mr. Kain, the bank employee, who had arrived.

“Oh, oh!” Dan remarked under his breath, as the man came swiftly toward them. “His face is as black as the smudge on mine! Something tells me we’re in for it now!”

## CHAPTER 12

### A Debt to Pay

Mr. Kain strode directly to Mr. Hatfield and the two cubs. The angry expression on his face left no doubt as to his attitude about the fire.

“I might have known something like this would occur!” he began. “Boys never should be permitted to run wild in a wooded area.”

“Just a minute, Mr. Kain,” interposed the Cub leader wearily. “Don’t jump to hasty conclusions.”

“The bank property has been damaged. We happen to own the woods, you know. It was a mistake to allow your organization to use this land.”

“You’re assuming that the Cubs started the fire, Mr. Kain.”

“What else should I think? They’ve been here almost daily, having picnics and starting fires.”

“That isn’t true, Mr. Kain,” Brad interposed, losing patience. “The Cubs have been careful about fires, knowing how dry the woods are at this time of year.”

“We’ve eaten cold food,” Dan added. “When this fire started, not a Cub was near the place so far as I know.”

The two boys were righteously angry for they felt that the bank employee was unjustly blaming the Cub organization without having made any investigation of the facts.

Several of the fire fighters who had overheard the remark, were of the same opinion.



“That’s right,” spoke up one of the telephone linesmen. “Fact is, if it hadn’t been for these two boys, the fire never could have been stopped. The house would have been destroyed for sure. But they saw smoke and got help before the fire was too well started.”

This information softened Mr. Kain somewhat.

“Is the fire out?” he demanded gruffly.

“Practically so,” he was informed. “The leaves are smoldering in a few places. But there’s no danger, if the area is watched for awhile.”

“We’ll be glad to do it,” offered Mr. Hatfield.

Mr. Kain made no reply. Abruptly leaving the group, he went to inspect the smoking, blackened patch of burned-over ground.

Brad, Dan and the other Cubs watched him uneasily. From his manner it was impossible to tell whether or not he accepted their statement that the Cubs had not been responsible for the fire.

Their eyes red and smarting from the smoke, too tired to care much what the bank employee thought, they flung themselves onto the grass to rest.

Mr. Kain presently returned. Immediately it was evident to the Cubs that his anger remained with him.

“What’s he picked up?” Dan muttered, noticing a charred object in the man’s hand.

“Looks like a stick,” Brad replied.

The object proved to be a half-burned shaft and arrow.

“This may or may not have significance,” Mr. Kain said coldly, addressing the group. “I picked it up in the burned area.”

“It looks like too large an arrow to be one of ours,” said Dan defensively.

“You’ve been using bows and arrows here however?”

“Sure,” admitted Brad. “We haven’t been starting fires with ’em though.”

“Nevertheless, the arrow convinces me that the Cubs have been roving through the woods at will, undoubtedly lighting matches and—”

“Cubs are taught to be careful about fire,” Brad broke in. “Besides, we’ve told you—the Cubs weren’t here today. Dan and I were the first to arrive.”

“The fire may have been slow in starting—possibly it smoldered for hours. But that’s neither here nor there. The damage has been done.”

“We’re mighty sorry, sir,” Dan said. “It wasn’t our fault, and we did our best to check the fire quickly.”

“I’m grateful to you for that, boys. All the same, you see my position. I am responsible to the bank. Of course you understand that I can’t permit you to continue to use this property.”

The Cubs gazed at Mr. Kain, dumbfounded. It seemed utterly impossible that he would send them away after they had worked so hard to save the Castle.

For a long moment no one spoke. Then Dan said:

“Mr. Kain, do you mean we can’t finish the filming of our play here?”

The bank employee dropped the charred arrow onto the grass. He stirred uneasily under the steady, almost accusing gaze of the Cubs.

“I know it will inconvenience you,” he said flatly. “But I have to think of the bank.”

“Inconvenience us!” Chips fairly shouted, breaking into the conversation. “If we have to go to another place, it means filming all the scenes over again!”

“We’re already working against a deadline,” Red added angrily. “Have a heart, Mr. Kain!”

“Sorry, boys. Is Mr. Holloway or your Cub leader around? I’ll have to inform them that the organization is not to come here again.”

Both Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway had gone to one of the cars where equipment was being packed. Seeing the two men, Mr. Kain would have started off to intercept them, had not Brad stopped him.

“Just a minute, Mr. Kain,” he said quietly. “I can’t feel that you’re being fair. The Cubs have been as careful as they know how to be in using this property. We cleaned up the brush and kept all of our promises.”

“I’m not blaming anyone,” Mr. Kain replied, ill at ease. “Boys will be boys. I’m not saying the fire was started on purpose. But you see my position. I’m responsible to the bank.”

“If you feel we caused the damage, let us pay for it,” Dan spoke up suddenly. “Just give us a chance to finish our play here.”

The offer seemed to strike a responsive chord with the bank employee. He paused a moment to consider.

“Sure,” urged Chips, “the Cubs have money we were saving for costumes and scenery. We could use some of that to pay for the damage.”

“Well, I hardly know what to say—” Mr. Kain hesitated.

“No buildings were destroyed,” Brad said quickly. “Only a few shrubs.”

“You boys did work hard to put out the fire once it started,” the bank man admitted. “I suppose an arrangement could be made for you to pay for the damage.”

“Then you’ll allow us to finish our play here?” Red demanded.

“Well, if you agree to pay, I suppose I might let you stay on for a week or two. But no longer.”

“How much will we owe?” Brad asked.

He knew that the shrubs which had burned were not rare or valuable ones. Actually, he thought that the fire had done very little damage. Although the blackened area was ugly and disfiguring, new growth quickly would cover it.

“Twenty-five dollars should cover it,” Mr. Kain said, after a little thought.

Now to him the amount seemed comparatively small. To the Cubs it represented a huge sum. To meet the debt they would be required to pool every cent they had earned for costumes and perhaps dip into the organization treasury as well.

Seeing the look of consternation upon the faces of the boys, Mr. Kain amended his calculation.

“Well, I’ll be easy on you,” he said. “Make it twenty dollars. However, the sum must be paid to the bank no later than tomorrow.”

Brad turned to the Cubs of Den 2. “How about it fellows?” he asked. “Can we do it?”

“We’ll have to,” decided Dan grimly. “I have three dollars and a half saved for my costume. I’ll toss that into the kitty.”

“How about the Cubs of Den 1?” Brad asked Ross. “Will they help too?”

“You’ll have to ask them,” he replied. “I know I can’t kick in. I’ve already used all my paper route money to buy a costume.”

“I thought Mrs. Holloway was making it for you.”

“I decided to buy it instead,” Ross answered. “No home-made job for me.”

With the exception of Ross, all of the Cubs who were present agreed to the plan. Having pledged themselves, they then sought Mr. Hatfield to tell him of their decision.

“If that’s what you want to do, it’s all right with me,” he agreed. “The Cubs always pay their debts. If the bank feels we’re responsible for the damage, then we’ll pay whatever they ask.”

“Have someone bring the money to the bank tomorrow,” Mr. Kain said. “I don’t want to be hard on the boys, but maybe having to spend their own cash will teach them to be more careful.”

No one replied. Decidedly uncomfortable, the bank man said good-bye and

drove away.

After he had gone, however, the Cubs had a great deal to say.

“He doesn’t want to be too hard! Oh, no!” Midge mimicked. “We worked mighty hard for that money.”

“And now it all goes to the bank when we didn’t do a thing except cut their old brush!” Red stormed. “It makes me sick.”

“We don’t have to do it,” Brad reminded the Cubs. “For that matter, we can give up the play.”

This the Cubs were unwilling to do.

“If Old Kill-Joy Kain says we owe twenty dollars let’s pay it,” Dan proposed grimly. “We’ll have to dig up every penny we saved for our costumes. That means making out with any old materials we can lay our hands on. Time’s too short to earn any more money now.”

“Fat chance we’ll have of winning the grand prize without decent costumes or scenery,” Chips said gloomily. “We’ll look like a band of tattered beggars!”

“All except Ross,” said Red, fastening his gaze upon the Den 1 boy. “He’ll have a perfectly super costume. Maybe, after all, we should award him the star part!”

## CHAPTER 13

### Kill-Joy Kain

Well aware that the other Cubs were out of sorts and annoyed at him, Ross immediately took issue with Red's pointed remark.

"Is it my fault I happened to buy my costume before this place went up in smoke?" he demanded. "Why shouldn't I be entitled to it?"

"Ross is right," Brad spoke up quickly. "He's just luckier than the rest of us. At least we'll have one good costume for the play."

"Yeah, but Ross should pay his share of the damage," Red protested hotly. "After all, he's as much to blame for the fire as we are—maybe more so."

"What do you mean by that crack?" Ross demanded.

"You were assigned to clean up the brush in your section. Well, that was where the fire started!"

"I didn't do it! Furthermore, I came out here last night and raked brush until I was blue in the face!"

"You probably started a little fire and thought you had put it out—"

"That's not so," Ross flung at his accuser. "You can't prove it. I never touched a match."

"Cut it out, Red," Brad quietly advised the other Cub. "Ross' word is good with me. You have no right to accuse him when you haven't any evidence."

"Okay," Red muttered, rather ashamed of himself, "I guess I did speak out of turn. Sorry, Ross."

The Den 1 boy made no reply. Turning quickly, he walked to one of the cars.

“We’re all out of sorts and dead tired,” Dan said. “It makes us all jumpy, especially after Mr. Kain came out here and delivered such a sock.”

“I’m sorry I accused Ross,” Red said again. “All the same, we know how he acts —”

“Never mind,” broke in Brad severely. “Mr. Hatfield is signaling us from the car. He’s ready to leave. I for one will be glad to get home and clean up.”

“Remember, we have to deliver our money to Mr. Kain tomorrow morning,” Dan warned the Cubs as they started off to the waiting cars. “I suppose we ought to meet at Mr. Hatfield’s house and all go to the bank together.”

After the other boys had scattered, he and Brad gathered up the empty buckets. Several men who lived not far away had offered to keep watch of the smoldering woods area, so the Cubs no longer would be needed.

“I’d like to know how that fire actually did start,” Brad remarked. “Dan, do you think Ross had anything to do with it?”

“Not intentionally.”

“No, of course not. I mean, do you think he came out here last night as he said to clear up the brush?”

“I rather think he did, Brad. Maybe that’s one reason the fire didn’t spread terribly fast despite the dryness of the season. He could have dropped matches or something, but you were right in saying we shouldn’t blame him. We’ll probably never know how the fire started.”

“Not unless we dig up a clue later on when we can search the area.”

“Everything is burned over. Not much chance of that, Brad.”

The Den Chief stooped to pick up the charred arrow which Mr. Kain had dropped on the grass. Carefully he studied it.

“You think that may have significance?” Dan asked after a moment.

“Maybe so. Maybe not. The arrow could have been lying out in the woods a long while. We know our mysterious Robin Hood has shot plenty of them.”

“Say! That’s an idea, Brad!”

“What is?”

“Maybe the fire was started by the fellow who has been roving around here—the Ghost of the Castle!”

Brad smiled, for the thought had occurred to him when first he saw the charred shaft.

“We know the Ghost is a very real person,” he commented. “We also know he roams over this property and the Castle at will.”

“He could be a tramp.”

“I’ve thought the same thing, Dan. We certainly shouldn’t blame Ross for that fire, until we’ve made as complete an investigation as possible.”

“Let’s see what we can discover right now,” the younger boy proposed.

Brad however, vetoed the proposal. He pointed out that Mr. Holloway and Mr. Hatfield both were ready to leave for town.

“We’re all tuckered out now,” he said wearily. “Let’s come back tomorrow. Then we’ll have plenty of time to comb the burned area for clues.”

“Providing the bank sticks by its agreement,” Dan added, sunk in gloom. “Even if we do dig up our money, the officials may change their minds about allowing us to use this place.”

The destructive fire was disheartening not only to Dan and Brad, but to all of the Cubs. Even if satisfactory arrangements were made for their continued use of the premises, they felt that they would remain under a cloud of suspicion.

Also, try as they would, they could not muster their former enthusiasm for presenting and filming the Robin Hood play. Without elaborate costumes and scenery they felt they would not have a very good chance to win first prize.



Mr. Holloway and Sam Hatfield also were troubled. It seemed rather unjust to them that the bank should hold the Cub organization responsible for the fire. Both offered to make good the loss themselves.

The Cubs however, were of one mind on this matter. They would not hear of the organization leaders assuming the bill.

“Maybe Mr. Kain will soften up when we take the money to him,” Dan said hopefully.

By pooling their earnings, the boys of the two Dens were able to accumulate twenty-one dollars and seventy-five cents. Ross was the only Cub to make no contribution.

“My paper route isn’t doing well any more,” he complained. “I’ve decided to give it up.”

“While you’re giving things up, you might cut out candy,” Chips reminded him, noticing that even as he talked Ross was nibbling at a chocolate bar. “I guess you have enough spending money.”

Brad gave Chips a warning glance and he subsided into silence. Nevertheless, the seeds of resentment were deeply planted among the other Cubs. Nearly all of the boys felt that Ross was taking a most selfish attitude.

“All set to go to the bank?” Brad asked the group.

The boys had gathered at Mr. Hatfield’s house to pool their money. Now, accompanied by the Cub leader, they walked three short blocks to the bank.

At such an early morning hour, few customers were in the institution. Mr. Hatfield inquired for Mr. Kain and was told he would be found upstairs in a balcony office.

The Cubs trooped up the stairs, presenting themselves at the official’s desk.

“Good morning, boys,” Mr. Kain said, but his voice, they noted, was not very friendly.

“We’ve brought the money,” Brad said, taking out his wallet.

“Oh, the money,” Mr. Kain repeated vaguely. He frowned. Then he said: “I’ve been thinking the matter over since I talked with you. The bank feels that it would be better not to allow the Cubs to use the property again. We’ll forget the amount you owe.”

“But you said if we paid the twenty dollars we might finish the filming of our picture!” Dan burst out. “We’ve raised the money. We’re keeping our part of the bargain.”

Mr. Kain stirred uneasily in his swivel chair.

“I’ve made further investigation since I talked with you boys yesterday afternoon. A farmer who lives not far from the castle grounds, reported to me that he saw a boy in the woods shortly before the fire started.”

“A Cub?” Brad demanded.

“Well, I suppose so.”

“None of the Cubs were there!” Dan said indignantly. “We’ve all given our word on that. Brad and I were the first to arrive on the scene. The fire had a good start then.”

“If it hadn’t been for Brad and Dan, I think the bank would have lost their building,” Mr. Hatfield interposed quietly. “To replace it at present costs would require in the neighborhood of a hundred thousand dollars, I should judge.”

“The house has no such value as it stands,” Mr. Kain said. “However, the bank is grateful to the Cubs. It’s not that. But you see our position. With so much at stake, we can’t risk having irresponsible—”

“The Cubs are not irresponsible,” Mr. Hatfield said firmly.

“Well, I’m sorry.” Mr. Kain spoke with finality.

“Then you won’t let us finish our film at the Castle?” Brad demanded.

“I can’t allow you to go there. As I say, I’m sorry—”

The Cubs waited to hear no more of his apology. Completely discouraged, they

started down the balcony steps.

“It’s unfair!” Red stormed. “This bank gives me a pain!”

Unnoticed by the Cubs, a heavily set man in gray, which matched the color of his hair, had met them squarely on the stairway.

“What’s this about not liking the bank?” he inquired.

Embarrassed, Red stammered out that Mr. Kain wasn’t being fair to the Cubs. And he added bitterly: “That’s all the thanks we get for saving their old house!”

The remark troubled the man, for he said: “We must look into this. Come with me, and we’ll talk to Mr. Kain.”

By this time the Cubs began to suspect that they had encountered another official of the bank. They were sure of it, when as they approached Mr. Kain’s desk again, the man quickly got to his feet.

“Good morning, Mr. Hammond,” he said respectfully.

Mr. Hammond, the boys learned a moment later, was vice president of the bank. A man of precise mind, he first asked Mr. Kain for his version of the disagreement. Then he listened to what Red and the other Cubs had to say.

“I didn’t annoy you about this matter, Mr. Hammond, because you were busy,” Mr. Kain said uneasily. “I thought for the protection of the bank—”

“Mr. Kain, you lose sight of several facts,” replied the bank official. “First, the Cubs give their word they had nothing to do with the fire. Second, had it not been for them, the Castle undoubtedly would have been destroyed. And third, it’s important that they finish the movie they’re making.”

“I only did what I thought was best for the interests of the bank,” Mr. Kain said, his eyes smoldering with resentment.

“I have a nephew who is a Cub Scout in another city,” Mr. Hammond continued. “He’s a dependable youngster and so are the other Cubs in his outfit. I’ll take a chance on such lads any day.”

“Very well,” said Mr. Kain stiffly. “The decision is yours to make—not mine. However, I must say that it’s tempting fate to turn loose a pack of boys on the premises.”

“We’ll not turn them loose exactly,” smiled the bank official. “I assume they will be under the direction of their leaders.”

“That’s right, sir,” Brad assured him.

“Also, I’ll assign you, Mr. Kain, to accompany the boys and watch over the property during the filming of the various scenes,” Mr. Hammond added. “I’m sure you’ll guard the bank interests most diligently.”

With that, he nodded to Mr. Hatfield, and moved on to his own private office.

It was plain to the Cubs that Mr. Kain resented their interference. This, he indicated, by the cold formal manner in which he addressed them.

“You heard what Mr. Hammond said?” he demanded. “He very generously has allowed you the use of the premises under my supervision. May I ask when you will film the next scenes of your play?”

“Probably Saturday if the weather is pleasant,” Mr. Hatfield informed him. “By that time we should have costumes and scenery ready. I assure you we’ll wind up the filming as quickly as possible.”

“Very well. Saturday then, I’ll be on hand to see that everything is kept in order. Oh, yes, there’s one more matter—the twenty dollars.”

“Well, for crying out loud!” Red muttered, but at a stern look from Mr. Hatfield, he subsided.

Now all the Cubs were certain that Mr. Hammond had not intended them to pay the sum. However, they were too proud to argue.

Without saying a word, Brad opened his wallet and gave the money to Mr. Kain.

“There go our costumes,” remarked Red pointedly.

“Eh?” inquired Mr. Kain, busily writing out a receipt.

No one repeated the remark.

Brad accepted the receipt, and the Cubs left the bank.

Red and Midge were in favor of protesting to Mr. Hammond. However, the Cub leader would not allow them to do that.

“All the same, Old Kill-Joy-Kain is taking advantage of us,” Red opined as the boys disconsolately walked down the street. “He’s sore now, and he’ll see to it that we have no privileges at the Castle.”

## CHAPTER 14

### Clues

Dan and Brad shared the opinion of the other Cubs that their “fun” times were nearly at an end at the Castle.

Parting company with the other boys, they discussed the matter as they walked toward their homes.

“I’ll bet a cent Mr. Kain won’t allow us to go poking around in the woods,” Brad remarked. “I especially wanted to see if we could find any clues as to how the fire started.”

“Why don’t we go out there now by ourselves?”

“I’d like to,” Brad replied. “I sure would. But it wouldn’t be cricket. Mr. Kain takes it for granted we’ll only go there when he’s around to watch-dog us.”

“I guess you’re right,” Dan admitted ruefully. “What we could do though, is to get there early on Saturday. If we’re lucky, we might get an hour’s jump on Mr. Kain.”

During the next few days, the Cubs made what arrangements they could for costumes. The mothers of the two Dens came through splendidly, fashioning garments of whatever materials they had on hand.

On the whole, the Cubs felt that the play would not be quite the flop they had feared. Nevertheless, resentment flared again when Ross displayed the elegant costume he had purchased at a theatrical supply store.

Among some of the boys it was whispered that Ross still expected to be awarded the star role in the play.

And though Dan and Brad tried to quiet such rumblings, the Cubs continued to hint that he might have had something to do with starting the disastrous fire.

“If Ross is innocent, the Cubs are doing him a terrible injustice,” Brad said to his friend early Saturday. The two boys had walked to the Castle grounds, and by intention were there ahead of the Pack.

“I wish we could find how the fire really started,” Dan replied soberly. “So much time has elapsed now, all clues probably have been destroyed.”

“We may find some more of those arrows, Dan. They may or may not have significance.”

The two boys were hopeful of coming upon evidence to indicate that the fire had been of accidental nature or had been started by the mysterious “ghost” of the Castle.

Their task proved most discouraging. As they wandered through the blackened, charred area, they found not a single clue. They did observe that the damage to shrubs and trees had been relatively slight.

“It looks to me as if Ross told the truth about cleaning up the brush,” Brad declared, pausing beside a large pile of charred sticks and debris. “See! He must have gathered it all here in this one place.”

“And maybe touched a match to it.”

“Ross wouldn’t be that stupid. He knows better than to start a fire in a wooded area. Anyway, you can see the fire didn’t start in this pile of brush. It spread from some distance back.”

Dan agreed with his friend’s observation. Both could see where the fire had followed a line of least resistance along a winding road.

“Say, I wonder where that road leads?” Dan speculated. “I never noticed it here before.”

Curious to learn whether or not it joined the main road, they followed it for a short distance.

Before the boys had gone far, they discovered that it twisted in among the trees, leading behind the Castle. From there it swung to the right, presently coming out within view of the adjoining estate. By this time the Cubs had learned that the property was owned by a Colonel Brekenridge.

“No sense going any farther,” Brad said, halting. “For all we know, we may be trespassing on Brekenridge land. If the Colonel’s gardener should spot us, he’d make trouble.”

“The road hasn’t been used much of late,” Dan said, noting that it was clogged with grass.

Pausing in the clearing, the boys gazed toward the pillared Brekenridge home. No one was to be seen either in the yard or on the veranda.

After a casual inspection, the pair started back the way they had come.

They had covered about two-thirds of the distance to the Castle, when Dan abruptly halted to study a charred irregular area at the side of the road.

“Say, it looks as if someone had a camp fire here!” he exclaimed. “Recently too, because rains haven’t disturbed any of the ashes.”

Brad turned to gaze at the area his companion indicated.

Immediately he noticed a snake-like black tail of burned ground leading toward another charred area.

“Dan, this must be where the fire started!” he cried.

“The wind was blowing toward the Castle all right.”

“It’s clear as day,” Brad declared, walking over to the dead ashes of the bonfire. “Someone built this, and didn’t put it out entirely. Then the person went off.”

“And it slowly spread,” Dan agreed. “First in this narrow tail, and then after it struck that section of dry leaves and grass it spread out rapidly through the woods.”

The boys carefully examined the dead embers. Beside them was a blackened tin



can which had been used for cooking purposes. Dan also picked up a half-burned stick with the remains of a roasted weiner still attached.

“This fire must have been started by a boy,” he said slowly. “Or possibly by a tramp. Brad, do you suppose it could have been Ross?”

“He wouldn’t build a fire as carelessly as this,” the Den Chief pointed out. “He’s had Cub training in how to lay his sticks. No, I’m more than ever convinced, Dan, that the fire wasn’t his fault.”

Decidedly relieved to think that they had found evidence which tended to exonerate Ross, the two Cubs traced the start of the fire. Plainly they could see where it had leaped over a narrow ditch and then moved in several directions.

“If Ross didn’t start the fire, who did?” Dan speculated as the boys started down the road again. “Our mysterious Ghost of the Castle?”

“Could be. I’d like to catch that guy who keeps horning into our pictures. Maybe we will too!”

“Any ideas?” Dan asked.

Before Brad could reply, both boys were startled to hear a babble of voices ahead on the trail.

“Sounds like a delegation,” Brad murmured. “I wonder if the Cubs have arrived for rehearsals.”

Rounding a bend of the road, the two boys caught a glimpse of four Den 2 boys who had gathered in a huddle.

Their backs were to Dan and Brad. So earnestly were they talking, that they failed to observe the approach of the two Cubs.

“Mr. Hatfield can’t and won’t do anything,” Dan and Brad heard Red say distinctly. “We all know Ross is guilty. So it’s up to us to see that he’s punished.”

“Sure, and let’s think up a good one,” proposed Chips. “We’ve got to teach that little guy a lesson he won’t forget!”

## CHAPTER 15

### A Message

As Dan and Brad walked up, the Cubs broke up their circle.

“Having a little conference?” the Den Chief inquired pointedly.

“Oh, just talking,” Midge Holloway replied uneasily.

The group was comprised of Red, Chips, Midge and Fred.

Brad fixed his gaze disapprovingly upon the four conspirators.

“I’m ashamed of you,” he said. “Plotting behind Mr. Hatfield’s back. You didn’t figure on letting Dan or me know what you were doing either!”

“We haven’t done anything yet,” Midge defended the group. “Furthermore, we haven’t had a chance to talk over this matter with anyone. My Dad brought us out here only ten minutes ago.”

“It seems you had to come back into the woods for your high-powered conference,” Brad said sternly. “I guess you didn’t want Mr. Holloway to hear you.”

“What if we didn’t?” Red demanded, glaring at the Den Chief. “You had your chance to do something about Ross and you let it slide. Now it’s our turn.”

“And just what do you have against him? Let’s hear your evidence.”

“We’ve got plenty,” Red announced grimly. “The lug bought himself a fancy costume and didn’t kick in a dime to pay for the fire damage.”

“He was lucky enough to have bought his costume before the trouble developed.

Why be jealous?"

"We're not jealous," Chips broke in. "We believe in justice, that's all. From the way Ross acted, we're sure he never did his work here as he was supposed to. Either that, or he came out and started the fire."

"You seem a bit hazy as to what you think he did do."

"One way or the other, he was responsible for the fire," Chips insisted.

"That's wild talk, and Dan and I can prove it!" Brad replied. "We've learned how the fire did start."

The two boys showed the other Cubs the dead bonfire ashes, the tin can and the charred weiner.

"Ross wouldn't have built a fire this way," Midge conceded. "You're right, Brad. We've misjudged him."

"If Ross didn't start the fire, then who did?" demanded Red.

"That's the question we'd all like to have answered," Dan told him. "If we could find the answer, it might clear us at the bank."

"We might try to keep watch of this road," Brad suggested. "I have a hunch whoever started that fire will be using it again. By watching we might learn something."

The other Cubs agreed that the proposal was a good one. They pointed out, however, that with Mr. Kain on hand to see that no one roved too far afield, any sleuthing must be carried on under difficulties.

"I admit we're handicapped," Brad acknowledged. "At any rate we know this road is the place to watch."

The Cubs emerged from the woods just as Mr. Hatfield drove up with another car loaded with boys from Den 1. Ross was among them.

Seeing the group of Den 2 boys, he turned as if to walk in the opposite direction.

“Ross!” called Brad.

The boy turned reluctantly and waited for the Den Chief. Then before Brad could tell him about the discovery, he said:

“I know the fellows are sore at me, thinking I caused all the trouble with the bank. I’m quitting the Pack. You can have my costume if you want it. Or give it to Dan.”

“Ross, you can’t leave the outfit,” Brad protested. “We need you.”

“The Cubs will be glad to see me go. I’ve annoyed them from the start, and now they think I caused the fire.”

“They may have thought that at first, but they have the right slant now. Listen, Ross, you can be a big help in straightening this mess out if you will.”

The Den Chief then told him of the discovery made near the old road.

“You can help us try to learn the identity of the Castle ghost,” he urged. “If we find him, we may learn who caused the fire.”

Brad’s words encouraged Ross. “I’ll keep watch,” he promised. “I didn’t want to drop out of the Pack—but the fellows have made it plenty tough for me.”

“I know,” Brad admitted. “Just don’t act so know-it-all and their attitude will change.”

Rehearsals began presently. As yet Mr. Kain had not appeared on the scene, and the boys were hopeful that he would fail to come.

However, shortly after the actual filming began, his car drove up.

Obviously displeased, Mr. Kain watched the boys for a few minutes. Then he began a minute inspection of the Castle itself.

“He’s looking around to see if he can’t find where we’ve damaged something,” Chips muttered. “If he discovers a single thing he’ll use it as an excuse to bounce us for good.”

Made uncomfortable by Mr. Kain's presence, the boys did not act their parts well. Repeatedly, Mr. Holloway had to take scenes over.

Mr. Kain completed his inspection of the inside of the Castle and returned to watch rehearsals.

As the sun rose higher, he became more and more impatient. He would wander to his car, sit there awhile, and then return.

From his scowl, no one questioned that he felt the Cubs were taking entirely too much time on the grounds.

"How soon do you expect to wind this up?" he finally asked Mr. Hatfield.

The Cub leader told him that the boys probably would not be ready to leave for another hour.

"I can't wait that long," the bank official protested. "I've wasted two hours here now."

"It isn't necessary for you to remain unless you feel you must, Mr. Kain. I can promise that the Cubs will do no damage."

"Well, I have another errand," the bank employee said. "I'll attend to it and then drop back."

He walked to his car. But as he started to open the door, his attention fastened upon an object lying in the dust.

The Cubs saw him pick it up and examine it carefully.

"Now what's he found?" Dan muttered. "It must be something he's going to hook onto us. Here he comes back!"

Carrying the object, Mr. Kain returned to the group.

"I found this lying on the grass beside my car," he said. "Maybe one of you youngsters can explain it."

Mr. Kain held up the shaft of an arrow. Attached to it was a scroll of paper.

“The mysterious archer again!” exclaimed Dan.

“What does the message say?” demanded Red impatiently.

Mr. Kain already had read it. He handed the paper to Brad. The words were written in a childish, nearly illegible scrawl. Brad read them aloud:

“Look in Robin Hood’s Strong Box. You will find something of interest.”

“Robin Hood’s strong box,” Dan repeated, recalling the Castle chimney niche which had been given that name. “Well, what do you know!”

“This message seems to make sense to you, if not to me,” Mr. Kain said testily.

“Will someone kindly explain what is meant by Robin Hood’s strong box?”

## CHAPTER 16

### Treasure

The Cubs were reluctant to tell Mr. Kain their secret, lest he feel that they had overstepped themselves in investigating the Castle.

“Robin Hood’s Strong Box is just a name for a hiding place,” Dan explained vaguely.

“Then one of you boys shot this arrow.”

The Cubs looked from one to another. Each boy shook his head.

“A mysterious archer has been annoying us a bit by shooting arrows during our rehearsals,” Mr. Hatfield explained. “This shaft looks as if it may have come from his bow.”

“But how did he know about Robin Hood’s Strong Box?” Midge muttered. “The guy must be psychic. Either that, or he sneaks around listening to our conversation.”

“I am quite certain this arrow was not lying near my car when I drove into the grounds today,” Mr. Kain said. “It has been shot in the last hour or so.”

“It’s probably a joke,” Chips commented. He wished fervently that the bank employee would leave and be done with his prying questions. Once he was out of the way, the Cubs could organize an intensive search!

“You boys seem to know what is meant by Robin Hood’s Strong Box. I rather think you’re trying to keep something from me.”

“There’s nothing mysterious about it,” Brad said, reluctantly deciding to reveal the hiding place. “Robin Hood’s Strong Box is merely a name we gave to a niche

in the fireplace.”

“Inside the Castle?”

“Well, yes.”

“Then you have been roving around inside again?”

“No, we haven’t,” Brad replied indignantly. “We found the hiding place long ago.”

“Show it to me,” the bank employee requested.

The Cubs would have preferred to do their investigating in his absence. But there was no escape.

Unwillingly, they walked with him back to the Castle. Dan noticed that the broken window had not yet been repaired and remarked about it.

“I’ve ordered new panes put in,” Mr. Kain said. “Workmen have been very slow. Rest assured though, the work will be done no later than tomorrow. I am quite annoyed to find so much activity hereabouts.”

The Cubs would have entered through the window, but the bank official would not permit it.

Instead, he unlocked the front door. A faint odor of smoke still lingered in the cool empty rooms, but this Mr. Kain did not notice.

“Now show me Robin Hood’s Strong Box,” he directed. “I can’t believe this message is anything but a joke. Nevertheless, I want to see the hiding place that is meant.”

As the Cubs led him toward the massive fireplace, Dan brought up the rear. Glancing from one Cub to another, he noticed that Ross was missing from the group.

“What became of Ross?” the boy whispered to Midge.

“Why, he was with us when we started for the Castle.”



“I thought so. He’s wandered off somewhere.”

Curious to learn what had become of the boy, Dan went to one of the grimy windows and looked out.

Ross was not to be seen anywhere on the grounds.

“Queer,” he reflected. “I’d have thought ordinary curiosity would have made him come with the other Cubs.”

“No one can tell what Ross will do, or where he’ll go,” Midge said with a shrug. “That lad is unpredictable.”

The Cubs gathered in a half circle about the fireplace. Brad explained to Mr. Kain how the chimney hiding place had been found.

Before he could search the niche, the bank employee crouched down and squinted up the dark hole.

“Nothing here,” he announced.

“You can’t see the niche,” Brad told him. “But if you run your hand up against the wall, you can feel it.”

Mr. Kain obeyed instructions.

“Still nothing here,” he declared. He withdrew his arm and brushed cobwebs from his coat sleeve. “Well, it’s no more than I expected.”

One and all, the Cubs were disappointed. They had hoped—indeed, had been confident that a surprise awaited them.

“Our Castle ghost has an unpleasant sense of humor,” Midge complained. “First he shoots arrows into the target just to show us how much better he is at archery than we are. And now this!”

Mr. Kain asked the boys several questions concerning the strange person who had appeared from time to time.

“We think he may have been the one who started the fire,” Brad said. “So far, we

have no proof.”

“That might be somewhat difficult to obtain at this late date,” the bank employee replied.

Smiling in a more friendly way, he turned to leave.

“Come along, boys,” he said as they would have loitered. “I want to lock up the house.”

Mr. Holloway, Mr. Hatfield and the Cubs followed the bank man to the door.

Without being noticed, Dan and Brad held back. Both were unwilling to leave the Castle without investigating the chimney niche themselves.

Dan ran his hand up the wall, groping carefully about.

“Nothing there?” Brad demanded impatiently.

“Not a thing,” the younger boy replied in disgust. “Mr. Kain was right. Say—wait!”

As Dan spoke, his hand brushed against a tiny object far back in the niche.

In an attempt to grasp it, he succeeded in pushing it farther back, almost beyond reach.

“What have you found?” Brad asked eagerly.

“Don’t know yet,” Dan grunted. “My fingers touched something. Then whatever it was slipped away from me.”

At the outside door, Mr. Kain and the Cubs were waiting.

“Come on, Dan!” Midge called.

Paying no heed, the boy groped again in the chimney niche.

This time he was able to fasten his fingers about the object.

He could feel its soft covering, and something hard inside.

Aware that Dan had made a discovery, the other Cubs quickly returned to the living room.

As they gathered about the hearth, the boy brought the object to light.

Held tightly in his hand was a small leather pouch with a drawstring.

“It seems Robin Hood’s Strong Box does have something for us after all!” he declared triumphantly.

The leather bag evidently had not been long in the niche for it was only slightly soiled.

On either side were stamped strange red and black symbols.

“Gosh! What do you suppose it contains?” Fred demanded. “Treasure, I bet! Open it quick, Dan, and pour out the gold.”

## CHAPTER 17

# A Valuable Collection

Dan loosened the draw string of the leather bag.

As Mr. Kain, the Cubs and their leaders gathered close about, he spilled the contents out into his outstretched hand.

For a moment no one spoke.

The bag contained perhaps fifteen coins of foreign make. Nearly all were of silver and apparently quite old.

“Oh, shoot!” exclaimed Midge in disappointment. “I thought we might find a real treasure. Just a few old coins.”

“At least it’s better than nothing,” Dan said, fingering one of the coins. “Even if we can’t spend them, they’re worth saving.”

“Let me see that coin,” Mr. Kain requested suddenly.

Surprised by the bank employee’s tone, Dan handed it over.

Immediately the man became very excited.

“I should say these are worth saving!” he said emphatically.

“They’re valuable old coins?” inquired Mr. Hatfield.

“That would be my opinion. This one, I’m sure, is a very old carlino.”

“What’s that?” asked Red blankly.

“Weren’t carlinos minted in Italy?” Mr. Holloway inquired.

“Formerly they were used in Naples, Sicily and Rome,” Mr. Kain said. “The coin obtained its name from the emperor Charles VI in whose time the coin first was issued.”

“And is this coin a real old one?” Fred asked in awe.

“I’m not an expert on such matters,” Mr. Kain admitted. “This silver piece though, very much resembles a similar coin in the British Museum.”

“Then it should be worth a lot!” exclaimed Midge.

“Off hand, I should be inclined to agree. I can’t make out the date,” the bank employee said, studying the reverse side of the coin. “It looks as if it might be 1740 or 1730. I know the coins were made as early as 1730.”

“Gosh, we have found ourselves something!” Fred murmured in awe. “Pass those other coins around, Dan. Let’s see what they are.”

Before Dan could do so, Mr. Kain seized upon another battered coin in the collection.

“This is a very old gold coin!” he exclaimed. “If I’m not mistaken it’s one they call an ‘angel.’”

“What is an angel?” questioned Fred, who never had heard of a coin by such a name.

“It was an English gold coin, originally of the value of 6s. 8d. sterling. Such coins first were struck off by Edward IV in 1465 and I believe were made until 1634.”

“Then we’ve come upon a museum piece,” remarked Mr. Hatfield.

“These coins are priceless,” the bank man declared. “That is, if they are genuine. As I say, I am not an expert.”

Greatly impressed, the Cubs passed the coin around. Though it was badly worn they could faintly distinguish the figure of the archangel Michael defeating a

dragon.

“A museum would pay a large sum to add such a coin to its collection. If my memory serves me, I’ve seen pictures of one of these angels on display at the British Museum.”

“Where do you suppose the coins came from?” Brad speculated. “We know they couldn’t have been in the chimney niche very long. The hiding place was empty when we looked there a few days ago.”

“This bag of coins must be a contribution from the Ghost of the Castle,” Dan said half in jest. “Say, you know he isn’t such a bad fellow after all!”

In addition to the two very old coins, the collection contained several half dollars of U. S. mintage. These, Mr. Kain said also were valuable to collectors, though far less in demand than the rare angel and carlino.

“Many of the coins I am unable to identify,” the bank employee admitted. “I do know enough about money though, to be certain you have a valuable collection here.”

“Say! Maybe we’ll be able to buy costumes for the play after all!” Midge declared jubilantly. “How much do you think these coins will bring, Mr. Kain?”

“That is impossible to say.” The bank man returned all of the coins to the leather bag. “We must have them appraised. And then, the question of ownership arises.”

To the Cubs the word had an ominous sound. They were certain the treasure had been intended for them.

Belatedly, they remembered that the Castle belonged to the bank. If he chose to do so, Mr. Kain could claim the property. From his expression, they were positive he meant to keep the collection.

“Ownership should be determined,” Mr. Hatfield agreed quietly. “It doesn’t seem reasonable to me that anyone in his right mind would give away such highly valuable coins.”

“If ever we find that mysterious archer, we’ll have the answer,” Dan declared.

Mr. Kain, in a far better mood now that the coins had been discovered, urged the Cubs to tell him what they knew of the trespasser.

“We don’t see him very often but we know he watches us when we rehearse for our play,” Dan answered. “Several times he’s shot arrows and he’s very good with a bow.”

“Have you ever had a good look at the man?”

“We’re inclined to think he may be a boy,” Mr. Holloway spoke up. “At least in one of the movie scenes, we caught a fleeting glimpse of him.”

“A boy, eh?” Mr. Kain repeated, fingering the bag of coins. “In that case, he might not have a right to this collection. It could have been stolen.”

“Gosh, that’s right!” exclaimed Red, rather alarmed. “We don’t want to get mixed up in anything shady.”

“You won’t be,” Mr. Kain assured the Cubs. “I’ll take charge of these coins—for the bank of course. I’ll make every effort to trace the owner.”

“And if you fail?” asked Brad significantly.

“Well, if the owner can’t be found after a reasonable length of time, the coins will become bank property.”

“Even when Dan found ’em?” Chips asked indignantly.

“I fear you are unfamiliar with the laws governing property,” Mr. Kain said. “Now the statutes of this state say—”

The Cubs were never to learn what the state laws set forth, for at that moment there came an interruption.

The Cubs were startled to hear a sharp rattle on a window pane.

“What was that?” Fred demanded.

Everyone turned to look. Someone stood at the living room, his face pressed against the window.

“The ghost!” exclaimed Chips.

“A ghost, my Adam’s apple!” Brad snorted. “That’s Ross Langdon. He only wants to see what we’re doing in here.”

On this latter point, however, the Den Chief was mistaken.

Instead of trying to learn what the Cubs were doing, the Den 1 boy frantically motioned for the group to join him.

“What ails Ross, anyhow?” Midge muttered.

As the boy’s strange antics continued, the Cubs became convinced that something actually was wrong.

“Let’s see what he wants,” Dan said, starting for the door.

Ross ran around the side of the house to meet him.

“Dan, come quick!” he urged breathlessly.

“What’s up, Ross?”

“I saw him!”

“Saw whom, Ross?”

“That little guy that shoots arrows!”

“Where, Ross?” Dan now became excited, for in view of the bag of coins that had been found, he knew it was vitally important to catch the intruder.

Before Ross could answer, the other Cubs, Mr. Kain, Mr. Holloway and Sam Hatfield gathered around him.

“When you all started here to see what was in Robin Hood’s Strong Box, I hid out,” Ross explained, talking rapidly. “I figured whoever shot that arrow must be hiding close by. I thought he’d probably show himself once everyone was inside the Castle.”

“Sound reasoning,” interposed Mr. Hatfield.



“I hid in the bushes. Sure enough. I hadn’t been lying low many minutes when out pops a kid no older than Dan here. He had a bow in his hand so I know he was the one we’re after.”

“What did he do?” Dan demanded impatiently.

“Well, he sneaked fairly close to the Castle and raised his bow as if to shoot. I thought he was going to send an arrow flying through the broken window.”

“Why didn’t you sneak up from behind and nab him?” Brad demanded. “That was your chance, Ross.”

“I got a little excited. I started after him all right, but I made too much noise.”

“He heard you coming and ran?” Mr. Hatfield inquired.

“That’s right, sir. See, he dropped his bow here by the window.”

Ross picked up the bow which was made of lemonwood and gave it to Mr. Hatfield. The Cub leader did not take time to examine it.

“Which way did the fellow go?” he asked.

“Into the woods.”

“You didn’t try to follow him, Ross?”

“No, but I saw him start down that winding road through the burned area.”

“That’s the way he always goes!” cried Dan. “He must live somewhere near here.”

“Maybe we can trail him if we hurry,” urged Brad. He gazed questioningly at the Cub leader, hopefully awaiting an order.

“Let’s take after him,” Mr. Hatfield proposed, hesitating only momentarily. “Our mysterious archer has many questions to answer! If we move fast, we may catch him this time.”

## CHAPTER 18

### Billy Hides Out

Led by Ross and Mr. Hatfield, the Cubs rapidly combed the woods in the immediate vicinity of the Castle.

The boy had completely vanished.

“We’re wasting time searching for him among the trees,” Dan offered his opinion. “I have a hunch he went straight down the road, maybe to the Brekenridge estate.”

“I think so too,” Ross supported the opinion. “I heard him running as if he expected to be followed.”

The Cubs set off at a fast pace through the burned area. Mr. Kain, in poor physical trim, found it difficult to keep pace.

“Incidentally, here is where the fire started,” Dan pointed out to the banker as they passed the remains of the small bonfire where the weiner had been roasted.

“Why, this isn’t on bank property,” Mr. Kain noted. “Possibly I have been unjust in blaming the Cubs.”

The boys reached the end of the road without seeing anyone.

Disappointed, they halted at the edge of the Brekenridge estate.

“The boy may have taken off in any direction from here,” Mr. Kain said doubtfully. “Who lives at that house with the pillars?”

“I believe the place is rented by a Colonel Brekenridge,” Mr. Holloway supplied. “I’ve never met him.”

“Any children?”

“I wouldn’t know.”

Through the trees the Cubs could see someone seated on the veranda.

“That may be Mr. Brekenridge,” the bank man commented. “Let’s ask him if he’s seen anyone pass this way in the last ten or fifteen minutes.”

“We may not get a chance to talk to the estate owner,” Dan hinted. “The gardener there doesn’t care for visitors.”

Not to be deterred by this warning, the men pushed on, followed by the Cubs.

Scarcely had they started up the lane from the entrance gate than a dog began to bark.

“We’ll be announced all right,” Brad said. “This place is well guarded.”

As the Cubs expected, the barking of the dog brought the gardener to see what was amiss.

Immediately he recognized Dan and Brad, who walked somewhat in advance of the others in the group.

“I thought I told you to stay away from here,” he said angrily.

“It’s important that we see Mr. Brekenridge,” Brad insisted.

“Well, you can’t talk to him and that’s final,” the man snapped.

By this time the others in the group had come up. Seeing such a large delegation, the gardener did not know what to make of it. Nevertheless, he was determined that his authority should not be questioned.

“We should like to see the master of this estate,” requested Mr. Hatfield politely.

“Mr. Brekenridge’s orders are to keep everyone off the estate.”

“Why is that?”

“Because he likes privacy, the colonel does. Now move along and don’t be making me any more trouble.”

Some distance away an elderly man could be seen reclining on a porch chair. Mr. Hatfield was convinced that it must be Mr. Brekenridge himself.

“Will you please tell the colonel that visitors are here?” the Cub leader requested. “After all, we would not insist upon seeing him but the matter is important.”

“If it’s a business matter, you can tell me. I’ll report to Mr. Brekenridge.”

“What we have to say is for the colonel’s ears alone.”

“Well, the colonel’s ears ain’t going to hear it!” the gardener retorted. “I’m in charge here and I say you’re not to bother the master. He’s not well enough to talk to anyone.”

“In that case, we’ll not press the matter,” Mr. Hatfield accepted dismissal. “However, since Colonel Brekenridge is up and about, I thought—”

“Visitors worry him,” the gardener cut in. “I ain’t aiming to be unfriendly, but my orders are to see he’s not disturbed.”

“We’ll go,” the Cub leader said. “But first, tell us if you’ve seen a boy pass this way in the last ten minutes.”

“I’ve been trimming a hedge. I ain’t had time to be looking for anyone.”

“I see,” said Mr. Hatfield, aware that the man would give no information. “Thank you.”

All the Cubs started to leave. As they moved away, they heard a faint call from the veranda.

“Oh, Pete!”

The gardener became somewhat confused upon seeing that Colonel Brekenridge was beckoning to him.

“Tell those folks to come here,” the master of the estate called.

“You heard him,” the gardener muttered, annoyed that Colonel Brekenridge had interfered. “He’s willing to see you. Why, I wouldn’t know, after telling me to keep folks away.”

The Cubs and the three men went on to the pillared veranda.

Colonel Brekenridge, once a large man now wasted to a shadow of his former self, lay in a specially built reclining wheel chair. He wore glasses and had been reading, for several English magazines and *The Spectator* were spread on a table beside him.

“You were sending these people away, Pete?” the master of the estate asked the gardener. “Did I not hear them ask to see me?”

“You know you’re not to over-tire yourself, Colonel Brekenridge,” the man replied. “I was only trying to look after your best interests.”

“I’m sure you were,” the colonel replied kindly. “Sometimes I fear you are inclined to be over-zealous in your duty. At any rate, I am feeling much better these days and welcome interesting visitors.”

“I trust we’ll prove interesting then,” said Mr. Hatfield with a smile. “In any case we will endeavor to be brief.”

Colonel Brekenridge waved the three men into porch chairs. The Cubs sat on the steps in front of them.

“I’m not as much of an invalid as my gardener would have you believe,” the colonel said with a smile. “When I first came here to live, I was seriously ill and required absolute quiet. Now, I’m happy to say, I appear well on the road to recovery.”

The three men introduced themselves and presented the Cubs. Mr. Hatfield then explained that the boys had been using the adjoining property in rehearsing for a play which they hoped soon to put on.

“You had a fire over there the other day, didn’t you?” the colonel inquired. “I saw smoke and was a little worried lest this property be in danger. Fortunately

for my interests, the wind carried it in the other direction.”

“We’re still trying to learn how that fire started,” Mr. Hatfield said. “That is not our reason for coming here today though. We’re searching for someone who hid a small bag inside the Castle, and then ran off in this direction.”

“We thought you might have seen him come this way,” Mr. Kain added.

“No, I can’t say I have. I must admit I dozed off for fifteen or twenty minutes.”

The Cubs now felt that they were at a complete dead-end in their search for the elusive archer. Believing that Colonel Brekenridge was unable to provide any useful clues, they arose to leave.

At this point, however, Mr. Kain brought out the small leather bag.

Even before the bank employee explained anything about it, the colonel’s eyes fastened attentively upon the pouch.

“That little bag has a familiar look,” he remarked.

“It isn’t yours by chance?” inquired Mr. Kain in surprise.

“Those symbols remind me of a bag I once owned. May I see it please?”

“Certainly.” Mr. Kain offered the coin-filled leather pouch.

“This certainly looks like a bag I once bought from an Indian on one of my trips through the west,” Colonel Brekenridge said. “Come to think of it, I don’t know what ever became of it either.”

“You are a coin collector perhaps?” interposed Mr. Holloway.

“No, I have no hobbies. In my younger days I enjoyed travel and picked up a few curios. But in no sense of the word could you call me a collector.”

Curiously, Colonel Brekenridge felt of the coins inside the bag. Mr. Kain bade him open the pouch.

The colonel poured the coins out onto the robe which covered his wheel chair.

“Well!” he exclaimed. “These too have a somewhat familiar appearance.”

“Then the coins are yours?” asked Mr. Kain.

“No, but I think I recognize them. They belonged to my son.”

“Is the boy here now?”

Colonel Brekenridge smiled as he moved his wheel chair so that the sun would not shine directly into his eyes.

“Oh, my son is a grown man,” he replied. “At present he is abroad serving in the army.”

“This puzzle grows more confusing by the minute,” declared Mr. Holloway. “Suppose we tell you exactly how we came into possession of the bag of coins.”

The Den Dad then related how the arrow with a message attached had been shot near Mr. Kain’s car.

Colonel Brekenridge’s amazement increased as he learned that the bag had been hidden inside the chimney of the bank-owned dwelling.

“These coins are very valuable,” he assured the Cubs. “I am certain it was never my intention to give them away. As I said, they belonged to my son.”

“Can you explain how the bag came to be in the hiding place?” Dan questioned.

“When last I saw that bag it was reposing in a drawer of a desk upstairs,” Colonel Brekenridge replied. “But I might have a theory—yes, it amounts practically to a conviction.”

The invalid winked at the gardener. “We do have an archer in our family, I believe?”

“Aye, that we do,” the man admitted with a heavy sigh. “Many a time he’s nearly winged me with his arrows.”

Colonel Brekenridge requested the gardener to call his nurse.

A rustle of stiffly starched white uniform heralded her arrival a moment later.

The young woman bore a glass of milk and two tablets on a tray.

“Oh, you have visitors, Colonel,” she observed somewhat disapprovingly. “Aren’t you afraid of over-exerting yourself?”

“Not in the least,” he rumbled. “Never felt better. I suspect I’ve been dying of boredom these last few months. What I need is more visitors.”

“Colonel, it is time for your medicine.”

“Medicine, be hanged! I’m sick of those ghastly concoctions the doctor has been forcing down me. And no more of that wretched milk!”

“You are feeling better, Colonel! Such spirit!”

“I’m deep in a mystery,” the colonel smiled. “With your help though, I think we may be able to solve it. Miss Aldringham, will you find my grandson, Billy, and send him here?”

“I’ll do my best, Colonel. That boy has a way of disappearing for hours at a time.”

During the absence of the nurse, Colonel Brekenridge told the Cubs a little about himself. He said he had rented the house six months earlier, but had not been too pleased with the quarters.

“For one thing, my grandson has had no playmates,” he explained. “The boy came to me three months ago from England.”

At Dan’s look of surprise, the colonel explained that Billy was an American by birth. He had spent many years in England and other foreign countries however, in company with his father.

“Billy hasn’t been very happy here,” he remarked sadly. “He’s a live wire and hasn’t had enough to do. Then I must admit I’ve been so ill I’ve scarcely concerned myself with his social needs.”

Miss Aldringham returned to the porch to report that she could not find Billy anywhere.



“His room is empty,” she said. “I couldn’t find him on the grounds either.”

“Drat that boy!” the colonel exclaimed. “Sometimes it seems to me he deliberately hides out! Since he’s been up to mischief, he probably figures he’ll be punished.”

The Cubs might not have learned the answer to their many questions for days to come. At that moment, however, Dan’s alert gaze chanced to rove toward a clump of bushes behind the veranda.

The Cub was startled to catch a glimpse of a touseled brown head of hair. A pair of blue eyes gazed squarely into his own from amid the foliage.

Then the face was gone.

“I saw someone in that rhododendron bush just then!” he exclaimed.

“Nail him!” commanded the colonel.

Dan and the gardener both made a dive for the bush.

They emerged with a small boy in tow. Not more than eleven years of age, he wore English cut trousers which he had rolled to the knees. His freckled, deeply tanned face was smeared with dirt.

“Well, Billy, I guess you knew you were wanted,” the colonel said severely. “Hiding out, weren’t you?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the boy.

His curious gaze moved from one Cub Scout to another and finally came to rest on the leather pouch which his grandfather held.

“Billy, you have a few matters to explain, I believe.”

The boy grinned at his grandfather.

“Oh, sure,” he admitted, undisturbed. “I’ll tell you whatever you want to know—only first you have to promise not to punish me.”

“You’ll drive no bargain with me, young man. Sit down!”

“Yes, sir,” Billy gulped, collapsing on the steps.

“Before we delve into other matters, there is one question I will ask,” said the colonel severely. “Did you or did you not have anything to do with starting a fire at the Castle?”

## CHAPTER 19

### A New Cub

The point-blank question did not disconcert Billy Brekenridge.

“Why, no, Grandfather,” he replied soberly. “I didn’t start the fire. That is, I don’t think so.”

“You don’t seem to be very certain, Billy.”

“Did you roast weiners that morning?” interposed Dan.

“No-o,” the boy replied, thinking hard. “Oh, yes, I did, too. It was only a little fire though.”

“Little fires have a way of spreading into large ones if they are carelessly tended,” remarked Mr. Hatfield. “On that particular day a strong wind was blowing in the direction of the Castle.”

“Then you think I started that big fire?” Billy asked, his eyes wide and very blue.

“We’re afraid you may have done it unintentionally,” his grandfather replied. “Billy, I fear I have neglected you of late, not paying as much attention to your comings and goings as I should have done.”

Billy said nothing, but stirred uncomfortably. He took it for granted he was to be severely punished for having caused the fire.

“Now there are other questions to be asked,” his grandfather resumed. “You’re quite handy with a bow and arrow, I believe.”

“I should be,” the boy answered. “I learned in England. My father taught me.”

Ross Langdon produced the bow which had been picked up by the Castle.

Before he could offer it to Billy, the boy claimed the property.

“That’s mine,” he said. “I dropped it when I ran.”

“Then you’re the ghost of the Castle?” Dan asked him.

“I’m no ghost.”

“That’s only the name we gave you. But you’re the one who shot arrows into our target during the tournament?”

“And the one who kept peeking at us as we acted out our movie scenes?” Brad questioned.

“Sure,” Billy admitted with a grin.

“Then it follows that you’re the mysterious archer who shot that arrow near Mr. Kain’s automobile,” Dan resumed. “You told us to search in Robin Hood’s Strong Box.”

“Did you find the treasure?” Billy demanded. “I know you did, because I see Grandfather has the bag of coins.”

Colonel Brekenridge directed a stern gaze upon his grandson.

“Why did you hide the coins in the Castle chimney niche, Billy?”

“Because I wanted the Cubs to have ’em,” the boy answered promptly. “They need money to buy costumes for their play. This was all I had.”

If the Cubs had felt any resentment toward Billy, it melted upon the moment.

“I’m certain you meant to be generous, Billy,” his grandfather said kindly. “You realize though that those coins are very rare and valuable. Your father gave them to you to keep.”

“I’m sorry, Grandfather. I didn’t stop to think. I only wanted to help. The Cubs had to pay for all the damage done by the fire. I know ’cause I overheard ’em talking about it.”

Mr. Kain squirmed uncomfortably. Now that it definitely was established the Cubs had been blameless in the fire, he was ashamed to have taken their money.

“A little mistake was made,” he said gruffly.

Colonel Brekenridge asked how much the Cubs had been required to pay. Learning that the amount was twenty dollars, he bade his nurse bring pen, ink and a check book.

“Billy was entirely at fault,” he told Mr. Kain. “It would be most unfair to hold the Cubs responsible for damage. I’ll gladly repay the amount.”

Colonel Brekenridge made out a check to Sam Hatfield, instructing that each boy be repaid the amount he had contributed.

“Say, we’ll get our costumes for the play after all!” Dan said jubilantly. “We can buy a lot of special trappings!”

“Whoop-ee!” chortled Midge, tossing his cap into the air. “Maybe we’ll win that contest yet!”

“I’d like to make a little contribution to help along the cause,” said Mr. Kain unexpectedly.

From his billfold, he extracted two new ten dollar bills.

“Oh, it isn’t necessary to repay us,” Dan protested quickly. “Colonel Brekenridge already has done that.”

“This is merely a little personal offering,” the bank employee said, thrusting the money into the boy’s hand. “I’ve learned a lesson in dealing with the Cubs. Use this to buy whatever you need for your play.”

“Thanks, Mr. Kain! And may we keep on using the Castle grounds?”

“As long as you like, or at least until the place is sold.”

“The Castle property is for sale?” Colonel Brekenridge inquired in surprise.

“Yes, the bank has decided to get rid of it. The property is a white elephant,

eating up an enormous amount in taxes and maintenance. It will be a bargain though for anyone who can afford such a mansion.”

Now that everything had been arranged to the satisfaction of the Cubs, they had no further excuse for remaining.

Brad arose from the steps and the other Cubs followed his example.

“Oh, do you have to go so soon?” asked Billy, his face becoming downcast. “Can’t you stay and play with me just a little while? I’ll let you use my bow and arrow and my Ping-pong table.”

His words and manner made it instantly clear to the Cubs that the boy suffered from loneliness.

This fact also became evident to Colonel Breckenridge.

“Billy,” he said, “as I said before, I’m afraid I’ve neglected you in recent months. Tell me, how do you spend your time?”

“I don’t know,” the boy replied vaguely. “There’s nothing to do here. No one to play with ever.”

“So that is why you’ve roamed the woods and found mischief for yourself?”

“I had to do something, didn’t I?” Billy asked.

“You could have had friends here.”

Billy gazed at the gardener and gave a snort. “Pete wouldn’t let me! If I even let out a yip, he would tell me to be quiet—that I was making you worse.”

“I see,” said Colonel Breckenridge quietly.

“Whatever I did, the servants would tell me not to make so much noise,” Billy went on. “The only fun I had was watching the Cubs. I wish I could be one.”

“And why not?” interposed Mr. Holloway heartily. “You’re the right age, Billy.”

“Also, you’re mighty handy with a bow and arrow!” added Dan. “You could teach us quite a few tricks.”

“Billy would be a real asset in our play,” added Brad. “If we’re to win the prize, we need a few fancy marksmen.”

Billy’s face had become highly animated. Springing up from the steps, he gazed anxiously at his grandfather.

“Oh, may I join?” he pleaded. “May I, Grandfather? I promise I’ll be as quiet as a mouse around here and never make you nervous.”

The colonel laughed. “Billy, you’re the same as a Cub Scout right now, if the organization will take a rascal like you! Furthermore, your days of tiptoeing around lest you disturb me are at an end. I’m well on the road to recovery. A little healthy boy-noise will do me good for a change!”

Billy now turned to Mr. Hatfield, eagerly demanding to know if he might be taken into the organization.

“Of course we want you,” the Cub leader assured him. “We’ll have the initiation as soon as possible. Meanwhile, you may take part in all our activities.”

“The Robin Hood play?”

“Certainly.”

Dan now spoke up. “I think Billy should be Robin Hood,” he said generously. “We all know he’s a better shot than anyone in the Pack.”

“I’d like to be in the play, but I don’t want the lead part,” Billy replied.

Mr. Holloway pointed out that many of the scenes had been filmed. To place Billy in the leading role at such a late date would mean retaking a great deal of film.

“We’ll find a role for him,” he promised. “Give me time to think of something.”

The boys told Billy a little about the Cub organization and particularly of their plans for the play.

They were amazed to learn that the boy not only was thoroughly familiar with the Robin Hood story, but had visited the real Nottingham Castle in England.

“You’re going to be a big help to us in supplying authentic detail for the play,” Mr. Holloway assured him.

Colonel Brekenridge remarked that it was approaching the luncheon hour. He would not hear of the Cubs leaving.

Instead, he invited them all to remain for a picnic lunch.

“Pete will look after everything,” he said, chuckling at his own joke. “He likes visitors, you know.”

Billy was thrilled to think that the Cubs would remain. He flew about, issuing orders to the servants and telling them exactly what he wanted for lunch. Double tables were set up under the trees and a cloth was spread.

Although unable to join the group, Colonel Brekenridge watched from his wheel chair on the veranda.

“How does the story of Robin Hood end?” Midge asked, as the boys sat eating hamburger sandwiches. “You’ve never told us, Mr. Holloway.”

“Robin Hood had a long and merry life in Sherwood Forest,” the Den Dad responded. “If we like, we may end our story on that note. I was thinking though, that an epilogue might be added. In this, Billy could play the part of Robin Hood in his old age, and shoot the last arrow.”

“How does the epilogue go?” asked Brad.

“The story is this,” Mr. Holloway explained. “Robin Hood had left England, but as springtime returns, he craves again to roam the woodlands of his beloved Sherwood Forest.

“He renews acquaintance with his old friends, Little John, Will Stutely, Allan-a-Dale and Midge, the Miller.

“Finally he falls ill of a fever, and seeks the aid of his cousin, the Prioress of Kirklees. The woman always has disliked Robin Hood and plots to bring his downfall.”

“She locks him in a room of the tower and allows him to weaken!” declared



Dan, who recalled the story. “A long while elapses before Little John hears his faint cries for help. By the time he traces the call and breaks down the oaken door, Robin Hood is on the verge of death.”

“Yes,” Mr. Holloway nodded, “and when Robin Hood realized that his hour had come, he bade Little John string his stout bow for him and choose a smooth arrow from his quiver.

“Then from his bed, Robin Hood prepared to shoot through the open window. He directed Little John to dig his grave where the arrow came to rest.”

“I don’t like a sad ending to a story,” Midge protested.

The other Cubs, however, favored adding the epilogue. They thought it not only would round up the story with a most effective scene, but would give Billy Brekenridge a chance to play a star part.

“I’ll fix myself up to look like an old man!” the boy declared happily. “I can shoot that arrow from a lying down position easy as anything.”

Throughout the morning, Mr. Kain had been increasingly impressed not only by the Cubs but by their plans for the Robin Hood play.

“When will it be given?” he asked Mr. Hatfield.

The Cub leader told him that plans had been made to present the play before three judges the following Saturday. An invitation also would be extended to parents to witness the show.

“This play deserves a larger audience,” Mr. Kain declared enthusiastically. “Why not put out posters and invite the town?”

“We’d like to do that, Mr. Kain. The boys have worked hard. We were afraid though, that the bank might not want so many people tramping over the grounds.”

“Let me take care of that,” replied the bank employee. “After the way the Cubs saved the property for us, I’m sure we owe them a little something.”

The Cubs were delighted by Mr. Kain’s change of attitude.

They were even more pleased when he went on, saying: “From watching rehearsals and listening to an outline of the epilogue, I plainly see you’re handicapped by having to do all your scenes outdoors.”

“Yes, we are, but that can’t be helped,” Mr. Hatfield agreed.

“Why not do the final scene inside the Castle at the window?”

“Could it be arranged?”

“I’m sure of it. I’ll see the bank president this very afternoon and let you know.” Mr. Kain arose and picked up his hat. “Well, good-bye boys, and good luck in winning the contest,” he said. “It’s been most educational knowing you.”

After Mr. Kain had gone, the Cubs remained for another two hours at the Brekenridge estate. Billy seemed pathetically eager for companionship.

He showed them about the grounds and displayed his archery equipment. Not in the least boastful, the boy, at request of the Cubs, demonstrated his ability with bow and arrow.

“I’ve practiced for years,” he said. “My father taught me in England. You’ll all be as good or better than I am, after you’ve practiced awhile.”

“We doubt that,” laughed Dan. “All the same, it will come in handy having you to do a little behind-the-scenes shooting.”

“I’ll be your double,” Billy volunteered. “Whenever a scene requires very accurate shooting, I can substitute for you, but my face won’t show.”

Details of the various scenes in which both boys would take part were worked out. Then it was time for the Cubs to leave.

“You’ll come again—soon?” Billy asked wistfully, escorting the group to the estate entrance.

“Sure,” Dan told him. “As often as we’re invited.”

“That will be every single day!” Billy laughed. “You won’t forget your other promise—to make me a Cub?”

“No one can make you a Cub,” Dan replied. “That’s up to you. You may be sure, though, we’ll take you into the organization.”

“The initiation will be soon,” Mr. Hatfield promised. “Meanwhile, boys, let’s all remember the Cub motto—‘Do Your Best.’ If we’re to win first in the play contest, we all must put forth top effort.”

## CHAPTER 20

### Epilogue

On the day set for the presentation of the Cubs' Robin Hood play, the boys of Dens 1 and 2 arrived early at the Castle grounds.

The weather had favored them. A rain the previous day had settled the dust and the air was pleasantly cool.

"Everything's perfect," Brad declared in satisfaction. "Now if we don't muff our lines, we're all set."

"I don't know," Dan replied, none too confident. "I almost wish we had adopted Ross' idea and put on an Indian pow wow instead of such an elaborate presentation."

"Don't you think it!" the Den Chief replied. "Just as Mr. Hatfield said, Indian shows are a dime a dozen."

"That one the Hi-Y Club put on was good though, Brad. We have real competition."

The previous night the Cubs had witnessed the Indian skit presented by another competitor for the grand prize. As Dan remarked, it had been very good indeed.

Ten organizations finally had entered the contests. Six of the performances had been of mediocre caliber. The other three, however, definitely were in the running for the prize.

"Don't forget, the last things usually are best," Brad encouraged his friend. "We've worked hard and we should win."

"We should, but will we?" Dan countered. "The shooting match is our big scene."

If I should get nervous and miss the target—that would ruin everything.”

“You won’t be nervous, Dan,” Brad said. “Quit your worrying. Now let’s get into our costumes. The crowd soon will arrive.”

For the occasion, the bank had opened the Castle to visitors. One room had been set aside as the Cubs’ dressing quarters. Here all of the Cubs had gathered.

“At any rate, we have top-notch costumes,” Midge declared in satisfaction as he scrambled into his tight-fitting suit of green. “Thanks to Mr. Brekenridge and the bank officials!”

The room buzzed with conversation. Red could not find his cap with the yellow feather. Chips, certain that he would forget his lines, kept mumbling them over and over. Everyone talked at once, and no one listened. Of the group, Billy Brekenridge appeared the most calm.

“I wish I had your confidence,” Dan told him enviously.

“Oh, I don’t need any,” the boy laughed. “My part is small, at the very end. I know I can shoot Robin Hood’s last arrow straight and true.”

“Wish I could be as sure of myself,” Dan sighed.

“Just relax and don’t think about the crowd,” Billy advised him. “You’ve improved a lot in practice this last week. You’ll do fine.”

The crowd soon began to arrive, everyone seating themselves on the grass near the Castle. Presently, Mr. Hatfield brought word that the judges had appeared.

“I have news for you,” he told the Cubs. “The judges may announce the winner of the contest at conclusion of our performance. All the other plays have been given, you know. Ours is the last one to be graded.”

“I hope they award us something for effort,” Chips said grimly.

Mr. Hatfield explained that the grading would be according to strict rules. A certain number of points were to be allowed for originality of material, a certain number for costumes, stage direction, acting ability, and general effectiveness.

By two o'clock, the hour set for the start of the play, a large throng had gathered on the Castle grounds.

The Cubs were amazed to see Colonel Brekenridge in the audience. He sat in the shade in his wheel chair, accompanied by his nurse.

At last came the moment of starting. Four trumpeters announced the opening with blasts from their instruments.

Although all scenes had been taken many times, Mr. Holloway had posted himself at an advantageous position to make a final filming of the play. It was planned that the picture later would be offered to other organizations for showings.

The play began with the prologue in which Robin Hood encountered Little John at the bridge.

Their sprightly duel evoked much laughter from the crowd and went off without a single mistake.

"Even the judges were laughing," Brad whispered to Fred. "We're doing all right so far."

As the play unfolded, the audience learned that a reward of two hundred pounds had been offered for Robin Hood's head, and that the Sheriff of Nottingham had sworn he himself would seize the outlaw.

The Cubs were uncertain how Ross Langdon would act his role. During practice he had alternately sulked or clowned.

As it developed, the doubts proved needless. Ross was as determined as the other Cubs to win honors for the Pack. He spoke his lines carefully, and his blustering manner exactly fitted the role.

Finally, came the vital scene of the play, the shooting match at Nottingham Town.

When Dan's turn came to shoot, he could feel his heart hammering against his ribs. The other archers in the scene had shot their arrows flying into the target.

And, as luck would have it, two of the shots had been especially good. To uphold the role of Robin Hood, he must beat both of them.

“Gosh! Do your best, Dan,” Midge whispered to his friend. “I didn’t mean to put an arrow in the gold. It slipped away from me!”

Dan dared not look too long at the target. Drawing the bow, he loosed the string.

For a moment he stood motionless, his eye fixed upon his point of aim. He was afraid to hope. If the arrow failed to beat the other two—the match was a farce!

Then a shout went up and the audience began to clap.

The arrow had flown straight and true, lodging inside of the other two, and clipping a bit of feather from the one Midge had shot.

“Bravo!” shouted Midge. “A beautiful shot!”

The play moved on swiftly now to the epilogue.

In this final scene only Billy Brekenridge and Brad appeared, the latter acting his role of Little John.

Billy had been made up to look very old. Propped on pillows, he reclined just inside the Castle, but visible to the audience.

As the camera began to grind, Brad as Little John opened wide the windows.

An amplifier carried Robin Hood’s final words to the audience. Speaking with a great deal of feeling, Billy instructed Little John to make his last resting place the spot where his arrow fell.

Then, raising himself upright, he drew the bowstring. Out through the open window sped the arrow. A perfect shot, it fell in a green bower directly in view of the judges.

A blast from the trumpets signalled the end of the performance.

“That was swell, Billy!” Brad cried, grasping his hand. “Your shot couldn’t have been better!”

“Where that arrow fell we’ll place our target for the archery range,” Billy said dreamily. “I’ve got it all planned.”

Brad was too excited at the moment by the success of the play to wonder what the boy meant.

Parents poured around the Cubs, congratulating them upon their fine acting.

Though pleased that it was over, the Cubs were none too confident of victory. The judges, they noticed, had gone into a huddle. Apparently, they were in disagreement, for they seemed to be arguing rather heatedly.

“No soap,” Chips muttered hopelessly. “I stumbled over my lines in one place. I’m sure that prejudiced one judge. I saw him looking hard at me.”

Ten minutes elapsed. Then word came that the judges were ready to announce their decision. George Hutton, as spokesman for the group, stepped out in front of the expectant audience.

“The task of choosing the best play from among ten entries has been most difficult,” he began. “All have had exceeding merit. In the unanimous opinion of the judges, however, one presentation has been outstanding in every respect.”

“*Which* one?” whispered Midge impatiently. “Can’t he ever get to the point?”

“First prize is awarded to the Cub Scouts for their play ‘Robin Hood,’” Mr. Hutton announced. “From start to finish, the presentation was a *finished* production.”

After that, there was no containing the pride of the Cubs. As they talked gleefully of their success, however, they gave full credit to Mr. Hatfield, Midge’s father, and to Brad and Dan who had contributed so heavily of their time.

Now that the winner had been announced, the crowd began to leave. Mr. Holloway called the boys together to thank them for their splendid effort and to tell them that already he had received many requests to show the Robin Hood film.

“Just think!” Fred said jubilantly. “Now that we’ve won the prize, we’ll have a complete archery set! Bows and arrows for everyone and targets! We’ll have a



chance to really become experts.”

“We’ll need an archery range though,” Red pointed out. “Now that our play is finished, we can’t expect the bank to allow us to keep on using these grounds.”

“That’s so,” Fred admitted, a trifle crestfallen. “Well, at any rate, we’ll have Billy here to teach us how to shoot.”

“Speaking of Billy reminds me of an important matter,” remarked Mr. Hatfield, who had overheard the conversation. “Officially, he isn’t a Cub yet.”

“Why don’t we initiate him?” demanded Chips.

“Soon, too,” chimed in Dan. “We need Billy.”

“I was thinking the same thing,” agreed the Cub leader. “Colonel Brekenridge is here now with his nurse. He may never be able to come to one of our meetings \_\_\_”

“He’d like to see Billy taken into the organization!” Brad exclaimed. “Why not induct him right now?”

All the other Cubs favored the plan. Gathering the boys in a circle, Mr. Hatfield briefly explained the ideals and goals of the organization.

“A real Cub is square,” he told Billy. “Also he is reliable and loyal. He sticks by his friends. A Cub prides himself upon being fair to others. Last but far from least, he always tries to be cheerful.”

The Cub leader then explained further that the five ideals, SQUARE, LOYAL, FAIR, HAPPY and GAME, were represented by the five fingers of the Cub’s left hand.

Billy then was asked to repeat the Cub Promise:

“I, Billy Brekenridge, promise to do my best, to be square and to obey the law of the Cub Pack.”

All of the Cubs of Dens 1 and 2 repeated the Law of the Pack:

The Cub Follows Akela.  
The Cub Helps the Pack Go.  
The Pack Helps the Cub Grow.  
The Cub Gives Good Will.

The boys showed Billy the official handclasp and how to make the Cub sign with the two first fingers of the right hand.

“You’re a full fledged Bobcat now!” Brad told him when the ceremony had been completed. “Work hard and you’ll soon be a Wolf.”

“And after that a Bear and a Lion!” laughed Ross Langdon. “It’s hard going though.”

Colonel Brekenridge, who had witnessed the ceremony, asked his nurse to wheel him to the group.

Congratulating his grandson upon his entry into the Cub organization, he then cordially invited the boys to come to his estate whenever they felt the urge.

“I don’t expect to be living there long though,” he added. “The place has been none too satisfactory.”

This information rather dashed the expectation of the Cubs.

“You’re not moving away from Webster City, Colonel Brekenridge?” Dan questioned. “We’d hate to lose Billy right after taking him into the Den.”

“Oh, no,” the colonel reassured the boys. “I expect to make my home here. I have bought a place of my own.”

“In this section of the city, I hope,” Brad said politely.

“Very much so.” Colonel Brekenridge smiled at the boys, and added casually, “In fact, you’re standing on my property now.”

The Cubs were dumbfounded.

“You mean you’ve bought the Castle?” Dan demanded.

“The deal with the bank was completed yesterday. I expect to finish the house as the designer originally planned it. The grounds will be cleared and replanted with shrubs and flowers.”

“Say, that’s great!” Chips declared, and all the boys nodded agreement.

“You’ll be welcome here at any time,” the colonel continued. “For that matter, to make certain you’ll come, I may offer a few inducements.”

“Picnic tables,” suggested Billy eagerly. “Outdoor grills and fireplaces.”

“By all means,” agreed his grandfather. “We’ll cut the brush from the woods and make interesting trails.”

“The Cubs can help with that work,” volunteered Dan.

Colonel Brekenridge smiled at his willingness.

“The Cubs have done their share of brush cutting,” he said. “I want this place to represent sheer fun for the boys.”

“Say, we’re going to like that!” laughed Midge.

“I guess SO!” chuckled Red.

“The Cubs need an archery range,” suggested Billy.

“I intended to ask about that,” said his grandfather. “Billy, fetch a bow and arrow.”

The boy ran to do his bidding. When he returned with it, the colonel placed the bow in Dan’s hands.

“Now, Robin Hood, you must shoot this arrow with care,” he advised. “For wherever it falls, there shall be the Cubs’ future archery range.”

“I know exactly the stretch we need!” declared Dan. “If only I don’t miss my aim.”

As the other Cubs gathered about him, the boy raised his bow and took careful aim.

Away sped the arrow, straight and true to fall to earth exactly at the spot he had planned.

“There lies our future archery range,” he said, smiling at Billy. “Here’s to our success!”

“And here’s to the best marksman,” added Brad. “The Bobcat who taught us the tricks of Robin Hood’s trade!”

## Transcriber's Notes

- Silently corrected a few typos (but left nonstandard spelling and dialect as is).
- Rearranged front matter to a more-logical streaming order.
- Corrected one speaker in dialog (from "Dan" to "Russ").

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