

THE MYSTERY  
AT CAMP LENAPE

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CARL SAXON

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# THE MYSTERY AT CAMP LENAPE

**CARL SAXON**

*Author of "Blackie Thorne at Camp Lenape"*

Decoration

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**THE MYSTERY AT CAMP  
LENAPE**

## CHAPTER I

### BATTLE-ROYAL

The Utway twins were at it again.

“You are, too!” said Jake.

“You’re another!” said Jerry.

“And you’re his brother!” said Jake.

It was “quiet hour” in Camp Lenape. The peace of Sunday afternoon hung above the rows of white tents on the hillside above the placid lake. In Tent Ten, however, the quiet was broken by a sudden uproar.

Six wide-awake lads perched on upper bunks, grinning and nudging each other. All eyes were turned on two bronze-haired, blue-eyed, sun-browned boys who faced each other in the center of the tent.

As they stood thus, it seemed as if there was only one boy, looking at himself in a large mirror; for the Utway twins were so much alike that others often wondered how one of them knew whether he was himself, or his brother—whether Jerry did not sometimes wake in the morning and think for a moment that he might possibly be Jake. The resemblance was heightened by the fact that both wore identical outfits—the basketball shorts and green-and-white jersey that served as the camp uniform.

However, while Jerry wore a tennis sneaker on each foot, Jake wore only one. The other shoe he brandished in an upraised arm with a threatening air.

“That’s talking,” put in “wild Willie” Sanders, from his perch above the two brothers. “You tell him, Jake!”

Jake turned on the speaker. “No noise from the nickel seats!” he warned. “This is our business—no butting in. Now, Jerry, take back what you said.”

“Well, take back what you said!” responded Jerry with some spirit. “And quit aiming that shoe at me! Put it down!”

“Keep off!”

The band of onlookers, now reinforced by the grinning faces of many inmates of neighboring tents, chuckled with delight. It looked as if there was going to be a fight at last. And the watchers knew from past experience that if the Utway twins got to scrapping again, the resulting action would do much to brighten up a dull Sunday afternoon. Therefore they waited happily for the first gong of the coming battle.

It looked as though Jerry meant business. With a swift rush he attempted to snatch the menacing shoe from his brother’s hand. Jake neatly dodged, and swung the improvised weapon in a dangerous arc. His fingers slipped on the smooth rubber of the sole, and the shoe hurled itself with some force at Jerry’s chest.

Jerry grunted as the flying sneaker took him in the midriff. He was not hurt, but he was mad. He had forgotten completely what the original quarrel was about; he knew that the shoe had been flung by accident, but didn’t care; all he thought of was to “get even” with Jake. He snatched the nearest thing at hand, which happened to be a canteen belonging to little Pete Lister, and flung it wildly at his brother.

Jake dodged again, and returned this fire with an unwieldy missile that proved to be Fat Crampton’s generously-built raincoat. This went wild of the mark, and he ducked a whizzing flashlight while at the same time reaching about for more ammunition. His hand touched “Sherlock” Jones’s camera-case, and he was about to aim this at Jerry’s head when he was taken full in the face with a canvas pillow, followed by a sweater and a Boy Scout Handbook.

“Hey!” cried Jones, jumping down from his bunk in alarm, now that his treasured possession was in danger, “that’s my camera-case you got!”

The contested object sailed past his ear and met its mark on Jerry’s leg. By this time Jerry was in no frame of mind to distinguish friend from enemy. He was

seeing red, and the sight of young Jones dashing toward him to regain his property raised his temper to the boiling point. He reached out and greeted the oncoming boy with the contents of a handy water-bucket.

The bucket was half full, sufficient to make a drenching torrent which reduced the hapless Jones to a sopping state. His cry of rage filled the tent. Wild Willie Sanders came to his rescue, and together they advanced on Jerry, who was now armed with a loose tent-peg swinging on the end of its rope.

Jake had taken advantage of his momentary freedom from attack to gather together a goodly pile of ammunition—shoes, tennis rackets, pinecones, pillows, and an empty wasp's nest which Lefkowitz had collected as a specimen. Chink Towner had entrenched himself on the top of a bunk, from which fortified position he was able now and then to swipe the tumbling combatants over the head with a pillow. Little Peter Lister managed to give Fat Crampton a timely shove which sent him rolling between the legs of his battling tent-mates.

Objects of all sorts, from baseball bats to cakes of soap, flew through the air and landed in the low bushes outside the tent. Battle-cries and shouts of the wounded rent the calm Sunday afternoon air.

The fight was no longer a private contest. The action had become general. A whirling shoe had landed on "Kipper" Dabney, aide of Tent Nine next door, and he had immediately led his cohorts in a vengeful sally against their warlike neighbors. Somebody had refilled the empty water-pail and was methodically doing his bit to make sure that not one of the combatants was left undrenched. A scouting party from Tent Five had raced downhill and were swiftly pulling the blankets from every bunk and tossing them into the huckleberry bushes. Tent Ten was a battleground of whirling arms, tumbling bodies, and flying weapons, whereon no one knew his friend, and every boy fought for himself.

"Stop!"

A shrill voice of command cut through the tumult. Unseen by the rioters, a short, erect man in scoutmaster's uniform had appeared in their midst.

"Stop this at once! Put those things down! Attention!"

A boy on the outskirts of the group whistled in surprise. "Chickie! It's Mr. Colby!" He dodged behind a tree and disappeared. Silently the boys from other



tents faded from the scene, trying to look innocent and peaceful. In ten seconds the members of Tent Ten were left alone amid the ruins, under the stern gaze of Mr. Colby.

“Attention! Line up!”

Eight boys guiltily straightened, heels together.

“You, Utway, drop that baseball bat! Now, what’s the meaning of this?”

The councilor’s keen eyes flashed from one face to the next. The sudden uproar had brought him running from his place at the leaders’ meeting on the porch of the lodge. As officer of the day, it was his duty to take charge of the camp program, inspect the tents, and assign merit points for the conduct of each tent-group. He took his duties most seriously; a short period of service in the National Guard had given him a mighty respect for military discipline; and his strictness at all times was well-known at Lenape.

“Men, you are a disgrace!” he snapped. A few feathers from a ripped pillow sifted down and settled upon the brim of his hat, but not a boy dared to smile. “A disgrace! Now, who’s responsible for this?”

His searching eye caught sight of the twins, standing together at one end of the line. He well knew the reputation these husky brothers had for unladylike conduct, and twice before had found it necessary to separate them from each other’s grasp after sudden tussles. His lips tightened as he stopped before Jerry, whose relinquished baseball bat lay across his feet.

“You again, eh? Fighting with your brother, were you, Jake? Or Jerry, whichever you are?”

“Well, you see——”

“Never mind accusing anybody else! You’ll have to learn that camp is no place for continual bickering! Look at this tent! You’ve made hay of the whole place. I’ll make it my job to see that Tent Ten gets the booby can for this——” The councilor’s words were broken off short, and he fell back, clapping his hands to his head.

He had been standing directly under the front tent pole, and the oil lantern

hanging there, which had somehow escaped being brought into the fray, had suddenly descended from its nail at the top of the pole and struck him full on the crown. The blow had been partly dulled by his stiff hat, but he was smarting with anger. His bristling gaze fell on the flushed face of Jake Utway, who stood beside the pole with defiance in his eyes.

“You—you did that, Utway! Don’t deny it!”

Jake did not deny it. He had taken this means of defending his brother from the full brunt of the guilt for the battle-royal.

“Well, why don’t you stop picking on Jerry? He wasn’t the only one to blame! All of us did some.”

“You—you——Both you boys are incorrigible! Now, listen! You two must put this tent in order at once—pick up everything, make all the beds, put everything in its place! If this is not done, I shall recommend that you serve ten hours apiece on the chain gang. No discipline—no discipline——”

Still rubbing his injured brow tenderly, the enraged scoutmaster rushed from the tent, not daring to trust his temper further.

The group relaxed. “Guess that’ll fix you guys for soaking me with all that water,” muttered Sherlock Jones. “Serves you right.”

“Shut up,” said Jerry rudely. “Say, Jake, thanks. He sure did look sad when that lantern bopped him! I knew right away you did it on purpose.”

“Aw, he was picking on you,” answered Jake. “That’s all right. He got even with us, though. It’s not going to be an easy job, cleaning up this mess. Let’s get busy. Come on, pick up those blankets.”

“You’re no cripple—pick ’em up yourself!”

“Pick ’em up, you lazy loafer!”

“Who’s a loafer?”

“You are!”

“You’re another!”

“And you’re his brother!”

The Utway twins were at it again.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **SHERLOCK ON THE TRAIL**

Sherlock Jones muttered vengefully to himself as he slowly stripped and removed his sopping clothes after the battle. Moodily he donned a dry outfit, pulled a sweater over his head, and stalked from the littered tent.

Between two pine trees a few yards away, a rustic bench had been built. Sherlock sat down, drew a thin book from his pocket, and began to read. He had barely cast his eye down one page when a shadow fell on his arm, and he looked up to see Wild Willie Sanders surveying him curiously.

“What’s bitin’ you?” asked Wild Willie. “You look mad as a wet hen.”

Sherlock scowled. “Something terrible’s going to happen around this camp!” he said with a profound air of secrecy.

The other boy laughed scornfully. “Huh! That’s what you’re always saying! Always acting mysterious, as if you thought somebody was going to commit a murder any minute! Reading that book again, too, I see! What’s the name of it?”

With a swift movement, he jerked the thin volume from Sherlock’s hand, and read the title. “‘How to Be a Detective in 10 Lessons, by the Fireside Correspondence School.’ Say, what makes you think you’re a natural-born sleuth, anyway?”

Sherlock peered up pleadingly, blinking his pale blue eyes behind the large, window-like lenses of a pair of horn-rimmed glasses that rested on his long, inquisitive nose. “Here, give me that, Wild Willie! Give me back that book!”

“All right, Mr. Detective.” The boy tossed the book down, and grunted. “Say, you better quit shadowing Chink Towner all over the place. He’s getting mad about it, and told me he’d swat you one if you didn’t stop following him.”

Again Sherlock gave him a solemn glance. “Shh! I got information that he’s a smuggler!”

“A smuggler? What do you mean?”

“Well, anyway, he’s probably a Chinese spy in disguise.”

Wild Willie laughed derisively. “Say, I’ve known Chink Towner all my life, and he’s no more a smuggler than the Chief is! Why he’s not even a Chinaman—we just call him Chink because he kind of looks that way. You better get these nutty ideas out of your head before you get hurt. It’s just like that time you told me that Leggy and all the other colored fellows in the kitchen were counterfeiters.”

Sherlock winced. This affair was another of his failures to discover a secret threat of Crime hanging over the heads of his fellow campers. One evening soon after the camp season had started, he had been listening outside the shack where these dusky young men lived, back of the ice-house, and had heard the whirr of machinery and the proud voice of Leggy, assistant cook, remarking: “Yas suh, dis here ma-sheen is sure goin’ to make lots o’ money for us all!” His hope of fame as a great detective was blasted next day in mess-hall, however, when that same Leggy announced that he had “brought a sewing-machine to camp with him and was prepared, for a nominal sum of money, to mend rips and tears in the campers’ clothing.”

“Never mind about that,” he said desperately. “People around this camp are going to be pretty glad they’ve got a live-wire detective on the job. Pretty soon you’ll wish you’d listened to me.”

“Why? What’s going to happen?”

“Some people around here will bear watching, that’s all!” Sherlock cast a meaning glance in the direction of Tent Ten, where the twins had set about clearing up the devastated tent and making up the bunks into a semblance of orderliness.

Wild Willie stared in unbelief, and again broke into a laugh. “You mean the Utway brothers? Say, if you take my advice, you’ll keep away from those two! Everybody knows they scrap with each other now and then, but if you try to tackle one of them, you’ll have both of them coming down on your neck! What have you got against them?”

“Well,” said Sherlock slowly, “Jake threw around my good camera-case, and Jerry dumped a whole bucket of water on me——”

“That’s no crime, is it? What’s mysterious about that?”

“You’ll see. Look at what they did to Mr. Colby—Jake knocked down a lantern on him, on purpose, and I bet they’d like to do worse, if they could. And he’s a councilor!”

“You’re a born chump,” remarked his tent-mate hopelessly. “No use trying to argue with you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes Junior. Some day, something terrible is going to happen around camp, and then you’ll be a hero and discover the mystery. *Oh, yes!*” Again came that scornful laugh. “Listen, there goes the bugle sounding Recall. Sax McNulty promised to tell some stories before swim, up at the big cherry tree. Are you coming, or are you going to read your old book all day?”

“You go ahead. I’m all right.” Sherlock again picked up his precious book, but he did not read far. As soon as Wild Willie was out of sight, he slipped the book into his pocket. He was convinced that the Utway twins were a pair of villains. If he could catch them in some dark act, and unmask them as dire disturbers of the peace of Camp Lenape——

Already a plan had formed in his mind. He would hide near them, watch their movements, and if possible discover them in some suspicious act.

The campus between the rows of tents was deserted now. Again silence hovered over Camp Lenape, scene of many a summer adventure, some of which have been written down elsewhere. The spreading lodge-building, perched on the hillside midway between the mountain range and the waters of Lake Lenape, was deserted. In the shadow by the kitchen door, Sherlock could see Ellick, the jovial, chocolate-colored chef, sprawled on the ground beside his three coffee-colored assistants, resting after their labors of preparing the midday meal of camp fare. The waiting lad could picture in his mind the scene under the wild-cherry tree in the baseball field beyond the lodge, where a dozen grown men, the councilors, sat, surrounded by the hundred lively boy campers who each season came to live under canvas in the woods and to enjoy the delights of this outdoor paradise. “Sax” McNulty, the comical leader who was in charge of camp stunts, would be relating some stirring tale. All the other councilors would be there——

Wally Rawn, the swimmer; Lieutenant Eames of West Point fame; Mr. Colby; Happy Face Frayne, the associate director; and the rest. And somewhere among the group of listening boys would be the Chief himself, the kindly director who knew all things.

Among the crowd, Sherlock's absence would not be noticed. He rose swiftly, and managed to creep unseen into a clump of low bushes about fifty yards below Tent Ten. From this vantage-point he was able to overlook the activity of the two brothers, who labored moodily at their task in the hot sun.

It was no easy thing to discover all the missing objects which the energetic raiders from other tents had thrown into the surrounding shrubbery, and to arrange everything inside in apple-pie order for a later inspection; and the better part of an hour passed before Jake and Jerry sat on a newly-made bunk and rested from their labors.

Sherlock, who had patiently squatted within the depths of a distant huckleberry patch all the while, now saw his chance to creep undiscovered to the space under the flooring of the tent, where he could listen and perhaps overhear some incriminating words. Expertly he wormed his way to this hiding-place, behind the unsuspecting backs of the brothers, in time to catch the end of Jake's last remark.

"—you're right, Jerry. We sure ought to do something. Everybody was in on the scrap, and Colby didn't have any right to put all this work on us."

"He's too strict, with all his talk about discipline," responded Jerry somberly. "From now on he's going to be after us, especially when you pushed the tent-pole and brought that lantern down on his dome; so we might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

"That's the stuff! What'll we do to him?"

Sherlock, below them, stifled a gasp of horror. Here was mutiny, rank rebellion against the authority of a councilor of Lenape, a grown man and a scoutmaster! His jaw gaped as he listened.

"I've been thinking," said Jerry slowly. "I bet old Colby could be scared out of his skin, even if he was a soldier once. You know that big bull-frog Spaghetti Megaro caught the other day? I know where he keeps it down in my tent. Let's

get it, and to-night, about twelve o'clock when everybody's asleep, we'll slide down to Colby's tent and chuck old Mr. Frog into his bed! Talk about scared! Say, I'll bet Old Discipline will let out a yelp you can hear a mile!"

"Boy, I can just hear it now!" agreed Jake, bursting into a laugh. "But how are we going to stay awake that long? Twelve o'clock's pretty late."

"I'll fix that. I can wake up whenever I want to, you know. We can run a long string across from my tent over here. Tie one end to your foot before you go to sleep. When I wake up I'll give it a pull and wake you up, then get the frog, and meet you here. Then we'll go down to Fifteen and give Mr. Discipline the scare of his life!"

"All set. I got a ball of cord in my locker we can use. Come on, Jerry—we got time enough before swim to listen in on one of Sax McNulty's stories. Let's go!"

*Day is done, gone the sun,  
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky—*

The full, rich notes of Taps rolled over the pines of Lenape and echoed across the lake. Fat Crampton doused the Tent Ten lantern and climbed heavily into his creaking bunk.

"Good night, campers!" drawled the voice of Jim Avery, the lanky councilor. Sleepy voices answered from the darkness. There was a slight rustling from the direction of Jake Utway's bunk. Sherlock Jones cocked an ear. He knew that Jake, following the plan he had overheard that afternoon, was attaching to his foot the cord which the twins had laid down after nightfall to connect Tent Ten with Jerry's bunk in Tent Eight down the line. This method of communication was necessary because the Chief in his wisdom made it a point to separate the two devoted brothers into different tent-groups when the changes in tent assignments were made at the end of each two-week period of camp. Therefore Jake was given a place with Mr. Avery, while Jerry was nominally under the guardianship of Dr. Cannon in Tent Eight.

Sherlock smiled with satisfaction in the darkness. He, too, had a score to pay off, and he would see that the brothers who had misused him would not get off lightly. His preparations were made. Cautiously he felt under his bunk to make sure that all the equipment he needed was at hand.



A few stars sparkled down through the softly-swaying pine branches. Nothing was heard in the tent now save the heavy breathing of the weary sleepers, led by Fat Crampton's rumbling bass snore. Far up the mountain behind camp a dog barked somewhere. The travelling spot of a flashlight came up the path as the Chief passed by noiselessly on his nightly round. Sherlock caught himself nodding—tried to jerk himself into wakefulness—nodded again....

He woke with a start. A dim bulk of shadow moved against the dull starlight; Jake Utway was dressing hastily in the dark. He waited until Jake had slipped on his tennis shoes and had noiselessly tiptoed down the steps. A light footfall from the path told him that Jerry was joining the party. "Got the frog?" he heard Jake whisper; the forms of the two brothers melted into the dark in the direction of Tent Fifteen.

Sherlock waited no longer. He sprang from his blankets, and stripped off his pajamas. He had, unseen by his tent-mates, slipped into bed fully dressed beneath his nightwear. It was the work of a few instants to slide his feet into a pair of moccasins and drop over the edge of the tent floor. Clutched under one arm he carried his camera, his most prized possession. In the other hand he bore a metal pan with a short handle, and a package labeled "flashlight powder."

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE MIDNIGHT MAN**

Through the gloom the Utway twins felt their way down the hill, trusting to the touch of their feet to keep them on the path that ran through the pines on the northern edge of the campus. Jerry carried under his sweater the bulging form of the big frog, whose long legs jerked fitfully.

Jake grabbed his brother's arm. "Hark!" he whispered. "I thought I heard something over to the right—there in the bushes!" They listened.

"You must be dreaming still! I don't hear anything. Come on! You aren't scared, are you?"

"Aw, say! Let's hurry up, though. We don't want to get caught. You still got Alexander good and tight?"

Jerry resisted a particularly violent kick from Alexander, the frog, and again moved forward. They were now close to the dull patch of canvas that marked Tent Fifteen, the tent furthest away from the lodge. The twins had marked beforehand the lower bunk occupied by Mr. Colby, which was on the far side. With the greatest caution, the twins circled through the underbrush and crept beneath the moorings of the tent-ropes. The councilor's bunk was now at hand. It was their aim to slip Alexander beneath the blankets, and retreat into the cover of the pines, there to await the startled yell that would tell them Mr. Colby had discovered his slippery bedfellow.

Jake put his mouth close to Jerry's ear. "Say, I know I heard something—there, right back of the tent! Somebody must be following us!"

"Well, what of it? They can't see us in the dark. All the more reason to hurry. Ready?" He fished Alexander forth. "Quick, now—lift up the covers and I'll

chuck him in——” He got no further.

*Boom!* A thunderous explosion came from a few feet away, and a brilliant flare lit the scene like a flash of lightning.

With daylight clearness, the startled raiders could see every feature of their surroundings, standing out from the night. It was like a stage play. The inside of Tent Fifteen was lit with a blinding radiance. In a cleared space at the open rear of the tent, Sherlock Jones stood, a flaming flashlight-pan held high over his head with one hand, his other hand clicking the shutter of the camera, placed on a tripod and aimed straight at the bunk over which bent the white faces of the Utway twins. In the darkness, Sherlock had poured more powder into the pan than would have been necessary to light the scene of action, and the resulting explosion had been greater than he was prepared for.

Jerry jumped backward, for in the momentary light from the pan he had seen Mr. Colby's eyes open and shut again, blinded by the dazzling glare. The boy's backward movement caused him to bump his head heavily against the mooring-pole, and he saw more stars than those that shone in the July heavens. Alexander dropped from his nerveless hand.

Jake Utway, however, was the most startled of all those whose figures stood out in that brief second of brightness. He could not hold in the cry that came to his lips. Not six inches away from his was a face—the face of a man, wild, desperate, knotted with fear!

For some precious seconds he was too paralyzed to move. The flare had died down, but in his mind's eye still stood forth, every feature cut clear in his memory, the face of the stranger. That twisted visage, he was sure, belonged to no one of the leaders of Lenape, nor any of the neighboring farmers that he knew. The head was completely bald, the eyes staring from their sockets, clenched teeth glittering between pale, drawn lips. He knew that never, as long as he lived, could he forget that frozen mask of terror.

It seemed ages before he could control his body enough to move. Stumbling blindly beneath the mooring-pole, he made for the shelter of the trees. Behind him came the shrill challenge of Mr. Colby: “Halt! Who goes there? *What is it?*”

Jake ran. He had gone about twenty yards when he tripped over a clump of brush, fell forward perilously, crashed into the trunk of a tree. He lay stunned

where he fell. Dancing sparks flickered before his eyes; a slow pain grew in the left side of his face, which had smashed against the rough bark of a pine.

From a few yards away came the crash of a struggling body, tearing its way through the bushes. "Is that you, Jerry?" he called hoarsely, finding his voice and struggling to a sitting position. There was no answer, but the thrashing sound continued. What was it?

The unknown thing was almost upon him now. His whole face stinging with the recent blow, he tried to flounder to his feet. His upraised arm came into contact with flesh! Some heavy body fell upon his, a writhing mass of humanity. His groping hand clutched a bony arm clothed in some rough, thin material. At least his unknown attacker was human! Gritting his teeth, Jake Utway pulled himself together and grappled with his strange antagonist.

The battle was brief. The enemy seemed more bent upon escaping from Jake's clutch than remaining to wrestle. It was a question which of the two was the more frightened. Jerry found and clung to a flailing leg until a sudden kick sent him sprawling again. The branches of the undergrowth crackled as the panic-stricken attacker fought his way free.

Painfully Jake scrambled to his feet. With his body scratched by the bushes and bruised in a dozen places, and his face throbbing from its blow against the tree, he now thought of nothing but regaining his tent undiscovered. Jerry must already have made his way back to his own tent. Jake hoped that Mr. Avery was not among those hurrying forms that passed near him in the dark, hastening toward the scene of commotion; but there was a chance that he had not been disturbed, as the lanky councilor was known throughout the camp as a sound sleeper who had to fight his way to wakefulness at Reveille. Jake's knowledge of the lay of the land now stood him in good stead, and he quickly found the path and scurried toward Tent Ten, stripping off his shirt and sweater as he went. He breathed a sigh of relief as he came to the step of his own tent. Nothing seemed out of the way. His peering eyes made sure that Mr. Avery had not stirred. With shaking fingers Jake undressed fully, scrambled into his pajamas, and got into the rumpled blankets a fraction of a second before he heard steps at the tent door.

The Chief's low voice floated through the night. "Taking pictures, were you? Well, Jones, if I didn't know that you were a bit cuckoo, I might wonder what you were up to. As it is——"

“But, Ch-Chief!” Sherlock whimpered. “If you knew what I was taking a picture of, you’d——”

“Shh! Don’t wake up the whole camp!” came the command. “If you have any explanation to make, you can save it until morning. Now, not another word. You’ve made enough racket for one night!”

Jake could not help grinning beneath the covers. Evidently Sherlock, impeded with his camera and other apparatus, had not made his getaway in time. What could the amateur detective have been doing there at that hour? It must have been he whom they heard following them on their expedition. Well, time enough to worry in the morning! He listened sleepily as Sherlock stowed away his outfit, not dreaming that the camera contained an exposed film which might be a highly incriminating record of their midnight misdoings.

Sherlock, however, made sure that his precious camera was carefully placed in his locker. He was not minded to lose his sole evidence that he had risked all to obtain proof of the raid. He cast a grim glance toward Jake’s outstretched form as he donned his pajamas for the second time that night. Little did the brothers reckon that Sherlock Jones, the detective, had not failed!

Sherlock awakened in the morning a few minutes before Reveille, and glanced across the tent to see if the adventure of the night had left any marks upon his mutinous tent-mate. It had. The most blundering detective could not have failed to note the clue which a tree-trunk had left on the face of Jake Utway. His left eye was ringed about with an inflamed patch of black-and-blue bruises—the most gorgeous “shiner” Sherlock had seen in some time. As he looked, Jake opened the uninjured eye and glanced aching about him. His gaze fell on the grinning Jones, sitting upright in his bunk.

“How are all the frogs this morning?” Sherlock greeted him. “Say, you ought to ask Ellick for a chunk of beefsteak to drape over that eye of yours. In a couple days you’re going to have a bee-yootiful sunset on your face. It’s already started to turn all colors of the rainbow.”

Jake felt his eye tenderly. “There was some commotion in the night, and I got up and must have walked into something,” he said, with due regard for the truth. “You better shut up,” he added belligerently, “if you don’t want to carry around one just like it.”

Sherlock said nothing, but smiled to himself. He had already decided to refer to his latest case under the resounding title of “The Clue of the Black-and-Blue Eyebrow.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ARM

Sherlock's opportunity to learn the results of his night's work did not come until the middle of the morning. The Lenape program gave no freedom for detective labors until the period after squad-work had been completed. Tent Ten had been assigned to policing the lodge, and as Sherlock bent over his broom he cast many a dark glance at the busy Utway brothers, fretting until the moment came when he would be able to take his exposed film to the dark-room and discover the results of his snapshotting expedition. At last Assembly sounded, and he headed for his tent, carefully removed the film, and made his way to the small dark-room that had been built under the lodge for the convenience of camper photographers.

As he shut the door, turned on the red electric bulb, and began laying out hypo and the rest of the developing kit, he heard voices from the kitchen directly overhead. Ellick was superintending the preparations for lunch, and from his tone it was evident that his temper was not as genial and kindly as usual. Ellick, it would seem, had a grievance.

"Ah don't no-how likes to think of a thief about de camp, Leggy," he complained. "Ah gives de boys and de councilors all dey can eat. Whaffor dey want to come stealin' around in de night to get bread and such?"

Sherlock pricked up his ears. Here was another case for a bright detective! Stealing from the kitchen! He awaited Leggy's reply.

"Don't know, Chef!" the assistant answered. "You-all figure, maybe dey gets hongry in de night, and a chunk o' bread look mighty nice."

"Don't talk foolishment! Whaffor dey have to bust de lock on de pantry window jest 'cause dey gets a cravin' for a snack? And what about de ax? Suppose dey

wakes in de middle o' de night and gets a cravin' to chop down a few trees? Mah best hand-ax, stole right off de woodpile! No suh, I don't like to think any Lenape fellow goes about bustin' into windows and swipin' dangerous wood-axes when folks is sleepin'."

"How much grub did dey-all take, Chef?" came a question in the voice of Howard Chisel, the squat, bow-legged, ebony-faced lad who presided over dishwashing operations. "Jest bread?"

"No. More'n dat. Got off wid a couple cans o' truck, and maybe some potatuh. Ah declare, if Ah don't tell de Chief about dis fust thing. Hookin' a doughnut now and den is jest boy-tricks. Bustin' windows and stealin' good sharp axes is somethin' else again!"

The listening boy made a note to ask Ellick for further details of this latest crime. At present, he was too busy to lend his services in another case. His hand shook slightly as he dipped the film in the developing baths, watched with eyes glittering behind their large lenses as the smoky negative cleared into masses of dark and light in the bottom of the tray. Most of the surface was taken up with a black patch that was in all likelihood the canvas of Tent Fifteen, but he would have to make a clear print of the scene before the details would show beyond question. He hung the fixed negative to dry and went out into the sunshine to wait impatiently until a proof could be taken.

Sherlock kicked his feet against a rock and thought over all the information he had gathered about the Utway affair. He hoped that the print he was making would show without question the full villainy of the twins. If it did not, it would leave him in a predicament. Mr. Colby had not seen either of the Utway twins, who had made their ways back to their bunks without capture. Yes; the picture *must* be a good one. Sherlock rose and went back into the dark-room.

With all the skill and care of which he was master, Sherlock Jones toiled over the developing of the first print of the raiding scene. Eagerly he bent over the developing bath as dark edges began to take shape on the bit of white paper. Slowly, slowly, the details melted into being, seeming to spring from the waters above the print. Now! The boy switched the print into the fixing tray, turned on the white light, and scrutinized his handiwork.

One glance, and he was ready to cry out with disappointment. He bit his lip. The



explosion of the too-generous quantity of flashlight powder had startled him, and in his haste, unsure of his hearings in the darkness, he had twisted the camera on its tripod so that none of the action was visible. Diagonally across the picture ran the rear flap of the tent. The head and pillow of Mr. Colby showed with clearness, but the forms of the Utway twins and Alexander the frog were cut off by the expanse of the tent-fly. All that the picture revealed was a peaceful night-scene in one corner of Tent Fifteen—nothing more.

Had Sherlock not reminded himself that a good detective never gives way to emotion or shows in his features the state of his feelings, he might have stamped up and down the dark-room, raving at his failure. As it was, he controlled his disappointment as best he could, and patiently went over the picture a second time, to make sure that no detail had escaped his notice.

He was rewarded. In the upper corner of the print was something which at first glance he had not seen. It appeared to be an arm, the hand gripping one of the tent-ropes, the upper part near the body cut off by the edge of the negative. With growing excitement, Sherlock drew from his pocket the small magnifying lens he carried with him at all times. Taking the wet print into the outdoor sunshine, he focussed his glass on the mysterious detail. It *was* an arm—and the lens showed plainly a mark by which a detective could distinguish this arm from all other arms in the vicinity. Upon the fleshy part of the under forearm was tattooed the sketchy design of an American eagle with outstretched wings.

Here was a clue, indeed! Sherlock quivered with renewed hope. The arm could not belong to Mr. Colby. Although he could not say for sure, he had never noticed that either of the Utway twins bore such a tattoo mark, and it was unlikely that they could have kept secret such a distinctive brand. Therefore they must have had with them an unknown accomplice whom Sherlock, in the confusion of the moment, had not caught sight of at the time of the raid.

Who could it be? He thought over all the names of the campers of Tent Fifteen. He could remember no one who wore on his arm the patriotic stamp of an eagle. Well, there was one way of finding out. He could examine every arm in camp. And this could be done quite easily when the entire strength of the Lenape campers gathered on the dock for swim.

The bugle-notes of Swim Call sounded over his head as he hastily cleared away his developing paraphernalia and hung the precious print to dry, hidden in a far

corner. He put away the negative in his breast pocket and raced down to his tent to change into swimming togs. Within a few minutes he was on his way to the boat-dock at the edge of the lake. He had already decided to refer to the Utway case in the future as “The Clue of the Tattooed Arm.”

The life-saving crew was already on duty, although only two or three younger campers had made their appearance on the plank floor of the dock. As Sherlock watchfully stepped out toward the far end, Wally Rawn, the husky leader who directed swimming and was captain of the life-saving organization made up of expert leaders and older boys, was shouting to a black-haired boy wearing the crew emblem. This boy, Steve Link by name, was rowing a round-bottomed steel rowboat some hundred yards out beyond the diving-tower. Attached to the stern painter of his craft was one of the camp canoes, which he was towing across the water with heaving oar-strokes.

“Where did you spot her, Steve?” Wally was shouting.

Steve rested on the handles of his oars. “Way down almost to the dam!” he answered. “She must have got loose last night and drifted with the current. Had the dickens of a time finding her, too!”

“Carelessness!” Wally Rawn muttered, shaking his head. “Somebody played the dub and didn’t even tie up after using it. I’d think even a tenderfoot would know that a canoe should be brought up and turned over on the dock after a trip. A good way to lose a fine canoe!”

He raised his arm to blow the whistle that would begin the swimming period, and Sherlock made sure that Wally Rawn, at least, had no tattooed eagle on his left arm. The dock was now crowded with campers, and the shrill call had no sooner sounded than the air was full of diving bodies and splashing spray as the boys of Lenape took to water. The life-saving boats were now at their posts, guarding the safety of the swimmers.

Sherlock remained on the dock, where he had a full view of everyone. His head jerked back and forth as he tried to follow every move of the group of swimming boys, now grown to almost the full number of the camp. He caught sight of Jerry and Jake Utway, whose flying bodies curved through the air from the highest diving-platform and almost at the same instant cleft the rippling surface of Lake Lenape. He watched them moodily as they swung hand over hand toward the

farthest lifeboat. At any rate, neither of them bore a tattooed eagle on his arm! He must find the mysterious accomplice. With renewed energy he swept the sportive, glistening bodies of the gay swimmers with an intent gaze.

When the final “All out!” whistle blew, the dejected Sherlock made his way up the hill. He was baffled. His vigil had not revealed an incriminating tattoo-mark on the arm of any of the campers or leaders present. He must be patient and watchful, trusting to luck and his skill at shadowing the suspected twins to bring forth some fresh clue.

As he entered Tent Ten, the only one of his comrades before him was little shock-headed Pete Lister, youngest and smallest lad in the tent-group. The kid looked up as Jones came up the step.

“Hey, Sherlock, look what I’m doing!” He squirmed over in his seat on the unmade bunk, and waved an indelible pencil in the air. “See? Making pictures, I am! Bet you never thought of this, Sherlock!” He stuck out one sunburnt leg. The calf and thigh were a mass of scrawled, deep-purple designs—crooked anchors, shaky outlines of American flags, hearts, daggers, skulls, and Pete’s own name in wavering characters. “You don’t need to worry—they come off easy. See? First you draw ’em, then you wet the picture a little, and I’ll bet you couldn’t tell ’em from a real tattoo-mark! Want to try it?”

“No. No, thanks,” said Sherlock Jones bitterly.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **IN THE NAME OF THE LAW**

“This is the place,” said Jake Utway. He indicated the trampled patch of bushes. “That’s the very tree that walloped me in the eye.”

“Funny I didn’t see him when the flash went off,” mused Jerry. “But I was busy, first with banging my head on the pole, and next in getting back home quick. What do you think he was after?”

Jake shrugged. “Search me! But after I tangled with him and he got away, he made for the path that runs down through Church Glade to the lake. No use trying to find any footprints now—too many of the campers have been along since last night.”

“Funny, all right.” Jerry strode back and forth through the low brush, kicking away the branches and examining the soft ground closely. “Nothing here, I guess. Let’s go, or we’ll have that snooping Jones following us around again. Hold on—what’s this?”

A bright bit of paper wrapper had caught his eye. He lifted the object from beneath the tangle of leaves that had concealed it from all but the sharpest scrutiny. “Huh,” said Jerry. “What’s a can of condensed milk doing here?”

Jake looked at the small can and its bright label. “Funny! That’s the same brand Ellick uses in the kitchen!”

“Do you think your bald-headed friend dropped it?”

“Boy,” replied Jake with feeling, “if he was half as scared as I was, I wouldn’t blame him for dropping a few arms and legs! Come on—stick that can in your pocket and let’s stroll on. Just like you said, that Sherlock kid is tagging after us again. I just saw him dodge behind a tree. He’s been acting awful crazy ever

since yesterday afternoon.”

“I’ve got a better idea,” put in Jerry. “I’m sick of being shadowed around every minute of the day by a goofy cluck with four eyes and no brain! Detective, is he! Huh! We’ll give him something to detect.” He set out through the woods at a rapid gait.

“What’s up?” Jake had to take long strides to keep up with his brother.

“He wants to shadow us. All right—but he’ll have to go some to keep us in sight this afternoon! We’ll lead him a merry chase through the woods, and by the time he gets back to camp he’ll be so sick of shadowing he won’t bother us for a month!”

“Swell! I tell you, we’ll take him up the side of the mountain and lose him. Bet he don’t know the short-cut down; and it’ll take him until after swim-time to find his way back!”

The Utway twins were masters of woodcraft, and on various hikes had explored the mountainous country west of Lenape so that they knew every trail and landmark. It would be no difficult task for them to mislead the blundering Sherlock. Jerry led the way cross-country with an easy stride, taking care always to keep in the sight of the amateur detective so that he would not lose hope thus soon, give up the chase as a bad job, and return to camp. With Jake at his elbow, he cut through the low pines and mountain maples beyond the Council Ring, crossed the wagon road just below the bend, and skirting the marshy meadows below the Hermit’s house, gained the base of the steep slide of boulders that scarred the mountainside.

“He’s still coming,” Jake assured his brother. “I saw him a minute ago, down in that birch swamp. He was having a heap of trouble getting through. Wait till he hits this patch!”

It was dangerous going now. The rock-slide was an ancient glacial moraine, that cut fan-wise down the face of the mountain. The two boys crawled, leaped, and climbed from one huge, lichen-encrusted boulder to the next, keeping a watchful eye for lurking snakes. They made a labored progress diagonally across the slide, now and then covertly glancing over their shoulders to keep watch on their victim. Sherlock, panting heavily, had stopped to rest in the shade and wipe away the moisture that had dripped from his brow to cloud the lenses of his

spectacles.

“He won’t come on here until we get across,” Jake muttered. “We could spot him too easily, he thinks—as if we didn’t know every step he’s taken since we started! Hurry up and get into the woods again; then we can swing around to the short-cut and be back in camp before he gets wise!”

In ten minutes they had left the hapless Sherlock far behind. They were now circling around the top of the rock-slide; far below toiled the weary form of the detective, slipping and sliding across the rocks. Not long after, their unerring trailing instinct led them through the scrub-oak of the summit and brought them out on a little-used pathway that ran straight as an arrow from the mountain-top down to the Lenape lodge. It was, in fact, the line down which the water-supply for the camp was piped, from a collecting reservoir below the spring near the crest of the first mountain. A track had been cut through the woods when the pipe was first laid, and although the way was still open, it was seldom used, most of the campers preferring to take the road, which made a more easy ascent. The Utway twins had discovered the overgrown path by accident, and now made good use of their knowledge.

They picked their way slowly through the forest, following the line of leaden pipe which ran down the hillside, now stretching for yards along the surface, now buried a few inches beneath the brown, needle-carpeted soil. Knowing that hiking down a steep incline is more dangerous than climbing, the twins, having no desire to lose any precious camping days by being laid up with a sprained ankle, stepped cautiously with a slow, woodsman’s pace. Once or twice they had to make their way around a fallen tree trunk, and for some distance they lost sight of the pipe-line altogether as they gingerly circled about a marshy bit of ground where the hillside began sloping off above the wagon road. Deer-flies buzzed in a cloud about their heads, and the stinging little pests were so bothersome that both boys hung their handkerchiefs down from their hats to flutter in the air and keep off the humming insects.

Jerry first came in sight of the road, and broke into a run. The road was cut in this place right across the hill, so that it was necessary, in order to gain it, to drop down a low cliff-edge about the height of a man. With a glorious leap Jerry surmounted the fringing brush and flew downward through the air. He landed in a heap, missing by a hair’s breadth the body of a man who squatted, hidden, in the shadow of the overhanging edge.

Jerry cried out to warn his brother. The man whose body he had barely missed in his blind leap was on his feet in an instant. Jerry Utway looked up, straight into the muzzle of a double-barrelled shotgun aimed directly at his head.

“Don’t move!” warned the stranger in grim tones. “You, there, up above—hands up! Come out of those bushes! I’ve got you both covered!”

Jake’s upraised hands appeared above, followed by his face, open-mouthed with surprise. “What’s up?” he asked.

“Never mind. Come down here where I can see you!” There was no mistaking the urgency of that hard voice. “Now, you there, stay right where you are on the ground. Not a move!” The man was dressed in some sort of a blue uniform. He wore a shapeless, broad-brimmed felt hat, and his trouser-legs were tucked into the tops of a pair of leather leggings. “Why, you must be twins!” he exclaimed in astonishment.

Jake slid down the slope in a cloud of dust and a shower of gravel. “That’s right. But what’s the idea of the hold-up?”

“Yes, what’s the idea?” added Jerry. “Look out that gun don’t go off. You better not try anything with us, or you’ll have everybody in Camp Lenape after you, Mister!” The boy’s bold words were somewhat belied by the shakiness of the voice in which they were delivered.

“Oh, from the camp, are you?” Slowly the man in blue lowered his weapon. “Anybody else with you?”

“No, sir. Hear that?” Through the woods drifted the familiar bugle-notes of Swim Call. “We got to get back for swim, or we’ll be missed.”

The stranger chuckled. “I see. Well, guess I won’t keep you.” He grounded the wicked-looking shotgun. “Just a word of advice to you, buddies, before you go. Be a little more careful how you drop on a fellow’s neck right out of the sky. ‘Look before you leap’ is a motto that still holds good.”

Jerry rose and straightened his dusty clothing. “Yes, sir.”

“And I further order you, in the name of the law, not to tell anybody at the camp that you saw me. They’ll learn soon enough. Now, hop it!”

The twins had no mind to argue with the law, backed by a gun. They hopped it. They were twenty yards away before the man in blue called out to them.

“By the way, you haven’t seen any strange men around here in the last day or so, have you?”

“You’re the only one.” It was Jerry who replied. Jake caught his breath, and reflectively felt the damaged flesh over his left eye.

“Right. So long!”

The twins did not speak until they had crossed the cleared ground above the tents. As they approached Tent Ten, Jerry broke the silence. “It’s too much for my feeble brain,” he said. “Wonder if he was after your bald-headed friend?”

“I give up. Come on—we’ll be late for swim. Wonder where Sherlock is now? Hope he don’t get shot. If he don’t turn up for supper, maybe we’d better go look for him.”

Within the empty tent they quickly slipped into swimming suits and made for the dock. The water was already alive with plunging bodies. At the landward end of the dock, where the lake bottom sloped gently in a sandy beach that was a favorite spot for the younger and more timid swimmers, who could here sport about without getting beyond their depth, the twins paused to watch a scene that never failed to arouse laughter.

Billy the Crow was taking his daily bath. Billy was an aged black ruffian who made Lenape his home, and was often to be seen hopping about the tents or perching in a near-by tree, giving vent to his feelings in no uncertain tones. At some time in his life Billy had been caught by the hired man on a neighboring farm, who had, by slitting his tongue, bestowed on the rascally bird the doubtful gift of speech. Billy knew only a few words, but he made the most of them. This ceremony of taking a bath at the edge of the lake was a stunt of which Billy was especially proud. He now teetered on a flat rock at the water’s edge, urging himself to overcome his timidity and bravely take the plunge.

“Go on in, Billy!” said Billy with a squawk. “Go on in, Billy!” With one pointed claw he gingerly tried the water. The laughing ring of boys about him imitated his words and splashed the rock with water. Mr. Carrigan, camp naturalist, sat on the planked floor of the dock, on life-saving duty, his warning whistle dangling



by its thong in his hand.

“Mr. William Corvus Brachyrhyncos doesn’t seem to be fond of bathing,” he observed.

“Is that his full name?” Jerry Utway chuckled as Billy finally made up his mind, and with a last “Go on in—aww-crk!” doused his ruffled feathers into the rippling waters. “He’s taken enough baths to wash himself white, but he still has to go through all that rigmarole first.”

“Crows are funny birds,” said Mr. Carrigan. “He certainly is a pet around here. Ellick must feed him crumbs from the kitchen.” Billy finished his brief swim-period, and fluttered across to the dock to dry and preen himself in the sun. “Here he comes, shaking water all over the place. Hello, Billy! Oh, you would, would you?”

“Hello, Billy!” mocked the bird. His bright eye had caught sight of the dangling whistle, its metal bowl twinkling as the sun’s rays caught it. A few hops took him to the councilor’s side. A sharp beak caught at the thong, tried to drag the whistle from its owner’s hand.

“Natural-born thieves, crows,” said Mr. Carrigan. “They’ll steal anything that happens to catch their eye. Here, let go, Billy!”

Billy, insulted, uttered a final scolding squawk and flew noisily to a perch on a near-by tree.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **BRAVES IN COUNCIL**

First Call for supper had already sounded before Sherlock Jones returned to camp. He limped into Tent Ten weary, scratched, and footsore, and in a dejected mood. It was a thankless task for a detective to try to shadow a pair of expert woodsmen through the mountains. He had barely time to wash his face and comb his rumpled hair before the camp was called to stand Retreat at the regular sundown ceremony of lowering the flag. His thoughts, as the buglers played To the Colors, were not friendly toward the two spruce, innocent-looking brothers who stood stiffly to attention at his side. It was beginning to look as though Sherlock Jones, the great detective, was baffled.

After the evening meal, Lieutenant Eames, officer of the day, announced that Indian Council would convene that night at the usual summons. Twilight found the braves assembling for the pow-wow. Figures of boys and leaders, draped each in his blanket, trooped solemnly toward the Council Ring on the north side of the campus. A hush fell upon the circle of listening tent-tribes as they awaited the call that was always, by long tradition, the signal for the ceremony to begin.

Through the hush of the dusk came the soft, whistling call of the first whippoorwill. Answer came from a near-by thicket. Amid the liquid chorus the Chief rose from his seat, pulled his blanket about him, and spoke.

“Braves and sagamores of the Lenape tribe, you have been gathered in council by the call of the whippoorwill. Brave Sunfish will now light the friendship fire in Indian fashion, with rubbing sticks.”

Sunfish Linder stepped forth from his tent-group, and took his place on the windward side of the fire, laid four-square in the center of the ring to supply light rather than heat. He put one foot on the cedar hearth-stick of his outfit, twisted the thong of the bow about the spindle and placed the drilling-point into

the point of the notched hearth-stick. Holding the drill steady at the top with a soaped drill-stone in his cupped hand, he began sawing the bow back and forth, at first slowly, then with increasing speed. Friction of wood upon wood caused a trickle of hot, powdery splinters to drop into the tinder-pan. A few seconds of rapid action, and the pan held a glowing coal of powder, which was dumped upon the prepared tinder. Sunfish swayed the bunch of tinder back and forth in his cupped hands, breathed upon it slightly. The glowing mass burst into a golden flame. The firemaker thrust the blaze between the logs. As it caught, climbing yellow tongues licked upward through the pile, and the friendship fire was alight. The silent campers broke the spell with a chorus of approval in Indian-talk. "How, how!"

"Good medicine! May the spirit of the Great Manitou watch over and guide our councils as we gather in peace this night," said the Chief, and sat again upon his stone dais.

The Utway twins never failed to enjoy the council in the woods. Something there is in the heart of every boy and man which only finds itself when a close-knit band of their brethren gather together in friendship beneath the star-sprinkled lodge of the great outdoors. The two boys sat with one blanket thrown over their sturdy shoulders, looking about the circle of faces thrown into bold relief by the ruddy glare of the fire. The tent flares were now lit, each small fire glowing in its brazier at the end of a pole marked with the tent totem. The great totem pole of Lenape towered above the huddled groups on the south side of the fireplace, its carved and painted emblems glaring forth awesomely from time to time as a shower of sparks flew upward. Opposite, on the north side, was the stone seat of the Chief, with its tall back of silvery birch trunks, shaped in the form of a gigantic "L" standing out from the blood-red blanket that curtained the majestic dais. The fine-cut head of the Chief rose above his blankets, calm, powerful, serene. At his side sat Sagamore "Happy Face" Frayne, Lenape scribe and keeper of the birch-bark scroll.

"We are now ready to hear the report of scouts of the Lenape tribe," announced the Chief.

This was the time for any member of the group, if he wished, to rise, bespeak the attention of the Chief and the assembled braves, and relate the discovery of anything which might be of interest to the tribe. Mr. Carrigan, now recognized under the title of "Sagamore Wise-Tongue" because of his wide knowledge of

nature-lore, rose and after addressing the Chief, reported that he had seen a covey of spotted snipe, and that the braves newly come to camp would soon have the rare chance to hunt these nimble birds with bag and lantern. Brave Rolfe rose to ask the name of the constellation of stars now riding overhead, and Brave Slater of Tent Four was called upon by the Chief to give a short talk on the signs now visible in the summer sky. Small Brave Barstow reported that the kingfisher's nest he had found by the lakeside now contained four little fledglings. The report of each scout was greeted with the approving murmur of "How!"

Again the Chief rose, to open the period of reports for the welfare of the tribe. This was the time for campers to tell of any observation which they had made which might lead to the improvement of the camp in any way—to point out steps that might be taken to keep the routine orderly and effective, or offer to help build or repair camp equipment. Instantly Steve Link was on his feet.

"O Chief!"

"Speak, Brave Link."

"This morning before swim I found that the Red Fox canoe was missing from the dock. I took out a boat and finally found the lost canoe far down at the end of the lake, drifting with its paddles on the bottom. I questioned the braves of Tent Eleven, who had used it when they went out after supper last night, and they said that they had left it bottom-up on the dock when they returned. Someone else must have been responsible for this carelessness. Now, every brave knows that such a canoe as the Red Fox is valuable and must be treated with care. I would like to ask that every brave who has passed his canoe-test consider himself duty bound to make sure that our boats and canoes are treated as they should be treated."

"How, how!"

"A fine suggestion, Brave Link. Sagamore Happy Face will enter it on the birch-bark scroll. Now"—the Chief's face was serious in the firelight—"now, I must say something which I have never, in my years as Chief of Lenape, had to say before. There is a stain on the name of the tribe. I dislike to say this, but—there is a thief among us."

"A thief!" A babble of voices came from the ring of braves.

“Yes,” went on the Chief grimly; “someone among us here to-night—unless I am gravely mistaken, which I hope I am—someone here has no right to share the free and honest councils of our tribe.” With an outstretched hand he silenced the rising flood of questions. “I will tell you what has happened, and you may judge for yourselves. Several days ago Brave Tompkins took off his gold ring to wash his hands, down by his tent. When he looked for it a few minutes after, it had disappeared, although he saw nobody near him at the time. When he told me about it, I thought he might have lost it himself, and advised him to wait and see if it turned up. But to-day, when Sagamore War-Canoe Munson told me that his silver wrist-watch had vanished under somewhat the same circumstances, I began to think that there must be a false brave among us, with light fingers and a spotted heart. Then, this morning our faithful Ellick came to me with the story of a robbery in the kitchen during the night.”

“Ugh, ugh!” growled disapproving voices from the darkness.

“Yes, bad medicine,” went on the speaker. “Ellick reports that the lock of the pantry window was broken and a supply of food taken away. Moreover, he says that a large hand-ax is missing from its place on the woodpile.”

The Utway twins listened breathlessly as the Chief went on. Sherlock Jones stirred eagerly within the folds of his blanket.

“One word more, and I will not bring up this unpleasant subject again to-night. Some one of you must know or guess who is guilty of these strange disappearances. If anyone here comes to me and returns these lost articles, and makes a clean breast of his misconduct, none of the braves shall know of his trespass against the Lenape code. Are there further reports for the welfare of the tribe? If not, we will pass to the less serious part of our council.”

The ranked listeners relaxed, and there was a laughing, expectant hum of voices as “Guffy” Evans rose to challenge all comers to a talk-fest. The challenge was immediately accepted, in the name of Tent Ten, by Sagamore Avery, who therewith entered little Lefkowitz as their champion in this jabbering contest. Sagamore Happy Face announced the subject: “Give a two-minute speech on Why Polar Bears Don’t Wear Red Flannel Underwear,” and gave the contestants thirty seconds to prepare their arguments. At the command, the two opponents faced each other near the center of the ring, and began a high-pitched, nonsensical stream of chatter about nothing in particular. Lefkowitz was finally

shouted into speechlessness, and the victorious Guffy took his seat amid cheers and cat-calls, while Soapy Mullins rose and called upon Lefty Reardon, the baseball captain, to stand against him in a hand-wrestling tilt.

After a series of boisterous games of “Buzz,” the fun was concluded by a short ghost story from Sax McNulty, which sent shivers of horror chasing up and down the spines of the younger campers. At last the Chief rose and held out his arms in Benediction above the dying fire.

“May the spirit of the all-seeing Manitou go with every brave as he leaves his place at our council this night!”

Flashlights pointed out the path as the drowsy braves filed toward their tent homes. The Utway twins, although pleasantly tired from their active day in the open, were nevertheless wakeful and alert. Behind them came the low chatter of a pair of youngsters from Tent Seven.

Jerry caught a phrase dropped by one of them, a small lad named Toots. “Gee, I clean forgot to make my report of scouts. You remember, Al, that when we saw that smoke from the woods across the lake, I said I’d report it at council?”

“What’s that?” Jerry questioned him. “You saw smoke across the lake?”

“Yes,” said the boy eagerly, “me and Al here, we were out in a rowboat over that way, and saw some smoke coming up like somebody had a campfire in the woods.”

“Hmm. Take my advice and don’t say anything about it. Not worth mentioning.” But Jerry looked at Jake, who nodded back. The expanse of heavily-wooded land across the lake was almost always deserted, so much so that deer tracks were often to be discovered within its depths. A campfire there was certainly a most unusual thing.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **NEWS AND MORE NEWS**

“Come on, Jerry!” said Jake Utway.

“We’ll go up and pitch down the chunks, and the other guys can stow them away in the refrigerator.”

“You’re on!” answered his brother, and began climbing the ladder.

Tent Ten had been assigned, as their squad-work the next morning after the council, to filling the large refrigerator in the pantry behind Ellick’s large, airy kitchen. This duty required that they ascend to the towerlike structure that housed the summer’s supply of ice for Camp Lenape. In mid-winter, when the lake was sheeted over with a crystal mass some six inches thick, a gang of men always came with saws and teams of horses to harvest the ice and store it, between layers of sawdust, in the Lenape ice-house for the use of the campers the following season.

It was the plan of the brothers to enter the ice-house, dig out the embedded blocks required, and send these down the chute to their waiting tent-mates, whose job it would be to wash away the sawdust and transport the ice to Ellick’s gaping refrigerator. Armed with ice-tongs and a large miner’s pick, Jake and Jerry climbed to the upper door of the edifice, and entered its chill gloom.

“Come on, work fast, if you don’t want to freeze!” advised Jerry. He raised the pick and began clearing away the thick crust of sawdust in one corner of the place, but paused as his brother made no move to aid him. “Hey! Earn your keep, man! Don’t stand star-gazing all morning!”

Jake was staring upward. The ice-house was solidly built, but at one corner of the roof the sunlight slanted through a narrow crevice. The watcher had for an

instant seen that spot of light cut off by the passage of a small body. Jake pointed. “Something up there, Jerry!”

Jerry’s eyes were more accustomed to the darkness. “Why, you cluck, that’s only Billy the crow! Hello, Billy!”

“Hello, Billy!” the cackling echo drifted down from the roof. “Billy the crow! Awr-rck!”

“He probably lives up there,” went on Jerry in a matter-of-fact tone. “Now, are we going to finish this job, or do I have to do it alone? Come out of your trance!”

Slowly Jake took his eyes from aloft, scraped away the sawdust with his foot, and clutched the half-revealed cake of ice with his tongs. “Fire away! But I got an idea, Jerry—and as soon as we chuck enough ice down, I’m going to try it out.”

The boys worked swiftly and silently after this, panting and shivering slightly as they uncovered one slab of ice after another and sent them crashing down the chute, after a shouted warning to their toiling comrades on the ground.

“There, guess that’ll hold Ellick for a while,” said Jerry at last, resting from his labors. “Now, what’s this bright idea of yours, Jake?”

“Billy’s still up there,” answered his brother. “I often wondered where his nest was. Crows, as Sagamore Carrigan said down at the dock yesterday afternoon, are funny birds. If you give me a boost on your shoulders, I think I can climb up the side of the wall the rest of the way.”

“Don’t know what good that’ll do you,” said Jerry promptly, “but here goes!” He cupped his hands, and Jake scrambled athletically to his shoulders, bracing his body against the rough timbered side of the building. Jerry grunted. “Uhh! Say, Jakie, you ought to be a sailor for this job! Sailors are experts when it comes to climbing to crow’s nests!”

Billy ruffled his feathers and cast a beady, suspicious eye down upon these proceedings. “Aww-rk!” he muttered. “Billy the crow! Go on in, Billy!” With a series of angry squawks he edged through the narrow opening in the roof and flew away to more interesting scenes.



Jake was by this time clinging to the wall, far above the sawdust surface where Jerry stood, head bent back, watching the climber's progress. Cautiously, arms spread eagled to seize any projection no matter how small, Jake ascended precariously toward his goal. He was now within arm's length of the corner where the talkative crow had made his entrance. Motes of dust danced in the beam of sunlight over his shoulder, and his groping hand stirred up a mass of dust and cobwebs which made him sneeze. In a far corner, on a ledge of rafters, his fingers touched a hard, metallic object.

"If you slip now," called Jerry warningly, "you'll get another black eye to match the first one."

Jake grinned with satisfaction as the sunlight glittered on the thing he held in his hand.

"Crows are funny birds," he remarked a second time. "Natural-born thieves. Here, catch!"

Jerry ducked, and deftly snatched the shining circle which came spinning down at him.

"Admiral Munson's wrist-watch," announced Jake. "And Terry Tompkins' ring is here too, along with a lot of other junk." He was stuffing the nondescript collection of articles into his pockets as he spoke. As cautiously as he had come, he began descending from his lofty perch.

"So *this* is what you found in the crow's nest!" said Jerry, and whistled. "Jakie, you're brighter than I thought you were. You put two and two together, and get—a heap of assorted jewelry!"

"Crows are very fond of bright objects, and will steal them and carry them off to hide away, if they get a chance," explained Jake with condescension, leaping at last to the sawdust floor. "Yep, Billy was the thief. Look here!" He drew out his treasure-trove. In his hand, in addition to young Tompkins' gold ring, lay a bit of crumpled tinfoil, the rusted top of a pickle-jar, a silver dime, a few bent nails, and the brass button from a scout uniform.

"Wonderful!" breathed Jerry in mock admiration. "Say, you didn't see Ellick's hand-ax up there, did you?"

“Don’t be a sap. Come along—we’ll show the Chief he was wrong about thinking there was a thief among the campers. Bet he’ll be tickled to find that the thief wears feathers!”

One after the other they slid down the ladder to the ground. Sherlock Jones and Wild Willie Sanders were wrestling with a large slab of sawdust-covered ice; they looked up curiously as the twins raced by them, on their way to the Chief’s office in one corner of the lodge.

As they stampeded across the mess hall to the small room that served the camp director as an office, they found another visitor ahead of them. The Utway twins almost fell over backward as they recognized the blue uniform and leather leggings of the man who held the door-knob, calling a parting sentence to the Chief standing within.

“If you fellows see or hear anything of him, just get to the nearest phone and call up the prison. They’ll know how to get in touch with us.”

It was the man whom they had stumbled upon at the wagon road, who had held them up at the point of a gun! The gun was in the crook of his right arm now, as he turned and caught sight of them.

“Why, hello, twins! Jumped on anybody’s neck lately?” he asked in a hearty voice, clapping on his felt hat and striding toward the door of the lodge. “So long. Be good boys!”

Jake stared at Jerry in wonderment, and Jerry stared back. Who was this stranger, whom they had first encountered in the woods? They were aroused by the voice of the Chief.

“Come in, boys. What have you there, Jake?” The Chief was the only person in camp who was always sure which brother was which. He had from long acquaintance discovered that Jerry had a tiny mole almost concealed under the bronze-colored hair that fell over his left temple, which mark served to distinguish him from his twin.

Jake stammered out his tale. As the Chief listened, his forehead knit into a puzzled frown.

“So it was Billy all the time, eh?” he said as Jake finished. “You were pretty

clever to figure that out. I'm glad to hear that these things are safe, and I'm sure Terry Tompkins and Mr. Munson will be, too. But that makes the kitchen robbery all the more strange. With what we know now, it's impossible to connect the loss of these things with the person who broke into the food-supply the other night. There's still a thief loose around Lenape, boys, and for some minutes now I've had the feeling that I know who it is." He placed Billy's plunder on his desk, and sat down thoughtfully.

Jerry summoned up courage. "Excuse me, Chief—but who was that man that just left here? Jake and I saw him guarding the road yesterday afternoon. What's he carrying a gun around for?"

The Chief spun about in his chair and faced them. "He's looking for a thief, too," he said slowly.

"Who?" both boys cried in unison.

"There's no reason why I shouldn't tell you, I guess—I'll have to make an announcement about it to everybody at lunch to-day. Boys, there's a dangerous man loose in this part of the country. Last Saturday night a convict escaped from the state prison up beyond Elmville. He had some hours' start before he was found missing. The warden thought it likely that he would head over this way, toward the mountains, where he might hide in the woods for days and never be found. Guards were sent out, but so far there's been no sign of him. The man you just saw is one of the prison guards, who is watching over this way. He tells me the escaped prisoner is a man named Burk, serving a term of several years—for robbery."

"Robbery!"

"Now you can see why I thought until now that this prisoner might be in the neighborhood and might have stolen this watch and ring. It's too bad the prison people didn't warn me before now—no telling what might have happened in the meantime. However, now we have been warned, and will be on our guard."

"Did—did you tell the prisoner-keeper—the fellow who was just here—that somebody broke into the pantry?"

"Of course, Jerry. He seemed to think it might be an important clue, and is getting a crew of men together to search the woods around the camp more

carefully. You see, there's a reward offered for the capture of this criminal, and naturally everybody is eager to earn it. Now, be careful and don't get very far away from the campus unless you have a councilor along, boys! An escaped convict is a mighty dangerous customer. And don't say anything about what I've told you until after lunch."

The Utway twins stared at each other again as the door of the office closed behind them. Jerry seized Jake's arm in an excited grip. "Why didn't you tell the Chief about the man you saw down by Fifteen the other night?" he whispered urgently.

"I didn't have a chance. Besides, why should we give that prison guard all the glory of capturing the convict?"

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **THE DISAPPEARING ACT**

The Chief's announcement that an escaped convict was in their neighborhood fell like a bombshell in the midst of the campers assembled at lunch.

"All boys are forbidden to go out of sight of camp, unless a councilor is along," he ended. "We must take precautions until this dangerous man is captured. Now, to-night we will assemble here in the lodge, for Stunt Night. Every tent-group will be expected to have an act or other stunt prepared, and prizes will go to the winners. Dismissed!"

The groups scattered from the mess-hall to their respective tents to pass the daily siesta hour which was set aside as a period of rest and quiet from the brisk, noisy turmoil of the camp's activity. Mr. Jim Avery cocked his long legs up on the end of his bunk in Tent Ten. "We have the whole afternoon to get ready," he observed to his followers. "That should give us plenty of time to work up a first-class stunt that will bring home the prize. Anybody got any ideas?"

Wild Willie Sanders spoke up. "We've got an edge on the other tents, haven't we? Here we are with Chink Towner, the most famous Mandarin Magician in captivity. Say, I'll bet we can put over a magic show that will knock the rest of the tents silly!"

"How about it, Chink?"

"Sure, that's right," Chink Towner agreed modestly. "We could do it, all right. I've got a lot of new tricks up my sleeve that nobody ever saw before. The best one, though, needs to have Jerry Utway, and that means we'd have to take Tent Eight into partnership with us."

"That can be arranged, I think," said Mr. Avery. "I'll speak to Dr. Cannon about

it. He knows it's next to impossible to separate the twins. And with fourteen campers on the job, it ought to be some show. Well, what's your trick?"

"Yes, what is it?" asked the Utway twins together.

"Well, it's this way," began the Mandarin Magician; "Wild Willie can announce a big display of old Chinese hocus-pocus. We fix up a place on the stage where I sit, and a crowd of you guys come around and want to see some tricks. Then Fat Crampton comes along, and then I do a few easy ones, just to show my stuff, and then——" He lowered his voice as his comrades gathered about to hear the plan. Lefkowitz was sent over to Tent Eight to bring in the other participants, who listened and agreed to the scheme for a combined stunt that would make a most amusing addition to the vaudeville program that night. As soon as Recall sounded, the two groups of actors made for the Council Ring, where they rehearsed excitedly most of the afternoon.

Sherlock Jones did not join in the preparations for Stunt Night. He retired alone to the dark-room, where he stared at a photograph and pondered plans of his own. The announcement that a reward had been offered for the capture of the escaped criminal had set his mind working furiously on the problem of the Tattooed Arm. Indeed, the Chief's startling news was a leading topic of conversation in Lenape that afternoon; but when supper-time brought no further information, the subject was temporarily forgotten in anticipation of the evening's entertainment.

No sooner had the dessert dishes been cleared away than the space in front of the blackened fireplace was transformed into a stage. Benches were ranged in rows for the seating of the camper audience, and a makeshift curtain of bed-sheets strung on a wire was hung across that end of the lodge. Darkness had just fallen when a boisterous crowd of leaders and boys took their seats, awaiting the drawing of the curtain on the opening act, announced by Sax McNulty, master of ceremonies, as "Captain Colby's Army," a Tent Fifteen Feature Production.

Joey Fellowes, who with his brother Ted made up the Lenape bugle corps, sounded Reveille on his muted instrument. The curtains parted to reveal a morning scene in Tent Fifteen. A great fuss was made by Ollie Steffins, dressed in a scout uniform with many medals and much gold braid, who in the person of Mr. Colby himself, went about getting the snoring sleepers to waken for morning drill. The drowsy boys were finally put on their feet and each armed with a

broom-stick gun, with which they went through a series of clumsy maneuvers, knocking each other over the head, facing the wrong way, and otherwise tangling themselves in a travesty of a squad of rookies at drill. The concluding evolution brought them into line facing the audience, singing off key their rallying song:

*“We are Mr. Colby’s army,  
Mr. Colby’s army we,  
We cannot shoot, we won’t salute,  
What earthly good are we?”*

The curtains closed amid cheers, boos, and stamping of feet, during which Mr. Colby sat with a self-conscious smile on his disciplinarian’s face.

The acts followed swiftly after that. Tent Twelve put on a pirate play, Tent Three showed to advantage in a lady-like game of basketball, in which each side begged the other to kindly accept the ball on pain of being slapped on the wrist. Tent Four gave a ventriloquist act, with Peanut Westover as the talking dummy.

“The Mysterious Mandarin Magician,” with an all-star cast from Tents Eight and Ten, was the next to the last number on the evening’s program. At the parting of the curtain, Wild Willie Sanders in a high, battered black silk hat, wearing the curling mustache of a circus ringmaster, pointed out the main attraction to a gaping crowd of boys from the participating tents, dressed in wild garbs of every description. “Laydeez and gen-tul-men! The *one* and *only* Chinese magician, brought at great expense from the Flowery Kingdom to mystify you to-night!” Chink Towner, his naturally oriental cast of countenance exaggerated by a line of grease-paint above each slanting eye, and dressed in a pair of colorful silk pajamas borrowed from Councilor Lane, sat cross-legged above the crowd on a blanket-draped table, his features masked in Chinese calm. “Step right up, laydeez and gen-tul-men, and see the *one* and *only*!”

Fat Crampton, tittering sweetly, walked by, dressed as a beautiful damsel in a skirt fashioned from Howard Chisel’s spare kitchen apron. The Mysterious Mandarin descended from his throne and expertly drew half-dollars from the hat, sleeve, and nose of the “lady.” He then gave an exhibition of sleight-of-hand, at which he was an adept of no mean skill—making a collection of red balls appear and disappear between his nimble fingers, shaking a flying pack of cards from his fan, collecting the cards in a neat pile and drawing forth at one flip the card desired by any of the nondescript crowd about him.

When he returned to his elevated throne once more, Wild Willie announced that the Mandarin would now display the powers of his X-ray eye. Chink turned his back to the audience, and Happy Face Frayne, one of the judges who would later award the prizes for the best performance of the night, adjusted a bandage over the magician's eyes to make sure there was no deception. Jake Utway now walked out into the ranks of the audience, and touched a sweater worn by one of the listeners.

"What is the color of the object I am touching, Mandarin?" he called out.

"Blue," answered the blindfolded Chink promptly.

"Correct. Now what color am I touching?" Jake held up Soapy Mullins' neckerchief.

"Orange."

"And now?"

"White."

"Correct," answered Jake, putting Slim Yerkes' sailor hat back on the astonished boy's head. All about him were faces wonder-stricken at the accuracy of the magician's responses. Jake, however, was not astonished, for he was in on the secret. The series of colors had been arranged with Chink ahead of time, and all Jake had to do was to find and point to an object of the required hue. "And now, what is the color of the thing I'm pointing at?" He held a finger to his damaged left eye.

"Rainbow!"

A hearty laugh arose, for Jake's "shiner" had indeed developed the color of a sunset, and was by now one of the sights of the camp.

"Here—I bet you my life I can do that, too!" broke in Spaghetti Megaro of Tent Eight, now assuming his role in the show.

"All right," agreed Jake, returning to the stage.

From his capacious bathrobe, Spaghetti drew forth a spreading assortment of



vegetables. “Now, Mandarin,” he said loudly, “I’m going to see if you cheat me, huh? Tell me quick—what color is this spinach?”

“Green.”

“Well, what color is this lemon?”

“Yellow.”

“Right again. Now, I ask you, what color is this orange?” The Italian boy held the fruit high in the air.

“Orange.”

“Plenty smart, all right.” Spaghetti shook his head and began eating the orange. “No can foola da majish’!”

This bit of comedy was greeted with high amusement by the audience. Again Wild Willie stepped forward.

“Laydeez and gen-tul-men, the Mysterious Magician will end his exhibition with a death-defying display of his great powers. Never before has this breath-taking miracle been performed on any stage! The Mandarin will make a person vanish, and then make him appear again somewhere else!”

These words were Jake’s cue to move again. He glanced quickly overhead, and made sure that Jerry was in his place, ready for the disappearing act that would give a climax to their stunts. He was rewarded by a nod from Jerry, who sat perched on the rafters high above the floor of the lodge and the rows of watchers in the camp audience. This was Chink’s great idea—a disappearing act in which the twins would take part. Jake, dressed in his camp uniform, would be selected from the crowd to enter a large packing-box on the stage, and at Chink’s command, a flashlight would be thrown aloft, and Jerry dressed in a like costume, would swing down from his high position and drop to the stage and there, his hidden twin’s exact counterpart, would receive the applause due to this miraculous reappearance.

“Who wishes to disappear into thin air, laydeez and gen-tul-men?” cried out Wild Willie.

A chorus of voices rose on the stage, Jake's among them. "I do!" "Me!" "No, take me!"

"You'll do." Wild Willie, according to plan, pointed out Jake, who stepped forward. "You will now enter this large chest. No deception, folks!" The boy in the high silk hat lifted the box to show that there were no false bottoms or secret exits. "That's right! Pretty soon you'll disappear, and come back from somewhere else. Now, step inside, and you"—he pointed to Fat Crampton—"you sit on the lid. All set, Mandarin!"

Chink again descended to the level of the stage, his blindfold now removed. Calmly and impressively he took his hands from his sleeves.

"Heap hard trick!" the magician grunted. "Make 'um white boy no-see, plitty soon come-see some place else, velly smart!" He waved his arms over the box, upon which Fat Crampton sat. "Hocus-pocus. Come *high!*"

The audience was bent forward in silence. Jake, crouched within the narrow darkness of the box, pictured to himself the scene outside. At the magic words, a flashlight would shoot upward toward the rafters where Jerry had taken his station, and Jerry would drop to the stage and finish the act amid the plaudits of the crowd.

"Hocus-pocus. Come *high!*" repeated Chink, in a nervous tone. Jake wished he could see out of his tight prison, and wondered at the delay. Titters came from the smaller boys in the front of the audience. Why didn't Jerry come down?

"Come *high!*" Chink sounded disgruntled. "Maybe so white boy no come, no can fly out. That's all—goo'-bye!"

The rings of the curtain rattled as they were drawn together to cut off the scene. The big act had failed. There was a half-hearted clapping from the audience, who of course did not see any point in the sudden ending of the act. With such an anti-climax, the Magician sketch could scarcely hope to win a prize.

Jake squirmed in a frantic effort to get out of the box. "Get up, Fat!" he called urgently, and felt the heavy boy's weight removed from the lid. Jake sprang out like a Jack-in-the box, alive with eagerness to see why their carefully-laid scheme had fallen through. He met a disgusted look from the grease-painted face of the Mysterious Mandarin.

“Fine brother you’ve got!” muttered Chink. “I thought he was going to be all ready up there when the time came!”

“But—but he was!” stammered Jake. “I—I saw him up there just a minute ago!”

“Well, he’s not there now,” Chink growled, turning away. Jake cast his eyes aloft.

The beam of a flashlight still slanted upward toward the raftered corner under the roof. But Jerry Utway was nowhere in sight!

## CHAPTER IX

### OFF FOR PEBBLE BEACH

Where was Jerry?

Boys from Tent Four were crowding on the stage, getting the scene ready for the next act. Jake Utway stood stock-still, gazing at the rafters overhead, where his brother had been a moment since. He could not have descended into the lodge unobserved in the short time Jake had spent in his dark box. Why hadn't he taken his cue and dropped to the stage at Chink's summons? It was not like Jerry to do a thing like that. There must be some good reason——

Jake went over in his mind the plan they had made for this "disappearing act" which had turned out to be a disappearance in real earnest. Jerry was not to go on the stage with the others for the first part of the magic show. He was to get the long ladder, climb silently to the roof of the lodge porch, and then cautiously crawl through the open window in the far gable of the building——That was it! The window! Why hadn't he thought of that before? Jake rushed through the bunch of amateur actors dressing in the Chief's office, and emerged on the lodge porch. A ladder leaned against the building, but even in the dim light he could see that Jerry was not on the ladder.

He was aware of a voice at his elbow. "Looking for something?" It was Sherlock Jones, who had followed him from the lodge.

"Jerry! He's gone!" Jake blurted. "He must have crawled out the window again, and gone off somewhere. Why didn't he tell me?"

"Look for clues—that's the thing to do in a case like this," advised Sherlock with a business-like air. "He must have climbed down the ladder. Come on." The two boys ran around to the steps, and presently Sherlock snapped on his flashlight at the base of the ladder.

“No footprints can show up on this rocky ground,” observed the detective. Jake glanced wildly at the surrounding trees and bushes, as if determined to make them give up their secret.

“Jerry!” he shouted desperately. “*Jerry!*”

There was no answer. Sherlock flickered his electric torch here and there about the scene of action. “No, sir, not a thing—— Wait, though! What’s this?” He caught the glint of metal about fifty yards in the direction of the tents, and ran toward it.

“This” proved to be a large-size can of tomatoes. A few paces down the hill was a similar can, and another of beans. Sherlock held them up for inspection.

“Clues! Jake, do you know where these came from?”

Jake groaned. It was as he feared. Even now Jerry might be wrestling in the darkness with a deadly foe, or lying senseless in the woods, struck down by a blow from behind——

“Come on!” he cried. “We’ve got to find him! Hurry!”

Above them, from the lighted lodge, streamed out a blare of music from the Lenape band. Pale stars glimmered overhead in the warm summer night.

“Which way?” asked Sherlock calmly.

Jake made no answer, but stumbled down the hillside, making to the left, where he remembered he had lost sight of his antagonist the night of the raid on Tent Fifteen. Then, the man had headed for the lake, and it was probable that under the same conditions he would again do likewise. It was a slim chance, but——

“Jerry!”

Their footsteps guided by the yellow splash of brightness from the flashlight, the two boys broke through the campus and into the stretch of woods beyond. It seemed to Jake, as he raced through the night, that hours had passed since he was released from the box to find Jerry missing.

“Not much chance——find anybody in these woods,” panted Sherlock, holding his

side. “Stop a second, Jake—give me time to get my breath——”

“Wait here, then, if you’re winded,” answered Jake fiercely. “Here, lend me the light, and I’ll come back for you. I tell you, I’ve *got* to find him!” Before the other could protest, he seized the flash and was on his way toward the lake’s rim at a breakneck speed.

He was now almost to the rustic bridge that cut across the stream through the marsh at the head of the lake. Water shone glassily through the trees at his right hand. A huddled form loomed ahead in the path beyond the bridge, showing ghostly in the pale beam of the lamp.

“Jerry!”

“That you, Jake?” came his brother’s voice.

“Jerry—what’s the matter? Are you all right?”

“Sure.” Jerry rose and limped toward him. “I heard voices up the hill, and thought it might be you. Who’s with you?”

“I left that Jones kid up there—he got a stitch in his side. But are you sure you’re not hurt?”

“I got off into the marsh, and banged into some birch trees, that’s all. To-night it seems to be my turn to chase around in the dark and bump into things. But I’m sure sorry I spoiled the act.”

“That’s all right, now I’m sure you’re safe,” answered Jake with relief. “You saw him—the man?”

“Clear as daylight. I happened to be looking out the little window in the top of the lodge, just about the time you got into the box, and I saw him sneaking down from the kitchen. He must have been prowling around again, looking for something to eat, and thought it was a good time to break in, when everybody was watching the show.”

“And you went after him?”

“There was just a chance to nab him—that’s why I didn’t yell out and get the

whole camp on his trail. He might have got clean away by that time. Besides, we didn't want to miss the reward, did we?" Jerry rubbed his bruised arm, which had suffered when his untimely fall had put an end to the chase.

"You're sure he was the man?"

"Couldn't have been anyone else, Jakie. But he spotted me when I was coming down the ladder, and dropped his stuff and ran. I followed him down about to here, and then I slipped on some muddy rocks and lost him. But we know where to find him if we want him, don't we?"

"Shh!" Jake said warningly. "Here comes Dopey Sherlock. Don't say a word—he's suspicious enough already."

The doughty detective had at last found his breath, and came stumbling toward them.

"So you found him, did you?" he asked. "What was he doing down here?"

"Just taking a walk, Sherlock old boy," said Jerry easily. "Anything else you'd like to know?"

"Yes—a whole lot. Did you drop some cans of tomatoes and stuff?"

"Oh, they were just part of the show. If you'd been at the rehearsal this afternoon, instead of moping around by yourself, you'd know all about these things. Now, which would you rather do;"—Jake's tone was threatening—"shut up, or get a sock on that long nose of yours?"

Sherlock glanced timidly about him, and retreated a few steps. He knew that he was no match for the two Utway twins; and here in the darkness, far from the campers and protecting leaders, it would be unwise to arouse their ire.

Morning brought further news of the search for the escaped prisoner. The Chief announced that a band of volunteers, under the direction of prison guards, had made a prolonged search of the vicinity, but had found no traces of the missing criminal. The object of their search had been free for more than four days now, and it was thought by some that he might have gotten clear away and escaped unseen to a far city where he could go undetected for some time. However, it

was best not to relax the precautions they had made; and therefore the plans for tent hikes that night would have to be changed. A storm of protest greeted these last words, for the campers dearly liked the fun that always came when each tent, under its leader, took its supper and made an evening's camp in some favorite spot a few miles from their usual haunts on the campus. But the Chief was obdurate.

At lunch, the Chief rose and stated that so many boys had come to him to ask that his ban on the tent hikes be lifted, that he had decided to allow these hikes to take place after all. He silenced the cheering with a lifted hand, and added that no group should camp more than a mile away from the lodge, and all should be in their own tents by ten o'clock at the latest.

This was good news. Noisy discussions took place at each table, as to what spot should be selected as the site of their evening meal. Jerry Utway shouted down the others at Dr. Cannon's table, and finally got them to lay claim to Pebble Beach, a narrow bit of ground on the northeast border of the lake.

"I'm going with Jerry's gang, please!" requested Jake. Mr. Avery, who had decided to take Tent Ten no farther away than Church Glade, gave a ready consent; and so it was arranged.

Directly the afternoon swim was over, the campers dressed in their hiking outfits, and two boys were sent to draw each tent's rations from the kitchen. Jake and Jerry Utway, burdened with pans full of beans, raw potatoes, bread, salt, butter, and other provisions, headed for the dock, where two rowboats, filled with the remaining boys of Tent Eight, waited to shove off for their short journey across to Pebble Beach.

"I don't much like the look of the sky," observed Dr. Cannon, sitting in the stern of one of the boats as the boys stowed away the provisions. "But I guess we'll be all right. Everybody got his poncho or raincoat? If it starts to rain, we can get back to the dock in short order. Ready? Shove off!"

The two boats, manned by a husky youngster at each oar, drew away from the dock, and shot across the placid water in the direction of their chosen camping-ground. Thus calmly and unsuspectingly, Jake and Jerry Utway, at the oars of the foremost boat, embarked upon the wildest night of their lives.



## **CHAPTER X**

### **THE MAN IN BLUE AGAIN**

The two boats grated on the shingle of Pebble Beach, and their gay crews disembarked and moored their craft to trees overhanging the water. Boys ran in all directions, fetching dry wood to the circle of blackened stones that marked the site of many a Lenape bivouac, and potatoes, in their jackets of damp clay, were thrust into the first embers of the small cooking fire that had been lighted under Dr. Cannon's direction.

While the supper they had brought was cooking, Spaghetti Megaro organized a game of "duck-on-a-rock." Twilight brought a gang of ravenous campers in a cluster about the fire, watching with alert eyes the drawing forth of the food whose steaming aroma, mingled with the bitter tang of wood-smoke, made every mouth water. The sun faded out into a gray foggy mass of clouds low-lying over the Lenape range across the lake, and by the replenished fire's glow, the boys squatted about and ate their simple meal, spicing it with many a cheery quip and good-natured jest.

When pans and mess-kits had been washed by the simple method of rubbing dirt on their surfaces to remove the grease, afterward dipping them in the lake, dead limbs and brush were heaped on the fire, and in the circle of light sent forth by the jolly blaze, the boys of Tent Eight settled themselves for an evening of campfire talk.

One story followed another, most of them having to do with strange occurrences, haunted houses, ghosts whose touch made the victim's hair turn White in a single night. As the hours passed, the air about the little encampment became decidedly spooky. A wailing wind had arisen, and swept mournfully through the overhanging trees. Down the lake on the other side, a leaping torch of flame marked the spot where Tent Two, camped below the baseball field, had built a high fire that danced with every gust and spouted a hail of sparks toward the

murky sky.

Oscar Hansen, a freckle-faced blonde boy, was relating the tale of the Golden Hand. He raised his voice as the climax of his story drew near. “—And he heard a footstep outside the door of the room, and a scary voice said: ‘*Who’s got my Golden Hand?*’ Then he heard the door swing open, and something said, in a louder voice: ‘*Who’s got my Golden Hand?*’ But he couldn’t see anything there. His hair stood on end. He sat up in bed. The thing was right at the foot of his bed, saying in an awful screech: ‘*Who’s got——*’”

“Good evening!”

Everybody jumped, and little Barstow cried out in fear. A dislodged stone rolled down into the fireplace. Peering eyes made out the towering form of a stranger just beyond the circle of firelight. A man had come upon them unawares as the group sat absorbed in the ghostly tale.

“Hope I don’t interrupt your fun. But I saw the fire, and just thought I’d step over and warm my hands a bit.”

Dr. Cannon rose to greet the newcomer. “Glad to have you. We were telling ghost stories, and I’m afraid you’ startled us a bit, Mr. ——”

“Diker. I’m from the state penitentiary over beyond Elmville.” The stranger shook hands, and pulled aside his slicker for a moment; the red glow flashed on the metal of an official badge. “Glad to know you, sir. Well, if it isn’t my friends the twins!”

Jerry stuck his elbow in Jake’s ribs. It was the man in blue again! The prison guard! Now that they looked closely, they could see that what they had first taken for a stick in the man’s hand was in reality the gun which he never seemed to be without.

“Hello, boys. I’m just staying a minute,” the guard went on. “A warm fire feels mighty good. I wouldn’t be surprised if we had a good-sized storm before morning. You’re lucky you don’t have to prowl around here in the dark all night, the way I do.”

“Here, have a seat,” said Dr. Cannon hospitably. “You’re still after that prisoner who got loose, I suppose. Are there any further developments?”

“No such luck. He’s disappeared completely; but sooner or later, he’ll be starved out of the hole where he’s hiding, and then we’ll get him again. It won’t be an easy job in these woods, though, because Burk—that’s the man’s name—used to be a hunter’s guide and is a real woodsman.”

“What kind of a fellow is he? Any objection to telling us?” asked the doctor.

“None at all,” said Diker cheerfully. “From what I’ve seen Of him, Burk is not a bad chap. Short, slender fellow—always quiet and well-behaved, never gave any trouble, until last Saturday morning, when he was discovered missing. We still can’t figure out how he got away from the prison grounds. It was a foolish thing for him to do, too; he only had a year more to serve, and now, when he’s caught, it will mean added time for breaking prison.” Diker held out his hands thoughtfully over the fire. “As I say, he was a guide for hunters—he knows the Lenape hills about as well as anybody—and most of the year he was caretaker at the Canoe Mountain Sportsman’s Club, down below Wallistown. Well, he was caught stealing money or jewelry or something when he was there alone, in charge of the place—I don’t think I ever rightly heard the exact circumstances. Probably some temptation came his way, and he wasn’t strong-willed enough to resist.”

“He doesn’t sound like a very dangerous character,” remarked the doctor.

“No, he’s not a fighter—but any man in a corner will fight for his liberty when he has to do it. I wish we could get him soon, though—I’m a bit tired of hiking through the country day and night in all sorts of weather. If we could only spot the smoke of his fire, or——”

“Say!” burst out Al Canning, nerving himself to speak. “Say, Mr. Diker—you said something about smoke. Me and another kid named Toots saw some smoke over here a couple days ago, right on this very side of the lake! Down below a ways where the trees are thickest—we saw it from a boat——”

“So?” The prison guard bent a sharp glance on the flushed face of the youngster. “Well, there’s a chance he may be in there. If nothing else happens, I’ll take a bunch of deputies in there first thing to-morrow, and if he’s there, we’ll get him! But say, young fellow, if you saw this smoke several days ago, why didn’t you report it?”

“Well,” stammered Al, “me and Toots were going to tell it at Council Ring, but

we forgot, and one of the Utway kids here said it wasn't worth mentioning." He pointed to the twins, and stopped, breathless.

Jake and Jerry faced the accusing glance of the guard. "Hmm! I seem to run into you two wherever I go. Now, will you kindly tell me——"

A crashing blast of thunder broke in upon his words, and a jagged stab of lightning illuminated the sky. Dr. Cannon jumped up hastily.

"Back to camp, boys!" he commanded. "Put out the fire, stow everything in the boats, and head for the dock! Everybody put on his raincoat—the storm will be here before we know it!"

The rising wind whipped a few stinging drops against their faces as he spoke. The prison guard stood motionless amid the bustle of breaking camp. In a few moments the little beach was crowded with the campers, who loaded their kits into the boats and climbed in after them. The fire hissed as Linder poured a bucket of water over the embers.

The return journey across to the dock was short, yet in that space of time the storm broke in fury. Stiff, white-crested waves slapped against the thwarts, and made smooth progress with the oars a difficult feat. Jake and Jerry bent their backs with a will, and their round-bottomed steel craft was the first to reach the dock. As the other two occupants clambered out, with water steaming from their rubber ponchos, Jerry caught his brother's arm and drew him under the shelter of the diving platform.

"Whew, that was a close one!" he whispered. "That guard is sure suspicious of us—I could see it in his eye. And he means what he says. A gang of men can go over that patch of woods across the lake with a fine-tooth comb, and they'll find our convict as sure as shooting. This is our only chance to get the reward—we'll have to do it to-night!"

"I'm game!" Jake brushed the raindrops from his hair with a swift motion.

"Don't get undressed. As soon as everybody is asleep, crawl out and meet me by the flagpole. Wear your poncho, and bring your big flashlight." A rumble of thunder capped his words. "Jakie, we've got to do it! We've got to find our man, and bring him back!"

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **THE LAIR OF THE ENEMY**

Jerry Utway lay in his bunk, fully dressed, for about an hour after Taps had summoned the campers to slumber. The storm had settled to a steady drumming torrent that would probably persist far into the next day. The sides of the tents had been lowered and fastened to the floor by their grommets, to afford the fullest protection from the blast. An occasional flash of lightning, accompanied by a crack of booming thunder, lit up the familiar tent at intervals. Jerry shivered slightly as he stretched out in his blankets and listened to the furious tattoo of drops on the tent-fly over his head. He would have liked a less tempestuous night for their expedition, but dawn would put an end to their hopes unless they moved speedily.

At last he judged it safe to make his getaway, and with infinite patience crawled into his boots and poncho, and shielding his flashlight, crept out into the night. The vicinity of the campus was black as pitch. Jerry felt his way through dripping underbrush, in order to avoid disturbing any sleeper. He found Jake by the flagpole, and without a word the two brothers stumbled down to the boat-dock.

On the unprotected platform of the dock they felt upon their wet faces the full power of the storm. Wicked-sounding waves swirled through the piles on which the dock was built; the little fleet of rowboats rocked and pounded each other at their moorings.

“Don’t put on your light,” cautioned Jake hoarsely. “That prison guard may still be patrolling over across, and if he happened to spot us, the game would be over. We’ll have to take a boat—we couldn’t get a canoe launched in this water to-night.”

“You untie a boat and pull it around in the lee of the dock, while I get the oars.”

In a few moments Jerry returned with the precious oars, and they were shoved into the locks of the boat Jake had selected. Before putting off, it was necessary to bail out the pool of rain-water that splashed in the bottom of the craft, and this Jake did, using his sou'-wester hat as a bail. When the duckboards beneath their feet no longer floated, the brothers cast off, seized the oars, and headed about on their second crossing that night.

“Head straight across!” ordered Jerry. “I figure that if we keep right into the teeth of the wind, we’ll come out at that pile of logs straight across, where the deer-trail comes down to the lake. Heave!”

Keeping the full sweep of the wind at their straining backs, the twins worked the oars with a heaving, united swing. Spray dashed over the bows and drenched their rubber garments; the rolling boat pitched and dived as they met one white-capped wave after another, head on. The dim structure of the diving-tower and the shore beyond faded swiftly into the gloom; but after fifteen minutes of labor they had no other evidence that their craft had made any progress in the direction they wished to take.

“Don’t quit!” grunted Jake. “Heave!”

Several times the bows were swept around and they took water broadside over the low gunwale before a frantic effort on the part of one or the other could swing them on their course again. It seemed to both laboring boys that hours had passed.

Bump! The stem of the small vessel crashed against some unseen obstruction, nearly throwing the young mariners headlong on to the floor-boards. Both clung to their oars, and a wave lifted the boat from its precarious position.

“We rammed the top of a sunken log!” called Jerry, who was nearest the bow. “I think it may be part of that big jam we headed for. Any idea where we are?”

“As I remember, the deer-trail is down to the right a few hundred yards. What do you say we skim along offshore and try to find it?”

“Good! Boy, I’m glad that’s over!” Jerry was breathing heavily from his exertions. He pulled on his oar, shoved off from the dark mass of piled logs an arm’s length away, and the boat began skirting the dimly-seen shoreline.

They had made the crossing in a Stygian darkness, but now the thunder again commenced its ominous cannonade. An opportune bolt of heaven-sent fire gave them a momentary glimpse of the shore on their port side, and told them what they wanted to know. Jake made out the muddy delta where, he remembered from a previous visit, the deer-trail began. Before the gloom closed in again, he pulled about and began stroking madly toward this landing. A thought struck him like a chill hand. Had a pair of terrified eyes spotted their boat from the black shelter of the trees? Did a desperate evil-doer lurk there, armed with Ellick's sharpest hand-ax, waiting for them to set foot on shore——? Jake shrugged. The rowboat buried its nose squashily in the mud-bank, beneath the dripping trunk of an overhanging tree.

Without a sound the boys moored the painter to a convenient branch, and cautiously removed the oars and placed them beneath the thwarts, along the bottom of the boat.

"We'll have to bail her again before we go back—if we do go back," whispered Jerry grimly. "Can you get ashore from where you are?"

"I think so." Jake stood and clasped the slippery tree trunk with both arms, and swung his body forward. His heavy boots made him a clumsy climber; but in a moment he had scrambled through a fringing litter of brush and twigs to firmer ground. Jerry followed in his track, almost dropping his flashlight as he clambered through the treacherous brush; and the boys found themselves once more together in the darkness of the forest.

"Stick to the trail—it's our only guide," advised Jake. He led the way, recalling as best he could the twisting of the narrow track which they had once followed by daylight on an idle exploring trip earlier in the season. An infrequent lightning-flash was their only help, and it was no wonder that they more than once wandered from the dim trail.

Deep into the murky reaches of the woods, they paused for breath. So far, they had seen or heard nothing save gloom-shrouded trees; the usual storm-noises of the wilderness; and the crackling of branches that marked their advance.

"Now, which way?" asked Jerry guardedly. "I think the trail splits about here. It's getting late—if anybody in our tents wakes up, we're sure to be missed. No use waiting here." His teeth were chattering from the damp of the low ground.

“Do you think we’ll have to give up?”

Jake was staring intently ahead. “I thought I caught a little glow of light over there just a second ago! If this rain would only hold up for a while—— There! See it?” He seized his brother’s arm and pointed.

Jerry peered anxiously into the mist. “Where?”

“Not that way! Right ahead! It must be a fire! That’s our man, all right! Guess he thinks he’s fairly safe on a night like this—and he sure needs a fire; it’s chilly enough over here to freeze you stiff! Are you ready?”

“Sure, Jakie! No use trying to creep up on him, though. We’ll sneak as close as we can, and then both rush him and jump him together! Come on, let’s get it over with. He’s not much bigger than we are, and we’ll take him by surprise!”

“Don’t let him get hold of his ax, though!” Jake quivered with excitement. “Ready?” He crept toward the low tinge of red light that marked the outlaw’s risky campfire.

They advanced unchallenged for some two hundred yards through the dripping trees, in line with their goal. Their straining eyes could barely make out a small heap of glowing branches at the mouth of what seemed to be a rude shelter of sticks and dead limbs, which would cut off the tiny glow from all other directions except the one from which they approached. Not another sign of life came from the secret camp they had risked so much to find.

“Now!” said Jake sharply, and dashed forward. Jerry was right at his side in a few strides. It was like the football days at school, with Quarterback Jake carrying the ball, and his husky brother at his elbow, crashing through the line —“Right through center!” Jerry was amazed to hear that shout in his own voice. In the madness of that charge he had sent forth the old battle-cry.

Together the Utway twins galloped down upon their foe. From an opening in the shelter beyond the fire appeared a pale, haggard face; a slender body sprang forward to meet this surprise attack; a shrill scream burst from the drawn lips.

“*Stand back!* You’ll never take me—you——”

Involuntarily the twins slowed up in their tracks. A streak of lightning, like the



crack of doom, hit the earth at a terrifyingly short distance away. The scene was illuminated as if by a thousand searchlights. Their enemy, the searing mark of horror branded on his face, cried out once more. His frail body quivered as if from a blow, toppled weakly forward, and lay in a heap almost at their feet—face forward, helpless, deathly still.

## CHAPTER XII

### A DARING RESOLVE

“He’s fainted!”

Jake and Jerry stared in bewilderment at the inert body at their feet. Their first thought was not one of triumph at this successful ending to their quest. Rather, it was one of pity for the tortured man whose desperate break for liberty had availed him nothing. Jerry was stirred to action.

“Get him into the lean-to! The poor fellow can’t hurt us now. Quick!” The twins lifted the limp form and carried him gently into the low brush shelter that he had built for protection against the elements. The rude thatched roof held off the rain fairly well, and both boys removed their ponchos, laying one on the ground, placing their unconscious burden upon it, and covering the convict’s body with the other. Jerry pulled open the rough gray shirt at the man’s throat, and fanned the bloodless face with his hat.

“Get some water, Jake! I think the creek is only a few steps away.”

Jake departed. His brother snapped on his flashlight, and cast its beams full upon his captive’s face. The man was not bald, as Jake had thought when he had first encountered him; his hair had been shaved close to the top of his head, but now a bristling stubble had grown to cover it. The chin and jowls were also darkened with a rough growth of beard showing blackly against the pallid face. Through bluish lips, the breath came in quick sobs. The man’s body, under the close-drawn poncho, was slender and wiry, and although but slightly taller than one of the twins, gave the impression of some strength.

Jake returned with his sou’-wester half full of water. He splattered a few drops over the prisoner’s face, and forced a slight trickle down the man’s throat.

“Don’t choke him!” cautioned Jerry. “Here, I’ll rub his arms and chest. He’s cold, and no wonder! Think of staying in this place for several days, without any blankets or even a coat!”

He began rubbing the man’s limbs briskly, and noted a flush of returning color in the pale features.

“That ought to bring him around,” observed Jake. “Say, he doesn’t look much like a desperado, does he? Poor fellow, it’s a shame he has to——”

“Shh!” Jerry paused, and tucked the protecting poncho about the body again. He had seen an eyelid flicker in the light of their lamp. The convict moaned feebly, opened his eyes, closed them again as the light struck them. “Give him a little more water, Jakie.”

Slowly their patient revived. His body jerked weakly.

“You’re all right,” said Jake soothingly. “Don’t try to sit up. Can you hear me?”

The man fell back wearily. “You’ll never—take me—*there*—again——” he murmured faintly. “I—I—water——”

“Here you are. That’s it.” Jake propped him up, and held a handful of water to his mouth. “Shade the light, Jerry. What do you think we ought to do with him now?”

“He’s half frozen. We’ll have to get him warm.” Jerry had meanwhile noted a small pile of wood heaped under the eaves of the narrow shelter, at the side of which lay the small ax which Ellick had missed after the raid on his kitchen. “It won’t matter now if anybody sees the fire.” Leaving his place at the man’s side, he stirred up the dying flames and placed a few more sticks upon them. “It’s stopped raining for a while, I think. We’ll bring him over here, where he can get warm.”

Skillfully they brought their prisoner, still wrapped in the poncho, to a sitting position at the mouth of the lean-to, close to the reviving fire. The man’s breath was coming more easily now. His eyes were open, and he watched their every move, without attempting to speak.

“Think of it, Jake,” Jerry went on; “he’s been in the woods now for four or five

days, without any decent clothes, and only a little food to eat, scared every minute that he will be caught again. It's no wonder he's worn out." He turned to the man. "When did you eat last?"

The one addressed shook his head. "I—don't know. Last night—got some food—dropped it——"

"That was Stunt Night!" put in Jake. "Sherlock and I found some cans of tomatoes he dropped when you chased him. Say, if we only had—— By jiminy, I just thought!" He reached in his breast pocket. "I got a couple bars of chocolate to eat to-night on the picnic, and just remembered them now."

The paper-wrapped candy he drew out was sodden and melted by contact with his body, but the man's eyes fastened themselves on them with mute pleading as Jake tore away the tinfoil about the sticky mass.

"Here—help yourself. Don't eat it too fast, though, or it may make you sick."

With shaking fingers, their starving captive seized the proffered food, and wolfed it ravenously.

"Feel better?"

"I—I—— You boys are all right. Guess it's no use. But—how did you find me?"

"We're from Camp Lenape, across the lake. We've seen you before," answered Jake; "once when I ran into you the time that crazy Sherlock Jones shot off his flashlight powder down by Tent Fifteen——"

The man nodded. "I got some food over there. I remember. I tried to find some clothes in a tent, but a big light went off, and——"

"—And you tangled up with me in the woods," finished the boy. "Guess we were both pretty scared. Then, last night, Jerry here spotted you, coming down from the kitchen——"

"You know who I am?"

"Sure," said Jerry. "You're Burk. But say, you don't look much like a thief and a jailbird. What did you do it for? I mean, how did you get in trouble in the first

place?”

A smouldering fury came into Burk's eyes. "I didn't do it!" he cried. "Do you hear me? I'm not guilty! And for more than a year I've been penned up in that place—like an animal—an innocent man!" His voice had risen to a high scream which echoed through the dripping darkness of the forest.

"Say! You mean you——"

The man fell back, exhausted by his short outburst. "I don't expect you to believe me," he said wearily. "Nobody believed me. Nobody. But it's true. There was a mistake, and everything was against me. Guess they were justified—I couldn't prove I didn't take the necklace. The evidence was too strong——"

"What necklace?" asked Jake with interest. "They said you stole a necklace somewhere?"

"Don't bother him now, Jake."

Burk sat up again. "I'm all right." The warmth of the fire and the food they had given him seemed to have bestowed fresh energy. "I want to tell you, even if you don't believe me. If I had been able to get away this time, I think I could have proved my innocence, but it was no use. But you boys, whoever you are, have been decent to me, and I want you to know I wouldn't lie to you. By the way, what are your names? I'd like to know. Brothers, aren't you?"

"Twins. I'm Jerry Utway, and this is Jake. But what about the necklace?"

Both boys had forgotten that they sat in the wet woods in the dead of night, far from their friends, who might miss them at any moment. They were intent only on hearing the story of this strange man.

"It was about a year ago," began Burk. "I'd always spent most of my time in these mountains—my father was a hunting guide, and I became one, too, after I went through high school. I had a pretty good job as steward and caretaker of a place down on Canoe Mountain, west of Wallistown. It was a sort of hunting lodge, belonging to a club of sportsmen. I lived in the lodge all year round, and took out parties of deer-hunters and fishermen during the season. Well, at this particular time there was only one man staying at the lodge—a man named Collinge, a banker in the city. He was going out fishing that afternoon by

himself, and asked me to take care of an expensive pearl necklace he had brought up with him. His daughter was driving up next day with some friends—it was her birthday, and he was giving her the necklace as a present. A party was planned, and I had to get things ready. As it happened, I had a touch of 'flu at the time—I didn't say anything about it, as I thought it was just a bit of a cold, but I must have had a high fever that day. I took the necklace. He told me to guard it carefully, as it was quite valuable. That's all."

"But what happened?" prompted Jake.

"*What happened!*" repeated Burk in despair. "That's the question I've been asking myself a hundred times a day, back yonder in the prison." He shivered. "Mr. Collinge came back that evening and found me lying on my bed, raving with fever. The necklace was nowhere in sight. I couldn't tell him a thing—I couldn't remember what I had done with it; I'd been out of my head most of the time. Well, I don't much blame him for getting angry and thinking I had hidden it, stolen it to sell later. He gave me until morning to produce the necklace or take the consequences of being a thief. When morning came, I was better—but no matter how I hunted all over the place, I couldn't find the necklace."

"And you couldn't remember?"

"It was gone—that's all. I was innocent—but how could I prove it? At the trial, Mr. Collinge was decent enough, even if he had lost a great deal of money; he asked the judge to deal with me leniently. But naturally everybody thought I had yielded to temptation, and was refusing to confess. Once in a thousand times, a jury will convict an innocent man. This was the one unlucky time. I went behind the bars."

Burk stared at the flickering fire for several minutes, lost in unspeakable thoughts.

"Boys, don't ever do anything that might lead to a prison cell. It's—it's—— Well, never mind that. I stood it, and I must stand it again, now you've caught me."

"Where were you going?" asked Jerry curiously.

"Didn't I tell you? I've had a feeling, all the time I was in jail, that if I could only get back to the Canoe Mountain Lodge, I might be able to—to find the necklace

and prove I wasn't guilty. I had a feeling I might remember——”

Jerry's eyes were alive with enthusiasm. “You think if you got to the lodge, it might all come back to you?”

“That's what I hoped. As far as I know, the necklace was never found. If that's true, it must still be there. If I could only——”

“What do you say, Jakie?” Jerry Utway looked over at Jake, who nodded back.

The convict stared from one to the other. “What do you mean?”

Jerry jumped up, pounding his fist in his palm. “We'll give you your chance— Jake and I will help you prove you're not a thief! No matter what happens, you're going back to Canoe Mountain and try to find that necklace! And we— we'll go with you!”

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE TRUNK ROOM

The astonishing proposal of the twins took the man completely aback. He turned his head away. A choking rose in his throat, and he rubbed his eyes with the back of one hand. “Boys——” He swallowed several times before he could go on. “Boys, nobody’s ever had as much faith in me as you two are giving—— No use trying to tell you what it means to me, or trying to thank you—— But I couldn’t ask you to do it. Any help you give me will put you in reach of the law. No, I couldn’t do it. The game’s up, and I’ll just have to make up my mind to go back ——”

“Here, that’s no way to talk!” put in Jerry with assumed roughness. “Now, forget everything, except that from now on, we’re going to do all we can to make you a free man.”

The twins were glowing at the prospect of new and more daring adventure. To protect Burk, to risk everything in a dash across country, in order to prove him guiltless of the crime for which he was condemned—here was a deed the thought of which set their hearts beating wildly!

Jake outlined their campaign. “You can’t travel until you’re fed and rested, Mr. Burk. And you can’t stay here—the prison guards will be through here in a few hours. We’ll have to hide you, somewhere near camp, where you can rest up for a while. To-morrow night we’ll start! Just leave everything to us!”

“The trunk room!” Jerry burst out. “That’s the place! Nobody ever goes in there—he can sleep all day to-morrow, and even the police wouldn’t think of looking right in the camp lodge!”

“Good idea, Jerry. Now, if you think you can move, Mr. Burk, we’ll start. Here it’s raining again, which is good—it’ll wash out our tracks.”



The boys helped the dazed man to his feet, and Jerry hung his poncho over his new friend's shoulders before helping Jake to try and remove all traces of the little camp in the woods. The small fire was soon buried in mud and brush; the lean-to was pushed over and pulled apart, and the branches scattered as far as possible. Taking the ax, Jake led the way back along the muddy trail to the boat.

The little party found the shore of the lake without mishap, and pushed off through a steady drizzle. Burk seemed lost in a daze. Only once did he speak on the return journey.

“Did—didn't you say something, back there, about a reward?”

“Sure,” the boy whispered. “You must have guessed they would offer some money for your capture. That's why we'll have to keep you out of sight all the time, until you find that necklace. Now, better not talk any more—that prison guard might spot us.”

The campus was undisturbed; no light showed anywhere through the rain. It was probable that the twins had not been missed, and stood a good chance of returning to their bunks undetected. Both boys were busily planning their new adventure, and first and foremost in their thoughts was the safety and comfort of the man they had promised to aid.

Between the pillars supporting the downhill end of the lodge, a loosely-boarded structure had been built next to the dark-room. This large space was used for storing the trunks, suitcases, and warbags which had served to transport the outfits of the campers from their homes. The trunk room was seldom entered during the season. Jerry's idea of hiding Burk in this place, directly beneath the feet of the campers as they assembled for meals, was not in reality such a dangerous scheme. Unless he took to the open woods again, there was no other place on the Lenape campus which afforded such secrecy and protection. All the man had to do was to lie here snugly, resting and regaining his strength, and unless he made a suspicious noise, he might go undiscovered for some time.

Jake pushed the door open a crack and tiptoed softly inside. The others entered behind him, and Jerry snapped on his light. Their shadows stretched gigantically across the rough floor and scaled the heaps of piled trunks and suitcases. Dry, warm, protected, and seldom entered, here was a good refuge for the outlaw.

“If you hear anybody coming, you can hide behind a pile of trunks,” pointed out

Jerry. "You can easily stay here until to-morrow night. Jakie, you see if you can make him comfortable. I'll be right back."

Jerry left them, and went to the kitchen. His hunch was a good one. On one of the tables he located a pile of pans and dishes which had been brought in by the late-returning hikers that evening. His guarded flashlight revealed that much unused food had also been returned. He found a pan half full of beans, an untouched loaf of bread, some butter and jam, and a can of pineapple which he opened before returning with his trove to the trunk room.

"Food," he announced. "This will hold you down for a while, Mr. Burk. We'll try to bring more to-morrow, if we can do it safely. In the meantime you can be having a long sleep."

"I found a good place," said Jake. He pointed to a far corner of the room, where an old, patched canvas, the remains of a worn-out tent, was folded to form a rough bed. Burk wore Jake's sweater over his wet garments. The man had seized eagerly upon the food, and was stowing it away in short order.

"These boards may not be the softest bed in the world, but at any rate, it's better than the wet ground on a night like this," Jake went on. "I guess you'll be able to sleep. But be careful not to stir around too much. All day to-morrow, until taps, there will be at least a dozen fellows around within a few feet of this place. And to-morrow night, when everybody's asleep, we'll come and get you."

"And to-morrow, some time, we'll smuggle in some decent clothes, and a razor, and everything," added Jerry. "Anything else you want?"

Burk, his mouth full of food, shook his head.

"Well, then, good night! And to-morrow——"

The two boys went to the door. Burk rose and ran to them, seized their hands. His voice shook, and he made no effort to hold back the tears that welled in his eyes.

"Good night, boys—and God bless you! God bless you!"

When Sherlock Jones awoke in the cold, gray morning, a few minutes before

Reveille, he had a feeling that something tremendous was going to happen that day. The first thing his prying eyes lit upon was one of Jake Utway's boots, lying carelessly on the floor of the tent. The boot was caked with sticky black mud almost to the knee. He pondered this mysterious circumstance at odd moments during the morning, without any satisfactory conclusion as to what Jake might have been doing in the dead of night that would put his footgear into such a state.

His feeling that great things were impending returned to him again and again as the morning passed. The customary line-up for the flag-raising was held on the lodge porch, as the rain was still dripping from low-lying banks of cloud; but along toward morning swim-time the sky cleared slightly, and by lunch a watery sun had appeared, to dry up the muddy campus.

All the time Sherlock had been on the job. Not once had the Utway twins been out of his sight.

At lunch, however, he came upon another clue. Jake appeared to be unusually hungry; it seemed almost impossible for him to satisfy his appetite. The long-nosed detective did not link this fact with the further fact that Jake's blouse, when he rose from table, bulged suspiciously in front.

After the meal, Sherlock moodily retired to the dark-room, his favorite spot in which to think over his information, and to "deduce" results therefrom. So far, he had little to go on.

He listened idly for a few moments to the song of the care-free black boy up in the kitchen. That brought to mind the recent robbery of the pantry. Might this have something to do with the Utway case?

A great light suddenly burst upon Sherlock Jones. A convict might be badly in need of food. And an escaped fugitive might well serve as a secret accomplice

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A creaking noise near him in the darkness brought him to wide-awake alertness. Sherlock strained his ears, eager to catch any further sound. Absolute silence followed. For a few moments the boy stood motionless; then he softly tiptoed to the door, and flung it open. The Utway twins were in sight, strolling easily down toward their tents.

They had come from the trunk room! It had been their footsteps he had heard. But what was their business there? Had they hidden something? Perhaps the swag of some midnight burglary, something that might incriminate them surely and swiftly?

Yes, the trunk room was assuredly the key to all the problems that confronted the amateur sleuth. Without making a sound, he stepped to the door of the trunk room.

It was a foolish step for young Detective Jones to make. Yet, whatever his other failings, Sherlock could not be accused of lack of courage. He turned the knob and pushed cautiously inside.

At first he could see little; it was not until his eyes were accustomed to the dimness of the room that he made out a heap of food on the floor, piled high on a paper napkin. Food! For whom? For what? He allowed the door to swing behind him, and bent forward to look more closely. He was not aware of a shadowy body that crouched at his side, tense, ready to spring on him from behind a heap of stacked trunks.

Sherlock Jones did not have a chance to cry out. A muscular arm circled his throat with a choking clasp. A bit of cloth was rammed into his open mouth; wiry arms clutched his own with a grip like that of a steel trap. His wild struggles were of no avail. He fell to the floor of the room, borne down by a strength greater than his own. As he fell, he saw—or did he dream?—that he was caught in the power of a stranger whose face was invisible, but on whose arm was tattooed the design of a flying eagle.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SO LONG, LENAPE!

It was past ten o'clock that night when Jerry and Jake Utway tapped softly on the door of the trunk room. The door opened a crack.

"It's us—the twins!" Jerry whispered urgently. "Are you all right?"

"Yes. Come in," responded a familiar voice. The two boys, with a backward look into the starlit night, slid through the doorway, and Jake snapped on his flashlight.

They saw before them a stranger. No, it was Burk—but a different Burk, a man new-made in the few hours since they had seen him. Now, they could see that he was quite a young man, a being entirely different from the haggard, bearded fugitive they had rescued. During siesta hour, as they had promised, they had smuggled into the hiding-place not only food, but also a razor with which Jake methodically scraped his upper lip every two weeks or so. They had also made up a bundle of clothing extracted from their camping outfits. But they had not expected such a transformation as that which had produced this likeable young fellow who now smiled back at them in the rays of the lantern.

Burk had shed his drab convict's clothing, torn and stained as it was. He was now attired in garments contributed by the twins, and wore a flannel shirt, black sweater under a Norfolk jacket, and Jake's corduroy trousers. A pair of stout army shoes had replaced his sodden prison footwear. A cloth cap concealed his tell-tale cropped head; he would not dare to remove that cap where others might see him. His shaving operations had left a small, neat mustache on his lip, which gave him a cocky, cheerful look. In fact, the food and rest he had taken had done much to restore him to his old, care-free outlook upon life. This was a surprising Burk; he was actually grinning at them, as though his whole future did not depend upon the outcome of the adventure upon which they were about to

embark.

“Is everything ready?” he asked.

“Well,” answered Jake slowly, “we’ve had to make a few changes in our plans. It’s this way. A goofy kid named Jones, in my tent, has gone and gotten himself lost somewhere. Our leader is worried to death about what might have happened to him—this kid is a nosy bird we nicknamed Sherlock, and is always fussing around trying to detect things. He didn’t show up for supper, and everybody’s been chasing all over the place ever since, trying to find him. We’re supposed to be looking for him now ourselves.”

“I think, from what you say, that I know the boy you mean. Well, he detected himself into some trouble.”

“You’ve seen him? You know where he is?”

“I do. If you’ll look over in the corner, there by my bed, you’ll find him safe and sound, though a little scared.”

The Utway twins pushed past the speaker, and tiptoed to the place mentioned. Sure enough; there on the canvas lay Sherlock Jones, flat on his back, his wrists pinioned behind him, a gag in his mouth held in place by his own handkerchief, above which a pair of pale eyes goggled through his thick glasses with a piteous, pleading look. For some hours past, the amateur sleuth had been expecting a gruesome death any moment from the mysterious stranger who had trapped him; now, at sight of the notorious Utway brothers, he thought his last hour had struck. He wriggled in his bonds helplessly. Through all the long time of his captivity, Sherlock Jones had come to the conclusion that he didn’t want to be a famous detective. If he ever got through this harrowing experience alive, he’d never shadow another suspect again.

“How—how did he get here?” gasped Jerry.

“I’m sorry for the poor chap, boys, but it couldn’t be helped. He was smart enough to find out where I was, and if I hadn’t tied him up, he would have had me caught in the wink of an eye! It was the only thing I could do.”

“Well, that’s not so good,” put in Jake. “Dog-gone it, why did he have to come snooping around right at this time? It’s a mess; it will make our getaway all the

harder. I thought that all we would have to do would be to sneak out our stuff after Taps to-night, and hit the trail. But right now, half the camp is chasing all over the place, looking for this sap; if we try to get through now, they might easily spot us, and if we stay here, they might decide to look in here any minute. What'll we do with him?"

"Yes, what?" Jerry echoed. "If we don't leave pretty quick, we'll be nabbed. Sherlock heard everything, and we don't dare let him go now. Even if we leave him here, he'll work loose sooner or later, and that will be even worse for us." He glared at the prostrate Sherlock, the whole cause of this hitch in their carefully laid plans. "I guess we'll just have to tie him tight and get as far away as we can before he's discovered."

"You two are ready to travel, then?" asked Burk.

"We couldn't get our blankets, because everybody in the tent is awake and up," said Jerry, "but that's all right. We can start right away, sure." Both twins wore khaki hiking breeches, woolen stockings, flannel shirts, and high shoes, and each wore a heavy mackinaw that would protect him well from the cold.

Burk's tone was serious. "And you're still determined to run away from your friends and go with me? Don't you think it would be wiser to let me start off alone, and let me take my chance without involving you in my trouble?"

"Dead sure. We go with you. Honest, we can help you a lot—we know all the trails around here, and we can hike fine. We're with you to see this through to the finish!"

Jake, during this whispered discussion, had been lost in thought. Now he broke out with the scheme that had occurred to him. "Listen! The only thing we can do with Sherlock is to take him with us! Sounds crazy, I know," he went on, looking at their amazed faces, "but we can't leave him here to let the cat out of the bag as soon as we're started. If we can take him with us up the mountain and leave him somewhere, we'll be far away before he can find his way back and break the news. What do you think? Anyway, we've got to do something right away; the longer we stick around here, the less chance we'll have to get clear. The campers are buzzing all over the place like hornets; pretty soon the moon will rise, and we won't be able to get ten feet without being spotted. Do we take him?"

"That might be the way out," said Burk slowly. "It's my fault that we're in this

fix, and I don't want the poor fellow to suffer any more than he has to. Let's go!" The delay was telling on the man's nerves. He longed to get into the open, and start the dash for Canoe Mountain; each minute they lingered would bring them fresh difficulties. "Here, I'll take the lad. You two lead the way."

Without ceremony, Burk lifted the helpless Sherlock and slung him over his shoulder in the position known as "fireman's lift." The bound boy was too helpless to put up a struggle as he was borne away in this undignified fashion, and hung limply while Burk, with cat-like steps, made for the door in the wake of the Utway twins.

It was a fine night outside. The air smelled fresh and cool; later it would be edged with the chill of the mountains, but now it was soft and spicy with pine scents, and breathing it brought a recklessness to one's senses. The lodge above the little party was dark, but several lanterns burned among the tents below them on the hillside, rivalling the far pale radiance of the constellations in the summer heavens. Taking care that not the slightest noise should disturb the watchful searchers scattered in the darkness about them, the twins led the way past the windows of the kitchen, scouted ahead as far as the side of the ice-house, and beckoned the burdened man to follow. A breathless dash, and they were in the cover of the low bushes that grew on the camp side of the wood-road, and here they paused a moment for breath.

Jake felt his brother's fingers clutch his arm with a swift start.

"Look!" breathed Jerry. Coming down the path were four or five dim forms, their legs showing in the yellow pool of light from the big lantern that marched with them. Burk also saw the advancing squad. Unceremoniously he dumped his bound burden among the bushes, and flopped down beside it, just in time. The lantern was swung high over the bearer's head, and a voice challenged them.

"Who's over there?"

Jake recognized the tall, spare figure of his councilor. "It's Jake!" he called. "Did you find anything, Mr. Avery?"

Jim Avery left the group a few steps, to meet them. Already he was dangerously close upon the hidden figures. "No, not yet. We were just up to the hospital tent. No sign of him. We're going down to the dock again now. Hadn't you boys better get to bed?"



“We can’t go to sleep as long as old Sherlock is missing,” responded Jake truthfully.

“Well, better go to the tent soon, anyway. And don’t get too far away from camp!”

The councilor hurried off to catch up with the rest of the search party. Jake and Jerry breathed sighs of relief as the light was taken from their faces, and they watched it bobbing off down the hill toward the baseball field.

“Whew! That was a close call! Jerry, I thought I’d yell if he came an inch closer!” Jake drew his sleeve across his brow. “Guess we can start again now, Mr. Burk. Can we help you any with packing Sherlock?”

Burk was already on his feet again, lifting the inert body to his shoulders.

“I can manage, thanks,” he whispered. “But as soon as we get out of the danger zone, I’m going to untie the poor chap. This must be hurting him. He can’t do any damage now, if we untie him. I’m sure sorry I had to lash him up this way.”

He fell in behind the two boys, now striking through the patch of cleared woodland that led to the road. Their plan was to follow the road for about half a mile, circle the farm where it ended, and from there head through the mountains southward, along the Lenape range toward Canoe Mountain. The night was yet young, and they hoped to put some miles between the camp and themselves before morning would force them to stop, rest, and hide from any possible discovery. A sallow tinge on the eastern horizon told them that the moon would shortly be rising, to light them on their fleeting way. Behind them trudged the man Burk, his burden heavy but his heart lighter than it had been for many a day, and the taste of freedom on his lips.

As they topped a rising knoll above the road, Jake Utway looked back. He could still see a few dancing lights, like will-o’-the-wisps over the camp.

“So long, Lenape!” he said softly, and headed up the road, on the first leg of their dash for Canoe Mountain. Something told him that he would pass through many hazardous passages before he again saw the familiar scenes of the camp by the lake. Their daring venture had taken them outside the pale of law, now; every man’s hand would be against them. There would be no ease for them until somehow, somewhere, they could prove that the courts of the land had

pronounced guilty an innocent man.

## **CHAPTER XV**

### **FOUR IN THE FOREST**

In the far corner of Farmer Podgett's meadow the little party stopped. They stood knee-high in tall grass by the fence, their legs spattered with dew. Burk leaned his helpless load against the fence.

"Listen, Sherlock," said Jerry into his tent-mate's ear; "if we untie you, will you promise not to yell or try to get away? It won't do you any good now—we're too far from camp for them to hear you. We don't want to hurt you unless you're stubborn."

The captive nodded his head vigorously. He would promise anything in the world to get free of those cutting ropes that bound him, and the gag that almost stopped his breathing. Without more ado, Burk untied the handkerchief that held the gag, and worked loose the knotted rope that pinioned the boy's arms.

"There, son!" he said. "That feel better? Let me tell you, I didn't want to tie you up this way; I'm sorry I had to do it. No hard feelings?"

For some minutes poor Sherlock could not speak. Had he not been leaning against the timber fence, he would have toppled over to the ground, so stiff were his cramped muscles. Jerry rubbed his arms briskly, and tears came into Sherlock's eyes as circulation returned to his aching wrists.

"There, take it easy, old man," counseled Burk. "We'll hike along slow, and you'll soon limber up."

"Where—where are you taking me?" asked the boy fearfully.

"Never mind now; you'll find out later," said Jerry. "Here, put on my mackinaw; you're cold. Now, let's be on our way." He helped young Jones into the warm garment, and guided him along the fence to the gate. The four passed through,

and were soon lost in the shadow of the woods again, heading southward.

A bright half-moon was rising over the tree tops, and its beams slanted through the leafy arches overhead, lighting their path. They followed a trail which the twins knew ran along the foot of the range for some miles, well above the rich farmlands below Lake Lenape. Podgett's hounds bayed afar as they passed beyond the sleeping farmhouse. Jake Utway was in the lead; Jerry followed, his arm about the shoulders of their captive; Burk brought up the rear guard, silent-footed, watchful, awake. The pace was not brisk, as Sherlock was still unable to travel rapidly. Thus, in silence, they threaded the trail through the woodlands.

It was past midnight when Jake halted on a spur of hill. By the side of the road was a spring he knew of, and all the hikers refreshed themselves with an icy draught of its water. Off to their left they caught a glimpse of moonlight glinting on the face of the lake. Jerry shivered slightly; without his mackinaw, he felt the chill of the night winds.

"This is a good place to ditch Mr. Tagalong," he observed. "Old Sherlock won't find his way home from here easily."

Sherlock, who had maintained a terrified silence during the march through the woods, now cried out in horror. "You mean—you'd leave me here? Alone? Please, Jerry, I never meant to do you any harm! Don't leave me!"

"We can't take you with us any farther," said Jerry, cold-bloodedly. "We've got enough trouble ourselves, without bothering with you. We're travelling light this trip."

"But—but—I'd be lost! I'm lost right now!" he pleaded. "There's probably a lot of bears in these woods. Do you want me to be eaten up?"

"There's no bears around here," Jerry answered disdainfully. "Come on, brace up, Sherlock. We can't take you, and that's that!"

Sherlock turned pleadingly to Jake. "You and me are tent-mates, Jakie! You won't desert me up here, will you? We've been pretty good friends, haven't we? Just tell me what you want me to do, and I'll do it. I can hike fast, honest!"

Jake shook his head. "Sorry, but we've got a long way to go, and a big job to do."

“I know! I heard what you said back at camp—you’re going to help this man get away from the police. Well, if you only don’t leave me, why, I’ll help too! I swear I will!”

Jake considered. “Think we could do it, fellows? I admit I hate to leave him up here; he might hurt himself, and never get back. He’s not a bad guy. We don’t dare let him tell what he knows, and maybe it would work out all right if we took him along.”

Jerry gave in. “All right; but he’ll sure have to travel to keep up with us. What do you think, Mr. Burk?”

Burk shrugged. “I don’t very well see what else we can do. You know who I am, son?”

“I don’t care if you are a—a convict! You said you were sorry you had to tie me up, and I believe you! If I can help you get away, I’ll do it!”

“You don’t understand,” explained Jake. “Mr. Burk is not trying to make a getaway. He wants to get a chance to prove he’s not guilty.”

“Then——”

“We’ll tell you everything later. In the meantime, you can come along with us and take your chance like the rest. But if you make one move to give us away ——” His unspoken words carried a threat that Sherlock did not dare ignore.

“I’ll come!” Young Detective Jones was feeling better already. After all, if he could not expose a desperate criminal, the next most exciting thing was joining that criminal’s band in an effort to baffle the forces of the law. “Here, Jerry, take your mackinaw. I feel warm enough.”

“Then let’s get going again,” urged Jake, rising. “We can’t stay here all night; we’ll get too stiff to move if we sit down any longer.”

Again they took the weary trail. Their steps now were slower; it took more effort for them to keep up a ringing, mile-eating stride. Down in his heart, the impatient Burk knew that he could not keep up the pace many hours longer; his brief rest at Lenape had not been enough to make up for the many days of starvation and exposure he had undergone. His prison life, too, had taken from

him his old endurance; he was no longer the steel-muscled hunter he had been a year ago. And he realized that the twins, for several nights, had taken considerably less than their usual ration of sleep; their nightly forays had fatigued them, as he could tell by their actions, and no doubt the attendant excitement had also told upon them. One cannot live in an atmosphere of mysterious incidents and midnight captures without paying for them in physical strain. And Sherlock, the least hardy of them all, had been trussed up tightly for half a day, and was in no condition to endure the demands of a long hike in the dark.

Left—right—left! The quartette, strung along the trail in Indian file, lifted their feet more leadenly as one endless mile followed another. The moon was right overhead now; they were a long way from Lenape, marching somewhere on the flank of the mountains. Only the sound of their footsteps attended them, except now and then the rasping hunting-cry of an owl, that nocturnal marauder, and once, up the ridge, the short bark of a fox. Several times they crossed the beds of swift hill-streams, and once they floundered about in a spreading thicket of rhododendrons for some minutes before Jerry, in the lead, found the trail again.

Sherlock Jones felt that he could not go another step. He was shivering with the cold; if only they would stop this eternal, steady plodding, mile after mile, and light a fire! Left—right—— He wondered if the twins had brought any food on this mad trip; he could see that they were hampered neither by provisions nor blankets—travelling light, as Jerry had said. What would they eat? When would they stop? Were they going to keep on this way for a thousand years, forever, putting one foot in front of the other, with never a word—— A tear trickled down Sherlock's grimy cheek. He kept on.

The strain of the past few days was putting its mark upon the twins. At last Jerry paused in a little clear space beside a brook. Jake marched past him, stumbled over a fallen branch, and almost fell. He turned his face to them, white in the moonlight, and muttered drowsily, "Guess I was asleep! I've heard of fellows falling asleep on their feet, but this is the first time it ever happened to me! Where are we?"

The rest of the party halted. "I calculate we've done about twelve miles since we left your camp," said Burk. "If we've kept straight south, we should be a good distance away. I think you've been heading right, because we've kept to the side of the mountain all the time. Wallistown ought to be in striking distance, over

that way; but I think we should try to keep to the hills—too dangerous to get closer to town. Now, I can see that you chaps are pretty well fagged out. You've stood the march like soldiers, and not a word of complaint; but it's clear to me we can't get any farther to-night. We'll have to lay up until to-morrow evening. Naturally I want to get to Canoe Mountain as soon as possible, but it won't do to start our trip with too big a jump. If we went much farther to-night, we'd bite off more than we could chew—we'd be sore and laid up with blisters and aches, and in no shape to put up a good race. I'm the least tired of any of us. What do you say if I push ahead and try to locate a place to stop?"

The twins agreed; Sherlock had no breath to spare for talk. Burk took a hitch in his corduroys, waved his hand, and springing across the brook, vanished beyond, up the trail.

The boys did not dare to sit down, for fear that their muscles would stiffen in that position and they would not be able to rise and walk again. When their breathing became more regular, the Utway brothers roused Sherlock and pushed on. They had not gone five hundred yards when they made out a figure striding toward them in the moonlight. It was Burk.

"Good news!" he called. "Here's a bit of luck! I happened to see the moonlight striking on a glass window over here. Come on through! There's a little ramshackle hut here. Not a soul has been around for a long time, as near as I can see. Probably this cabin was built by some tie-cutters. Over this way!"

They followed him, warmed to the heart by this smile of fortune. Concealed amidst the trees, a hundred yards from the trail, was a low, one-roomed shanty of slabs, chinked with clay.

"There was no lock on the door," explained the discoverer, "so I just walked in. There's a fireplace and some wood; we ought to be warm enough, even if we have no blankets. And I guess we're so tired that we won't mind bedding down on the floor, eh?"

Jake threw his flashlight about the tiny dwelling. Dust rose from the slab floor; cobwebs everywhere seemed to prove that the place had indeed been deserted for some time past. It was a better refuge than they could have hoped for; a snug little cabin where they could lie up until the next evening brought them a chance to continue their long hike.

Jerry was already busy, kindling a fire on the narrow stone hearth. Welcome flames were soon leaping up to warm their numb bodies, and Jerry, like the rest, considered their luck in finding such a haven in the depths of the woods. But he had a more pressing matter in his head. There were four of them, and they would have to pass at least one day here, with nothing to eat but, perhaps, the few berries they could find in the forest. Four hungry mouths! No fun marching on an empty stomach—— The others were already stretched out on the floor, with their coats under them, close beside the glowing hearth. Jerry scratched his head; then fished in his pockets and drew out a handful of coins and counted them. Not very much, but it would buy a few cans of beans, some bread, and——

Jake lifted his head from the hard floor. “Listen, Sherlock,” he warned, “don’t try to get out of here without letting us know. First move you make toward that door, I’ll rise up and bust you one.”

“I won’t move! I’m one of you now, Jake! I won’t run away!”

“Well, don’t forget!” He saw Jerry still standing beside the fire. “What’s biting you, Jerry? Why don’t you come to bed with the rest of the gang? Want me to sing you a lullaby? What are you up to, anyway?”

Jerry put his money back into his pocket, and yawned. “Oh, nothing!” he answered. “Nothing at all. Good night. Say, I hope the owner of this shanty don’t come rolling in along about morning. He’ll want to charge us rent.” He chuckled. “Wonder what Mr. Jim Avery is thinking now, back at camp?”

A snore answered him. Jerry Utway spread his mackinaw across the least rough patch of floor he could find, stretched out his full length with feet toward the fire, and closed his weary eyes. “Nothing at all!” he murmured drowsily. In five minutes he was asleep.



## CHAPTER XVI

### HARE AND HOUNDS

Jake Utway stirred uneasily. Something was digging into his hip, bluntly shoving him back to consciousness. He sat up. Was it Reveille so soon? But this wasn't Tent Ten! For a moment he stared, sticky-eyed, into a small fireplace heaped with flaky white wood-ash. In a flash it came back to him—the escape from Lenape; the moonlight march with their captive, Sherlock; the discovery of the shack in the woods—— Jake groaned softly, and stretched his cramped body.

“Anybody awake?” he asked drowsily. “Boy, but I'm stiff! This log floor—maybe I shouldn't have slept against the grain of the wood!”

A loud sneeze at his side answered him, followed by a series of sniffles and a second sneeze. He turned and discovered Sherlock Jones, with tears in his pale eyes, rubbing his nose with a grimy handkerchief.

“Bad coad!” explained the ex-detective with another sneeze. It was plain that Sherlock was not made of the stuff of outlaw heroes. Reddened eyes, a dripping nose, and chattering teeth were the penalties of his moonlight jaunt and his night in the backwoods hut. “Very dasty coad! Say, who pud this thig over be?” Sherlock had noticed for the first time that a norfolk jacket had been carefully thrown over his body some time in the night. It was the garment worn by Burk, who had evidently tucked it about the sleeping boy as a protection against the night breezes that penetrated through the cracks in the floor of the hut. “Where's Bister Burk? Oh, there you are. *A-choo!* Thags very buch, Bister Burk. You bust have been coad yourself!”

“Forget it, old man!” Burk rolled over and yawned. “Sorry you have a cold, though.” Of a sudden the man sprang up. “Where's the other fellow?” he cried.

Jake looked about him. Jerry was not in the little room.

“Where’s your brother? Did he tell you he was going out?”

“Why, no!” said Jake. “He must be somewhere around, though. He can’t have gone far.”

The sun was high; a dazzling, glorious stream of light poured in through a dusty window. Sherlock pointed with his handkerchief.

“Whad’s that over the fireblace?” he snuffled.

Jake jumped up to look. A bit of paper was stuck prominently into the cracks of the stone mantel. It was an old envelope, on the face of which was scrawled a few cramped lines of writing in pencil. “It’s a note—a note from Jerry!” he exclaimed in surprise. “He’s—he’s gone!”

“Gone!” echoed the man.

“Yes; listen to this: ‘Dear Jakie and Others—We’ve got to have grub, so I’m going to Wallistown. Will bring it as soon as I can. Will try to get some news if I can. Don’t worry about me.—Jerry.’ Well, what do you think of that?”

“I thig it’s good,” sighed Sherlock. “I sure could eat somethig right dow!” Burk said nothing, but took up a couple of holes in his belt.

“That’s just like Jerry,” observed Jake, sticking the note in his pocket. “He knew we’d have to stay here in hiding all day, and didn’t want us to starve. We need grub, sure enough. But it’s no use for him to tell us not to worry—anything in the world might happen to him in Wallistown, and I won’t rest easy until I see him back here safe.”

“You thig he may get into druble?”

“Say, Sherlock, that cold of yours must be affecting your brain. Don’t you know that everybody in the world will be after us, after what happened last night? We can’t just disappear—the Chief and all the rest back at camp will be hunting for us, and they’re sure to connect our disappearance with Burk here. That’s why we can’t travel in the daytime.”

“But where do you wad to travel?”

Jake threw up his hands. "Listen! It's plain we've got to tell you everything. Mr. Burk was put in jail for being a thief, but he didn't steal the necklace. If we can get to Canoe Mountain Lodge, he thinks we can prove that he's innocent. And we've got to get there! Now do you savvy?"

"Thad's wad I thought all the tibe," nodded Sherlock sagely. "I said Bister Burk was all right, and I probise to help if I cad. *A-choo!*"

"Well," said Jake, "you can help us a lot—— Jiminy, what's that?"

It was small wonder that Jake was startled. A sound had broken the stillness of the forest, a chilling, heart-gripping hullabaloo from the north, toward Lenape—the high belling howl of a pack of hounds on a warm trail.

"Dogs!" Burk clenched his fists. "By heaven, they've got bloodhounds out!" His pallid face went whiter still.

"Bloodhounds! You mean—they're pointing out our trail last night?"

"Yes—listen!" It came again, the terrifying chorus of their sharp-nosed pursuers. "They can't be far off! Boys, we can't stay here!"

"But—where will we go?" said Jake, shakily. "If Jerry comes back here, he's sure to be caught!"

"Can't help that!" Burk was gathering together their few belongings over his arm. He ran to the door, and cooked his ear up the trail. "Come along!"

Sherlock Jones, at the first awesome baying of the pack, had given himself up for dead. Bloodhounds! He struggled weakly to his feet, found Jake pulling his arm, leading him toward the door.

"If we stay here, we'll be cornered!" cried the man. "They're not far off now—they'll be on us in a few minutes!" The baying call sounded again, much louder, it seemed. "Hurry!"

He plunged into the woods, looking back to see if the boys were following. Jake was having difficulties; he had almost to push the bewildered Sherlock every inch of the way. The vision of a pack of fiendish hounds leaping at his throat, pulling him down, almost paralyzed the poor lad; he stumbled along at Jake's

side, shivering, sneezing, almost falling headlong. Again rose in the still air the hunting-cry of the beasts on their track.

Jake noticed that the man was leading them downhill, fighting his way through the scratching underbrush. Where could they be going? In which direction lay an instant's safety from that yapping Nemesis at their backs? The two boys leaped down a steep declivity, saw Burk standing in a little ravine below.

"Water!" he shouted. "We've got to wade in this brook a ways—that will shake them off for a bit!" He started down the course of the swift stream, splashing rainbow drops up to his knees, rattling stones with his hurrying feet.

Jake herded his charge into the water, and took the plunge himself, driving Sherlock ahead of him down the rough descent. For some two hundred yards they stumbled forward in panic, ankle-deep in the chill rivulet. The stream was rapidly becoming wider, fanning outward to form a little pool. Beyond, they saw Burk, wading waist-high across to a little spot of grassland sheltered among tall poplar trees.

"Come on!" he called.

Somehow—Jake never could explain it to himself afterward—he forced the stricken Sherlock through the pool and helped him to climb the muddy bank, where the dazed boy lay where he fell, his thick glasses knocked over one ear, his eyes streaming, caught in the clutch of a sneezing fit.

"I—I can't go on!" Sherlock gasped. "I dowe I probised to help—but—but——"

Burk bent over him. "We've got to get away, old man! You can't stay here—they'll find you in a minute." He helped the boy to his feet, and with Jake on the other side, they continued their mad progress, almost dragging the limp body of young Jones between them.

As they ran, Burk jerked out a few directions. "I think I know where we are now. It's dangerous ground—but the dogs have driven us out of the mountains. We've got to find more water—that's the only thing that will shake them off our trail. And I think this little brook empties into Lake Wallis——"

Jake looked back over his shoulder. Above them, to the northward, he caught a view of a figure for an instant, clear against the skyline—the silhouette of a

mounted man, galloping along the trail. Again came the bloodthirsty belling of the hounds. Had they found the hut?

Again the fugitives were among the trees. Of a sudden Sherlock Jones collapsed; had they not caught him, he would have fallen headlong on his face. Jake and Burk exchanged glances. With the pursuers so close on their heels, burdened as they were with a helpless boy——

Sherlock was mumbling something, through chattering teeth. “You go ahead—leave be here——”

Jake shook him. “We won’t leave you, old scout! Just a few steps more——”

“No—can’t bake it—— I’ll clibe a tree, so the dogs can’t get be——”

“Do you think you can?” asked Burk eagerly. “Say, if you could get into a tree, the dogs would stop for a while, and we might get free! If only you could do it, hold them at bay for a few minutes——!” It was true that the boy was a hindrance to their flight, and could be nothing but a danger to them; but could he be left behind to hold the yapping hounds, who were sure to pause if they found their quarry treed, he might gain for them a few priceless seconds——

“I’ll do it! I said I’d help you, Bister Burk!” gulped Sherlock bravely. “Just put be into a tree—a big tree——”

“By George, that might do it!” said Burk, admiringly. “Come on, we’ll hoist him up this one.” He indicated a smooth-barked poplar with a low branch hanging just above them. “Give him a lift.”

There was no time for delay. Like a sack of flour, Sherlock’s form was heaved against the trunk of the tree with a mighty swing. He waved his arms desperately, caught hold of the limb, and scrambled aloft amid a shower of leaves and bark, kicking his dripping feet wildly behind him. Like a treed raccoon, he huddled in a crotch of the tree and tried to make himself small.

“Rud!” he shouted to the two below. “I’b all right. I won’t tell theb a thig!”

The two on the ground hesitated no longer. Jake did not dare look back; he had all he could do to keep up with the racing man at his side.

“Sherlock’s game, all right!” he managed to gasp. “He came through fine; I never thought he had it in him! Think he can hold them?”

Through his mind flashed the thought that already their party was scattered; Jerry was gone, Heaven alone knew where, and now Sherlock had sacrificed himself so that the others might have an instant’s start. Good old Sherlock! He had helped them after all—— They burst through the last of the trees, into a spreading pasture land.

“One chance in a hundred!” Burk was crying through clenched teeth. “We’ll fool them yet! If we can only get as far as Lake Wallis—— Cross water! Now, son, don’t try to say anything more now!” The two racing fugitives dashed through the grass in the hot sunlight. “Save your breath! We’ve got to run now as we never ran before!”

## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **JERRY GETS A RIDE**

Jerry had awakened about eight o'clock, scribbled his brief note, and crept from the hut in the woods without disturbing any of his sleeping companions. His mind was made up. Burk had said that Wallistown was not far away, and there he could certainly purchase the food they needed so badly. Since they were forced to hide here until nightfall, his brief desertion would not hold up their march. And he knew they would be hungry. He was hungry already. The keen, fresh morning air whipped up his appetite as he hiked steadily down the trail. Birds were flashing through the dewy thickets about him, caroling their morning-songs; not a cloud hung in the sky.

He came to an old moss-covered stone fence, crossed over, and found himself in a lane, lined with tall elder bushes, with dark rich clusters of small berries hanging among the leaves. A rich find! He filled his mouth with the bitter-tasting fruit, which stained his hands a deep purple as he ate.

Feeling refreshed by this woodsy breakfast, he decided to follow the lane. It led him half a mile, coming out at a white frame farmhouse where a woman was washing clothes in the yard. She looked up as he passed and watched him strangely, but said nothing, and he walked on to the road beyond. This was a dirt-covered highway which evidently led in the direction he wished to take. He swung along steadily through rich farm-lands and pastures where cattle grazed. A hay-wagon driven by a man in a large straw hat passed him; he did not look up, but had a feeling that the driver was watching him steadily. The road twisted and curved until Jerry had to get his bearings from the mountains before he was sure he was on the right track. Two miles farther, he came to a signpost that informed him that Wallis Springs lay to his left, while Wallistown was still seven miles away. This hike was farther than he had supposed; he might not be able to return to his comrades for some hours yet. Nevertheless, he knew that Wallis Springs was nothing more than a little group of summer cottages where he might

not be able to purchase any food; he must push on to Wallistown, at the foot of the lake. He swung off down the curving road.

The sun was now high overhead; he was hot, dusty, and a trifle tired. He took off his mackinaw and slung it over his arm, wishing he had left it behind. Now and then he could see to his left the fringe of trees that bordered the big lake, and could make out the roofs of little cabins occupied by people who were summering on its shores. The road twisted in and out, following the wavy outline of the lake's bank; no matter how fast he tried to walk, Wallistown seemed to be as far away as ever. He begged a glass of water from a friendly, red-faced woman who answered his knock at a little cottage beside the road, and went on. Several automobiles passed him, driving toward town, but none of their occupants offered to stop and give him a lift, and he did not dare ask for a ride. People who picked you up, he had found, were often very curious about where you were going and why; they asked too many questions, and he was in no frame of mind to undergo any cross-examinations this morning. It was almost eleven o'clock when he halted to rest beside a bridge that spanned a little stream which wandered toward the lake.

A whirring drone sounded above him; a cross-shaped shadow skimmed across a field by the road. An airplane hummed overhead, flying low, almost hitting the tree tops. Jerry wondered idly why the pilot took a chance of crashing by flying so close to the ground. The plane circled and swung off toward the mountains, and Jerry dismissed it from his mind. If he had known that this airplane was combing the country for traces of Burk and the missing boys, he might not have dismissed it so easily.

He rose and plodded ahead down the dusty road. Wallistown was in sight now. He could see the group of two-story buildings that marked its main street, leading from the wharf where a number of canoes, rowboats, and small motor launches were tied up. It was getting late; he decided to keep as far as possible from the center of town, where he might be observed. There was no use taking any chances, and he must start right back, to have time to carry the food he would purchase back over the long miles that now separated him from his friends in the mountains.

At one side of the wharf was a line of low buildings. Jerry left the road and followed a wooden sidewalk along the bank of the lake, and made out, on the front of the largest of these buildings, a sign that proclaimed it to be a grocery



and “general store.” This was as close to the town as he wished to go. The sight of so many strange faces—people who probably had never even heard of Camp Lenape—frightened him a little. If he hadn’t come so far, and hadn’t known that his brother and the rest were depending on him to bring them some grub, he might have turned back right there. As it was, he quickened his pace and entered the shadow of the store.

The interior of the place was gloomy, after the sunlight outside, and was filled with a thousand different odors, chief among them being those of stale candy and dried fish. An old man was lounging in a chair which leaned back against the counter; he moved his head lazily to look at this customer.

“What’ll ye have, bud?”

“A couple cans of beans, and some other stuff—I don’t know just what.”

“Wal, look around and pick ’em out. Guess we got what ye want,” the man answered, and leaned back again with his arms behind his head.

Jerry poked about among the shelves in the back of the store. They wouldn’t have much chance to cook; better to take things that would carry easily, and that they could eat cold—bread and cheese and chocolate——

The old man Slammed the four legs of his chair to the floor with a bang, as someone entered hurriedly through the door.

“You got my order ready, Mr. Clay?”

“Hullo, Rufe. Say, did ye find that canoe of yourn?”

The newcomer was breathing heavily. Jerry darted a glance at him. He saw a stringy youth with a pimpled face, garbed in a jersey and dingy white flannels, whose voice now took on a tone of injury.

“Yeah, we found it floatin’ down by the outlet. They must have landed in some hurry; Talk about nerve! I was choppin’ some wood up by our place above the Springs. These two come burstin’ out of the woods, runnin’ like blazes, and got away with the canoe before I even had time to yell. I run along shore about half a mile, but they had started across, and I couldn’t do a thing. Pretty soon along comes a man on a horse, gallopin’ along like mad. He asks me if I’ve seen this

pair—he's a deputy sheriff, he says. You could have knocked me over with a feather when he tells me that one of the guys who stole the canoe was this convict that's been missin' from the Pen at Elmville!"

"Ye don't say! Wal, did he catch 'em?"

"No, not yet. They got ashore by the outlet, like I told you. They're still loose around here somewheres; this sheriff feller says he hunted 'em with dogs, and got one, but these two got clean away."

Jerry was frozen in his place, one hand still gripping a can of corned beef. It couldn't be true! Hunted with dogs! And one of them captured!

"They'll get 'em," said the old storekeeper with grim satisfaction; "ye'll see, Rufe, them fellers won't get far. That there airyoplane they got flyin' around is like to spot 'em if they try to break across country."

"I hope they do get caught," said the youth vengefully. "Stealin' my canoe! Jimmy from the newspaper office was just tellin' me this convict feller had got some kids from a camp up the line to help him get away last night. Must have been one of 'em I saw with this man——"

"What did the boy look like?" Jerry blurted out, and instantly wished he had bitten out his tongue rather than speak those words. His concern for his brother had made him forget how perilous was his own position.

The youth in flannels turned upon him slowly. "Well, if it's any of your affair, Mr. Butt-In, he was——" The speaker gasped, and surveyed Jerry from head to toe. "Why—why—from what I saw of him, he looked just like you!"

The old man cackled with laughter. "Guess that'll fix 'im, eh, Rufe? Pretty fast answer, that!"

"But, I mean he—he really does look like him! I only caught a glimpse of this kid when he was runnin' to the canoe, but I could swear——"

The storekeeper's chuckles broke off. "Don't mean to say ye think this young feller is a des-prit criminal, do ye, Rufe? Why, this feller come in just as cool as a cucumber—wanted some beans, he says."

Jerry thought rapidly. "Well, I don't want any now!" he said boldly. "You can keep your old stuff. I don't want to listen to all your talk, after this!" He started with determination for the door.

"Half a minute!" The youth called Rufe barred his way. "Maybe you weren't the same feller that took my canoe, but you act kind of funny to me. Maybe you know somethin' about all this."

Jerry did not pause. "You're crazy! Just try to stop me!" His heart was in his mouth, but he tried to look unconcerned, and pushed his way ahead. The other looked as if he would hold him by force; but evidently thinking better of it, he stepped aside, and Jerry passed out into the street.

His whole body was quivering at the suddenness of this encounter. Sherlock caught—Jake and Burk escaping in a canoe from a mounted rider who had tracked them! Why, he had left them sleeping miles away only a few hours ago! And now—they must be near him, in danger, expecting any moment to be taken!

Briskly, he crossed the street, and walked hastily down toward the business section of town, taking no notice of the groups of people who passed him. Was the game up so soon? Rufe hadn't looked very convinced—— Jerry glanced guiltily over his shoulder. Down the street by a garage he caught sight of a pair of flanneled legs in warm pursuit. He was being followed!

He turned the first corner he came to, leading into a narrow street, and broke into a heated run. How far could he get before the youth behind him saw his flight, and raised a hue and cry? Gritting his teeth, Jerry plunged down the street. It was only two blocks long, and ended in a high board fence. There was no way out; he was in a blind alley. Out of the tail of his eye he caught sight of his pursuer, who had turned the corner and was now in full cry after him, shouting something Jerry could not make out. There was only one thing to do. Jerry leaped at the fence, caught his hands in the rough top, and swung over. With smarting palms, he landed in a heap on the other side. There was no time to waste. He sprang up, and found himself in a little field full of daisies. Ahead lay a line of telegraph wires, strung on poles fringing a shining asphalt road. It must be the state highway! If he could only get to the road before the youth behind him could manage to get over the fence——! His breath was coming in painful, dry sobs; he couldn't last much longer——

Dimly he made out a car coming up the road from north, approaching him. He waved an arm at it, and shouted, although he knew the driver could not hear him. He was now half-way across the field; behind him came a cry of rage as Rufe clambered to the top of the fence—— Jerry's eyes lit up as he saw the car on the highway slow down, come to a halt not a hundred yards away. He would make it yet! He waved his arm at the man in the driver's seat.

“Give me a ride?”

He had to fight to get out the words. It was his last chance! To his joy, the driver nodded, swung open the rear door of the big car.

“Hop in!” came a man's jovial voice from the back seat. Rufe was still coming, but he was no runner, and the fence-climbing had winded him. There was still time—— Jerry Utway almost fell into the back of the car, sprawling across a pair of outstretched legs. The driver slammed the door; the car, whose engine had not stopped, responded to the clutch and slipped forward with a roar. Jerry pulled himself together and fell backward into a seat, panting out his thanks. He looked up into the round, jolly face of the man on his left who had told him to hop in. He was wedged between this man and another, in the rear of the car. He turned his head back; through the window he could see the baffled figure of Rufe, shaking his fist at the rapidly-moving automobile. Jerry grinned.

He suddenly realized that he had left his mackinaw somewhere——probably back in the grocery store, when he had walked out so hastily. Well, he could get it back some time, later—— Just now he had a headache, and things looked a little blurred.

A voice rumbled at his side——his right side. It was the man whose face he had not yet seen. “You were in quite a bit of a hurry back there, weren't you?” it drawled. “Well, you needn't worry. You can rest now——rest a long, long time. I thought you'd turn up again, twin, but I didn't expect it so soon!”

Jerry knew that voice. He knew the man, too, even before he looked into his face. With a cry, Jerry sank back into the seat of the speeding car. It was Diker! Diker, the prison guard! The man in blue, whom he had last seen at the campfire on Pebble Beach! And Diker's arm was locked about his own, in a firm, threatening grip!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE GYPSY VAN

Jake jumped ashore; Burk followed, and pushed the canoe far out, so that it floated empty on the face of Lake Wallis.

Never had Jake Utway taken a paddle in such a wild canoe race! It was impossible that the two fugitives should still be at liberty. The boy had given up hope long before they had reached the lake and taken the canoe; their furious progress across the half-mile of water had seemed the despairing effort of a dream; but here they were, miraculously ashore again, and for the moment still free. Yet the dream feeling still persisted; Jake moved his body as if he were wrapped in the twining coils of a nightmare, when horrors beset the sleeper and all efforts to escape the menacing shapes in pursuit are of no avail.

“Tired, partner?” asked Burk. The man seemed to be made of whipcord; he had taken the stern paddle in their mad dash, yet his set face showed no trace of anything but determination.

“I can keep going,” Jake managed to say.

“We’ll have to get somewhere else pretty quick.” Burk pointed toward the far shore from which they had come. “Look over there! See that little motorboat just pushing out? Well, I’m pretty sure that the people in it won’t take long to get over here and pick up our trail again. We’re in for it again—but at least we’ve got a few minutes’ start.”

“I’m ready. Which way?”

Burk shook his head. “We’ve just got to trust to our luck now. They’ve driven us out into the open; I’m not much good down here near town. There’s only one way we can go.”

They had landed on a little spit of gravel on the east side of Lake Wallis, almost directly across from the town. There must have been people over on the wharf who had seen them desert the canoe, who would put their pursuers on the track at once; even now, hostile eyes might be watching their every move.

“Don’t run—somebody may be watching us, and get suspicious,” warned the man, and set the example by walking rapidly away from the border of the lake. Jake, following, tried to smile; he felt that he couldn’t run even if his life depended upon it. They climbed a bushy slope, came out above in a little glade aglow with maple and sumach. Burk darted a look backward; the motorboat was already well on its way across, coming toward them with a feather of spray on either side of its bows.

“The state highway runs along here on this side somewhere,” remarked Burk. “We’ll have to keep away from it; it’s dangerous for us right now.”

He swerved to the right to avoid crossing the ribbon of asphalt that cut through the woods, and the two walked parallel to the files of telegraph wires lining the highway. For five minutes or so they followed a course which brought them ever nearer to Wallistown; and each of those passing minutes, they knew, brought the net of capture ever closer.

Suddenly Burk gave a sharp exclamation, and pointed. “Something funny ahead!” he said warningly.

It was too late to turn back. A few yards before them, the highway bent toward them in a sharp angle. They stopped in their tracks, and looked on a strange scene.

The queerest vehicle Jake had ever seen was tilted drunkenly at the side of the road at the outer corner of the bend. “Half flivver, half covered wagon,” the boy described it to himself. Two little seats huddled behind the steering-wheel; the remainder of the chassis was roofed over by a spreading arc of canvas, patched and weatherworn, stretched over hoops fastened in the truck-like body of the car, from the rear of which hung down a few narrow steps. The right-hand wheel at the rear was firmly bedded in the ditch; the opposite wheel in front was raised several inches from the road. Two quaint figures stood mournfully gazing at the ditched wheel. One of these was a short, very fat woman of middle age. She stood with her stout arms akimbo, and with such a downcast look on her dark

face that Jake almost burst out laughing. Her arms glittered with several bracelets, and large rings dangled from her ears. The man at her side was also short and fat, and also wore earrings, and in one hand swung a spreading black hat which, when worn, must have given him the appearance of an Italian bandit in a stage melodrama. With his other hand he was scratching among his graying locks with a perplexed air.

He must have heard Burk and Jake approaching, for he wheeled about on his toes, and flashed a dazzling display of white teeth at them.

Jake had taken in the situation in an instant.

“We’ll help you get back on the road, Mister!” he said. “Come on, partner—let’s give them a hand!” He gripped the ditched wheel, and tried to lift it.

The little man danced about on his toes, while his wife swung back and forth until her bracelets and bangles tinkled in delight.

Burk was now at the front of the car. He pulled back the emergency brake lever, and Jake felt the strange vehicle starting to roll farther down into the ditch. He put all his strength against the tailboard; the little dark man was at his side. “Poosh—that’s right!” The boy heaved, his face red with exertion; Burk had gripped the spokes of the wheel in the ditch, and was bending all his effort to force the car from its lodgment. The united strength of the three of them slowly shoved the strange little vehicle up the slanting grade, and in half a minute the car was back on the road again, headed toward Wallistown, no worse for its plunge.

“Many, many thanks—many!” the dark man cried happily. He clapped his villainous-looking hat on his head, and scrambling into the seat, worked the levers and steering-wheel back and forth to see that no damage had been done. “You help fine! Come up, Maria!”

“Yes, you help fine!” the little man repeated. “Now we go. You go, too?”

“We’re going the same way you are,” said Jake quickly. “You—you couldn’t give us a lift, could you?”

“For sure! For sure!” Their new acquaintance was all smiles. “You help me fine! I help you a little bit maybe.”

They needed no second invitation and darted around to the tiny set of steps that hung from the tailboard, sprang one after the other through the slit in the canvas at the back, and tumbled into the body of the caravan. An alarming pop-popping sounded in front; the wheels began to move, and the car rattled down the highway at the breath-taking speed of twenty miles an hour.

Jake looked around the interior of the strange van. Overhead arched the canvas roof, filtering the sunshine and splashed with moving shadows as the car journeyed down the road. He found himself sitting on the edge of a bunk built across the floor of the car, directly back of the driver's seat now occupied by the ridiculous couple whom they had helped. In one corner was a small charcoal stove. The interior was heaped with all sorts of things: a little tin trunk, cooking pots, a cage with a canary chirping inside, bundles of clothing; from hooks swung more clothing, a lantern, a jangling bucket, a spare tire. "A regular house on wheels!" he told himself. "Wonder if these people are sure-enough gypsies?"

The little dark man's head appeared as if by magic through an opening cut in the front of the canvas, his teeth showing white against his sweeping mustachios. "That ees right! Make yourselves like at home, eh?"

"How far are you going?" Burk asked him. "To Wallistown?"

The car bumped and shook dangerously; the head was withdrawn and the machine put back on its course again. Then the rolling black eyes were turned on them once more. "What town ees that?"

"The one just down the road there."

"We do not like the towns. We just go on, and then go on some more. Maybe we see nice place, we stop, eh? Maybe not." A teeth-rattling lurch of the car again demanded his full attention, and the conversation was cut off.

Burk shook his head. "I don't know whether we've done the right thing or not," he said in a low tone. "These people seem to be going our way; but it remains to be seen whether we're any better off than we were."

"But, Burk—those people from the lake would have found us in no time if we hadn't got this lift! And now we're going south, even if it's not very fast. And we're hidden here under this cover, so that nobody will see us, even if the police have sent out a description."



Burk nodded soberly. "I guess so. But you can be sure this highway is the first place they'll watch." He peeped out through the flap in the back of the caravan. "Look; we're almost into Wallistown; if he stops here, I might as well be back in my cell at the prison right now. I know this was the only thing we could do; but maybe we've jumped out of the frying pan into the fire." The hunted man had never been at his ease among crowds of people; now, he felt doubly unsure.

Jake tried to reassure him. "Cheer up! We're snug enough here for a while, and it'll give us time to think up a plan. We'll make it yet, old timer! Now, if I only knew where Jerry was, I think I'd feel pretty good."

The creaking van shivered to a halt; bumped forward again. Burk chanced another look outside. "We've crossed the main street of town," he whispered. "Looks like we're going south after all."

"Sure! That's the stuff!" Jake replied. "You see—it was a lucky thing we were able to help out these gypsies, or whatever they are. If the cops can find us here in this travelling house, they're pretty good. Keep a stiff upper lip, and we'll make Canoe Mountain before dark!"

## CHAPTER XIX

### SHOTS ON THE HIGHWAY

“Yes, I thought you’d turn up again,” repeated Diker. Jerry felt the man’s hand tighten on his arm. “You twins seem to have a habit of popping into sight when least expected. The question is, which one are you?”

Jerry did not answer.

“Well, that’s easily found out,” his captor went on. “I don’t know how or when you got away, but if you were with Burk when the dogs made him take to water, your legs ought to be wet. They’re not. Therefore, we’ll get your brother when we get Burk.” He raised his voice to speak to the man at Jerry’s left. “See, Warden—I told you this was one of ’em. Good thing I spotted him when he was topping that fence, eh? Well, now Frank can step on the gas. The others may be ahead of us, or they may be behind, but sooner or later, we’ll get ’em!”

The jolly-looking man at Jerry’s left now put in a word. “What was the big idea, son?” he asked. “I’d think you were old enough to know better than to trifle with the law, and help a convict get away. All your leaders back there at the camp are worried to death about you kids. Didn’t you think of that? Where were you trying to go?”

“Anyone would have done the same thing!” Jerry burst out at last. “Burk told us he wasn’t guilty, and we wanted to help him!”

The jolly man smiled, looking jollier than ever. “My boy, I’ve been a prison warden for twelve years, and I’ve never had a man in my charge who’d admit he was guilty! Innocent men, every one of them—to hear them tell it.”

Jerry, in his efforts to show Burk’s innocence, forgot himself. “Let him stay free a little longer, and he’ll prove he’s not guilty!”

“Oh, he will, will he?” the man said sharply. “How will he do that?”

The boy realized that he had said more than enough. He sank back in his seat. But Diker, it seemed, was not through with his questions.

“How’d you get down here to town so quickly?” he asked. Jerry shook his head. “Won’t, tell anything, eh? Well, we’ll find out all about it later. I don’t think you know where the others are anyway. You’re just like the skinny lad we treed up in the hills.”

“Sherlock?”

“That his name? He wouldn’t say a word to us—all he did was sneeze. I left Harris to take him along back. We got him, and now we’ve got you—and the rest of the crowd can’t be far away.”

The car slowed to a halt at a crossroads, where a motorcycle policeman in the khaki uniform of a state officer sat vigilantly astride his machine. Diker jumped out, and ran across to the man, hailing him as he came.

“See anything?” he asked.

The man in khaki shook his head. “Nothing unusual. I’d swear they haven’t come along this way.”

“Well, keep your eyes open,” he was admonished. “That plane up there will keep them from bolting toward the hills again. So long!”

Diker jumped back into his seat, and again the car slid forward. Twice more, as the miles went by, it stopped at the side of the road, and Diker spoke to men who seemed to be posted on guard. Once, they passed a car drawn up by the side of the road. It was a queer-looking affair, Jerry noted, with a canvas top like a prairie schooner, and a chubby little man who looked like a foreigner was pumping up a tire. They drove by this roadside scene so rapidly, however, that Jerry could not make out any details.

Some time in the middle of the afternoon, the big car drew up in front of the post-office of a little hamlet about fifteen miles south of Wallistown. The driver got out and entered a small restaurant whose sign proclaimed it the “Apple Hill Cafe—Tourists a Speciality”; he returned with an armful of sandwiches and four

bottles of pop. Diker waved to Jerry to share this sketchy repast, and the boy was too famished to refuse, since his only previous nourishment that day had been a few elderberries, hours and hours before. He put away three ham sandwiches in almost no time at all, and started to demolish one of the large apples which the driver, whose name was Frank something-or-other, had brought out in his pockets.

“Well, Warden,” said Diker conversationally, taking a long pull at his bottle of pop, “they surely couldn’t have gotten this far down in the time since we know they got ashore up by Wallistown. Either they’re off the road altogether, or else we’ve slipped up somehow. I guess we’ll have to turn back. Shame to make you waste time on the chase this way, but you know how it is.”

“Burk used to live down this way, didn’t he?” asked the jolly-faced warden. “He’ll know his way around now, if he’s gotten this far. No; I don’t mind taking the time to end off this affair properly. I’m curious to find out what our friend Burk is trying to do.”

“If you’re ready to start back then, we’ll go.” Diker motioned to the driver, who circled around the Apple Hill Post-Office, and the car started on the return journey.

About two miles out of Apple Hill, Frank slammed on the brakes. A man stood in the center of the road, waving at them. Jerry recognized him as one of the watchers they had spoken to on the journey down; a farmerish-looking man who seemed to be some sort of constable. Without delay, he ran to the side of the car, and hurriedly addressed the prison guard. “Jest got a telephone call from the police-station in Wallistown,” was his message. “They been inquiren’ around like, and found a feller who was workin’ over on the side of the lake where your man was seen to land from a canoe. This feller—road-mender, he is—was workin’ by the side of the highway, and noticed some sort of outlandish automobile stopped there for quite a while. He didn’t see nothin’ of this convict feller, but he says if ye can find this queer auto, the feller drivin’ might know somethin’ to help.”

“What did this car look like?” asked the warden.

“Like nothin’ else in the world, seems like. Said it had a canvas top, like a Conestoga wagon, all fixed up to live in—the driver was a fat little feller that

looked like a wop, and he had his missus along. Catch that pair, and mebbe they'll tell you somethin' ye ought to know!"

"We passed that outfit up the road—remember?" burst out Diker. "Full speed ahead, Frank! They were fixin' up a tire when I saw 'em—they can't be very far from here! And pass me that gun of mine."

Frank carefully passed Diker's shotgun over the back of his seat, and the car roared ahead. Jerry peered forward with the rest. He had seen that caravan and its funny little owner. Did he know anything about Jake and Burk? Was it even possible that——

They rounded a sharp bend in the road. "There it is!" whooped Diker. "Draw up beside them, and we'll see what they know!" Again the driver slammed on the brakes, and the car screamed to a halt a few yards ahead of the oncoming van. Diker jumped out, shotgun in hand, and stood in front of the strange canvas-covered car. "Halt, in the name of the law!"

The caravan shivered to a rattling stop. The dark, fat couple on the seat began jabbering at each other in some outlandish tongue.

"Never mind that!" came Diker's command. "Come down here in the road! Now, I just want you to answer a few questions—— Quiet! How do you expect me to talk when you're gabblin' like a bunch of turkeys?"

"What ees it you do, Meester?"

"Come down, I say! That's right—now bring the lady." Diker turned to his chief. "I'll bring 'em over to you, Warden, so you can ask 'em anything you like. Over here, please! Gypsies, aren't you?"

Jerry, from his seat in the car, could look down upon the heads of the two dark little people who were now lost in the cross-fire of questions put to them by Diker and the warden.

"Now, you stopped up by Lake Wallis a few hours ago. We're looking for a man, a convict, who has escaped and who was last seen at the place you stopped. Know anything about him?"

The little man almost had tears in his large rolling black eyes. "Ah, Meester, I

have hear of that wicked man! No, thanks to the saints I have seen no wicked man—eh, Maria?”

His gestures were comical, but Jerry Utway was not watching. Did his eyes deceive him, or was there a ripple of movement behind the canvas top of the other car? Was it really true that Jake and the man Burk were——

“No,” the little stranger went on; “there was no wicked man. But—wait a meenit—there was a very good man, a good man who help me poosh—and a very good leetle boy——”

Jerry, who had not taken his eyes from the opening in the canvas front of the caravan, bit his lip to keep from shouting. For an instant, he had seen a pale face peeping out there, and it was Jake’s face! They were in that car, hiding under the canvas top! In another second the fat, voluble little man would give them away, and then it would be all over!

Diker shifted his gun. “A man and a boy?” he cried. “Where are they now?”

Jerry saw his chance. All eyes were upon the strange couple. With a swift movement, he leaned forward, over the driver’s shoulder. The keys to the ignition were still in the lock on the dashboard. Deftly he switched them off, and threw the bunch of keys as far as he could into the bushes on the other side of the road!

The men of the law, intent on their questioning, had been taken off guard. For a moment they did not comprehend what had happened; and in that moment Jerry Utway screamed his warning.

*“Drive ahead, Jakie—drive!”*

He felt the warden’s arms about him; he could not move. The driver shouted: “He chucked away the keys!” and jumped out of the car, colliding with the bewildered Diker. A motor whirred noisily; the ungainly caravan lurched slowly forward. And Jake, good old Jakie, was bending over the wheel, driving for dear life!

*“Drive!”*

The man called Frank was trying to disentangle himself from Diker’s arms, still

shouting: “He chucked away the keys! We can’t chase them until we get those keys!” Diker fought his way free, bumped into the fat, frightened-looking dark man, and at last got clear. He started to run up the road in the wake of the caravan, which had slowly gained speed and was rattling south at a good rate. Seeing that he could not hope to overtake the car on foot, he stopped short, yelled a final command to halt, and clapped his gun to his shoulder.

“*Duck!*” shrieked Jerry, and felt the warden’s hand clapped over his mouth. A double explosion boomed from the road. Diker had fired both barrels. Jerry’s eyes hurt as he strained to see through the smoke. The caravan jerked an instant, then moved on, gathered speed, and disappeared from view at a curve in the road.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE LAST TRAP

In full career, the caravan pitched and creaked like a ship in a heavy sea. Jake clung grimly to the wheel, expecting each minute to hear another rain of lead rattle about his ears; but he doggedly notched the little car to its highest speed, holding her to the road.

Old Jerry had done it! In another minute they would have been bagged without a struggle, but Jerry had given them the only chance for freedom in sight. It would take their hunters some time to locate the keys of the big car, turn it around, and pursue the van. A few minutes leeway might do wonders!

“Stop, stop, ye fool!”

A man with a badge on his lapel was waving his arms wildly in front. Jake shoved on more gas; the man who had sought to stop them leaped blindly for his life, and they passed him in a cloud of dust.

How far could they get at this rate? Jake leaned back and shouted, “All right, Burk? ’Fraid we can’t get far, unless we get out of this bus pretty quick.”

Burk’s head appeared in the opening. Jake did not dare turn around, and so did not see that his partner’s face was drawn with pain. “It’s—no use, I guess, old man.”

“Why, we’ve been in worse places than this! Soon as we get a bit farther along, we’ll hop out and take to the hills again!”

Burk shook his head. “We can’t make it. Only thing to do is—pull up and wait for them.”

“Come, Burk,” Jake protested; “we’re not far from Canoe Mountain now! We’ll



desert this car and run for it again!”

“Can’t do it, son. Not a quitter—but I couldn’t run very far. Some of that shot caught me in the leg. I—I——”

“What?” Jake shoved on the brake, and the caravan rattled to a standstill at the side of the road. He scrambled through the curtain, and stared at Burk’s blanched face. “Let me see—did they get you bad? I didn’t stop to think they might—— It was that fellow Diker with them; I knew him right off.” He was rolling up the corduroy trousers on Burk’s right leg as he spoke.

“Whew! Looks bad; right in the calf of the leg. But it might be worse. Do you see anything around I could use for a bandage?”

Burk shook his head again. “Don’t bother. The prison people will be along in a minute, and they’ll take care of us. Too bad it had to break this way; why, we can see Canoe Mountain from here.”

“How far is it?” Jake’s tone was filled with eagerness.

“Only about five miles to the lodge. You take the road that leads out from Apple Hill, just a little ways down here a piece. At the top of the first mountain, you turn right on a short lane that goes straight to the lodge. But why?”

“Listen,” said Jake Utway swiftly; “can I leave you here all right? I can see your wound is pretty bad, and you couldn’t walk a step with that leg; but I’m still lively enough. We’re not licked yet. I’m going on!”

Jake peered out the back of the caravan. Their enemies were not in sight yet. Burk waved his hand in feeble protest.

“The game’s up, old fellow. What could you do at——”

“I don’t know, Burk. But I’m going anyway. I want to have a look at that hunting lodge of yours. The prison bunch will take care of you I know. Now, before I leave you, tell me—have you been able to remember anything about where you might have put that necklace?”

The man groaned softly. “I’m afraid not. I’ve tried and tried—but I guess it’s hopeless.”

There was not a minute to waste. Jake jumped to the ground. “So long, Burk! I’ll be seeing you again. Cheer up!” he called gently, and began hiking at a fast gait up the road toward the little village of Apple Hill.

A forlorn hope, if there ever was one, Jake Utway told himself as he hastened toward the nearing cluster of houses that marked the crossroads town. Of the four of them who had faced the new day in heartsome spirits, he alone was the only one still uncaught. First Sherlock, then Jerry, and now Burk—one, two, three!—one after another they had sacrificed their liberty in order that the venture should go forward. And it should go forward, to the very end, Jake promised himself. Canoe Mountain or bust! It was part of playing the game, to keep on and on toward the goal, as long as breath was left to struggle ahead——

A boy in overalls was riding slowly toward him on a bicycle. Jake halted and waved his arm at the oncoming lad, who pulled to a stop, and eyed him suspiciously.

“Hello, kiddo,” smiled Jake. “Where do you live?”

The boy scuffed the toe of his shoe into the dirt beside the road, and gaped with open mouth before answering. He jerked a grimy thumb to the right. “Yonder.”

“Want to make some money?”

The boy’s eyes widened. “Huh?”

“I said, do you want to make a little extra money? Listen; I have to go somewhere pretty quick. Lend me that bike of yours for a couple hours, and I’ll pay you.”

“Naw.”

Jake fished in his pocket and pulled out all the cash he had been able to bring with him. “Look! There’s almost four dollars there. Four bucks, just for letting me ride your old bike for a little while! I promise to bring it back in good shape.” The farmer lad shook his head. Jake jingled the money in his palm. “You won’t have another chance to make money this easily!”

The boy pointed a finger at Jake’s scout knife, which he had drawn from his pocket with the money. “What kinda knife’s that?”

Time was getting short. “That’s a swell knife—look at all the blades it’s got,” said Jake desperately. “Tell you what—I’ll give you the knife and all this money too, if you let me borrow your wheel for just an hour or two!”

The added attraction of the knife was enough to sway the smaller boy’s mind. He snatched it and the coins from Jake’s hand, and then slowly climbed down off his bicycle.

“You’re making a good swap, kid,” said Jake, gripping the handlebars. He was surprised to find that the boy, as though he had suddenly changed his mind, was clinging to the bicycle with determination. “Say, what’s the matter?”

The boy shook his head. A thought had just occurred to him. “How do I know you’ll bring it back? Maybe you’ll bust it, or I’ll never see you again!”

Jake’s patience was rapidly giving out. “Look here!” he said. “You haven’t got sense enough to take my promise. Well, see this mackinaw I’m wearing? It’s a good coat, and worth two or three measly bikes like this one!” He slipped off the garment, and held it out. “Here, take it. You can keep that until I bring your bike back safe, just to show you I’m not trying to steal anything. Do you get that?” The boy looked at the coat, then at the money and knife in his hand. Jake tucked the coat under the lad’s arm. “All right. You keep the mackinaw, and in a little while I’ll bring this back to that red house over there—that’s where you live, isn’t it?—and get back my coat.”

Before the boy could change his mind or offer further objection, Jake climbed into the saddle and began pedalling down the road toward Apple Hill. He had not gone far when he heard a shout behind him, as if the boy had already doubted the wisdom of his transaction; but he increased his speed, and was shortly amid the houses of the town.

He found the road to Canoe Mountain without any trouble, and speeded off to the westward. Only a few miles away the low blue line of the hills, bristling with pine and spruce trees on the skyline, pointed his goal. About half a mile after he had left Apple Hill behind, the asphalt paving ended, and the road became a dusty and rutted stretch of dirt. A fine powder, stirred up by his progress, settled on his clothing, coated his face and choked his nostrils. Yet he kept on, pedalling as hard as he could go.

Some three miles on his way, he came to the span of a concrete bridge, which

carried the road across a slowly-moving stream. Jake dismounted, and wheeled the bicycle beneath the bridge, where a grassy bank spread invitingly in the sunshine of the late afternoon. It was warm there, and restful.... He needed a bit of rest, to get his breath back.

Jake stretched his limbs out luxuriously. His hunger made him feel a little light-headed. He closed his eyes for a moment to shut out the bright sun. Burk—Jerry—the prison guard—hungry....

He awoke with a start. It was late. The sun was almost down, now; there was a misty chill in the air beside the slowly-gliding brook. He jumped up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. What had happened? The bicycle lying at his side brought his memory back again. For several precious hours he had been sleeping; he could have been at Canoe Mountain Lodge by this time! Hurriedly he pulled together his scattered wits, and climbed to the road. The coast was clear. He pushed the bicycle up the embankment, mounted, and once more was riding toward the hills that loomed darkly before him in the dusk.

Timberlands began to line the road now. Night was dropping its curtain over the countryside; lights twinkled in far-off farmhouses in the valley. He was soon aware that the road was rising steadily; he was on the mountainside, surrounded by dark thickets and ghostly trees; an uncanny, haunted feeling came over him. He could hardly see the road before him; he felt for his flashlight, and smothered an exclamation. He must have left his light in the pocket of his mackinaw, now in the possession of the boy back at Apple Hill.

The road was now too steep for riding; all the strength of his muscles could not drive the machine forward. He jumped off, and began a slow trudge upward, trundling the bicycle beside him.

It took him fully half an hour to reach the summit of the mountain. The hunting lodge could not be far away now. If his venture was a wild goose chase, at any rate that chase would soon be at an end.

The weariness of his journey had blotted out all sense of reality; he did not even think of the hopelessness of burglarizing a strange house and searching there for evidence of an incident which had happened more than twelve months ago.

His feet sounded hollowly on some sort of wooden steps. They must lead up to the door of the lodge! He leaned his bicycle against a rustic railing, and stumbled

wearily across the resounding boards of a porch. If only he had his flashlight! But no matter—— This must be the door. His hand sought out the latch, and he started back in surprise. It was open!

Could anyone be within? But no, there were no lights showing anywhere about the place. Some carelessness, no doubt. He pushed lightly on the door; it gave before his hand, and he stepped over the threshold, into a room.

Jake Utway tried to scream, but a lump had risen in his throat, and he could not get the words out. In a far corner of the strange room a red coal, like a cigar-end, glowed and died. A freezing paralysis of fear ran down his spine; in his ears pulsed loudly the pounding beat of his heart.

“Come right in, son,” said a voice that was horribly jovial. “You’re a bit late. But you’ve come at last.”

The door slammed behind him like the crack of judgment. Some heavy body had thrown itself against the panels, and now stood ready to bar his way. All the hazardous escapes of his flight from Lenape had been of no avail. From this last, dark trap there was no escape.

## **CHAPTER XXI**

### **THE SECRET OF THE LODGE**

“Don’t move!” warned the Voice from the dark. “You can light up the lamp now, Frank.”

The man at Jake’s back felt his way a few yards to the left. The sound of a match scratched on the sole of a shoe came to Jake’s ear; a tiny yellow flame blossomed, was held to the wick of an oil-lamp. The man called Frank replaced the glass chimney of the lamp, and stepped back to his post by the door.

“Sit down, bud. You must be tired.”

Jake Utway stared across at the speaker. His new enemy sat in an armchair by a dead fireplace, calmly smoking a cigar and smiling easily.

“You’re Jake, aren’t you?” he went on. “You look so much like your brother that I feel I know you already. But no tricks, mind!” he chuckled. “That brother of yours has fooled us enough for one day—throwing the keys of the car away, just when he saw his chance to help you.”

Never taking his eyes from the smiling man, Jake sank into a chair.

“That’s right! We’ll be heading back in a few minutes; might as well get your breath before we go. Now, Jake, you can tell me just exactly what you expected to do here at this lodge.”

“Who are you, sir?” Jake countered.

“I suppose you didn’t see me in the car when we stopped your covered wagon up the road. I happen to be warden of the Elmville Penitentiary—your friend Burk escaped from my charge, and naturally I wanted to get him back again.”

“How is he—Burk?”

“Oh, don’t you worry about him! He got a few buckshot in the leg, but we bandaged him up, and he’ll be walking around as good as ever in a day or two. He’s gone back with Diker and your brother some time ago.”

“Who told you I was coming here?” demanded Jake.

“Burk himself. Told me you’d been good to him, and he didn’t want you to come to harm. Very earnest about it, too. Yes, I must say I’m learning a lot about our friend Burk in these last few days.”

Jake considered. “Have you found out that he’s not a thief?” he asked boldly.

Again the man smiled, wearily. “You’re pretty young, Jake. I admit Burk was always well-behaved when he was serving his time, and he looks like a decent sort. No doubt he told you a yarn that sounded convincing enough—why, every man at Elmville can make himself out to be a saint, if you give him a chance! But I have yet to find any proof that John Burk was not given every benefit of the doubt when his case was tried at law.”

Jake struggled upright, his eyes blazing. “It—it might be law, but is it justice? Why, sir, he—he——” The boy fell back, his strength spent. The warden jumped up and came to his side.

“Here, son—you must be worn out! Frank, get that thermos bottle of hot chocolate from the car, and have that caretaker make up some sandwiches.” He patted Jake’s shoulder. “Bet you haven’t had a thing to eat to-day. No wonder you look worn out.”

The boy closed his eyes. “I am tired, I guess. But I really mean it, sir. Burk didn’t steal that necklace any more than I did.”

“All right. Don’t talk any more now. We’ll have some hot food for you in a minute.”

The man resumed his seat, and began puffing on his cigar in silence. As the minutes passed, Jake looked about him. The room seemed to be the main hall of the hunting lodge. Over the fireplace he made out a dim shape, the mounted head of a large buck deer. The walls were hung with Indian blankets; a case of books

stood in one corner, and a rack of guns and fishing-rods in another. The place was fitted out in rough comfort, and at another time Jake might have delighted in examining everything which the sportsmen who owned the club had collected. As it was, he waited motionless until Frank reappeared with a steaming cup of chocolate, some sandwiches, and a dish of hot soup.

“Feel better now?” the warden asked, as Jake swallowed the last of the heartening liquid. The man had removed his hat, and Jake could now see that his hair was snow-white. “If you’re ready for a ride, there’s nothing to keep us here any longer.”

“But—but, sir, give me a chance to explain!” The warm food had brought back much of Jake’s strength, and with it his fighting spirit. If they departed from Canoe Mountain Lodge now, there would never be another opportunity to clear up the mystery of the necklace, and Burk would be worse off than before. Here, if anywhere, lay the heart of that mystery, and although Jake Utway had no clear idea as to the way of its solution, he felt that the walls of the lodge must contain some clue that would lead them to the truth.

The warden shook his head patiently. “You fellows have risked everything to get to this place, but Burk himself confessed to me awhile ago that he had no definite aim in view, except to hunt around some more for that necklace. What can you know that he doesn’t know?”

Jake stood up. Strength was flooding back into his aching body, and he spoke with a confidence that could not fail to impress the white-haired man. It was a confidence based not upon reason, but upon the boy’s feeling that Burk had spoken the truth. Into his mind flashed the picture of that night of storm across the lake from the Lenape dock; he could almost see the convict’s drawn face, and hear the earnest ring of his voice as he told his story to his two young captors——

“Mr. Warden,” he began, “I feel sure that you know there’s something strange about this case of Burk’s; otherwise, you wouldn’t have taken so much trouble to talk to him after you caught him, or to come here and wait for me. You believe that the law is right, but you’re not sure in your mind that a mistake hasn’t been made; and you want to be fair to Burk and give him a chance to prove that there has been a mistake. Isn’t that right?”



The jollity of the warden's face dropped from it like a mask. He leaned forward, and his cigar dropped from his fingers.

“That might be so, son. But——”

“You've asked yourself: Why didn't Burk get far away from this part of the country when he had the chance? Why did he risk getting caught, as he was caught, simply to come here to Canoe Mountain, if he knew he was guilty?”

The warden leaned back again. “That's easily explained, Jake. Many times a man will give way to temptation, and steal something of great value. Even if he's caught, he will refuse to tell where he has hidden the thing, hoping that when he gets out of prison he will be able to come back, take the object from its hiding-place, and sell it for what he can get. Burk knew where he had hidden the necklace, and was coming back to get it.”

“Suppose I could prove to you that Burk didn't know where he put it?”

The man smiled, and shook his head. “That would be a mighty hard thing to prove. But if you could do that, and the necklace was restored to its owner, it might make some difference——”

“All right. Now, here's another thing. Why should Burk steal that necklace? He had never done anything like that before. He had a good job, which he liked, and as caretaker here had been in a position of trust. He must have known that he would be caught at once. He might have run away with the pearls in Mr. Collinge's absence; but he was still here, and didn't try to get away. He has said all along that he was innocent. The disappearance of the necklace has brought him nothing but trouble. Why should he risk ruining his whole life to take it?”

“You'd make a good lawyer, Jake!” the man said slowly. “Hear that, Frank? The lad is convincing me in spite of myself. But you haven't answered the big question, Bud: What did happen to that necklace?”

“I'm coming to that.” Jake's words were coming out in a rush now. He must make them understand; he must prove to them that his friend Burk, by this time no doubt back again in his hated cage, was blameless of this crime. “What happened to the necklace? The answer is: Burk was sick. Have you ever had the 'flu? Then you can picture what happened to him that day. He was out of his head. His one thought must have been to put the thing in a safe place, and then

lie down on his bed in peace. Can you blame him for not being able to remember what he had done, or where he hid the thing?”

“But why wasn’t it found?” the man asked quickly. “A valuable thing like a necklace doesn’t disappear so easily. And the case was well-known; why, I’ll venture to say that this whole place here has been gone over with a fine-tooth comb at least a dozen times in the past year! And as far as we know, the necklace has never been found.”

Jake cast his eyes about the large room, noting where several doors led off to the back of the lodge. “Tell me, sir,” he said at last; “if the necklace could be found, and if it could be proved that Burk was sick and didn’t know what he had done with it—that he had hidden it for safekeeping, and not for his own gain—would Burk be set free?”

“I could safely say,” said the warden, “that if such was the case, the facts would be put before the Pardon Board, and I myself would make a point of urging that Burk be released. But you can see for yourself that it’s an almost impossible job. Now, let’s forget all this foolishness, and start back. It’s getting late.”

Jake did not move. “Did you say that the man who is now the caretaker is in back somewhere?”

“Yes, he is, but——”

“Could I talk to him, please?”

The warden opened his mouth as if to object, but thought better of it, and in a forbearing tone asked the chauffeur, Frank, to call the caretaker.

The latter must have been just outside the door, in the kitchen of the lodge, for he shambled in at once, looking with curious eyes at the strangers who had invaded his domain in the name of the law. He was a bent little man, with a drooping brown mustache, and he stood in silence, resting on one foot, waiting for someone to speak.

Jake faced him. “Can you show me the room where Burk used to sleep, when he was working here?”

The caretaker darted a look at the warden, who motioned for him to answer.

“Wal, yes, guess I can. Sleep there myself; my room now.”

He led the way toward the rear of the building, and the others followed, with Frank bearing the oil-lamp behind them. The room which they entered lay in the far corner of the lodge, a narrow little place with brown boarded walls, within which there was barely space enough for a small cot-bed, a chair, and a tiny dresser. The warden surveyed the room curiously, but Jake went straight to the bed, and turned down the covers. Then he wheeled on the caretaker.

“Is this bed the same as when Burk was here?” he asked sharply.

“Wal, just about. Covers are the same, mostly, but that there’s a new mattress I just got last week.”

“Where’s the old mattress?”

“Chucked it outside on the woodpile. Why?”

Jake Utway did not pause to reply. In an instant he was into the hall, racing through the lighted kitchen, and out the back door.

“Stop him!” shouted the warden. “Get him, Frank! It’s another trick!”

But Jake had gone no farther than the woodpile. In the light that streamed from the open kitchen window, he was feeling about among the wreckage of a worn-out cotton mattress, which had been thrown upon the heap of firewood in the rear of the lodge. Frank, still carrying the lamp, held his arm until the warden and the caretaker joined them.

“Let me go!” cried Jake impatiently. “Hold that lamp down closer, will you? I can’t see very well——”

“What in the world——” began the warden. His words were cut short. Jake had found a short slit in the heavy striped ticking that encased the stuffing of the old mattress. His hand slid through; he felt about for a moment, and drew his hand out again. In the yellow light of the lamp, everyone could see the object which dangled from his clenched fingers. A short string of gleaming, milky-white bubbles flashed before the astounded eyes of the three men.

“It was a long guess, but it was right!” exclaimed Jake Utway in triumph.

“Here’s the pearl necklace, safe and sound! Burk wouldn’t have put it away in a place like this, if he hadn’t been sick, and it was the first place he thought of hiding them! And now, Mr. Warden—I’ll hold you to your promise to do all you can to set John Burk free!”

## CHAPTER XXII

### BROTHERLY LOVE

Jake Utway woke from a restless doze as the car bumped over the rough road behind Camp Lenape. He looked about him with sleep-sodden eyes as the driver, Frank, drew up outside the lodge. There was a light in the Chief's office, and the Chief himself must have heard the noise of their motor, for he appeared at once, holding up a lantern so that he could see the newcomers.

His face lighted up as he saw Jake, huddled in the back of the machine beside the warden of Elmville.

"Well, there you are at last!" he exclaimed with a sigh of relief. "Jerry has been in bed for an hour, and I stayed up on the chance that I might hear something of you. Now that you're really here, I admit that a big load is off my mind." He turned to the warden. "I don't know how to thank you, sir, for picking up the boys as you have done. I'm sorry that two Lenape fellows have caused you so much trouble."

"No trouble!" cried the warden genially. "Now, let's not keep young Jake here away from his bed any longer with all our talk. He's earned a good night's sleep."

"That so? Well, hop along, Jake. We'll talk this over with you and your brother in the morning."

The words sounded ominous, but Jake was too tired to worry about what the morning would bring. He stumbled off toward Tent Ten, hardly aware of what he was doing; but as he left, he heard the Chief invite the two men into the lodge for a cup of coffee, and the three of them disappeared into the building talking together in confidential tones. Jake fell like a log upon his bunk, without taking off any of his stained garments; but Mr. Avery was awake, and soon tucked the

worn-out boy between his blankets.

The next morning, after breakfast, the Utway twins stood outside the door of the Chief's office with beating hearts. They had not been given any chance to speak to each other since their separate returns to camp late the previous night; and now that they were back in the familiar scenes of Lenape, their wild adventure seemed like a mad dream. How could they have run away from camp without thinking of the worry and trouble that this disobedient act would cause their leaders and the Chief?

Jerry knocked shakily upon the door. At the call of "Come in!" the two culprits entered the office and stood waiting for judgment.

They could not read the look on the Chief's face as he stood regarding them quizzically. "We-ell!" he said slowly, and paused.

"We—we're sorry, Chief!" blurted out Jerry. "We didn't think about making a lot of trouble for you and our leaders. We just wanted to help—— But I guess it's no use trying to tell how we felt about it."

"Do you think you did right in leaving Lenape without telling anybody?"

Jerry shook his head miserably.

"What about you, Jake?"

"I'm sorry too, Chief. We thought we were helping Burk, but maybe we were wrong. When you put it up to us that way, it makes us feel as if we—we——"

The man nodded. "I could talk to you for an hour about camp discipline, and it wouldn't mean as much to you as those words of yours mean, boys. Your own consciences are better judges than I could ever hope to be. And I won't say that you didn't have some excuse. As things have turned out, no harm has been done, luckily for you."

The Chief tapped with a pencil on his desk for an instant, and then began speaking softly, almost to himself.

"I talked with the warden last night after you went to bed, Jake. And he said several things about you boys which I won't repeat; but he made me see that

Lenape hasn't done all it might do for you two. From now on, I shall expect you to use all your extra energy in being better campers. You both have lots of pep, and in Burk's case your efforts turned out to be of great value. Keep on putting that pep to work to help the other fellow at Lenape! You know how to do it."

He rose with a smile, and held out his hand. The twins straightened, and looked their leader full in the eyes. "Thanks, Chief," said Jerry huskily. "We'll try."

"We sure will!" added Jake.

Silently the Chief took their hands, and gave each a hearty grip.

"Oh, by the way, boys," he said, as they turned to go, "I have some news for you. Last night the warden told me some things about this fellow Burk that interested me a lot. When he's free again, as he should be if the warden means what he says, I shouldn't be surprised if I could find a job around camp where Burk might be of use."

Jake and Jerry Utway held back their feelings until they were almost out on the porch. Then they broke loose.

"Hurray for Chief!" they shouted. "Yay, Chief! Yay, Lenape!"

The hospital tent was full to overflowing with laughing boys. In the midst of them, clad in pajamas, Sherlock Jones sat up in a comfortable white bed, leaning back on his pillows with sparkling eyes. Now and then he paused in his talk to blow his long nose resoundingly, but otherwise seemed none the worse for his adventure on the mountain and his wetting in the brook when the hounds were on his trail. He was the center of interest, and it was plain to be seen that he was enjoying his brief moment in the limelight of fame.

About him sat or stood all the members of the Tent Ten group, and a number of other boys who listened joyously to his tale. Chink Towner and Wild Willie Sanders perched at the foot of his bed; Fat Crampton, with wide eyes and open mouth, hung upon his words; Steve Link was there, and Sunfish Linder, and Spaghetti Megaro, and many others.

"And were you scared when those big bloodhounds jumped up at the tree and tried to get you?" piped up little Pete Lister.

“Say, I hung on and said my prayers!” answered Sherlock amid laughter. “But pretty soon along came a man named Harris, and he chained ’em up, and after that it was all right.”

“But how did Jake and the man get away so quick?” asked Soapy Mullins.

“You’ll have to ask him that.”

“I tried to ask him this morning,” put in Lefkowitz, “but he wouldn’t tell me a thing. But he came to camp real late last night; I was awake and saw him get here.”

“We’ll know all about it pretty soon,” observed Gil Shelton, who was sitting on the steps of the tent. “Here they both come now, up from the lodge. Guess they want to see you, Sherlock.”

Sherlock drew forth his handkerchief. “I used to think I was some punkins as a detective,” he announced, “but I’ll say right here that the Utway twins have got it all over me when it comes to solving mysteries. From now on, I resign! A thousand mysteries can happen around this camp, and I won’t lift my little finger!”

A low cheer broke forth as the two brothers stepped into the shadow of the tent-house. “Yay, Jake! Yay, Jerry!”

Jake grinned. “Hello, Sherlock, old boy! How have you been since I last saw you? Get down that tree all right?”

Sherlock smiled back. “I’m all right. How are you two?”

“We’re cinders,” announced Jerry. “We’ve just been listening to the Chief, and boy, we’re never going to run away from camp again! From now on, I’m going to be the best little boy you ever saw. And I really mean it. I felt like a penny waiting for change after the Chief got through talking. Man, I’d sooner get pinched by the cops ten times, than have the Chief look at me like that again!”

“You said it,” added Jake. “I’d rather get shot at ten times than feel as low as I did just now. But the Chief is one grand fellow. He made us see how wrong we were to run away from Lenape the way we did, but he knew what really happened, and said he hoped Burk would get his pardon soon, and that he’d find



a job around camp for Burk to do when he got out!”

“But what did happen?”

“How did Burk get caught?”

“Where were you all the time?”

Questions rose from a dozen clamorous throats, and the crowd of excited campers closed in about the two brothers.

“Well,” said Jerry slowly, “it’ll take a long time to tell. We were only away from camp for one day, but boy, what a day!”

“It seemed like a hundred years!” agreed Jake. “And say, wasn’t that farmer kid surprised when we drove up last night and I gave him back his bicycle! Guess he thought he had my mackinaw for keeps!”

“That reminds me,” said Jerry. “I’ll have to write to that storekeeper down at Wallistown to send mine back. But you fellows will have to get Jake to tell the story. He’s the one that did everything, and got to Canoe Mountain. I got nabbed before we were half-way there.”

“Yeah!” said Jake scornfully. “I wouldn’t have got very far if you hadn’t seen us in the gypsy flivver, and hadn’t thrown away the keys to the warden’s car. And it was your idea for us to go to Canoe Mountain in the first place.”

“That wasn’t anything. But I call it real smart of you to figure out that Burk had stowed away those pearls in his mattress!”

“Listen, Jerry Utway!” said Jake, and there was a glint in his bright blue eyes. “We found Burk together, and we never could have put it across if we hadn’t been working together all the time. Sherlock here helped a lot, too, although he didn’t know it. Now, for goodness sake, nail up that trap of yours until you can say something with some sense to it!”

“I will not!” answered Jerry stoutly. “You’re a hero, that’s what you are—a bloomin’ hero!”

“I’m not! Don’t call me names! Take that back!”

“You are, too! I won’t take it back. You’re a bloomin’ hero!”

Jake seized a heavy hot-water bottle that lay at the foot of Sherlock’s bed, and wielded it threateningly. The circle of boys widened about the two brothers, and laughing campers nudged each other and winked. For almost a week now, the Utway twins had been strangely peaceable. They had been driven by the mystery that had surrounded Camp Lenape to join forces and forget their brotherly strife in a common cause and in the face of a common danger. But now that they were back home again at Lenape, a friendly little battle might clear the air, make them feel themselves once more.

“That’s the boy, Jake!” urged Chink Towner. “Give him the works!”

“Key down, you Chinaman!” cried Jake. “I know what I’m doing.” Again he wielded the hot-water bottle menacingly, hefting it as if on the point of hurling it full at his brother. “Now, Jerry, you take that back!”

“You’re a hero, a bloomin’ hero!” chanted Jerry, tauntingly.

“And you’re another!”

“And you’re his brother!”

Sherlock Jones flashed a mock-terrified glance at the two embattled brothers.

“Help!” he cried, and slid down into the bed, pulling the covers protectingly over his head. “The Utway twins are at it again!”

THE END

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