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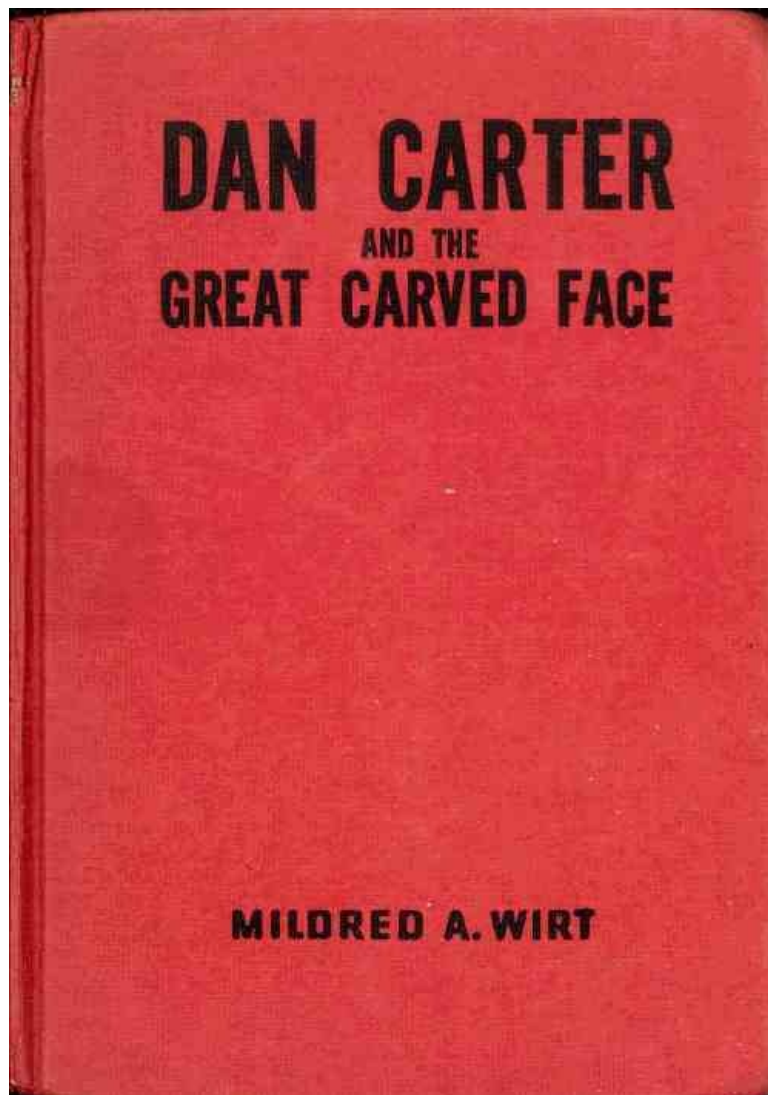
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DAN CARTER AND THE GREAT CARVED FACE ***





A grotesque carved face loomed on the wall.

[\(See Page 31\)](#)

"DAN CARTER AND THE GREAT CARVED FACE"

DAN CARTER
and
the Great Carved
Face

by
Mildred A. Wirt

ILLUSTRATED

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Dan Carter and the Great Carved Face

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[1]

Dan Carter and the Great Carved Face

CHAPTER I A MISSING CUB

Firelight splashed the eager faces of six Cub Scouts, who squatted Indian fashion around the glowing log.

Sam Hatfield, cubmaster of Den 2 at Webster City, raised his hand in cheery greeting.

"How!"

"How!" responded the Cubs. Expectantly, they waited for their chief to speak.

On this particular night, the den meeting was being held on a river slope directly behind the home of Burton Holloway, one of the Den Dads.

As all the Cubs knew, the session was no ordinary week-end ceremonial. For Mr. Hatfield had promised that an important announcement would be forthcoming.

"Everyone here?" The cubmaster's gaze roved from one Cub to another as he started to call the roll. "Brad Wilber!"

"Present," drawled the Den Chief.

Brad was nearly 14, a Boy Scout and an acknowledged leader among the younger Cubs. Mr. Hatfield depended a great deal upon the dark-haired, serious youngster, having found him to be even-tempered and quick of wit.

[2]

"Dan Carter!" the cubmaster resumed the roll call.

"Here," answered Dan with a friendly grin. He was a sandy-haired boy, clever in school and a fine athlete. All the Cubs liked him.

Next Mr. Hatfield called the name of his own son, Fred, who replied with a loud "How! Me heap big Injun!"

The roll call also included Mack Tibbets, Chips Davis and Midge Holloway, a son of the Den Dad. But when Red Suell's name was spoken, he did not respond.

"Where's Red?" Mr. Hatfield inquired. In the flickering firelight he could not see the boys' faces distinctly. "Not here yet?"

"Late again," drawled Chips. "You know Red. He never can make a meeting on time."

"I thought he'd be here tonight," said Brad. "He had something special on his mind. Fact is, I'm a little bothered about it—"

[3]

"Someone's coming down the hill now," cut in Dan. He directed attention toward a shadowy, hurrying figure.

A moment later, Red, who had acquired the nickname because of his fiery hair, breathlessly joined the group. He carried a bulky object concealed in a large paper bag.

"Time you're getting here!" Chips scolded him. "What you got in that sack?"

"Oh, nothing." Red grinned mysteriously.

Carefully holding together the top edges of the bag so that none of the Cubs could see what it held, he took his place in the circle.

Mr. Hatfield stirred the log with a stick, sending up a shower of sparks.

"I'm about to spin a few Indian stories," he remarked. "But first, now that we're all here, I'll tell you about next month's den project. Ever hear of the Navajos?"

"Sure!" chirped Chips, proud of his knowledge. "Blankets! We've got some at home."

The other Cubs hooted in derision.

"The Navajos are Indians," corrected Dan. "They live on a large New Mexico reservation."

[4]

"That's right," agreed Mr. Hatfield. "The Navajos are very skillful at weaving blankets and making silver ornaments, so Chips wasn't too far off."

"What do the Navajos have to do with our project?" asked Mack Tibbets curiously.

"A lot, I hope. I thought we might adopt a Navajo Pack."

"Do the Navajos have Cub Scout organizations?" demanded Red. In his surprise, he nearly dropped the paper bag which he had kept so carefully tucked under his arm.

"Why should we adopt an Indian Pack?"

questioned Midge Holloway.

"Because the Navajo youngsters need our help," Mr. Hatfield explained. "The government has aided the Indians by setting up schools and providing many necessities. But while some of the Navajos are well off, others are very poor, depending almost entirely upon sheep raising for a living. Their dwellings are *hogans* or houses built of sticks, rock and mud. Few have adequate clothing or shoes."

"What do the Navajo Cubs need?" asked Brad.

"All sorts of things. Books, uniforms, craft articles and especially money."

[5]

Mr. Hatfield went on to say that if the Cubs decided to adopt a Navajo Pack, cash might be raised by various projects, including an Indian pow-wow.

"Say, that sounds swell to me!" approved Dan instantly. "I'm for it!"

"Me too," chimed in Midge Holloway.

All the other Cubs likewise voted in favor of the project.

The matter decided, Mr. Hatfield related several Indian stories. As the fire burned lower, the boys huddled close together, for a chill had come upon the summer night.

Unintentionally, Dan brushed against Red's mysterious paper bag. He could tell by the feel that it held something soft and warm.

"What are you hiding, Red?" he demanded. "You keep clutching that sack as if you're hanging onto a live rabbit. What's in it?"

"A bear maybe," grinned Red. "Wait and see!"

Remarking upon the darkness of the woods, he stared fixedly toward the tall pine trees. His intensity began to make the other Cubs feel a trifle uneasy.

[6]

"What's wrong with you anyhow, Red?" Dan asked, losing impatience.

"Nothing," Red returned innocently. "Gosh, but it's getting dark! Do you 'spose any wild animals are out there in the woods watching our fire die down?"

"Probably a mountain lion, six wolves and a couple of bears," Dan retorted. "All waiting to attack! Don't try to stir our imaginations, Red."

"Who me?" Red demanded indignantly.

He subsided into silence. However, a few minutes later, Dan heard him urge Mr. Hatfield to "tell a good scarey bear or wolf story."

"It's getting rather late," the cubmaster rejoined. "Our wood is nearly gone."

"I'll get some more," Red offered eagerly.

Before anyone could stop him, he darted off into the woods.

Instead of telling an animal story, Mr. Hatfield explained the origin of the Navajo fire dance, or

mountain chant.

This spectacular Indian dance, he related, was performed by the braves four or five times a year, usually late in fall.

[7]

"The Navajos believe that bears and snakes are evil spirits," the cubmaster remarked. "If a Navajo kills a bear, he fears that the animal's spirit may enter his own body. So to free such an evil spirit from the body, the Indian braves take part in the fire dance ceremony which often lasts five days."

Dan paid only scant attention as Mr. Hatfield described the colorful dance. He kept watching the fringe of woods for a glimpse of Red. Surely, the boy had been gone long enough to return with an armful of firewood!

"What's become of him?" he whispered to Brad who sat on his left in the circle.

"Oh, he'll be along soon enough," Brad shrugged. "Relax."

Mr. Hatfield finished his description of the fire dance. Mr. Holloway then told the Cubs of plans which included the building of a Navajo trading post, a *hogan* and perhaps the making of a sand painting.

"We'll practice canoeing too," he added. "Fact is, we're hoping to schedule a canoe race with Den 1 at the end of the season."

"We'll beat 'em too!" Midge announced proudly. "Dan and Brad are handy with a paddle."

[8]

"So is Ross Langdon of Den 1," Dan reminded him. "Don't count our trophies until we win 'em."

"Also, keep in mind that winning isn't nearly as important as good, friendly competition and fun," Mr. Hatfield added. "Now, shall we close the meeting by the Cub Promise?"

Quickly the boys formed in a circle about the dying embers of the fire. In unison they recited:

"I promise
To do my best
To do my duty to
God and my country,
To be square, and to obey the law of the
Pack."

As the meeting broke up, Mr. Hatfield doused water on the live coals.

"What became of Red?" he asked. "He left camp twenty minutes ago for more wood. He must have gone to the house."

"Probably to get a head start at the refreshments," chimed in Chips. "That's Red!"

"I'll see if he's there," Dan offered quickly. "I saw him disappear into the trees, but he may have circled around."

[9]

A light glowed from the kitchen windows of the Holloway house on the hill.

The dwelling stood at the extreme edge of the metropolitan park area in the section which

included many acres of wild, almost virgin timber. On many occasions the Cubs had been allowed to use the Holloway cabin which fronted the river. Often too, they explored the marked trails, usually accompanied by either Mr. Holloway or the cubmaster.

Climbing the gravel path, Dan peered in at the open kitchen door. In the glare of the electric light he could see Mrs. Holloway setting a long table with paper plates and napkins. Fragrant chocolate simmered on the stove.

"Oh, hello, Dan," Mrs. Holloway greeted him cordially. "You're the first Cub to come looking for food."

"Then Red hasn't been here?"

"Why, no, not yet."

"We're looking for him," Dan explained. "Guess he must be somewhere else." Without telling more, he ran back to the river front to report to Mr. Hatfield.

[10]

Both Mr. Hatfield and Midge's father were troubled to learn that Red had not been found at the house. Anxiously, they gazed toward the dark woods.

"Maybe he's lost in there," Dan said, reading their thought. "I saw him start off that way."

Mr. Hatfield reached for a powerful flashlight which he always kept ready for use. "I thought Red had more sense than to go beyond view of the camp fire," he commented. "He can't be very far away though."

"Let's call to him," proposed Mr. Holloway. "If he's anywhere near, he'll hear us."

The two men shouted Red's name repeatedly. No answering cry came from the darkness. However, the other Cubs gathered about, alarmed by the disappearance of their den mate.

"It's really my fault," Brad said, addressing the two men. "I shouldn't have let him do it."

"Do what, Brad?" questioned Mr. Hatfield. "What are you talking about?"

"The truth is, Red planned to play a little joke on the Cubs."

"A joke? What kind of joke, Brad?"

[11]

"It was connected with that paper sack he had with him. He brought a bear skin rug from home. Red figured he'd slip away from camp, put it on, and then sneak back to scare the Cubs. You know—pretend to be a real bear."

"Red should have known better than to try such a kid trick!"

"It was my fault," Brad said, taking the blame. "I should have set my foot down hard when he told me his plan. He was so hepped up about it, I let him go ahead."

"But why didn't he come back as he planned?"

"That's what has me bothered," Brad admitted anxiously. "He intended to make a few scratching sounds in the trees and show himself

about the time the story telling reached a climax."

"Red is such a youngster," Mr. Holloway murmured. "He never did have much sense of direction—"

"Right now, he may be wandering around in the woods, hopelessly lost," added Mr. Hatfield grimly. "We must find him quickly, or it may turn into an all-night job!"

[12]

CHAPTER 2 THE FACE ON THE CLIFF

The Cubs bunched together, waiting for orders. Red's plight, they knew, easily might be a serious one. If he foolishly had wandered deep into the woods, it might be necessary to organize searching parties in order to find him.

"Mr. Holloway, Dan, Brad and I will try to pick up his trail," the cubmaster said quietly. "The rest of you go to the house and wait there."

Dan and Brad followed Mr. Holloway and the cubmaster to the fringe of woods, leaving the other Cubs to make their way up the hill. Mr. Hatfield took an optimistic view of the disappearance.

"Red has good sense," he said. "Furthermore, unless he's forgotten Cub training, he'll eventually find his way back to camp or to the road. The worst is, if he doesn't show up shortly, his parents will be scared."

Ahead, the cool forest loomed dark and rather terrifying. By day, the trails wound pleasantly through the preserve, skirting ravines and crossing rustic bridges. But now, the entire area had a forbidding appearance.

[13]

"We all must stay close together," Mr. Hatfield instructed. "Now Dan, show us where it was that you last saw Red."

Dan already had identified the spot, a narrow gap through two tall birch trees. He had noted the place, for the white trunks had stood out distinctly in the starlight.

After he had pointed it out, Mr. Hatfield went ahead, flashing the bright beam of his flashlight on the ground.

"Red came this way, all right," he declared, elated at having picked up the trail so easily. "See! Here's a deep heel mark in the mud."

"What could have induced him to wander off?" Mr. Holloway speculated. "I thought Red knew better. He evidently had no intention of gathering wood because he passed up plenty of it at the edge of the woods."

In the dark forest, it became increasingly difficult to follow Red's trail. After moving deeper into the trees, the party halted to listen for a moment and then to shout Red's name.

"He's wandered a long distance away, that's sure," the cubmaster said. "Perhaps to the ravine. Our voices might not carry to him there."

"But why would Red go that far?" Brad asked himself aloud. "I can't understand it. He only intended to play a little joke on the Cubs."

Mr. Hatfield, in advance of the others, halted so abruptly that Brad bumped into him.

"Hello, here's something!" the cubmaster exclaimed.

He stooped to pick up a paper sack lying in plain view on a log.

"That's the one Red had!" Brad cried, instantly recognizing it.

Inside the sack, Mr. Hatfield found a neatly folded bearskin rug.

"Red intended to play a joke on the Cubs all right," he commented. "But something caused him to change his mind."

"For some reason he decided to go deeper into the woods," Mr. Holloway added thoughtfully. "Evidently, he wanted to travel fast, so he pitched this bulky sack. He left it on the log, where he could find it easily on his way back."

More than ever mystified by the boy's strange disappearance, the four now hastened on. Soon however, Mr. Hatfield reported that he no longer could find any shoeprints on the trail.

"Red must have turned off somewhere," he told the others. "That will make it a lot harder to find him."

The four paused, discouraged by the realization that it might take hours to learn what had become of the missing boy. A cool wind whispered through the pines, causing Dan to pull his sweater more tightly about him. Red, he recalled, had worn no jacket. Unless they found him soon, he might actually suffer from cold.

"Listen!" commanded Brad suddenly. "I thought I heard something!"

The four stood perfectly still, listening. Overhead an owl hooted, but there was no other unusual sound.

"I was certain I heard something," Brad muttered, ashamed to have aroused false hope. "It sounded like someone running. Guess I imagined it."

"We'll have to go back a ways and try to pick up Red's trail again," Mr. Hatfield said. "I only hope my flashlight holds out."

The searchers turned around, but scarcely had they gone a dozen yards, than Brad exclaimed:

"There! I heard it again! Someone *is* running through the underbrush!"

The other three had halted to listen.

"You're right, Brad!" exclaimed Mr. Hatfield. "It must be Red!"

Their hope revived, the four shouted the missing

boy's name repeatedly. To their intense relief, an answering shout came from the left of the trail.

"That's Red!" cried Brad.

"He's over by the ravine, just as I thought!" added Mr. Hatfield. "Keep shouting, so he can find us. We'll wait here on the trail."

Five minutes later, Red struggled through the bushes and brambles to confront his would-be rescuers with a sheepish grin.

He was breathing heavily, having hastened as fast as he could.

"Gosh, were you out looking for me?" he asked, sagging down on a log to rest.

"Were we looking for you!" Brad exclaimed furiously. "You and your crazy jokes!"

"I intended to come right back—honest I did. But gosh, I had the scare of my life! I'm still shakey from the shock of it."

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"You didn't meet a live bear?" Dan asked.

Red shook his head and took a deep breath. "I—I saw a fire through the trees," he informed his listeners.

"A fire?" Mr. Holloway repeated. "In the forest? That could be serious if it spread. So many cabins and cottages are situated near the park preserve. Fires aren't permitted at night, and in daytime only with written permission of the warden."

"That's why I started off to find out about it," Red said quickly. "I thought if anyone had left a fire unwatched, the Cubs ought to know about it."

"Where did you see the fires?" Mr. Hatfield cut in. "Near the ravine?"

"Yes, but it wasn't unattended. When I got there—oh, gee!—it scared me half out of my wits. I was afraid to go very close."

"Get to the point, Red," Mr. Holloway urged impatiently. "What did you see?"

"A fire had been built on a shelf of the ravine. It was blazing up high against the rocks, making the whole cliff wall illuminated. A man, who was wrapped in a blanket, sat there. His back was to me so I didn't see his face."

"What's so frightening about that?" Brad demanded. "Was that all you saw?"

[18]

"I'm coming to the important part," Red went on breathlessly. "Near the fire—on the clay wall—I saw another face—a huge one."

"Sure you didn't imagine it?" asked Mr. Hatfield dryly.

"It was real as anything," Red insisted. "The face was as big as a house and it sort of leered out at me. Oh, it was weird with the firelight throwing crazy shadows over the cliff wall! I took one look and beat it back here!"

"You dreamed all that up!" Brad accused.

"I did not!" Red denied furiously. "I'll show you if you want me to!"

"It's late now," Mr. Hatfield said. "The Cubs are waiting at the house."

"I'd like to prove that I'm right. Honest, I didn't imagine it!"

"You can show us the face tomorrow—by daylight," the cubmaster replied.

"But it may be gone then."

"It will be all right," scoffed Brad. "And that man you saw by the fire too! I've explored every trail in the metropolitan park and never came upon any giants."

[19]

"The face didn't look human," Red described it nervously. "It sort of loomed out of the wall—huge eyes."

"As large as saucers?" teased Dan.

"Yes, they were, and you needn't rub it in! I saw the face, and I'm willing to prove it if anyone will give me a chance!"

"You'll have your chance tomorrow," Mr. Hatfield soothed him. "Odd though, about that fire."

"I seriously doubt the warden would grant anyone a permit in this section of the park," added Mr. Holloway. "The danger of starting a forest fire is great at this time of year."

Although Red insisted that his attention first had been attracted by a glimpse of a camp fire through the trees, the others could not now see the blaze. Despite the boy's insistence that the sight he had viewed was very real, they were inclined to think his eyes had played him false.

Decidedly crestfallen, Red accompanied his would-be rescuers back to the Holloway cottage. Immediately, the other Cubs fell upon him, demanding to know where he had been so long.

Brad and Dan would have spared their chum the tale, but Red himself told it. In fact, he expanded upon his original story, building up the face he had seen as an awe-inspiring apparition.

[20]

At first the Cubs were impressed, but as Red added more and more to the tale, they began to scoff. Soon they flatly informed him that he was "talking through his hat."

"You were scared, that's what!" accused Midge. "You thought you'd play a joke on us with that bear skin. Instead, the joke's on you!"

"Sure, Red got out there in the woods and began seeing things that weren't so," chuckled Mack.

The teasing so upset Red that he spilled a little of the hot chocolate in the mug Mrs. Holloway had served him.

"I'll show you," he retorted fiercely. "Just give me a chance! That's all I ask."

The Cubs, one and all, grinned provokingly. Red subsided into hurt silence.

Then unexpectedly, Mrs. Holloway, the Den

Mother, sided with Red. As she passed a plate of chicken sandwiches, she remarked quietly;

"About a half hour ago, while I was working in the kitchen, I noticed a light somewhere back in the woods. It looked for all the world like a bonfire."

[21]

"A fire!" cried Red triumphantly. "What'd I tell you?"

"It struck me as very strange," continued Mrs. Holloway. "With so many cottages nearby, a fire in the park could be serious unless carefully tended."

"Then you think Red may not have imagined that face on the cliff?" inquired Mr. Hatfield thoughtfully.

"I'm wondering if an investigation might not be advisable."

Mrs. Holloway's observation was sufficient to completely change the attitude of the Cubs. Instead of making fun of Red, they now began to ask Mr. Hatfield when they could visit the ravine.

"Tomorrow," he promised as the meeting broke up. "If anyone is camping in the woods without permission, we ought to find out about it. We'll gather here after school for canoe practice and a little trip of exploration. Who knows, we may run into something interesting!"

[22]

CHAPTER 3

RED PROVES HIS POINT

The next night after school, all the Cubs except Mack, who had a paper route, gathered at the Holloway beach for canoe practice.

Dan, Brad, Chips and Fred had passed their swimming tests with flying colors. Red, less skillful at water sports, was assigned to painting paddles.

Mr. Hatfield provided him with a number of interesting Navajo designs, telling him to make his own selection.

"If you do a good job of painting, Red, we'll exhibit your paddle at the Indian pow-wow," he promised. "An award is to be made to the Den that turns in the most artistic one."

"I'll come up with a prize winner!" Red grinned. A talented art student in the Webster City elementary school, he was confident of his ability. "Right now, though, I've got other things on my mind."

"Weird faces on the cliff?" the cubmaster prompted.

[23]

"My honor's at stake," Red declared. "If you'll just give me a chance to prove—"

"All in good time," promised Mr. Hatfield. "First, canoe practice, and then we'll hike to the ravine

to satisfy our curiosity."

While Red busied himself on the beach, painting paddles, the other Cubs, took turns using the canoe Mr. Holloway had provided for their use. Brad and Dan already had mastered the knack of guiding the craft skillfully and were developing strong arm muscles.

After a hard paddle against the current, the two Cubs returned to shore to give up their places to Chips and Fred.

As they stepped out on the sand, they saw a newcomer talking to Red.

"Why, that's Ross Langdon!" Dan muttered under his breath. "What's he doing here?"

"Scouting for Den 1, I'll bet a cent," Brad replied. "You know Ross! He's already afraid we'll get ahead of him somehow."

"We usually do, too," grinned Dan.

Ross and Dan long had been friendly rivals. Both were excellent swimmers, though in a Pack competition, Dan had proven himself to be the better. Ross, who prided himself upon excelling in all sports, never had forgotten.

[24]

"He's here to see how we're getting along in canoe practice," Dan remarked. "Well, I hope he gets an eye full!"

Ross was tall and gangling, having grown so fast that his Cub uniform already was too small for him. He was strong for his age, inclined to be arrogant, and was the least liked of any boy in Den 1.

Aware that Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway were within hearing distance, Ross addressed the two Cubs respectfully enough.

"Working hard, I see."

"Oh, just practicing a little," Dan answered carelessly.

"You should," Ross retorted boastfully. "Den 1 is all set to take you for a cleaning in the canoe race. We'll win in a walk."

If the Den 1 boy had hoped to get a retort from Brad or Dan, they disappointed him by remaining silent. Irrked by his failure to start a spirited debate, Ross picked up the paddle upon which Red had been working.

"Hey, be careful!" Red protested. "You'll make the paint run!"

[25]

"Couldn't make it look much worse than it is," Ross said contemptuously. "You should see some of the paddles Den 1 has painted."

"Works of art, I suppose?" Brad asked dryly. "Going to exhibit 'em at the museum?"

"Maybe, after we've nailed first prize at the Pack exhibition."

"Put that paddle down before you wreck it!" Red ordered furiously. "You're getting sand on the fresh paint."

"Excuse me." With an elaborate bow, Ross laid

the paddle on the sand near the river's edge. Glancing around, he next demanded: "Where's your hogan?"

"Haven't started it yet," Brad replied. "We'll probably get it up over the week-end."

"Den 1 has a dandy all finished," Ross continued boastfully. "We put it up in nothing flat."

Dan could not resist saying cuttingly: "It probably looks like it too! We aim to take our time and do a good job."

Ignoring the jibe, Ross glowingly described the accomplishments of the Den 1 Cubs. Not only had they completed a Navajo hogan, but they likewise had started to build a trading post and a Wells Fargo station, he informed his listeners.

[26]

"We're building a loom too, for blanket weaving," he went on grandly. "And we've already gathered six boxes of clothing to send out West to the Navajo reservation."

"You're ahead of us all right," Dan conceded. "But we've only started on the program. You'll see us put on steam."

"I hope so. Otherwise, Den 1 will have absolutely no competition at the pow-wow." Affecting a bored air, Ross sauntered away.

"That snoop!" Red snorted. "He came here to spy and for no other reason. I don't believe half what he said."

"It's probably true Den 1 is ahead of us, but that doesn't mean it will be that way in another week," Dan declared. "They started in before we did, so naturally we're behind."

Red, who a few minutes before, had been very proud of the Indian design he had painted on the paddle, gazed at it with distaste.

"I guess it isn't much of a job," he admitted.

"It's a swell design!" Brad reassured him. "Not that you won't be able to do even better with a little more practice."

[27]

"I'll work on an original design—not one copied from a book!" Red announced grimly. "I'll show that Ross Langdon!"

"That's the spirit," laughed Brad. "Maybe it's a good thing he came prowling around here. It will spur us to greater effort."

After Ross had gone, the Cubs kept on with their canoe practice until long shadows began to finger out across the water. Mr. Hatfield then called a halt.

"It's getting late," he said. "If we want to hike to the ravine, we'll have to make a start."

Dan and Chips pulled the canoe out of the water, taking care to drag it far up on shore beyond the reach of waves. There they overturned it so that it would be dry when they wanted to use it again.

"We'll let Red lead the way," Mr. Hatfield said as the boys started off through the woods. "Think you can find the ravine?"

"I'm sure I can, Mr. Hatfield. And I'll prove—"

"Sure, we know," cut in Chips wearily. "We'll believe you when we see it. Just lead the way and don't give with so many promises." [28]

Goaded by the knowledge that his fellow Cubs still believed his report of the previous night to be a brain fantasy, Red started doggedly off through the woods.

At first he followed the well-marked trail. After going a short distance, he hesitated briefly and then moved off in a diagonal direction.

"Everything looks different in the daytime," he complained. "I think I came this way, but I'm not sure."

"Give up already?" Fred teased.

"Not on your life."

"The ravine is just ahead," said Mr. Hatfield. "It extends for the entire distance of the park preserve though."

Presently, the Cubs emerged from the trees to find themselves on a great limestone rock overlooking a deep gash in the earth.

In either direction, as far as they could see, stretched the shadowy ravine. At the bottom, a tiny stream of clear water rippled and foamed over the rocks.

Opposite the Cubs, the cliff walls rose somber but entirely blank. [29]

"Where's your big face, Red?" Brad demanded.

"I must have come out at the wrong place," Red mumbled. "It should be here, or somewhere close."

"Not even a trace of a bon-fire," remarked Chips. "I guess this proves who was right, Red."

"It does not!"

"Give him a chance, boys," interposed Mr. Hatfield. "The place Red's looking for may be up the ravine from here."

"That's right," Red agreed quickly. "This doesn't look like the place at all."

"Well, lead us to it then," urged Fred. "That's all we're waiting for."

Considerably let-down, Red turned to the left, picking his way along the edge of the ravine. At intervals, he paused to scan the walls and shelf of rock.

"Hey, my feet hurt!" Chips presently complained. "How much farther do we walk?"

Red halted, gazing at Mr. Hatfield in despair.

"It's no use, I guess. I never came this far last night."

"I'm afraid we'll have to give up the search for this afternoon," the cubmaster said regretfully. "We can try again sometime, Red." [30]

The Cub made no reply, but was sunk in gloom.

Well he knew that the other boys would make life miserable for him, twitting him about his vivid imagination.

He was grateful that during the hike back along the ravine, they refrained from making remarks.

Reaching the turn-off by the granite boulder, Red again paused to survey the site.

"I think we went the wrong direction," he said. "If we'd turned right instead of left, we'd have hit the place. Close by too."

"No alibis," chided Chips.

"Just give me five minutes more," the boy pleaded. "That's all I ask. Five minutes! If I can't find the place by that time, then I'm willing to eat worms."

"Five minutes?" repeated Mr. Hatfield, noting how rapidly darkness was falling upon the ravine. "I guess we can give you that much time, but no more."

"Come on, then," Red urged, leading off, almost at a dog trot. "We're traveling fast this time."

The Cubs were hard pressed to keep up. Sure of foot, Red skirted close to the edge of the steep cliffs.

[31]

"This is the right way, I'm certain!" he encouraged the others. "I think I remember that white birch!"

"You think!" Chips exploded as he caught his shoe on a sharp rock. "You better be sure."

Abruptly, Red halted. So suddenly did he stop that those behind him bumped into one another.

"What did I tell you!" he fairly shouted. "I guess this proves whether or not I was dreaming!"

Through a gap in the bushes, the Cubs glimpsed the opposite wall of the ravine. One section of it had fallen away, leaving an expanse of rich clay.

From this surface loomed a grotesque carved face, that of a man with very severe features.

The Cubs were so taken aback that for a full minute they could only stand and stare. Then Dan exclaimed:

"It's real enough. Gosh, what a face!"

"How did it get here?" Brad demanded. "Who carved it?"

"And what about that fire Red saw?" added Chips.

"I can see where a fire was built on that rock shelf directly below the carved face," observed Mr. Hatfield.

[32]

Both he and Mr. Holloway were mystified by the strange carving, having had no knowledge that anything of the sort could be found in the park area.

"Someone was here last night all right," the cubmaster declared.

"And someone's here now," murmured Brad,

peering intently down into a clump of bushes directly behind the dead ashes of the camp fire. "We're being watched by a man who's hiding there in the foliage!"

[33]

CHAPTER 4 SUSPICION

Brad's observation caused the other Cubs to glance alertly toward the clump of bushes. Distinctly, they could see a crouching figure among the leaves.

"Someone is hiding there!" cried Red.

His words carried across the chasm and to the man who squatted close against the wall of the cliff.

As the Cubs watched, the bush moved convulsively. They saw the shadowy figure retreat behind the screen of foliage, and finally disappear on a trail.

"You scared him away, Red!" Dan exclaimed. "Who was he, anyhow?"

"Maybe the person who carved that grotesque face in the clay wall," commented Brad. "Whoever he was, he didn't want us to see him."

"Let's go after him," urged Chips, eager for action. "How about it?"

To reach the opposite side of the chasm, it would be necessary to make a sharp descent, and an equally sharp climb on the other side. By the time the Cubs could reach the site of the carved clay face, the fleeing man would be far away.

[34]

"No use going after him," Mr. Hatfield decided. "After all, he may have as much right to be in this park area as we."

"Do you suppose he was the one who carved that queer face?" speculated Fred.

"It's very likely," agreed his father. "The face isn't quite finished. Notice the left side. The cheek is only half carved."

The Cubs stood for several minutes, gazing at the huge face which seemed to return their stare. A lowering sun cast a reddish-golden glow over the upper section while the remainder of the carving was shrouded in cool shadow.

"Whoever did the work is a skilled sculptor," commented Mr. Hatfield. "It's possible that the park authorities authorized someone to make the carving."

"But why in clay?" pointed out Brad. "A few heavy rains will destroy the work. To be of permanent value, it would have to be carved in the rock face of the cliff."

[35]

"And this part of the park seldom is visited," contributed Midge. "If the park authorities ordered the work, wouldn't they want it done where visitors could see it easily?"

Mr. Hatfield acknowledged the logic of the Cubs' deductions. He readily agreed that the carving might have been done by a crank, a man with a peculiar twist of mind.

"A very talented individual, however," he added.

"Who in Webster City would have the skill to make such a carving?" speculated Mack. "I don't know of anyone."

Further study of the unusual carving, convinced the Cubs that it was intended to be the face of an Indian.

"I wish we had that old boy for our pow-wow!" chuckled Dan. "We'd certainly out-class Den 1."

Rather elated by their discovery of the carved face, the Cubs lingered for awhile. Then, as the hour grew late, they started back to the beach at a brisk pace.

"I guess now you'll quit twitting me about my vivid imagination," Red said, enjoying his victory. "Who was right after all?"

[36]

"You were," Brad told him. "We'll send you a letter of apology."

"Never mind that," laughed Red. "Just treat me with more respect in the future."

Upon reaching the beach site, the boys began to gather up their belongings, preparatory to starting to their separate homes.

"If we're going to get ahead of Den 1 in the Indian handicraft exhibit, we'll have to meet here almost every night after school for a week or two," Dan informed his companions.

"That's right," echoed Brad. "You heard Ross boasting that the Den 1 Cubs have their Navajo hogan already up. We've not even started."

"We can get going on that tomorrow night," Chips declared. "How about a trading post or a Wells Fargo station?"

"We can make 'em if the fellows want to," Brad agreed. "Just to be different though, why not try a big sand painting?"

"What's that?" demanded Chips, whose knowledge of Indian tradition and ceremony was limited.

"Dan will tell you," Brad said. "He's been reading up about it at the library."

[37]

Urged to share his information, Dan began by explaining that the art of making sand paintings had been adopted from the Pueblo Indians and made into a high art by the Navajos.

"Twenty years ago, few persons were allowed to witness the making of a sand painting," he told the Cubs. "Even today, the Indians seldom allow anyone to sketch the pictures or take photographs."

"Then how are we going to make one?" Midge demanded.

"Oh, the ordinary designs and patterns are available. I was just giving you the background. Among the Navajos, sand painting is a sacred

ceremony, held in connection with healing of the sick or initiation of a member into the tribe.”

“Most sand paintings are started at daybreak, aren’t they?” prompted Brad.

Dan nodded, warming to his subject. “That’s so they’ll be completed before sunset. It’s supposed to bring bad luck, if a painting isn’t done in one day. Several persons work on the larger pictures, but a medicine man or high priest always is in charge of the work.”

Fred asked what type of scenes were used in the paintings.

[38]

“No two are alike,” Dan explained. “The designs are all abstract, symbolic in meaning. Colored sand is used, of course. Each color has a special significance. For instance, browns and grays are for fulfillment. White represents the morning. Blue is for goodness or happiness.”

“That sounds too hard,” complained Mack. “Can’t we make something easy like a house or a sunset?”

“It wouldn’t be according to the Navajo tradition. I’m in favor of trying to do it right or not at all.”

“That’s so,” chimed in Red. “Let’s stick to the Cub motto: ‘Do Your Best.’”

“I’m for that,” Mack agreed. “But how are we going to get colored sand?”

“That’s easy,” declared Dan.

He told the Cubs they might use powdered paints, ground-up flower pots for the red color, table salt for white, and cornmeal for yellow. From library books he already had compiled several drawings from which they might make a selection of design.

“Say, you know all about it, don’t you?” Chips demanded, admiringly. “Let’s elect him Medicine Man, fellows. How about putting him in charge of the sand painting?”

[39]

“Sure,” agreed Mack and Fred, glad to turn the responsible assignment over to the capable denner.

All the others likewise voted for Dan.

“I’ll gather together the stuff we need,” he promised. “When it comes to making the painting, though, I’ll need plenty of help.”

With Dan in charge, the other Cubs were confident that all details of the project would be carried through with speed and efficiency.

By far Dan was the most popular Cub in Den 2. Not only was he even-tempered, modest and an excellent student and athlete, but he had a way of “making things go.” The boys never had forgotten how he had saved the Den’s honor when a Webster City pheasant raiser wrongfully had accused them of stealing his valuable birds.

The story of the Cubs’ encounter with the foreman of the farm and their part in saving his prize pheasants during a disastrous flood, has been told in the first volume of this series: “Dan

Carter, Cub Scout."

By placing Dan in charge of the sand painting project, the boys felt that the job already was half done.

[40]

Mr. Hatfield now came up to inquire if the Cubs were ready to leave.

"It looks like rain tonight," he remarked, surveying the darkening sky. "So don't leave anything lying around."

"Where's that paddle you painted this afternoon?" Brad asked Red. He had noticed that the boy did not have it with him.

"Didn't you pick it up?"

"Why, no."

Chips looked troubled. "I didn't see it lying on the beach a minute ago," he said. "Anyone else pick it up?"

The other Cubs looked blank, shaking their heads.

"I'll flash back there and have another look-see," Chips offered. "Wait for me."

He was gone a long while. When finally he rejoined the group, he was without the paddle.

"It's gone," he announced, his face grim.

"Then someone must have picked it up," declared Dan. "Everyone check."

[41]

The Cubs could not find the missing canoe paddle among their belongings or anywhere nearby. Thinking that Mr. Holloway or Mr. Hatfield might have locked it into the cabin, Brad went there to look.

"No sign of it," he reported. "I'll bet a cent that paddle is still on the beach."

"You look then," Chips challenged. "I couldn't find it anywhere."

The Cubs dropped their knapsacks and trooped down to the beach. Chips' footprints plainly were visible in the sand, showing where he had wandered in his fruitless search.

"See any paddle?" the boy demanded.

"Are you certain you left it here, Red?" Dan inquired dubiously.

"Certainly I'm certain! Right here by the river. I wanted it to dry so I left it turned up to the sun."

"Well, it couldn't have paddled itself away!" Chips wisecracked.

"Very funny!" Red glared at him. "I spent a long while painting that paddle. Now it's gone. Either one of you took it for a joke or—"

"On your honor, fellows, has anyone seen Red's paddle?" Brad soberly questioned the group.

[42]

All the Cubs reasserted that they had not touched the missing item.

"When last I saw it, Red was laying it out in the

sun just as he said," added Midge. "Maybe it floated away."

"Like fun!" Chips snorted. "This river doesn't have a tide. I know what became of that paddle!"

"What?" Dan demanded.

"Ross Langdon took it!"

For a moment after Chips had made his accusation, no one spoke.

Then Mack said thoughtfully: "He was around here making remarks. He looked at the paddle several times."

"He came here to snoop!" Chips accused angrily. "He was afraid Red's paddle would win a prize in the handicraft contest, so either he took it for meanness or he pitched it into the river."

"Ross didn't have anything in his hands when he left here," Dan said quietly.

"Then he shoved it into the river and it floated away! That's probably what it did!"

"Chips, don't go completely off your base," Brad interposed. "You're making some pretty rash accusations."

[43]

"Ross likes to win," added Dan. "He's boastful too. But I'd hate to think he's dishonest."

"One Cub never should make that accusation against another unless he's prepared to back it up with proof," resumed Brad severely. "You're only making wild guesses, Chips."

"Well, if Ross didn't take the paddle, who did? Answer me that!"

"I don't know what became of the paddle, Chips. Red was rather careless though, to leave it lying so close to the river's edge."

"Oh, so it's all my fault?" cried Red.

"Now don't get huffy. No one is blaming you. On the other hand, we've no right to put it on Ross."

"Just wait until I see that lad," Chips muttered. "I'll drag it out of him!"

Brad took Chips by the arm, giving him a little, impatient shake.

"Get hold of yourself," he advised. "Do you want to stir up bad feeling between Den 1 and Den 2? If you go to Ross and accuse him, you'll get all of his denmates sore at us."

"Our Indian pow-wow will turn into full scale war instead of a nice friendly competition," warned Dan severely. "You can't do it, Chips."

[44]

"Oh, all right," the boy growled. "If you're going to make such a fuss about it, I'll keep quiet. I'm convinced though, that Ross got away with that paddle! I'll keep on thinking so too, unless it shows up."

[45]

STRANGE INDIANS

After school for the next three days, the Cub Scouts spent much of their spare time either at the river or gathering clothing to be shipped to the Navajo reservation.

No more was said about the missing paddle. Though the Den 2 boys saw Ross Langdon in school, they avoided mention of their loss.

Red meanwhile, obtained another paddle, and went quietly to work on a more elaborate design. The finished job was so much better than the first that all the Cubs declared the Den might actually have been the gainer for having lost the paddle.

Not to be bested by Den 1, the boys set as one of their major projects, the making of an Indian hogan.

The house, they decided, would be made of best tree boughs and covered over with mud and clay. Brad pointed out that while it would be easier to use canvas or cloth for the slanting walls, the mud would be more in keeping with Navajo tradition.

Hogans were circular, six or eight-sided huts, with a roof-hole for the escape of smoke, he explained. The structure had only a single door which traditionally faced east toward the rising sun.

[46]

"The north side of the hogan always is the 'woman's side' of the house," Brad went on with a grin. "In our hut, we'll skip that. We want it to look like a real Navajo hogan though. So we'll need a lot of clay. When it hardens on the skeleton-pole structure, it should form a hard, rain-proof surface."

"We can get plenty of good clay over the cliff," Dan suggested. "I noticed the quality was especially good there at the ravine near the carved face."

"Grab buckets, fellows, and let's go after it," Brad urged.

Sure of the route, he led the Cubs through the tall hardwoods toward the ravine. A saucy bird trilled at them from a tall pine. Otherwise, except for the chattering of a squirrel, the forest was very quiet.

Well aware that the other Cubs shared his eagerness to view the carved clay face once more, the Den Chief hiked directly to the ravine.

[47]

The air felt cool and damp as they emerged from the woods, directly opposite the great carved face.

"Gosh, it's still here!" exclaimed Chips. "I'd half convinced myself it was all a pipe dream."

"The carving is real enough," declared Dan in awe.

Even more than upon their previous visit, the Cubs were impressed by the lifelike appearance of the staring face.

As they gazed fixed at it, Midge inquired if the park authorities had been informed of the Cubs' discovery.

"Mr. Hatfield talked to the park superintendent about it," Dan told the group. "It was all news to Mr. Jennings. He said it must be the work of a crank. Park employees have been instructed to try to catch the sculptor, but they haven't time to keep watch constantly."

"Work has been done since we were here last," observed Brad. He had been studying the face intently. "See! That section to the left has been finished."

"That's so," agreed Red. "It's funny the park people can't catch the fellow."

[48]

"They're not too disturbed about it," Brad replied carelessly. "After all, the carving is a credit to the park. Mr. Hatfield says it's certainly being done by a skilled and talented sculptor."

"He doesn't have any idea who the person may be?" Dan questioned thoughtfully.

"Not the slightest. In fact, Webster City has only one really talented sculptor, and he's so far up in years, it's unlikely he'd attempt anything like this."

After gazing at the clay image for awhile, the Cubs descended the sharp incline and struggled up the steep, uneven slope on the opposite side of the ravine.

Catching their breath, they viewed the strange face at close range. Lips and cheeks of the weird creature had been colored with powdered red sandstone. Bits of broken dishes formed the whites of the eyes.

To the left of the face, on the rock shelf lay a grotesque fallen tree trunk, its dead fingers of roots stretching out toward the carving. It was at the base of this tree that the Cubs found the dead ashes of a fire.

"Gosh! It gives me the creeps just looking at that face!" Fred muttered. "Let's get our clay and beat it."

[49]

The boys began to fill their pails. Now and then as they worked, they kept casting furtive glances at the face on the wall. A grim, half-smile played over the stoical features, as if the carved man were enjoying his own little joke.

"Where do you suppose that bird keeps himself?" Mack demanded suddenly. "The one who does the carving, I mean?"

"He may hide in the forest here," Brad replied. "Whoever he is, the park officials will catch up with him in time. They're just too busy to spend much time watching."

Dan straightened suddenly. His attention had been seized by a faint rustling sound and a slight movement of bushes to the right of the clay face.

He stood tense on the rock shelf, convinced that someone was watching.

"What's wrong, Dan?" Brad asked, instantly alert. "See anyone?"

"Indians maybe?" teased Red.

The snicker died on his lips and his blood fairly congealed as two men silently stepped from behind the foliage. Both wore corduroy pants, rough looking shirts, boots and sombrero-type hats.

However, the gaunt faces with skin pulled tightly over cheek bones, plainly distinguished them as Indians.

"Jeepers creepers!" Chips muttered and sucked in his breath.

The Cubs instinctively clustered together. Although the sudden appearance of the two strangers did not frighten them, they were made vaguely uneasy.

The taller of the two Indians wore a bracelet decorated with silver and turquoise. An ornamental belt girded his lean waist.

"Good afternoon," said Brad. He spoke evenly enough though inwardly he was quaking a bit. "Anything we can do for you?"

The Indian replied with a guttural rumble in his throat.

"No speakum English," murmured Red, with a wink at Fred.

The Indian froze him with a quick glance.

"Speakum English very well," he replied sarcastically. "I graduated from the University of New Mexico."

[51]

"Oh!" gasped Red, taken aback. "I—I'm sorry. I thought from your clothes—that is—"

"Never mind, Red," Brad came to his rescue. He spoke politely to the two Indians. "We're a Den of Cub Scouts, out for a hike. This carved face interests us. You made it perhaps?"

The Indian shook his head. "I am Eagle Feather," he introduced himself. "This is White Nose. We are of the People."

"That means you're Navajos, doesn't it?" asked Dan, who had been reading up on customs of the reservation Indians.

"We come from New Mexico," Eagle Feather replied.

"We search for one of our brothers," added the other Indian. White Nose also spoke excellent English, though with less ease.

His raven-hued hair was combed back straight and long. In the lobe of his left ear hung a single turquoise earring.

"A scurrilous prairie dog!" muttered Eagle Feather.

"You see him, perhaps?" White Nose questioned.

[52]

"No prairie dogs," answered Brad. "In fact, this is all Greek to us. We don't know who you're talking about."

"Say, I bet this is all a joke!" exclaimed Mack. "Mr. Hatfield has planned this whole thing to

point up our Navajo pow-wow!"

Midge gave him a quick kick in the shins. The grim expressions of the two Indians had convinced him that their appearance had not been planned by either Mr. Hatfield or Mr. Holloway.

The two Indians had turned to regard intently the weird carving on the cliff wall.

"We search," said Eagle Feather, "for the one who made that face in the clay. I called him brother, but he no longer is of the tribe. He is an outcast."

"Dishonored," added White Nose.

"He must be punished for his sin against the tribe," went on Eagle Feather. "You have seen him here at the cliff?"

"We don't know what you're talking about," Brad declared uneasily. "We came upon this carved face only a few days ago. We don't know anything about it, and that's the truth."

"What's this tribesman done that you're so anxious to find him?" Dan asked curiously.

[53]

The two Indians, however, did not reply to the question.

Apparently satisfied that the Cubs could provide them with no information, they spoke together for a moment in their own tongue.

Then, with polite farewells, they vanished back into the trees.

For a long while after the Indians had gone, the Cubs remained speechless.

"Did it happen? Or did we dream it?" Mack muttered.

"We didn't dream it," replied Brad soberly. "I almost wish we had."

"Those guys are tough," said Dan. "Did you notice the expression of their faces? Whoever that Indian is that they're after, I feel sorry for him."

"He must have violated some law of the tribe," Chips speculated. "Gosh! This is going to be exciting!"

"It may be a lot more than that," declared Brad. The Cubs saw that he was deeply worried. "I don't like it a bit—not a bit. Grab your clay fast, and let's get out of here. I want to talk to Mr. Hatfield."

[54]

CHAPTER 6 ANOTHER LOSS

The meeting with the two Indians had excited all the Cubs and as they hiked back to the day camp, they could discuss no other subject.

"Did you notice Eagle Feather's belt?" Dan

asked the others. "It had big discs of silver strung together on leather."

"Seeing it gave me an idea," declared Brad enthusiastically. "We'll want to make some fancy Indian costumes for our pow-wow. We can rig up calico shirts and slit denim trousers up the side. But we'll need belts to set off the outfits."

"Maybe you can wheedle one from the Indians," Red twitted.

"I've got a better idea. We'll make em!"

"Know anyone that owns a silver mine?" Midge scoffed.

"No, but the tops of peanut butter cans will do just as well. We can use the metal discs, punch them with holes and string them on leather straps."

"Say, that's a good idea!" Dan approved instantly. "Wouldn't cost us a cent either."

[55]

"I know what would snap up our pow-wow more than anything else," declared Fred. "A couple of real Indians!"

"White Nose and Eagle Feather, for instance?" chuckled Chips, stepping over a fallen tree on the trail.

"Sure. Why not?"

"We'll appoint you a committee of one to arrange it."

"Mr. Hatfield might do it," interposed Brad, taking Chips' suggestion half seriously. "Those Indians are well educated and they might be willing to cooperate with the Cub organization. The only trouble is, we don't know where they're staying in Webster City."

"Or what brought them here," added Dan soberly. "I didn't like all that talk about searching for one of their brothers. They were too grim. To me, it had an ugly sound."

"They seemed to think that the person they're after carved the face on the cliff," remarked Mack. "That deepens the mystery."

"I wish Professor Sarazen of the Webster City College art staff could see that carving," Brad said thoughtfully. "If I get a chance, I think I'll drop around at his place and tell him about it."

[56]

The Den Chief had been swinging along through the forest at a smooth but fast pace. Now, coming to a little brook, he paused abruptly.

"Whad'you see?" demanded Dan, who was directly behind.

Without answering immediately, the older boy bent down to examine a crude snare which had been built across a game run near the stream bank. "Someone's been hunting for rabbits here!" he exclaimed.

"And hunting is illegal in the metropolitan park preserve!"

"Sure, it is. Notice anything unusual about this snare!"

Dan nodded. "I saw some pictures like it in those Indian books I read."

"It's an Indian snare all right."

"Maybe White Nose and Eagle Feather set it up here," Fred speculated.

"Maybe," agreed Brad, his voice trailing off.

He pocketed the snare, and the Cubs went on to the day camp.

So much time had been lost that the boys knew they would have to work fast to complete their hogan before dark. During their absence, Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway had started the frame of the hut. Bent boughs had been tied firmly together with leather and cords.

[57]

"The Navajos have eight different types of houses," the Cub leader informed the boys as they worked. "The dwelling is erected in a single day, for all the neighbors come in to help. On the reservations, they're usually made of pinon logs, cedar bark, an earth roof, and the chinks filled with mud."

For an hour the Cubs labored, taking satisfaction in seeing the hogan grow slowly but surely.

"There!" Brad declared in satisfaction, as the square doorway was nailed on, "it's finished! I call it a dandy job too!"

"You do?" demanded a voice from behind him.

Brad whirled to see Ross Langdon standing there, a grin on his face.

"Oh, hello, Ross," Brad greeted him, trying to make his voice cordial. "Didn't hear you come up."

Ross had been studying the hogan, and obviously was impressed by the work. But he would not say so. He sauntered over and leaned rather heavily against the doorway.

[58]

"Hey, Ross!" exclaimed Dan, dropping his hammer. "Don't do that. You might knock the thing down."

"Why should I bother?" Ross retorted loftily. "A good strong wind will take care of it. Den 1 has a much better hogan. We really did a job."

"Glad to hear it," Dan replied, refusing to take offense.

Ross' unexpected arrival in camp did not please the other Cubs. Chips, in particular, had not abandoned his belief that the Den 1 boy had been responsible for the loss of the painted paddle. He now eyed him suspiciously.

"What brings you here so often, anyhow?" he demanded.

"Oh, just looking around."

It was on the tip of Chips' tongue to accuse Ross of taking the missing paddle. However, a warning glance from Brad caused him to lapse into silence.

Ross moved away from the hogan toward a site

on the beach which Dan painstakingly had cleared in preparation for making a large sand painting.

"What's going up here?" the Den 1 boy asked curiously.

[59]

"Oh, just a surprise feature for the pow-wow," Dan told him. "An added attraction."

"We may have a few other surprises to spring too," hinted Red.

"Such as?"

"Real Indian stuff," Red informed him. "Maybe some Indians."

This was too much for Ross. "Fat chance of digging up a live Indian in Webster City," he scoffed. "You're just doing a lot of silly talking."

Darkness was settling over the treetops, so Mr. Hatfield brought the friendly argument to an end by saying it was time to end the work for that day.

"It looks a little like rain," he observed, squinting at the sky. "We'll have to take our tools inside tonight."

"Some of the stuff can be loaded into the canoe and paddled down stream to the cabin," suggested Mr. Holloway.

Brad and Dan, aided by Fred, quickly gathered up the more cumbersome items, stowing them in the craft. Mr. Hatfield supervised the loading.

He intended to assign Brad and Dan to take the canoe in, with Mr. Holloway riding along to supervise the job.

[60]

Before he could do so, Ross grabbed up one of the paddles.

"Let me help," he offered.

"Well, what d'you know?" Chips muttered, his mouth sagging open.

Without waiting for anyone's consent, Ross stepped into the canoe. He and Mr. Holloway shoved off and with deft, sure strokes paddled downstream toward the nearby Holloway cabin.

"Ross certainly turned cooperative fast," Dan muttered. "You could push me over with a hummingbird's feather!"

"Look at that boy paddle!" murmured Midge in grudging admiration. "He's good!"

"That's why he grabbed a paddle," Red said contemptuously. "He wanted to show off."

"He'll win the canoe race for Den 1," Midge declared with misgiving.

Dan and Brad watched Ross silently and without envy. Each summer the Langdon boy spent several weeks at his parents' cottage on Lake Elmo and quite naturally had acquired a high degree of skill at all types of water sports.

The two Den 2 Cubs knew full well that they would be up against tough competition in the race. They wanted to win for their organization.

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Though they made no comment, both silently determined to practice harder than ever before in an effort to at least give Ross a run for his money.

In the next few days, the Cubs spent all their spare time either working at the camp or otherwise making preparation for the coming pow-wow.

One night after school, Dan, Brad and Midge canvassed several neighborhoods in search of items to be exhibited and also clothing to be sent to the Navajo reservation.

By design, Brad included the home of Professor Sarazen as one of their stops. Mrs. Sarazen gave the boys a bundle of clothing and showed them a half dozen beautifully woven Navajo blankets which her husband had acquired on a trip West.

"Would you like to have one of them for your pow-wow?" she inquired. "They're all very fine blankets."

"Gee! We'd sure like to have one, if you aren't afraid it might be damaged!" Dan exclaimed gratefully.

"I've loaned things to the Cubs before," Mrs. Sarazen said, smiling. "They're very dependable, I've learned."

[62]

Removing one of the smaller blankets from a cedar chest, she spread it out on the floor for the boys to see.

"This is a ceremonial blanket, often called a *Yeibitchai* or a sand-painting rug," she explained. "The first of this type was made in 1910 by Hosteen Tia, a Navajo medicine-man."

"Why do they call it a sand painting rug?" Brad asked curiously.

"Each rug is a replica of a sand painting," Mrs. Sarazen explained.

"Say, maybe we could make our sand painting like this blanket!" Dan proposed. "It's an awfully complicated design though."

"It is that," agreed Mrs. Sarazen. "Almost too intricate, I'd judge, for duplication."

The blanket was largely woven in black and white. It was characterized by figures representing twelve rattlesnakes.

Mrs. Sarazen told the Cubs that the original sand painting from which the blanket had been copied represented a ceremony connected with a snake-bite cure.

"Take the blanket along now," she urged. "If the design isn't too intricate, use it for your own sand painting."

[63]

Just then Professor Sarazen sauntered in from the garden. He told the boys more about Navajo blankets, tribal customs and habits.

In turn, Brad related how the Cubs had come upon the strange carved face on the cliff wall.

"I must see that carving for myself!" Professor Sarazen exclaimed. "From your description, I

doubt that it was made by any Webster City sculptor."

Dan was pleased to have acquired a genuine Navajo blanket. The next night after school, he and Brad took it to the river camp to show to the other Cubs.

Mr. Hatfield especially, was impressed by the fine quality of the weaving.

"This is too fine a blanket to keep here until the pow-wow," he declared. "Since Dan is in charge of the sand painting, why not make him custodian of the blanket?"

"In that case, I want to take it home with me," Dan returned promptly. "That is, until the day of the pow-wow."

"I was going to suggest that, Dan."

Using the blanket's base design, the Cubs made a rough sketch of the sand painting. Then they began to block out the main outline on the beach.

[64]

They were hard at work when an elderly man sauntered into camp. Dan instantly recognized him as Professor Sarazen, and rushed to welcome him.

"Making good use of that blanket, I see," commented the teacher.

After admiring the start which the boys had made on the sand painting, he remarked that he had come, hoping someone would show him the carving at the ravine.

"I'll be glad to guide you to the spot," Dan offered.

"So'll I," chimed in Chips, eager for a little diversion.

"Wouldn't mind a little hike myself," added Fred quickly.

Mr. Hatfield laughed, remarking that he thought all the Cubs wanted to go.

"Mystery always is more intriguing than work," he chuckled. "But then, we're well along with our preparations for the big pow-wow. The hogan is finished, the sand painting started, and we expect to get at our Wells Fargo station in a couple of days. Let's all knock off, and go to the cliff."

The Cubs were hopeful that Professor Sarazen would be impressed by the great carved face. Nor were they mistaken.

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Upon reaching the ravine, he made a careful inspection of the work, declaring it to be Indian in origin.

"A somewhat crude carving," he told the Cubs, "but the work of a man of great talent. Amazing that such a face could be created here and no one have seen the artist."

After Professor Sarazen had studied the face awhile, viewing it from several angles, the group returned to the river camp.

"Time to break up for tonight, boys," Mr.

Hatfield said. "See you all tomorrow after school—same time."

As the other Cubs gathered up their belongings, Dan went to the hogan for the Navajo blanket. He was gone a long while. When he came out of the hut, he went directly to Mr. Hatfield.

"I can't find the blanket Professor Sarazen let us have," he said nervously. "Did you put it anywhere?"

"Why, no, Dan. I saw you put it inside the hut myself." [66]

"Just before we all left for the cliff," Dan agreed.

"It must be there."

Dan shook his head. "It's gone—stolen," he said miserably. "It was valuable too. How am I going to face Professor Sarazen?" [67]

CHAPTER 7 A BRUSH-OFF

Professor Sarazen had very little to say when Dan gave him the disheartening information about the Navajo blanket. His kindly silence, however, made the Cubs feel all the worse about the loss.

"It wasn't your fault," the professor said quietly.

"But it was!" Dan insisted. "When we borrowed the blanket, it was understood that we'd take good care of it. We never dreamed anyone would run off with it in broad daylight."

"It may show up later," Professor Sarazen said to encourage him. "I hope so."

Well aware that the Cubs felt very badly, he did not add that the blanket was one of the most valuable in his collection.

While Dan talked with Professor Sarazen, Mr. Hatfield and Brad again searched the hogan where the blanket had been left.

"Hello! Something else is gone!" the Cub leader exclaimed, his gaze roving swiftly about the interior of the hut. "I stored a box of tinned food here, ready for a cook-out later this week. You didn't move it, Brad?" [68]

"Haven't been inside this hogan all day."

"Well, it went the same way the blanket did," Mr. Hatfield said grimly. "Frankly, Brad, I don't like the way things are disappearing."

"That paddle too," Brad recalled. "The Cubs still blame Ross."

"I don't think he took it," Mr. Hatfield said. "Ross isn't a thief. Someone else is prowling around this camp. We'll have to be very careful about leaving anything of value lying around, even during the daytime. Warn the Cubs."

"I will, Mr. Hatfield."

In inspecting the inside of the hut, the Cub leader's eye picked up several moccasin prints not far from the doorway. He stooped to examine them.

"Ha! Here's something!" he exclaimed.

"Moccasin prints!" agreed Brad. "Say, do you suppose those two Indians—White Nose and Eagle Feather could have been sneaking around here?"

"It's a possibility, Brad."

"They didn't wear moccasins though," the Den Chief recalled. "I noticed that they wore cowboy type boots."

[69]

"These prints definitely were made by an Indian moccasin. No use saying anything about it to the other Cubs, Brad. It might make them uneasy. Just keep your eyes open, and be careful about leaving things unguarded."

"I sure will, Mr. Hatfield."

As the Cubs left the camp to return home for supper, Dan was in a very dark mood. Not only was he discouraged over the loss of the Navajo blanket, but he wondered how the sand painting ever could be properly completed.

"That's right," Brad sympathized with him. "You were using the design on the blanket for the sand painting, weren't you? That is tough."

"I made a rough sketch of it. But it's not a very good job. The design is so complicated, I doubt the Cubs can follow it."

"Can't you take an easier design?"

"Yes, but we have the center all done. I guess it's better to go on, but it's going to be hard."

"We ought to get that blanket back somehow, Dan. Professor Sarazen didn't say so, but I have a hunch it's worth a lot of money."

"Losing it has taken all the fun out of planning for the pow-wow. Any idea what became of it, Brad?"

[70]

"An idea maybe. But nothing we can act on."

The two Cubs had reached Morton and White St., where they must separate to go to their individual homes. They paused in front of Grisby's Grocery Store to say goodbye.

Standing there, Dan chanced to glance through the big plateglass window where an array of fruit had been temptingly displayed.

It was not the fruit, however, which held his attention. Instead, his gaze fastened upon two men inside the store. They stood at the counter, making purchases from Mr. Grisby, the owner.

"Our friends!" Dan exclaimed. "Looks as if they're buying camp stuff. At least they're getting enough to last 'em awhile."

Brad turned to stare through the big grocery store window.

"White Nose and Eagle Feather!" he exclaimed.

"Let's go in and talk to them," Dan suggested impulsively.

"I'd like to—very much," Brad said, thinking of the missing Navajo blanket. "I'd like to ask them some questions. It might not be wise though."

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"I know what you mean, Brad. The same suspicion is in my mind."

"We don't dare accuse them of anything, Dan. We have no proof."

"Oh, I realize that. But at least we can talk to 'em. We might learn something."

"What'll we say?"

"We could make the excuse of inviting them to our next Cub Scout meeting."

"Not a bad idea," Brad instantly approved. "White Nose and Eagle Feather could tell the Cubs about Indian customs. Let's do it!"

Their minds made up, the two boys entered the grocery store.

The Indians had their backs turned and did not appear to notice Brad and Dan.

Eagle Feather was completing a grocery purchase. He had bought bacon, flour, matches and items one might need if embarking on an extensive camping trip.

Now that they were in the store, Brad and Dan hesitated to speak to the two Indians.

The Cubs were not actually afraid of the strangers, but their appearance seemed less friendly than at the meeting by the cliff. Eagle Feather and White Nose were grimly intent upon their purchases.

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"Go ahead," Dan urged Brad in a whisper, giving him a nudge. "Ask 'em."

Brad moved closer to the counter. Both Indians now saw the boys, but stared at them without friendly recognition.

For an instant the boys were taken aback, wondering if they had made a mistake.

But a second glance reassured them that the Indians were the same pair they had met at the cliff.

"Good afternoon," Brad began politely.

"*Yah eh tah!*" responded Eagle Feather.

Taken aback, because he knew that both Indians spoke English almost perfectly, Brad momentarily was at a loss for words.

"You remember us," Dan said, coming to the rescue. "We're the Cub Scouts you met at the cliff. We want you to come to one of our meetings and talk to the boys about Indian customs. Will you?"

The two Indians stared stoically, as if they had not understood a single word of the request.

It was Dan's turn to become confused. He could not comprehend the Indians' strange behavior.

[73]

Why were they turning on the “freeze,” pretending that they never had seen the pair before?

White Nose deliberately turned his back to Brad and Dan. He directed himself to the storekeeper.

“*Doh quih?*” he demanded.

Then as the storekeeper failed to catch the meaning, he grudgingly interpreted in English, “How much?”

“Eight dollars and twenty-three cents.”

White Nose paid the amount, receiving change for a ten-dollar bill. He pocketed the money and picked up the box of groceries. The pair left the store without a second glance at the two Cubs.

“Well, was that a brush-off?” Dan demanded indignantly.

“They knew us all right! For some reason they pretended otherwise.”

“Maybe they stole the Navajo blanket, and were afraid we’d jump them for it, Brad!”

“Exactly what I was thinking,” Brad agreed soberly. “Looks as if they’re planning on camping out somewhere in the woods, judging from all the supplies they bought. If they’re going to stay anywhere near our river place, then it behooves us to keep watch!”

[74]

CHAPTER 8 DAN’S SAND PAINTING

After school the next night, all the Cubs took turns using Mr. Hallowell’s canoe and practicing their strokes.

While Dan, Midge and Chips worked on the sand painting, the other boys received instructions in water safety. Because Brad and Dan were the most proficient with a paddle, their practice session came last.

The two paddled across the river and back, carefully timing their strokes. Deep, even thrusts sent the craft fairly skimming through the water.

“How you coming on the sand painting, Dan?” the older boy asked from the stern seat.

“About two-thirds,” Dan replied. He rested a moment on his paddle, glancing at the overcast sky. “Think it will rain?”

“Oh, I doubt it at this time of year.”

“A hard rain could ruin our picture. Mr. Hatfield is covering it with canvas tonight—just in case. The covering will protect it from a light shower. But if it pours, the canvas probably wouldn’t keep the colors from running.”

[75]

“You fuss over that sand picture as if it were a baby, Dan!”

“Well, I want Den 2 to win the pow-wow

handicraft contest.”

“Sure, but no use making yourself a nervous wreck about it. The canoe race is just as important. Mr. Hatfield told me this afternoon, he’s definitely decided to put you and me in as the contestants.”

“No foolin’?” At this information, Dan began stroking faster again. “I thought maybe he’d select Midge instead of me.”

“Midge is good,” Brad conceded. “But you have a little the edge over him. I’m glad you’re going to be my partner.”

Dan warmed to the praise, for he knew that the Den Chief always meant his words. The canoe moved through a patch of water lilies.

“Say, wait a second!” Dan cried, lifting his paddle. “Mom would like some of those lilies! I want to get a handful of ’em for her.”

Brad obediently backed water, holding the craft steady in the lily patch.

Resting his own paddle across the gunwales, Dan reached out to seize one of the flowers.

[76]

“Hey, be careful!” Brad warned.

The flower root was long and tough. As Dan tugged, the canoe rocked dangerously.

“You’ll upset us!” Brad exclaimed. “Hey, watch that paddle!”

The canoe had given a convulsive movement. Before Dan could snatch the paddle, it slid into the river.

“There it goes!” Brad declared in disgust. “Of all the dumb tricks! A fine example we’re setting the other Cubs in water safety. I just hope they didn’t see that!”

“Gosh, I’m sorry,” Dan apologized. “I know Mr. Holloway told us never to lay a paddle across the canoe, but I was in such a hurry to get that water lily, I forgot.”

“We’ll lose the paddle, if we don’t fish it out of the river pretty fast. Wow! Look at it travel down stream!”

The paddle had cleared the lily pads and reeds and was floating free. Apparently, it was caught in a fast-moving current, for it traveled down river at an astonishing rate.

Brad dipped in his paddle, heading the canoe in pursuit. A few firm strokes brought him alongside.

[77]

However, as Dan reached out to scoop in the runaway, it again moved beyond his grasp.

“Say, we are in a fast current!” he agreed.

Brad paddled again, and after another miscalculation, managed to rescue the truant paddle.

“A nice exhibition!” he grinned. “I hope that teaches me a lesson.”

Brad did not chide his friend for carelessness. In

fact, he was thinking more about the current than he was of the manner in which the paddle had been lost.

“Wonder what causes such a fast movement in this particular part of the river?” he speculated. “It gives me the idea—”

What the idea was, Dan never learned. For just then, Mr. Hatfield yelled across the water, motioning for the boys to come in.

“He saw me drop that paddle all right,” Dan said ruefully.

Mr. Hatfield did not scold the two boys, merely reminding them again that safety rules must be observed at all times.

“You’re both swimmers,” he said, “but even so, you can’t afford to take chances. Besides, you must set examples for the other Cubs.”

[78]

“It won’t happen again, Mr. Hatfield,” Dan promised. “I just had a mental lapse, that’s all.”

The Cub leader told the boys that the Indian pow-wow definitely had been set for the following Saturday.

“That doesn’t give us much time,” Brad said anxiously. “Think you can get the sand painting finished in time, Dan?”

“Tomorrow night probably.”

Feeling that not an hour should be wasted, Dan called Midge and Chips and the three again went to work.

On the east side of the picture, Dan made a circle to represent the sun, filling it in with colored sand.

He was hard at work when Brad called to say that the other Cubs were hiking to the cliff to see if any more work had been done on the carved face.

Chips and Midge, tired of working on the sand design, quickly joined those who were leaving with Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway.

“Coming, Dan?” the Cub leader called to him.

“No, go on without me,” Dan answered, absorbed in the sand painting. “I want to get this thing finished before we leave here tonight.”

[79]

“Sure you don’t want to come along?”

Dan shook his head. Chips and Midge offered to stay with him, but he told them it wouldn’t be necessary.

“I can finish it alone,” he insisted. “Shouldn’t take me much longer now.”

Left to himself, Dan kept steadily at work. The picture now had taken on both form and color, with pleasing symbols in blue, black, yellow and red.

Carefully, he sifted the sand, trying not to blur edges of the outlines. Often, however, the capricious wind would snatch the grains from his fingers, blowing them helter-skelter.

Dan lost all count of time as he worked. Finally, the last outline had been filled with yellow sand, and the job was done.

Tired, but thoroughly pleased, the boy rocked back on his heels to survey the picture.

“Not bad—not half bad,” he remarked aloud.

Dan suddenly realized that the hour had grown late, for both the river and the nearby forest were darkening. The Cubs, he knew, had been gone a long while. At any moment, they should be returning to camp.

[80]

“They’ll be surprised to find the picture finished!” he thought proudly.

Dan stood back to survey the sand picture. The edges were blowing and he was a little worried lest the outlines be ruined by the wind.

“I’ll have Brad help me cover it up with canvas as soon as he gets back,” he thought. “Wish he’d hurry.”

Dan glanced toward the forest in the direction the Cubs had gone. None of the boys were in sight. What was keeping them so long at the ravine?

Deciding to wash his hands, Dan sauntered down to the river. As he crossed the rippled sand he was startled to see a moccasin print near the overturned canoe.

Rather alarmed by the discovery, the boy bent to examine the print carefully. It was much too large to have been made by one of the Cubs. At any rate, they all wore rubber-soled shoes.

Searching near the water’s edge close to the canoe, Dan found other similar moccasin marks.

“Someone’s been sneaking around here since Mr. Hatfield left,” he thought uneasily.

[81]

More than ever, Dan now wished that the Cubs would return to camp. Though not afraid to remain alone, he could not rid himself of an uncomfortable feeling that at this very moment he was being watched from the nearby woods.

His mind dwelt upon the unpleasant recollection that a painted paddle, food and a highly valuable blanket had disappeared from camp. Now it seemed someone had designs upon the canoe!

The trail of moccasin prints could not be traced beyond the beach. Yet Dan was almost certain that their maker, perhaps one of the Indians he had met, had taken refuge in the woods.

“Nothing I can do except warn Mr. Hatfield,” he told himself. “A nice thing when one can’t leave anything lying around without having it disappear!”

Dan went down to the water’s edge to wash his hands. The river looked very dark and menacing, an indication that a storm might be brewing.

Overhead, black clouds were traveling rapidly across the sky.

“Storm’s coming up fast,” Dan thought uneasily. “I hope the Cubs get back before it breaks!”

[82]

Even as he straightened up from washing his hands, a strong breath of air stirred the trees. Waves began to pile up on the beach.

Fearful that the canoe might be washed away, Dan pulled it farther back on shore.

Unexpectedly, a great gust of wind swept the beach. Sand was flung in Dan's face, causing him to cough and choke.

The wind blew hard for a minute or two and then subsided. A few large drops of rain splashed down.

Deciding to seek the shelter of the hogan, Dan scrambled up the slope to the camp.

Pausing an instant to catch his breath, he gazed down on the cleared square of beach where only a few minutes before he had completed the sand painting.

A gasp of dismay escaped his lips. For where the picture had been, there was now only a hodge-podge of wildly mixed colors!

[83]

CHAPTER 9 A LOST PADDLE

A half-sob escaped Dan as he beheld the ruin of the beautiful sand painting. The work of hours—completely destroyed! It was almost too much to bear.

As he stood staring at the meaningless mess of mixed color, the boy heard footsteps behind him. He turned quickly to see that it was Mr. Hatfield and the Cubs returning from their hike to the ravine.

"Hi, Dan!" the Cub leader greeted him cheerily. "Picture all finished?"

"It's finished all right."

Dan pointed miserably to the mass of strewn sand.

"Someone wrecked it while I was down at the river washing my hands. It makes me sick. All that work—gone."

"Ross Langdon must have been here!" Chips cried furiously.

[84]

"Not while I was around," Dan returned. "Fact is, I didn't see a soul."

"It's unfair to blame Ross," said Mr. Hatfield quietly. He had been looking about the camp, making a few observations. "Don't you realize what happened to your sand picture?"

Dan shook his head.

"It was stolen by the wind."

"The wind! That's right, it did blow terribly hard here for a few minutes! I was scared the hut would blow down."

"Obviously, it was the wind that scattered the sand," Mr. Hatfield went on. "Too bad you didn't cover the picture with canvas before it was wrecked. Or, better still, you could have used a little shellac as a base to hold the sand in place. I'm sorry I didn't suggest it."

"How long will it take to re-make the picture?" Brad asked with forced cheerfulness. "I'll be glad to help, only I'm not very artistic."

Dan remained silent. At the moment he was too discouraged to think of re-doing the sand painting.

Mr. Hatfield flung an arm about his slumped shoulders.

"Buck up, Dan," he said. "Practice makes perfect, you know. You'll make an even better picture next time."

"We'll all help you," Chips offered. "Maybe next time we can do the picture Navajo style—all in one day."

"We'll almost have to, if we want to have it ready for the pow-wow Saturday," Dan said with forced cheer. "Okay, fellows. We'll start in again right after school tomorrow night. I'll fix some more materials in the meantime."

"That's the spirit, Dan, old boy," Red approved.

"Show him what we found at the cliff," urged Fred.

Dan now noticed for the first time, that Red was carrying a bulky, folded object. It appeared to be an Indian blanket.

"You found Professor Sarazen's blanket!" he cried jubilantly.

"No such luck," Red corrected. "We did find this, though."

He spread a tattered red, white and black woven blanket on the grass. Plainly it was Indian in design and made on a hand loom. The pattern was incomplete, for the blanket had been used until it was fairly in tatters.

"Where did you find that?" he asked the Cubs.

"At the ravine," Red explained. "While the others were looking at the carved face, I went poking around in the bushes back of the cliff. I found this."

"Say, maybe whoever left it, took our good blanket!"

"That's my theory," agreed Mr. Hatfield. "The blanket is worthless, of course. We just brought it along to show you."

Little more was said as the Cubs prepared to start home. They took care to see that no items of value were left lying about. Mr. Hatfield personally locked the canoe, the paddles and all tools in Mr. Halloway's cabin.

Dan was bitterly disappointed over the loss of the sand painting. However, his spirits were revived by a good night's rest. By the following afternoon he had assembled new materials and

was ready to start work again on another project.

"This time I'll outline the picture in a protected place," he announced.

While Dan was making the preliminary layout, Brad and the other Cubs busied themselves with canoe practice. At intervals the denner saw them deliberately upset the craft, empty it of water, and scramble in. This accomplished, they would paddle back to shore.

[87]

Dan worked doggedly, determined to keep at his task, though he had lost enthusiasm for it. For the second sand painting, the boy had chosen a more secluded spot, well protected by a wind-break of trees.

As he outlined geometrical figures with a sharp-pointed stick, he became aware of a rather uncomfortable feeling. At intervals Dan would glance over his shoulder, feeling that he was being watched.

"What's the matter with me, anyhow?" he asked himself in disgust. "I'm getting more nervous than an old cat!"

He tried to concentrate on the work before him. But he could not rid himself of that strange, uncomfortable sensation that he was being watched.

Glancing over his shoulder, he actually saw a shadowy face peering down at him from the foliage on the slope above. Or did he imagine that too?

Dropping his stick, Dan glanced quickly about the camp. The Cubs were still on the river, receiving instruction in canoeing.

[88]

"Maybe I am seeing things!" he thought. "Anyway, I'll find out."

Scrambling up the slope, Dan boldly entered the fringe of woods.

Distinctly, he heard a faint rustling sound, and the crackle of a stick. Someone *had* been watching him! That person now was moving rapidly away.

Dan moved faster. Now deep among the trees, he could see no one. It was as if he were chasing a will-o'-the-wisp!

Finally giving up, the boy returned to the slope directly above the site he had selected for the sand painting.

A gap in the tree branches, he noted, permitted a perfect view not only of the camp but also of the picture he had started.

"Someone was watching me, all right," he thought. "Wonder if it was Ross?"

Carefully, Dan inspected the soft, moist earth. At first he could find no footprints or other sign of the watcher. But after he had pulled away a pile of damp leaves from the trail, he discovered a print which appeared to have been made by a moccasin.

"It wasn't Ross," he decided. "One of those

[89]

Indians is watching our camp. I don't like it."

Decidedly troubled, the boy returned to the sand painting. But he could not keep his mind on it. What use, he thought, to go to so much work again, with the ever present hazard that overnight the picture might be ruined by a hostile stranger?

Presently, Dan sauntered down to the beach, intending to tell Brad and Mr. Hatfield of his latest discovery. The Cub leader was still out on the river giving Midge and his son a few advanced pointers on stroking.

Brad, he noticed, was talking to Red and Chips farther down the beach. They were speaking rather loudly and seemed to be deep in some sort of argument.

"Sure, I brought the paddle in when I got through with my turn at the canoe," Red said furiously. "Don't try to accuse me of losing it!"

"I'm not accusing anyone," Brad told him, holding his temper in check. "No use getting your back up! I'm just checking on the paddles, that's all. We've lost one and we can't afford to lose another."

"Ask Mr. Hatfield then," Red said peevishly. "He probably has the extra one with him in the canoe."

[90]

"I know he has one. I don't think there were two spares."

"Well, ask him," Red insisted. "I know I didn't have it."

Coming up to the trio, Dan asked Brad what was wrong.

"Another paddle missing," Brad answered briefly. "Or at least I think it's gone. I'm not blaming anyone. Only checking."

Acting upon Red's suggestion, he called to Mr. Hatfield to ask how many paddles the Cub leader had in the canoe.

"Two," came back the answer.

"Then we're one short again," Brad declared grimly.

"Think it was stolen?" Dan asked, instantly recalling the moccasin track in the woods.

"No-o." Brad spoke thoughtfully. "I remember when Chips, Red and I came in from our practice session on the river, that paddle was laid down —"

"Right here where we're standing," Chips interposed. "It was fairly close to the river."

"I should have picked it up myself," Brad said. "I guess I just didn't notice, that's all. I'm as much to blame as anyone else."

[91]

"The paddle should be here," Red said doggedly. "How'd it get away?"

"It probably floated off," Brad answered. "The waves pound up here whenever a big cruiser passes."

"Well, if the paddle floated off, it can't be far away," Red declared.

"That's so," agreed Brad. He turned to Dan. "Let's go after it!"

"Afoot?"

"Not much chance of trailing it that way. Maybe Mr. Hatfield will let us take the canoe."

Brad had observed that the Cub leader already was paddling toward shore with long, sure strokes.

The two Cubs went down to the water's edge to meet him. Quickly, Brad explained what had happened. As they had expected, Mr. Hatfield showed immediate concern.

"We can't afford to lose another paddle," he said. "We'll have to find this one, that's all."

Motioning for Brad and Dan to exchange places with Fred and Midge, he pointed the canoe down stream.

For the next twenty minutes, the three searched every cove and back-water along the shore. The lost paddle could not be found.

[92]

"It beats all what could have happened to it," Brad said, resting a moment. "You didn't see anyone in camp while we were out on the river, did you, Dan?"

"Not on the beach," the younger boy answered slowly. "I did see someone watching me from the woods—an Indian, I think."

"I guess it's no use looking any farther for the paddle."

"Wait. Let's not give up just yet," Mr. Hatfield said unexpectedly. He had been studying the swift river current with deep absorption. "Maybe an Indian stole our paddle, but I doubt it. Notice how fast this water moves?"

"Only one little ribbon of it," Brad replied. "I discovered that the other day. This old river must have a lot of currents."

Mr. Hatfield nodded. "On your toes, boys," he said. "I'm going to try an experiment."

"What are you going to do?" Brad asked, puzzled.

Without answering, Mr. Hatfield deliberately dropped his paddle into the river.

[93]

CHAPTER 10 AN UNDERGROUND STREAM

Brad and Dan watched in fascination as the paddle drifted away from the canoe.

At first it moved very slowly, then faster and faster.

Brad noted instantly that the paddle seemed to

travel downstream much faster than the canoe and also at a quicker pace than other drifting objects nearby.

"It's caught in an especially swift current!" he exclaimed. "I wonder what causes that fast water? An underground stream emptying into the river?"

"I've wondered myself," Mr. Hatfield declared, keeping close watch of the drifting paddle. "Some time ago, Mr. Holloway pointed out to me that a fast current less than twelve feet wide moves along shore for a considerable distance. We never took time to trace it down or discover its origin."

"The paddle is caught in that current now," Dan nodded.

"I'd thought of the same thing myself," Brad declared. "Fact is, I've wondered if maybe those two missing paddles didn't float away."

[94]

"I'm sure Ross never took them," Mr. Hatfield said.

"This fast-moving current passes close to the beach," Brad said thoughtfully. "Furthermore, each time the paddles disappeared, they'd been left lying close to the water's edge!"

"Anyway, Brad, it's a theory worth investigating. We can't afford to lose another paddle. If we're not careful, this one will get away from us!"

The paddle which the Cub leader had dropped into the water, was moving faster and faster. Pursuing it, Brad pushed the canoe forward with deep thrusts of the one remaining paddle. But with two heavy passengers, he could not make the craft spurt ahead.

"Want me to take over?" Mr. Hatfield offered.

Brad grinned and shook his head. "I need to build up muscle for the Saturday race. You and Dan keep your eyes glued on that paddle."

As the canoe proceeded downstream, Mr. Hatfield outlined his theory regarding the disappearance of the paddles. He reminded the Cubs of the river's close proximity to Lake James, only a half mile distant from their camp. Often on pleasant Saturday afternoons, the Cubs had hiked there for cook-outs.

[95]

"Now it strikes me that Lake James is at a somewhat lower level than this river," the cubmaster went on reflectively. "Does that give either of you a clue?"

"An underground stream might connect the two!" Brad said promptly.

"That's what I'm thinking," Mr. Hatfield nodded, "Anyway, we'll soon know. Notice, that floating paddle is moving toward shore again."

"It's traveling, too!" Dan exclaimed. "Almost as if it had a motor!"

"Even if the river did carry away our two paddles, that doesn't explain what happened to the Navajo blanket or our cache of food," Brad remarked thoughtfully. He shifted the paddle to the other side of the canoe so that his arm

muscle might have a brief rest.

"No, someone deliberately took those things. It bothers me, too."

"Indians?" Dan interposed.

"It could be." Mr. Hatfield spoke rather guardedly, as if reluctant to tell the Cubs everything that was in his mind. "I've been trying to run into those strangers, to get a line on them. So far, I've had no luck."

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Since the Cubs first had discovered the carved clay face at the ravine, park officials had made several visits to the site. Twice they had noted that additional work had been done. But on no occasion had they found anyone in the vicinity.

"The park is too short-handed to assign a man to watch the ravine," Mr. Hatfield said. "Eventually the culprit or culprits will be caught, but it may take time."

"I think the one who is doing the work is hiding out somewhere in the woods," Dan volunteered his theory. "And we're likely to lose things until he's found and put out of the park preserve."

"Say, we're going to lose another paddle if we don't watch out," Brad directed attention of the other two to the ribbon of current.

Despite his best efforts, the paddle again was moving faster than the canoe. It had swung in quite close to shore now.

The Cubs never had visited this particular section of the forest preserve. No trails had been built in the area, for the underbrush remained thick, particularly along the shore. Except for a narrow, sandy beach, sheer limestone cliffs rose to a height of more than a hundred feet.

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Mr. Hatfield studied the wall of bushes overhanging the water.

"I think I see where that current goes underground," he declared. "Quick, Brad! Bear down or we'll lose that paddle."

Brad took several quick thrusts of his own paddle. With a scraping of twigs, the canoe nosed into a tangle of brush.

Directly ahead, the truant paddle had snagged against a log which protruded from the water. Beyond, the swift-flowing current seemed to vanish into the cliff itself.

Barely in time, Mr. Hatfield reached out to snatch the floating paddle.

As Brad now held the canoe steady, the trio studied the face of the cliff with keen interest. The water here was very deep, flowing silently into the dense wall of bushes.

"Edge in a little closer, Brad," Mr. Hatfield instructed.

Brad obediently steered the canoe deeper into the brush tangle. It was hard to keep the craft pointed downstream, for the current kept pulling the bow.

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Mr. Hatfield pulled aside some of the heavy

branches. At the sight before them, Brad and Dan sucked in their breath.

A torrent of water flowed silently, mysteriously into a great, arching cavern. The three amazed explorers could not see its end.

"A cave!" Dan whispered in awe.

"Our paddle would have been sucked in there if we hadn't snatched it just in time," added Brad. He grasped a tree branch with one hand, helping Mr. Hatfield hold the canoe steady.

"This explains what became of those first two paddles we lost," Mr. Hatfield declared. "Undoubtedly, they were sucked into this cave. Furthermore, the underground current explains what's happened to a number of things that have disappeared on the river. Mr. Holloway lost a life preserver last summer. He hunted for miles down-stream, but never could find it."

"Doesn't anyone know about this cave?" Dan asked, staring into the dark, silent water.

"Never heard it mentioned," Mr. Hatfield answered. "The park people may have this underground stream mapped, but I rather doubt it. The preserve was set up only a little over a year ago, you know. Parts of the area never have been fully explored."

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Brad was impatient to investigate the cavern. The entranceway was very small, just large enough to admit a canoe, but not with its occupants sitting upright.

"Say, if we all lie down, we can get in there," he estimated. "It will be a tight squeeze though."

"And we wouldn't know where we were going, or what we were running into," Mr. Hatfield put an end to his plans. "I'd like to learn what's inside the cave, but we're not going to be foolhardy."

"Then if we can't shove the canoe in, how are we going to recover our lost paddles?" Brad demanded, disappointed by the Cub leader's rejection of his proposal. "How'll we ever find out where the stream goes or what's in the cave?"

"Maybe we never will," Mr. Hatfield replied. "We're not taking risks, and that's that."

Actually, as he peered longer into the dim, dark cave, Brad lost much of his desire to explore. He could see that the current moved swiftly along the rock floor. Even if it were possible to get the canoe in for a short distance, it might be impossible to work it out again against the stiff opposition of the racing underground stream.

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"The water is swift," Dan observed, "but it doesn't look very deep inside the cave."

Mr. Hatfield had made the same observation. He instructed Brad to pull the canoe up onto the tiny stretch of beach close by.

"Then we are going to explore?" the Den Chief demanded.

"Not exactly. I want to probe the depth of the water at the mouth of the cave."

Beaching the canoe, the Cubs searched and finally found a long, fairly straight stick which could be used as a measuring rod.

Following Mr. Hatfield, they inched their way along the cliff wall, fighting bushes all the distance.

The ledge was so narrow that only the Cub leader could peer into the cave opening.

"What do you see?" Dan demanded eagerly.

"Nothing but damp walls veering upward to a rough, low roof," Mr. Hatfield answered. He had thrust head and shoulders into the opening, so his words were muffled. "I wish I had a flashlight."

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"Want me to go back for one?" Brad asked.

Mr. Hatfield turned down the offer, pointing out that the hour already was late. By the time Brad could return, it would be nearly dark.

Carefully, the Cub leader measured the depth of the water. At the mouth of the cave, it was nearly waist level. But a foot inside the entrance, the depth was six inches less.

"Unless I'm mistaken, the floor of the cave slopes upward," Mr. Hatfield declared.

"Then farther back, you think the water might not be so deep?" Dan questioned.

"That's the way it looks from here. I can't see very far though."

"Gosh, wait 'till the Cubs hear about this cave!" Brad chuckled. "And won't we have it all over the Den 1 fellows! I sure wish we knew what's back in there."

Mr. Hatfield had completed his inspection of the entranceway. He now backed away to rejoin Dan and Brad.

"We might be able to explore it," he said, dubiously.

"Today?" Dan's voice became electric with anticipation.

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"No, that's definitely out. We'd need flashlights and lots of batteries, a good stout rope and maybe some other equipment. Besides, I'd want Mr. Holloway's opinion before tackling it."

"When can we do it?" Brad demanded. "Tomorrow night?"

"Possibly," Mr. Hatfield conceded. "I'm making no promises though."

Now that they could learn no more, the Cubs were eager to return to camp to tell their Den mates of the exciting discovery. Launching the canoe, both Dan and Brad paddled. However, it was hard work, moving against the current.

Nearly twenty minutes elapsed before the trio came within hailing distance of the camp.

"Perhaps it's just as well not to mention the cave tonight," Mr. Hatfield remarked. "I want the Cubs to know about it eventually. But if they learn about it too soon, it may get them all

excited."

"And take their minds off the pow-wow," Dan added with a laugh. "We still have a lot of work to do around the camp before Saturday."

As the canoe slipped in toward the beach, Chips and Midge came running down to help pull the craft up on shore.

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"Gee, Mr. Hatfield," Chips exclaimed in relief. "I'm sure glad you're back!"

"Anything wrong, Chips?"

"Well, not exactly." The boy lowered his voice. "But we've got visitors."

"Nothing wrong with that is there?"

"Wait until you see 'em," Chips muttered. "Our visitors are two Indians! Eagle Feather and White Nose. They've been giving the camp the once over and acting awfully queer about it. The Cubs want you to come quick, Mr. Hatfield!"

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CHAPTER 11 FRIEND OR FOE?

"I'll come right away," Mr. Hatfield reassured Chips and Midge. "No reason to be alarmed though. Indians don't carry tomahawks these days."

"Maybe not," Chips replied quickly, "but these boys both have knives!"

"They look fierce too," added Midge, with a nervous glance over his shoulder. "Fred and Red are talking to 'em, trying to keep watch so they won't take anything."

"I'll be very glad to meet the pair," Mr. Hatfield said, starting up the path from the beach. "I'm sure though, that there's no cause for uneasiness. They are probably only curious to learn what we're doing here."

"Curious isn't a strong enough word," Chips informed him. "They've snooped into everything—the hogan, the Wells Fargo station we're building and they made a lot of remarks about the sand painting."

"Complimentary ones, I hope," grinned Dan.

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"White Nose said something in his own Navajo language," Midge informed him. "Then he spat on the ground."

"Well, I like that!" Dan said indignantly. "I may not be an artist, but my picture isn't that bad. I'm going to give that old Indian a chunk of my mind!"

"Let me handle this, boys," Mr. Hatfield said.

He went ahead of the Cubs to the hogan where Fred, Mack and Red were talking to the two Indians. The pair did not appear unfriendly, but as Chips had said, their inspection of the camp had not been very polite.

"Good afternoon," Mr. Hatfield introduced himself. He extended his hand, and gave his name. "I'm the Cub leader here. Anything we can do for you?"

Neither White Nose or Eagle Feather made reply. They looked Mr. Hatfield over and silently accepted his proffered hand.

"We're a Cub Scout outfit," Mr. Hatfield went on pleasantly enough. "Our camp may look rather odd to you, but we're preparing for an Indian pow-wow. The boys chose the Navajo theme. Maybe you can help us with a few suggestions."

"Cub Scouts!" Eagle Feather repeated. "A good organization."

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"The Navajos are starting their own dens now," Mr. Hatfield went on, trying to act friendly. "In fact, our boys are gathering clothing to be sent out to New Mexico."

"That is good," Eagle Feather responded stiffly.

"Is there anything we can do for you?" Mr. Hatfield next inquired.

"Nothing," Eagle Feather shrugged.

"You are searching for someone perhaps?"

"For one of our brothers."

"You'll not find him here," said Mr. Hatfield. "However, someone has been making himself at home in our camp during our absence. We've lost food, and a valuable Navajo blanket."

This information obviously was of great interest to the two Indians. But their only show of it was a sparkle of the eyes.

"Dan, get the blanket that was picked up near the ravine," Mr. Hatfield instructed.

Dan ran to fetch it. As he brought it back, Eagle Feather quickly took it from his hand. He and White Nose both examined the tattered blanket intently, talking earnestly in their own language.

"They recognize that blanket, all right," Red whispered to Midge.

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"Either it's theirs, or it belongs to that 'brother' they claim to be looking for," Midge added.

The two Indians did not explain the reason for their interest in the blanket. After their brief but thorough examination, they lost all interest in the item.

Mr. Hatfield was rather annoyed by the visitors' attitude. He did not like the cool manner in which they had made themselves at home in the camp. Nevertheless, he hesitated to order them away, feeling that it would be much better to try to make friends.

"You're Navajos, I believe," he remarked.

"Yes," agreed Eagle Feather, "we are of the People."

"The Cubs would appreciate a little first hand information. How about giving us a talk on the customs and traditions of your people? For instance, you might tell us about the origin of

the Fire Dance. We're trying to work one up for presentation at our pow-wow Saturday."

The Cubs, especially Dan and Brad, expected Eagle Feather to refuse. But, to their surprise, he appeared flattered by the request.

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Mr. Hatfield motioned for the Cubs to gather about in a semi-circle. Eagle Feather squatted in the center and began to talk, speaking formally, but in perfect English.

He told the Cubs that the Navajos had 27 major chants which they used on ceremonial occasions or for the cure of the sick.

The Fire Dance, or Mountain Chant as it sometimes was called, was the most showy of all the Navajos' ceremonies, he went on.

"The medicine man's whistle marks the start of the dance," Eagle Feather described it. "Twelve dancers with their bodies sprayed white, come in bearing cedar bark torches. As they dance about the log fire, they sing the Fire Dance song about a Sleepy Owl.

"The leader throws a bundle of burning bark to the East. Three other bundles are lighted and hurled to the West, North and South. This, my people believe, will drive away colds and bad luck.

"The dance ends with the lighting of torches and a wild race about the fire. The dancers move faster and faster, fanning their torches into a long flame. The ceremony lasts until daybreak."

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"We'll offer a simplified version of the Fire Dance at our pow-wow," Mr. Hatfield declared. "The Cubs are using flashlights instead of torches."

"Tell us about other dances," urged Dan.

Now that his tongue had been loosened, Eagle Feather was willing enough to talk. He described other versions of the fire Dance, the Feather Dance and one which he called the Plumed Arrow.

He then told the Cubs a few Navajo words. Medicine man, he said, was *Hah-tahnc*, and sand painting, *ee-kah*.

"Your *ee-kah* very bad," Eagle-Feather added, a suggestion of a smile lighting his grim countenance.

"I know that," Dan admitted with a laugh. "But then, it's the first sand painting I ever attempted. The second, to be exact. Our first one was ruined—by the wind I guess."

"Tell us some Indian stories," urged Mack. "One about medicine men."

The request brought a strange reaction from the two Indians. Immediately they seemed to become less friendly and more grim. Even the tone of Eagle Feather's voice changed as he said:

"I will relate a tale of truth, one that concerns a medicine man of our own people."

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"A traitor and a thief," muttered White Nose.

"This medicine man once was highly respected by his followers," related Eagle Feather. "He was trusted by the people who placed in his hands many valuable tribal treasures."

"Ancient turquoise rings found in the old cliff dwellings," murmured White Nose. "Sky blue and hard as glass. Silver necklaces and discs."

"The greatest treasure of all was the turquoise toad," went on Eagle Feather, his voice as flinty as stone. "It was a handsomely carved piece, worth a large sum."

"What became of the turquoise toad?" Mr. Hatfield inquired as Eagle Feather became silent.

"One day the medicine man vanished. With him went the turquoise treasure. But the vengeance of the tribe will follow him! He will never escape!"

A fierce expression came over Eagle Feather's leathery face. As the Indian straightened up from a crouched position, Chips instinctively backed away. Thrown off balance, he collapsed against Mack.

A strained silence had fallen upon the Cubs.

Eagle Feather's story had produced an unpleasant effect on everyone. Even Mr. Hatfield felt strangely uneasy in the presence of the two Indians. He tried to hide his own misgiving by saying pleasantly:

[111]

"Thanks for telling us so much about the Navajos. I'm sure it's been very interesting. Goodbye."

Eagle Feather's thin lips loosened into a hard smile.

"We may return," he said. "White Nose and I have a mission."

The two Indians turned and with dignity moved off into the woods. Not even the rustle of a dry leaf or the crackle of a stick marked their leave-taking.

For a long while after the pair had gone, no one spoke. Finally Brad broke the painful silence.

"Friendly chaps, eh?"

"I'll bet a Lincoln penny they took Professor Sarazen's blanket!" Chips burst out. "Or at least they know who did!"

"Not so loud, Chips," Mr. Hatfield warned. "They may be within hearing."

"What did you think of that tale they told about the medicine man?" Dan asked Mr. Hatfield, keeping his voice low.

"It gave me an uncomfortable feeling. I don't know what those two Indians are doing in Webster City, but I'm afraid they're here for no good purpose."

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"Shouldn't we report 'em to the police?" suggested Midge.

"So far they've done nothing that would warrant a complaint," Mr. Hatfield replied. "All the same,

I dislike the way they're apparently watching our camp."

"Do they think we're hiding someone?" demanded Dan.

"They're after that guy who does the carving at the ravine!" Brad exclaimed. "Y'know we ought to tip him off. White Nose and Eagle Feather could be very bad medicine, if one met 'em on a dark night."

Mr. Hatfield spoke firmly.

"The Cubs," he said, "will concern themselves with organization affairs. We're not getting mixed in any tribal feuds. Get that straight!"

"Yes, sir," replied the Cubs, speaking as one. And Red added: "I wouldn't have anything to do with 'em, even if you'd give me a prize turquoise toad!"

"From now on," said Mr. Hatfield, issuing a further order, "no one is to remain in camp alone. Mr. Holloway or I always will try to be here. But, if for any reason, we're called to the house, two Cubs always must stay to look after our stuff."

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The Cubs accepted the order soberly. With more than their usual care, they began gathering up their belongings for the night. Though Mr. Hatfield hadn't said so in plain words, they knew that he distrusted the two Indians and was afraid that they might cause real trouble.

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CHAPTER 12 EXPLORING THE CAVE

The following day, Dan and Brad discussed the discovery of the underground stream and cave with both Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway.

Acting on a theory that the swift river current must connect with Lake James at a slightly lower level, the two men went on a tour of inspection. They found the point upstream where the underground river flowed into the larger stream, but not where it later emptied into the lake.

Dan pleaded for a chance to explore the cave, pointing out that the lost paddles might be caught somewhere deep in the cavern.

"We need those paddles too," he added persuasively.

"You wouldn't be interested in exploring for its own sake?" the cubmaster joked.

"Sure," Dan grinned. "It would be top adventure! Our secret is too good to keep from the other Cubs."

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Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway were of the same opinion. So when the Cubs had their next gathering, they were told of the discovery.

Immediately there was a clamor to explore the cavern.

"Right now!" Midge insisted. "Lead us to it!"

The other Cubs echoed his demand. Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway had, of course, anticipated the request and were prepared for it.

The night before they had discussed the matter and had decided to undertake the exploration. A long light rope had been obtained, as well as an ample supply of powerful flashlights and extra batteries.

"Okay," Mr. Hatfield consented to the request. "We'll explore the cave, if it can be done safely. Let's go."

"How about leaving someone to watch our camp," Brad reminded the group. "It seems that something disappears every time we turn our backs."

The Cubs stood watching Mr. Hatfield rather anxiously. No one wanted to be assigned to remain behind.

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"Oh, except for a few tools, we have nothing here today of great value," Mr. Hatfield said. "We'll take a chance."

The Cubs proceeded to the site of the cave, following Mr. Hatfield, Brad and Dan along the shore. Tangles of brush and willows frequently caused the group to detour away from the river. So when finally they located the mouth of the cavern again, it was much later than the Cub leader had expected.

"There's no time to waste," he told the Cubs. "We can't afford to be caught here after dark. Now everyone must obey orders. I know you're all eager to see the inside of the cave, but it may be unsafe. Therefore, I'll go in ahead."

"Not alone!" Brad protested quickly.

"Mr. Holloway will remain at the entranceway," Mr. Hatfield resumed. "I'll take two Cubs with me."

"Me!" interposed Mack.

"No, let me go!" cried Chips.

"The stream is swift and it may be deep," Mr. Hatfield went on, paying no attention to the demands. "We'll have to inch our way very cautiously. Naturally, the only Cubs I can take must be good swimmers."

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"Brad and Dan," Red said instantly. "They're the best."

Mr. Hatfield was well pleased that the Cubs themselves had elected the two boys, for he had considered them the most dependable. Dan in particular, swam like a fish, and could be depended upon if an aquatic emergency arose.

"Arm yourselves with long, stout sticks," he instructed. "They'll be useful in feeling our way. No telling either, what we may run into."

The Cubs obtained the sticks from the beach, and they presented themselves again at the yawning mouth of the cavern.

A narrow stream of fast-moving water flowed

silently into the dark tunnel of rock. Gazing into its mysterious depths, the other Cubs were not too reluctant to have Dan and Brad do the initial exploring.

Mr. Hatfield tied a long length of rope about his waist, and gave shorter ones to Brad and Dan, who were to follow him.

"No telling how far this cave goes," he commented. "If our rope doesn't hold out, we may have to come back and try it again some other day."

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The Cub leader gave careful instructions. Brad and Dan were to follow him into the cave. Two jerks of a rope in quick succession would signal the waiting Cubs that they were to pull in.

"We'll not give the signal unless we're in trouble," Mr. Hatfield said.

Mr. Holloway manned the rope attached to the Cub leader's waist. Chips and Midge grabbed Dan's rope, while the other Cubs took the one Brad had tied about his middle.

"Be careful not to do any pulling unless you catch a signal or are sure we're in trouble," Mr. Hatfield admonished. "I'm not looking for any mishaps, but it's always wise to be prepared."

"Let's go!" urged Brad, eager to be at the job.

A silence fell upon the group as the three stood for a moment gazing into the dark jaws of the cave. The shadow of a tree shrouded the entranceway, and the moving branches made an eerie pattern upon the limestone.

"All set?" Mr. Hatfield asked.

Brad and Dan nodded. Both suddenly seemed to have lost their voices.

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"Walk carefully and watch your footing," Mr. Hatfield instructed. "Don't let your rope get tangled."

He stepped from the ledge into the flowing stream. The water came well above his knees, and somewhat higher on Brad and Dan.

Finding the floor of the cavern smooth, the Cub leader moved along, slowly at first and then a little faster. Brad followed a few paces behind with Dan bringing up the rear.

Damp, dripping walls veered to a high rough roof only a few inches above their heads. Now and then Mr. Hatfield had to stoop to proceed. At one point he thought he could not go on. However, after he had squeezed through the "low bridge," the passageway became higher.

Pausing to rest a moment, the three gazed back. The opening of the cave appeared as a circle of light.

"Everything's okay!" Mr. Hatfield shouted to reassure Mr. Holloway and the Cubs who waited anxiously at the cave's mouth. "We can't see the end yet."

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His voice echoed weirdly in the cavernous depths.

Losing his balance, Dan grasped a jagged projection of rock for support. The walls at this point were slimy and covered with clusters of lichens. Farther on, the explorers passed an oozing icicle-like stalagmite which dangled from the roof.

"Need any ornaments for your Christmas tree?" Dan joked.

Brad's line had become twisted. Without answering Dan, he halted to try to straighten it.

Unaware that the two boys had stopped, Mr. Hatfield moved on some distance ahead. Suddenly they heard him shout:

"I think we're coming to the end of the tunnel! Or at least to a larger chamber. I'm out of the water."

Brad hastily adjusted his rope and the two Cubs splashed on. Mr. Hatfield was waiting for them on a narrow ledge to the right of the stream.

Before the amazed eyes of the two boys spread a large chamber, nearly circular in shape. Occupying a large portion of the cathedral-like room was a round pool, which in earlier years obviously had been ground out of the rocks by whirling waters.

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The underground river sought an exit at the extreme end of the chamber, beyond view of the Cubs.

A rocky ledge extended on three sides around the chamber. The shelf was barely two feet wide where Mr. Hatfield stood. Farther on, Dan and Brad could see that it widened to a sizeable floor.

"Be careful," Mr. Hatfield warned as the Cubs came on. "There's a sharp drop-off here at the entrance into the chamber. I couldn't probe it with my stick. The pool must be over a man's head."

"Is this the end of it?" Brad asked, pausing.

"It's as far as we're going today. Maybe it's as far as we'll ever go. I'm satisfied now that the underground stream empties into James Lake. The tunnel through to the lake may be too small for exploration. I suspect it is, but at any rate, our curiosity is satisfied."

"And we've found ourselves a cave!" Dan said. He caught himself talking in a half whisper. "Won't the Cubs be jarred when we tell 'em about this!"

"We haven't found our missing paddles though," Brad remarked. "Wouldn't you think they'd be floating around in this pool?"

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"One would think so, unless they were sucked on down the tunnel to Lake James," Mr. Hatfield remarked.

He trained his most powerful flashlight on the dark stream. No longer a whirlpool, only a slight circular motion could be observed.

Piles of sticks and debris drawn into the cave from the river, had accumulated against the rough chamber walls.

"Say, what's that over on the ledge?" Brad demanded.

He focused his flashlight. The battery, however, had grown weak, and the light annoyingly blinked out.

Mr. Hatfield centered his ray upon the ledge. The Cubs then made out a pile of balsam boughs neatly piled against the wall.

"Balsam!" Dan exclaimed. "Freshly cut too!"

"Someone must have been using the boughs for a bed," Brad reasoned. "Recently, too."

"It does look as if this cave is being used," Mr. Hatfield said. "Let's look closer at that balsam pile. Be careful though. The ledge is slippery."

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Dan took a few steps only to halt.

"I've come to the end of my rope!" he announced. "And that's no joke."

"I can't make the ledge either," Brad reported. "The slack is practically all gone out of my rope. I'll have to untie it."

"No, don't do that," Mr. Hatfield ordered. "Just wait for me."

While Dan and Brad remained on the narrow portion of the ledge, he circled around to the wider section.

Waiting rather nervously, the two boys found themselves shivering. A cold breath of air seemed to be circulating in the chamber. Their clothing was wet to above their knees, adding to their discomfort.

"Wish he'd hurry," Dan muttered. "I'm getting anxious to get out into the sunshine again. This cave would give a fellow the creeps if he stayed here too long."

Mr. Hatfield had bent down to examine the pile of balsam boughs.

"Someone's been sleeping here all right," he called to the Cubs. "And cooking in the place, too!"

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"What have you found?" Brad demanded, for the Cub leader's broad back blocked out the view.

"An old coffee can used for cooking a stew, or something of the sort. The rock is blackened from smoke. The coals are still faintly warm to the touch."

"Gosh! Then our cave dweller has been here probably today!" Dan exclaimed, gazing quickly over his shoulder. "I wonder where he is now?"

Mr. Hatfield moved deeper into the chamber, away from the pile of balsam.

"Say, here's something!" he cried. "I've found—"

But Dan and Brad did not learn what it was their leader had discovered in the darkness. In bending over he unintentionally had given the rope about his waist a quick jerk. At the mouth of the cave, the Cubs began to pull him in.

"Hey!" Mr. Hatfield exclaimed. "What's coming

off? I didn't give the signal."

Again the rope jerked. To avoid being pulled into the pool, Mr. Hatfield had to retreat backwards around the ledge.

"Those Cubs!" he exclaimed with an annoyed laugh. "They're pulling me in! Either they're worried because we've been gone so long, or something's happened at the cave entrance!"

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CHAPTER 13 MORE TROUBLE

As the Cubs at the cave entrance pulled steadily on the rope, Mr. Hatfield was forced to move briskly along to keep from being swept off his feet. He jerked on the rope several times as an indication that he was safe. The signal, however, seemed to be misunderstood. At any rate, the steady pull continued.

"Come on, Brad! Dan!" Mr. Hatfield exclaimed. "They'll be dragging you in next."

Already Dan had felt a tug on the rope about his waist. He and Brad followed the Cub leader across the rock shelf to the tunnel of shallow water.

"It's probably getting late," Mr. Hatfield said, splashing along. "Either that, or something has gone wrong at the mouth of the cavern."

As the three proceeded toward the cave entrance, the pressure on their ropes suddenly relaxed. Evidently Mr. Holloway and the waiting Cubs now realized that there was no need to pull the three in. However, the trio continued toward the exit, knowing that it was too late to do any more exploring that night.

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Coming within view of the cave mouth, they paused in astonishment. The gap between the rocks barely was discernible as a circle of light.

"Why, it's nearly dark!" Dan exclaimed. "No wonder the Cubs decided to haul us in!"

"We were in that cave a lot longer than we realized," Mr. Hatfield agreed.

Mr. Holloway and the Cubs greeted the three explorers eagerly as they emerged from the dark hole amid the rocks. Once on the beach it was much lighter, but the sun had set and long shadows had fallen across the river.

"We didn't mean to pull you out of there," Mr. Holloway apologized. "The truth is, we got worried. We'd had no signal, and it was getting late."

"You did entirely right," Mr. Hatfield assured him. "Time the Cubs are home. Everything all right here?"

"We had one scare. It didn't amount to much. What did you learn in the cave?"

Mr. Hatfield described the explorations,

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declaring that he was almost certain the underground stream emptied into Lake James.

"Just before we were hauled in, you made a discovery," Dan reminded him. "What did you see?"

"The object of our search."

"Not the paddles?"

"One of them. The other may be there too. I was pulled in before I had a chance to find out. The paddle I saw was back against the wall of the cave, behind the pile of balsam."

"How'd it get out of the pool?" Dan speculated. "Someone must have fished it out."

"Oh, someone's using the cave all right," Mr. Hatfield responded. "A rugged individual accustomed to living out-of-doors."

"Maybe that mysterious fellow who's been doing the carving at the ravine!" Red exclaimed.

"Could be," Mr. Hatfield agreed thoughtfully. "It's just as well we didn't find him at home. We'll turn the job of eviction over to the park authorities."

"You mean we're not going to have a chance to explore the cave?" Chips demanded. "I say! Dan and Brad have all the fun."

"There will be plenty of time to inspect the cave later on," Mr. Hatfield reassured him. "But routing out whoever is hiding in there isn't our job."

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"Mr. Hatfield's right," Mr. Holloway backed him up. "Anyone who would chose to live in a cave must be either a fugitive or slightly demented. The fellow may be armed."

The Cubs were disappointed that they were not to be given a chance to explore the cave for awhile. But they realized their leaders had made a wise decision.

"You spoke about having a scare while we were in the cave," Mr. Hatfield reminded the Den Dad. "What happened?"

"Oh, nothing serious. As we waited, Mack thought he heard someone prowling about in the bushes above the cave entrance."

"I did too," Mack insisted.

"It took us awhile to scramble up there because the rocks are steep," Mr. Holloway went on. "We didn't find anyone. We had a feeling though, that we'd been watched."

"You probably were right about it too," Mr. Hatfield replied. "It's almost certain someone is living in the cave."

The air had grown chilly. Dan, Brad and Mr. Hatfield, whose clothing was soaked to above the knees, had begun to feel rather uncomfortable. Mr. Holloway proposed that they all hike back to camp as quickly as possible.

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Brad and Dan, bringing up the rear of the procession, were more silent than the other Cubs as they scrambled over the rocks to the

strip of beach.

Reflecting upon the many strange happenings of the past few days, they were convinced that Mr. Hatfield was right in assuming that the cave had an inhabitant.

It occurred to Dan that the man who had taken refuge there might indeed be the medicine man sought by White Nose and Eagle Feather.

"Do you suppose that bird, whoever he is, has Professor Sarazen's blanket tucked away somewhere in the cave?" he mused aloud.

"I was asking myself the same thing," replied Brad. "I sure hope we get another chance to explore before too long. We ought to get that blanket back before our Indian pow-wow."

The camp near Mr. Holloway's home was shrouded in evening shadow as the Cubs trudged in. Heavy clouds had overspread the sky, causing darkness to come on somewhat earlier than usual.

"I'm ashamed to have kept the Cubs so late," Mr. Hatfield apologized. "I hope your parents won't be sore, fellows."

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"I'll take everyone to town in my car," Mr. Holloway offered. "Special delivery service tonight."

The Cubs quickly went about the camp, gathering up the few belongings they had left behind. Everyone was relieved that nothing seemed to be missing. None of the tools had been disturbed.

"All set?" Mr. Hatfield inquired, ready to leave.

"Just a minute," called Dan. "I want to look at something."

Brad was exasperated. "We're late now," he complained. "That Dan—he has to go kiss his sand painting goodnight. He watches over it as if it were a baby."

"He's done a fine job on it so far," Mr. Holloway said warmly. "He'll only be a minute."

Dan, however, was gone so long that the Cubs began to grumble.

"What's the matter with him anyhow?" Fred muttered. "He must be caressing every grain of sand! I'm going after him."

"Here he comes now," Midge observed.

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Dan came quickly to the group. He plainly was very angry.

"It's happened again!" he burst out.

"What's happened?" Brad asked.

"My sand painting has been ruined! There was no wind to amount to anything either! This time I know it was done deliberately."

"Well, for crying out loud!" Red cried indignantly. "Who is pulling this stuff? I say it's time we get that guy and poke him in the nose!"

The Cubs and their leaders went back with Dan

to view the painting. All trace of it had been obliterated.

"Even my materials are gone this time," Dan said bitterly. "I mixed the colors so carefully too. I'm through!"

"We can't blame you for feeling that way after twice losing your picture," Mr. Hatfield said sympathetically. "This time we may as well forget about it, Dan. You've more than done your part."

Dan remained silent for a moment, a little ashamed of his outburst.

"I suppose I could try it again," he said after a moment. "Time's short though. And there's no assurance that the sand painting wouldn't be ruined a third time."

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"Someone's doing it out of meanness!" Red declared. "I still think Ross may have a finger in it."

"We've just run into bad luck, that's all," Brad said. "Our troubles began when we lost the paddles and the blanket. Without a sand painting, I guess Den 1 will outshine us in the handicraft contest. But it can't be helped. It's not Dan's fault."

"I'm willing to start another painting," Dan offered doggedly. "Maybe we could set up a guard to watch."

Mr. Hatfield opposed this suggestion. "Someone would have to stay here on a twenty-four-hour schedule, Dan. That isn't practical."

"I guess not," Dan admitted gloomily.

"We're tired and discouraged tonight," Mr. Hatfield resumed. "Suppose we decide what to do about the painting tomorrow. Meanwhile, maybe Mr. Holloway or I will have an inspiration."

So the matter was left. As the Cubs started up the slope toward Mr. Holloway's home, Mr. Hatfield recalled that his hat was lying inside the hogan. Telling the Cubs not to wait for him, he went inside to get it.

A moment later he was outside the hut again, calling excitedly to the boys.

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"Come back here a minute!" he shouted. "I want to show you something!"

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CHAPTER 14

RED'S SLIP OF TONGUE

At Mr. Hatfield's shout, the Cubs, who had started toward the house, immediately turned back.

Dan was the first to reach the doorway of the hogan. He thought he could guess why the Cub leader had called.

"Something else stolen?" he demanded.

"No such thing. Take a look at this!" Mr. Hatfield focused the beam of his flashlight on the floor of the hogan.

Dan sucked in his breath, completely taken by surprise.

Skillfully laid out in brilliant colors, was a sand painting. In scope it was far more elaborate than the one which had been destroyed outside of the hut.

"Can you beat that!" Dan exclaimed. "How did it get here?"

Before Mr. Hatfield could voice an opinion, Mr. Holloway and the other Cubs had rushed up.

For awhile the hogan buzzed with excited conversation, as the boys speculated upon how the painting had been transferred.

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"It wasn't really transferred, though the basic design is the same," Mr. Hatfield pointed out. "Dan's painting was broken up so that the same materials could be used here to make this much more elaborate picture."

"Who did it, and why?" Dan demanded.

"Not Ross, that's sure," contributed Red. "He doesn't have that much skill."

"This picture was done by an expert," Mr. Holloway agreed. "An Indian, I'd judge. Note the skill with which the curving lines have been put on."

"Why was the picture made here?" mused Brad. "Why inside the hogan?"

"I think I can guess the answer," Mr. Hatfield replied. "Navajo sand paintings usually are done inside a hogan—often in the home of the person for whom a 'cure' is sought."

"And the custom is to destroy the painting before the day is done," Mr. Holloway added. "By tomorrow morning, we may find this picture wrecked as were the others."

"Gosh, I hope not!" Dan exclaimed. "This painting is the best one yet."

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"It will be just the thing to set off our handicraft exhibition at the pow-wow tomorrow," Brad declared. "We'll really have something nifty to show the Den 1 Cubs when they show up for the canoe race!"

"Can't we take turns guarding the hogan tonight?" suggested Mack. "I'm willing to take a trick."

Mr. Hatfield turned down the proposal. "Your parents wouldn't want you up all night," he said. "Furthermore, if you did stay up, you'd be no good for the pow-wow."

"But we don't want to lose this sand painting, Mr. Hatfield."

"Tell you what," Mr. Holloway volunteered. "My house is just up the hill, so it won't be a hardship for me to keep watch. I won't guarantee to stay here all night, or to prevent destruction of the painting. But I'm willing to check occasionally."

Mr. Hatfield and the Cubs thought the Den Dad would be taking too much upon himself. However, he insisted he wanted to assume guard duty, so finally it was agreed that he should assume responsibility for watching the river camp that night.

"Now, hike for home, boys," Mr. Hatfield directed when the matter had been settled. "Get a lot of sleep tonight. Remember, tomorrow is the big day."

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The Cubs were thoroughly familiar with the program that had been planned. Early morning hours would be spent in last-minute preparations. The pow-wow, a money raising project, would start before noon and continue into the early afternoon. Parents and friends of both dens had been invited to attend.

In addition to an exhibition of craft items, a canoe race, and minor athletic events, the organization had planned an elaborate ceremonial. All Cubs planned to wear Indian costumes which they had made.

As a climax to the gathering, there was to be guitar music around a camp fire and the serving of "treats" from a chuck wagon.

A silver plaque would be awarded the den which won the highest number of points in both craft and athletic events.

Altogether, the Cubs felt that the pow-wow would be one of the most successful ceremonial affairs the organization ever had held. As an added attraction, the leaders had planned a side trip to the ravine where the parents and Den 1 boys for the first time would be given opportunity to view the mysterious carved face.

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"I wish we had found out who carved the big head," Dan remarked regretfully. "I'll bet it was the same person who made this sand painting."

"And very likely the same one who is hiding in the cave," Brad muttered.

"What was that?" Midge demanded, not catching the mumbled words.

"Oh, nothing, just talking to myself," Brad answered. He knew that Mr. Hatfield was not yet ready to reveal to the Cubs all of the observations made in the cave. Therefore, he remained silent.

Now that it was decided Mr. Holloway should remain to guard the camp, the Cubs were without means of transportation into Webster City. Mrs. Holloway, however, offered to drive them into town. All reached their homes a little late, but in time for dinner.

"See you tomorrow early," Dan told Brad as they parted for the night. "We've got a busy day ahead of us."

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"Get a good night's rest," Brad advised. "Mr. Hatfield is putting us into the canoe race as a team. Midge will be a substitute."

Dan was pleased to learn that he and Brad had been chosen to represent the den in the all-important race. The announcement was not exactly a surprise. For a long while everyone

had taken it for granted that the two Cubs would be selected. By far, they were the best canoeists, with Midge a close second to Dan.

"I'll see you in the morning," Dan bade his friend goodbye.

True to his promise, he turned in very early after putting a few finishing touches on his Indian costume. When the alarm went off at seven o'clock the next morning, he was out of bed in a flash, ready and eager for a full day.

"You're certainly brimming with pep today," his mother observed as he raced down the stairs for breakfast. "It's a beautiful morning too."

Dan quickly assembled his belongings to take to Mr. Holloway's place.

"Brad and I want to get there early," he explained. "We've been assigned to buy all the groceries and take them out to Mrs. Holloway."

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"Do you need help getting supplies to the camp?" his mother inquired. "I can borrow the car, if necessary."

"Brad and I won't have more than we can carry," Dan answered. "Thanks, a lot, Mom. You'll be at the pow-wow?"

"I wouldn't miss it, Dan. I aim to see you win that canoe race."

"Sure hope I don't let you down, Mom. Or the den," Dan added with a grin. "See you later."

He slammed out of the house, whistling as he went. The morning was bright, with not a hint of a cloud in the sky. Dan drew a deep breath as he started for Brad's house. He felt fine, as if he could whip his weight in Den 1 Cubs!

At the next corner, Dan ran into Red, who had been out making a last minute collection of clothing to be sent to the Navajo reservation.

"I'm on my way to meet Brad and go to the grocery store," Dan told him. "Want to come along?"

"Sure," Red agreed.

Brad was sweeping the garage when the two boys joined him at his home. The job was nearly finished though.

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"Got a list of what we're supposed to buy?" he asked Dan.

Dan produced the scrap of paper Mrs. Holloway had given him the previous night.

"All right, let's go," Brad said, setting his broom against the garage wall. "I'm through here."

The three Cubs walked briskly to the corner grocery where they did most of their buying for the den. As they entered, Brad suddenly gripped Dan's arm so hard that it hurt.

At the counter, buying supplies, were White Nose and Eagle Feather.

Dan and Brad decided to greet the pair casually. Red, however, became greatly excited upon seeing the Indians.

"Let's jump 'em!" he whispered to his companions. "They're the ones who've been making trouble around our camp! Let's tell 'em a thing or two!"

"Quiet!" Dan warned, giving him a hard look.

"Pipe down," Brad muttered. "You want to get us into trouble?"

Red, however, was not to be silenced. Before Brad or Dan could stop him, he walked over to the two Indians. [143]

"Good morning," he said, to attract the attention of the two Indians.

They responded to the greeting without friendliness, continuing with the buying of supplies. Their very indifference further angered Red.

"I want to ask you some questions," he burst out. "And I want some straight answers—see!"

"Red!" Dan remonstrated, trying to grab his arm.

Red pulled away. He had no intention of being silenced.

"First off, I want to know if you and White Nose weren't the ones that wrecked our sand painting and then remade it inside the hogan?" he demanded.

Eagle Feather now paid him the honor of being most attentive. His eyes flickered with interest as he demanded mildly:

"Sand painting?"

"Oh, you needn't pretend you know nothing about it," Red snapped. "You've both been hanging around our camp ever since you came to Webster City!"

"Your sand painting has been redone?" inquired Eagle Feather, speaking with precise English. [144]

"Late yesterday afternoon," Red informed him. "Oh, you know all about it!"

Dan tried vainly to pull his friend away from the grocery counter. But Red, in one of his stubborn moods, would not budge.

"We know nothing about your sand painting," Eagle Feather said distinctly.

"The work was done by an Indian—we know that from the skillful way the picture was put together," Red rattled on. "It must have been you and White Nose."

"We have no skill at sand painting," said Eagle Feather. "We know one who does have cleverness in his hands—"

Red broke in, not giving the Indian an opportunity to finish.

"I'll bet you've been living in the river cave on the park reservation," he went on.

By this time Dan and Brad were thoroughly exasperated by the rash manner in which Red was revealing information. They were

particularly annoyed because they could see that their den mate was supplying the Indians with facts of great interest to them.

"Where is this cave of which you speak?" Eagle Feather asked.

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Dan stepped on Red's foot so hard that he howled with pain.

"Button your flapping lips!" Dan hissed into his ear.

Belatedly, Red realized that he had talked too much. He lapsed into a crestfallen silence.

But the damage had been done. Eagle Feather and White Nose were keen enough to know that Dan and Brad had sought to prevent their friend from revealing the exact location of the cave. They did not ask for more information.

Instead, they spoke together in their own language. Then without completing their purchases or paying for the ones already ordered, they hurriedly left the store.

"Now what got into them?" the storekeeper demanded, scratching his head. "They order groceries and then go off without taking 'em along."

"And what was the idea of stepping on my foot?" Red demanded indignantly of his friends.

"We ought to have stepped on your tongue," Brad retorted. "You've done it now!"

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"Done what?"

"You had to blurt out about that cave."

"Well, I thought they knew about it, and the sand painting too."

"You thought wrong," Brad said furiously. "You just fed them a lot of useful information. Now, unless I'm tangled up, they're out for mischief."

"Mischief?" Red echoed blankly. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Those Indians came here looking for someone," Brad told him. "When you mentioned the sand-painting and the cave, you evidently gave them just the clues they needed."

"And now they're on the way to find that cave," Dan added. "If they should find the man they're looking for there—wow! Fireworks!"

"Gee, I didn't know," Red mumbled. "I'm sorry."

Brad thought fast. He handed the grocer the list of supplies, asking him to fill the order as quickly as he could.

"We've got to get out to the camp right away," he told the other two Cubs. "White Nose and Eagle Feather are looking for trouble. If they find the cave and the medicine man they're after, there's no telling what they may do! We've got to get there first and warn him!"

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CHAPTER 15

THE MAN IN THE CAVE

Now that it was too late to recall the information so carelessly given, Red was distressed by his slip of tongue.

"What'll we do?" he asked helplessly. "Can't we stop those Indians?"

Dan already had rushed to the grocery store door. By this time the two Indians were across the street, walking very rapidly. He called to them, but they paid no heed.

"We've got to find either Mr. Hatfield or Mr. Holloway right away," he declared. "If we don't—well, Brad's right—no telling what may happen."

The three Cubs were deeply worried, for White Nose and Eagle Feather plainly were being driven by thoughts of revenge.

"What's all this about anyhow?" Red demanded. "Why are you both so scared they'll go to the cave?"

"There's a lot you don't know," Brad shot back. "Furthermore, Dan and I haven't time to explain things now. Come on! We've got to get out to camp right away or there may be no pow-wow today."

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Decidedly crestfallen to think he had made a serious blunder, Red said no more. The three Cubs quickly paid for the groceries, and with the sacks, started off at a fast walk for the Holloway place at the edge of the park preserve.

Enroute, Brad and Dan told Red of their fear that the man sought by the two Indians might be hiding in the cave.

"No one was there when we explored yesterday," Dan admitted. "All the same, Mr. Hatfield found plenty of evidence someone had been living there recently."

"What d'you think would happen if White Nose and Eagle Feather find the cave?" Red speculated uneasily.

"No telling," Brad answered. He quickened his pace. "You heard that story they told about the stolen turquoise toad."

"Gosh! You think the medicine man they're after may be hiding in the cave?"

"We're wondering, that's all. If White Nose and Eagle Feather should come upon the fellow unexpectedly—well—"

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"But if he stole the turquoise maybe he deserves to be punished," Red argued.

"Maybe," Brad shrugged. "But if I'm any judge, those Indians will do their punishing first and ask questions afterwards."

"They had knives in their belts," Red admitted with a shiver.

Reaching the Holloway home, the Cubs rapped

on the door. Mrs. Holloway did not answer. Noticing that the garage door was open and the car missing, Brad deduced that the Den Mother had gone on a quick errand. But they did not have time to await her return.

"We'll have to leave the groceries here on the porch," he told the other two. "We've got to find Mr. Holloway. I don't suppose Mr. Hatfield has come out to the camp yet."

Depositing their packages, the Cubs hastened down to the river's edge. The camp was entirely deserted. They saw that Mr. Holloway had been working there, however, for wood had been gathered for the ceremonial campfire.

Dan peered inside the hogan. The sand painting remained in perfect condition. In fact, the entire camp looked in readiness for the pow-wow. Yet no one was around.

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"It's too early," he said. "Mr. Holloway probably went into town and the others aren't here yet. We'll have to wait."

Brad paced nervously in front of the hogan, trying to decide what to do. As Den Chief, the decision rested entirely upon him. The safe, conservative thing to do, of course, was just to wait for Mr. Holloway or Mr. Hatfield and let them take over.

On the other hand, he was afraid that any delay might be serious. Although White Nose and Eagle Feather didn't know the exact location of the cave, it wouldn't take them long to find it, now that they had a clue upon which to work. If the mysterious occupant of the cave were to be warned in time, it would have to be immediately.

"I'm going to try to get to the cavern ahead of White Nose and Eagle Feather," he announced with sudden decision. "With luck, I may make it."

"We'll go with you," Dan insisted. "It's not safe alone."

Not wasting a minute, the three started off through the woods. They were a considerable distance from camp before they remembered that they had not left a note for Mr. Holloway or Mr. Hatfield to explain their absence.

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"We may get back before they show up," Brad said. "I hope so, but there's no telling what we may run into. I sure hope we aren't making a mistake starting off this way."

In an attempt to take a short route to the cave, Brad chose an inland route. There was no marked trail. Every inch of the distance was a battle against the underbrush. When finally the boys emerged on the beach, not more than a hundred yards from the cave, they were worn from their struggles.

Dan suddenly reached out and jerked Red back into the bushes.

"Down!" he commanded.

Red ducked low and then demanded in a whisper:

"What's the idea?"

"Look out on the river and you'll see!"

Red and Brad both peered through a gap in the foliage. Some distance upstream, but well within their range of vision, White Nose and Eagle Feather could be seen paddling close to shore in a red canoe.

"They're searching for the cave all right!" Brad observed. "If they see us now, it will be a dead give-away."

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The Cubs knew that their best bet was to lie low and wait. Accordingly, they flattened themselves on the earth, at intervals raising up briefly to survey the slowly moving canoe.

"They're starting the other way now," Brad observed in relief. "They haven't found the cave entrance yet, and they may miss it."

"Think it's safe to duck in there now?" Dan asked.

"Let's wait a little longer," Brad cautioned. "Until they get around that bend in the river, we'll be exposed, once we come out of hiding."

The Cubs waited, nervously aware of how fast time was passing. By now the sun was well up over the treetops, beating down mercilessly upon their backs.

"We won't have too much time, you know," Dan reminded his companions. "The pow-wow starts at eleven sharp. Mr. Hatfield will be chewing his fingernails if we don't get back in plenty of time."

Brad remained silent, his gaze on the canoe. Now that they were near the mouth of the cave, he wondered if he had been rash to propose entering it without Mr. Hatfield or Mr. Holloway along.

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Even in broad daylight the cave looked forbidding, and this time the Cubs were not supplied with flashlights or candles.

"We can give it up and go back," he suggested. "After all, White Nose and Eagle Feather haven't found the entranceway. They may miss it entirely."

"No chance of that, if they come back this way," Dan said significantly.

"The mouth is well guarded by bushes."

"Yeah," Dan agreed, "but look sharp and tell me what you see."

Both Brad and Red peered intently toward the cave entrance. At first they noticed nothing unusual. Then they noted a thin wisp of black smoke issuing from the jagged mouth.

"Someone's got a fire in there!" Red exclaimed.

"And that smoke can be seen out on the river," Brad added in alarm. "This settles it! We'll have to go in there and warn the guy. I've got a hunch Mr. Hatfield wouldn't want us to get mixed up in this business, but what else can we do?"

Neither Red nor Dan were eager to enter the dark cave, yet they agreed with Brad that the

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occupant should be warned of his danger.

"Let's get on with it," Brad said briskly. "You two can wait here and I'll go in alone."

"Nothing doing," Dan rejected the proposal. "We'll stick with you. Won't we, Red?"

"Sure," the latter agreed, though without enthusiasm. "Lead on!"

By this time the canoe bearing White Nose and Eagle Feather had rounded the river bend and was out of sight.

Rolling up the trouser legs of their Cub uniforms, the boys removed shoes and socks, hiding the latter in the bushes.

Then with Brad leading, the three scrambled over the jagged rocks to the cave entrance. As they stood there a moment, gathering courage, a little puff of black smoke issued forth.

"Someone's in there, all right," Brad muttered. "You fellows follow behind me, and try not to make any noise. We want to find out what we're running into before we reveal ourselves."

The swift-moving underground stream felt icy cold as the boys stepped into it. Red, who never had been inside the cave, felt especially nervous. He kept close to Dan, occasionally bumping into him.

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Without a light to guide them, the Cubs could neither see nor be seen. However, the bright mouth provided dim illumination for a short distance. After that, they were in complete and rather terrifying darkness.

Brad, who kept ahead of his companions, found the smoke increasingly unpleasant as he moved deeper into the tunnel. He covered his face with a handkerchief to ward off any inclination to cough.

Approaching the inner rock ledge above the stream, Brad signalled his companions to be very cautious.

The smoke had become thick, and ahead he could see the faint glow of a fire. From the odor of the smoke, he knew that game was being cooked.

Fancy was not playing a trick upon him, for as the smoke cleared, he distinctly made out the figure of a man crouched over the fire.

The problem of how to make themselves known to the stranger solved itself most unexpectedly. Red tried to smother a cough and could not do so.

In the silent cave, the sound echoed loudly. Brad, Dan and Red flattened themselves against the rough limestone wall. Too late!

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The man crouching over the fire had heard the cough. He started up, staring into the darkness, directly at the three frightened Cubs.

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DANGER

Brad did not know whether or not the old Indian actually saw them in the darkness. But he decided to take no chance of being mistaken for an enemy.

"Hello," he said, and his voice echoed weirdly in the cavern, "cooking your dinner?"

With a show of friendliness, he stepped out into the glare of the fire. Dan and Red followed his example, though not without misgiving. Would the old cave dweller accept them as friends? Or would he be hostile? In the darkness they could not see whether or not he wore a knife at his belt.

For a full minute, the old Indian stood tense on the rock floor, staring at the three Cubs. In the glare of the fire they saw that he was gaunt and lean, with a bony, unwrinkled face. Prominent cheek bones pulled the skin tightly.

"Good morning," Brad said, gaining confidence as the Indian made no hostile move. "Cooking a rabbit, I see."

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The stranger replied with a deep-throated grunt which the Cubs took for assent. He did not seem unfriendly, however, only guarded and a trifle dazed.

Oddly enough, the old Indian did not question the boys as to their unexpected presence in the cave. Apparently accepting them as friends, he motioned for them to share the warmth of his fire.

The Cubs squatted around it, watching the old fellow rotate the cooking rabbit on a crudely fashioned spit.

Without saying anything, Dan nudged Red to direct his attention toward the wall behind them. Not far from the pile of balsam boughs lay the Navajo blanket which had disappeared from the Cub camp a few days earlier!

Brad cleared his throat and after telling his name, tried to draw the old Indian into conversation. Aside from learning that the other's name was Miquel and that he was a Navajo of the Beebitchni clan, he made little headway.

Paying scant heed to the Cubs, old Miquel carried on a sing-sing monologue in a tongue the boys could not understand.

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At intervals he broke into English, but the words made no sense to the three listeners.

"Turquoise Mountain, king of mountains, everlastingly beautiful," the old Indian muttered.

"So what?" Red mumbled into Dan's ear. "What sort of jargon is this?"

Old Miquel did not appear to hear Red's remark.

"It does me no harm, no harm," he rambled on, "for I am Holy with the Fire."

"He's out of his head," Red whispered to Dan.

"He's completely lost his buttons!"

The old Indian had arisen from the fire, turning dramatically toward the east. He made a picture as he stood there in the flickering firelight, his calico shirt open at the throat. In one ear he wore a single turquoise ornament.

"The male porcupine eats gum," he intoned. "I do it in a Holy way."

"He's reciting parts of a chant, I think," Brad volunteered his opinion. "Miquel hardly knows we're here. Do you Miquel?"

The Indian went on with his chant, not even glancing at Brad or giving any indication that he had heard. [161]

"He's in a mental fog, all right," Red insisted. "I'll bet though, that he's that old medicine man White Nose and Eagle Feather are after!"

Hearing the two names spoken, Miquel paused in his weird, meaningless chanting to stare at Red. But a responsive thought chain almost immediately was broken. He seemed to forget the two familiar names as quickly as he heard them and went on with his prattle:

"I am thinking of crossing the river.... I am thinking of going home."

"If White Nose and Eagle Feather jump him for stealing, he won't go anywhere!" Red remarked uneasily. "Brad, tell him why we came."

"I'll try. I don't know whether or not I can get it across to him."

The Den Chief began very patiently, attempting to make Miquel understand that if he remained in the cave he might be in grave danger.

"White Nose and Eagle Feather are looking for you," he tried to explain. "They're hunting for the entrance to this cave right now. We came here to warn you."

"That's right," chimed in Dan, trying to drive home the point. "We don't know what you've done, but White Nose and Eagle Feather are out for revenge. Unless you want to get into trouble with them, you'd better move on to another hiding place." [162]

Old Miquel had listened attentively to the two Cubs. They were hopeful that he had understood at least part of what they had said. But when he spoke, they knew they had completely failed.

"Rabbit almost done now," he said cheerfully. "We eat."

Removing the meat from the spit, he divided it into four equal parts. Brad and Red refused a share. Old Miquel's hurt was so apparent that Dan accepted his share. However, he only made a pretense of eating, as he watched the old Indian ravenously devour the remainder of the food.

"He's half starved," Brad observed in deep concern. "We've got to get him out of here."

"How?" Dan asked. "He hasn't seemed to understand anything we've said to him."

Brad waited until Miquel had nearly finished eating. Then he touched him on the shoulder, saying in a friendly way:

"Come with us, Miquel, to our camp. We're friends."

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"Friends," the old fellow echoed in a child-like way.

But when Brad and Dan attempted to lead him away from the fire, he pulled away from them.

"He won't leave here," Red muttered. "What's the use trying to help him?"

"We have to," Brad said firmly. "You can see he's half starved. If those two Indians should come upon him here, there's no telling what might happen."

"Brad's right," Dan agreed. "We ought to get him out of here. But how to do it?"

The Cubs took turns trying to make the old Indian understand. It was so much breath wasted.

"He acts like a sleep walker," Brad remarked in perplexity. "Never ran into anything like it before in all my life."

"Do you suppose he suffered an injury?" Dan speculated. "He doesn't seem to have much of any memory of the past. He just keeps mumbling those chants."

The Cubs did not know what to do. From Old Miquel's appearance and actions, they were satisfied that he was the medicine man for whom White Nose and Eagle Feather searched so ruthlessly. They suspected too that he was the one who had carved the remarkable face on the wall of the ravine. Likewise, he was the one who had taken their Navajo blanket and possibly food from the camp.

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Had he also completed so expertly the sand painting after perhaps destroying Dan's picture?

In the cave there was considerable evidence that Miquel was indeed a man of many talents. On one of the walls, he had marked a strange design with charcoal. In another place, he had drawn characters not unlike those which appeared on the completed sand painting.

"We're wasting our time trying to make him understand," Brad finally said. "We can't persuade him to leave, that's certain. Now what'll we do?"

"Leave him here," Red suggested. "He'll get along all right until we can get back to camp and tell Mr. Hatfield."

"He'll be safe providing White Nose and Eagle Feather don't come along. But if they should find the entrance to this cave—wow!"

"Why borrow trouble?" shrugged Red, always inclined to take the optimistic view. "They were a long distance down stream when we saw 'em last."

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"But they may return."

"And if they do, they'll notice smoke coming out of the cave entrance," Dan predicted. "I guess we'll have to take that chance though."

Brad nodded and warned: "We can't stay here much longer, unless we want to miss the Pack pow-wow. We've done our best to tip him off."

"It's getting late," Dan said uneasily. "You know it took quite awhile to get to the cave."

"And no one knows we're here," Brad agreed. "We'll have to go. Right now."

The Cubs were reluctant to leave Old Miquel alone, for he appeared in a half-dazed condition. They were certain that he needed not only food and better living quarters, but medical attention.

Nevertheless, it seemed hopeless to try to persuade him to leave with them. Their best bet, they thought, would be to go for assistance and return as quickly as they could.

The three Cubs tried to tell Miquel of their intention. It was obvious, however, that he did not comprehend.

They were ready to leave when Dan's keen ears detected an unusual sound in the cavern.

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"Listen!" he whispered.

Brad and Red already were aware of the sound at the entranceway to the cavern. They distinctly could hear splashing as if more than one person were wading along the passageway.

"Someone's coming!" Dan warned.

"Those Indians probably," Brad whispered back. "They've found the entranceway! Now we're in for it."

Old Miquel also had heard the sound, for he listened attentively, though without undue interest. After a moment, he went on eating his meal with complete unconcern.

"The goof doesn't even know he may be in danger," Red muttered. "What are we going to do? Those guys may prove nasty."

Brad was worried. Plainly the men were moving closer, for the splashing noises now could be heard distinctly. They knew one of the men had stumbled over a rock, for they heard him grunt as he picked himself up from the water.

The boys looked about for a hiding place.

Their only chance of avoiding detection was to step far back against the cave wall, away from the glare of the firelight.

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"Quick!" Brad warned.

To try to take Old Miquel with them was out of the question. Retreating, the three Cubs sought the innermost recess of the cave. Flattening themselves against the moist wall, they breathlessly waited.

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RED'S MISTAKE

Scarcely had Brad, Dan and Red taken refuge than two shadowy figures emerged through the tunnel.

Watching tensely from a niche in the limestone shelf, they saw Eagle Feather climb nimbly from the floor of the underground stream to the rim of the circular chamber.

He stood there silhouetted in the opening, the firelight flickering upon his fierce features. In his hand was a drawn knife.

Seeing the weapon, Red clutched Dan's hand in a tight grip. He held his breath, fearful lest he draw attention to himself or his mates.

The Cubs were more afraid for Miquel than for themselves. But the old Indian medicine man remained undisturbed.

Observing White Nose and Eagle Feather on the ledge above him, he murmured, "Ah-hah-lah-nih," in affectionate greeting.

White Nose and Eagle Feather leaped down in front of the old Indian, their attitude hostile. They spoke rapidly, fiercely in their own tongue.

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Brad, Dan and Red could not understand what was being said, though they caught one word "turquoise."

They guessed, however, that the two Indians were accusing the old medicine man of having stolen the turquoise toad from the tribe.

Old Miquel began shaking his head in a bewildered way. Abandoning the fire, he backed away from his accusers.

Step by step, White Nose and Eagle Feather pursued him.

Old Miquel backed nearer and nearer the edge of the ledge.

To the horror of the Cubs, he suddenly toppled backwards into the deep pool. He struggled briefly and went down.

Before Brad and Dan could make a move, White Nose leaped into the water. He submerged, and seemingly could not find Old Miquel's body. In a moment though, he was back on the surface, holding Old Miquel by a lock of his long, black hair.

Eagle Feather helped to haul the old man out on the ledge.

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"He's done for," he said, speaking in English. "His head was gashed on a rock."

"The Gods have spoken," muttered White Nose. "Vengeance is not to be ours. They have punished him for robbing his people of the Turquoise Toad."

"Let us go," replied Eagle Feather.

To the horror of the watching Cubs, the two Indians made no attempt to revive the old man.

Taking it for granted that he already was beyond help, they quitted the cavern.

Brad, Dan and Red waited only until they were certain that the two Indians did not intend to return.

Then, they went quickly to the old man who lay motionless on the ledge. Brad stripped off his jacket and placed it over the wet body. The old fellow did not stir.

"He wasn't under water long enough to have taken much into his lungs," the boy declared, feeling of the Indian's pulse. "Got a handkerchief?"

Dan produced one which the older boy used to staunch the flow of blood at Old Miquel's temple.

"He must have hit his head on a rock all right," he declared. "But the cut isn't deep. It's mostly a flesh wound."

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"How's his pulse?" Red inquired anxiously. "Is he still alive?"

"I think so. The pulse is so weak though that I hardly can catch it. White Nose and Eagle Feather evidently thought he was dead or they wouldn't have gone off."

"What'll we do?" Dan asked. "Go for help?"

"He needs a doctor right away. But I'm afraid to leave him here alone."

"If he revives, he might roll off into the pool," Dan agreed. "Then he'd sure drown."

The three Cubs huddled about the prone figure, uncertain what to do. Aside from their fears for Old Miquel they knew that their own long absence from the Cub camp might have occasioned considerable alarm.

By now they had lost all track of time, but they were certain more than two hours had elapsed since they had left Webster City. Soon it would be time for the Pack pow-pow to start. With three Cubs absent, the Den 1 boys would be frantic.

Dan searched in the darkness until he found the Navajo blanket which belonged to Professor Sarazen. This he used as an additional covering over the old Indian.

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"We can't leave him alone, that's sure," Brad said with decision. "Dan, you and Red, hot-foot it for the camp. I'll stay here."

"You're needed more than I am to run off the events and take part in the canoe race," Dan replied. "Without you, Den 2 hasn't a chance."

"Getting help for Old Miquel is more important than winning a competition, Dan."

"Of course," the younger boy agreed simply. "But you'll be needed while Midge can substitute for me in the race. See what I mean?"

"The Pack comes first," Red sided with Dan. "I'd stay and let Dan go only—well, I might as well admit it, I'm scared to death to be here alone."

Neither Dan nor Brad made light of Red's fears for they knew that even an hour's wait in the cave could prove a terrifying experience.

"We're wasting valuable time," Dan urged. "Get going, you two. I don't mind staying. Honestly, I don't."

"Want Red to wait with you?"

"No. If the pow-wow is run off, he'll be needed in camp. No use tying him down here when he couldn't do any good. I'll make out."

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"We'll hurry as fast as we can," Brad promised. "The second we reach camp, we'll send a doctor and some stretcher bearers."

The Den Chief clasped Dan's hand for an instant, well aware that the younger boy deliberately had sacrificed himself that his Cubmates might have a better chance to win.

"If Old Miquel should come to, he might get rough," Brad warned in parting. "Don't take chances. If he makes trouble, just get out of the cave as fast as you can."

"Sure," Dan promised. "Don't worry about me. I'll be okay. Just get to camp as fast as you can and tell Mr. Hatfield what happened."

With reluctance, Red and Brad started off through the tunnel, not at all sure that they were doing right in leaving Dan behind. But then, they had no choice. Old Miquel must have medical attention at once, or he might never recover.

At the mouth of the cave, the two Cubs halted briefly to take bearings. White Nose and Eagle Feather had vanished. The sun was well up in the sky, indicating that the hour was even later than they had anticipated.

"Gosh, I'll bet the pow-wow has started!" Red exclaimed. "We've got to get back fast."

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Brad edged around the ledge to the beach. He was starting off the way they had come when Red halted him with a suggestion.

"I know a shorter way," he insisted. "It's through the woods, and hard going for a short distance. But we can cut off at least twenty minutes."

"You're sure of the trail?" Brad asked dubiously.

"It isn't marked, but I know this section. Besides, one can't get lost in the park."

"Don't you believe it!" Brad replied. "Maybe not permanently lost, but one could lose a lot of time wandering around looking for a main road or a marked path."

"We're not far from our camp, Brad. I'm sure of the way."

"Okay then, lead off. The important thing is to get back as fast as we can. Old Miquel's life may depend upon it."

Confidently, Red started off, circling behind the beach into a dense forest of towering trees.

At first the going was quite easy, but as they moved farther and farther from the water front, the underbrush became more difficult. Soon they

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encountered a swampy area which slowed them down.

"Say, we're not making any time this way," Brad protested, wading through a boggy place. "Let's strike back toward the beach."

"The going will be easier as soon as we're through this," Red insisted. "I remember. Even though it's hard going for a little while, we'll save time."

Brad had his own opinion. However, realizing that it was too late to turn back now without losing more precious minutes, he kept silent. He blamed himself severely for having listened to Red. From past experience he should have known that the younger boy's enthusiasm often carried him away.

The swampy area behind them, the Cubs looked in vain for a marked trail.

"We should have hit it right here," Red declared, deeply troubled. "Well, it can't be too far ahead."

"You're not losing your way, are you?" Brad demanded. "Dan's back there in the cave, waiting and—"

"I'll get you into camp," Red cut in though with less confidence. "I may be a little mixed, but I'm sure of my directions. We'll strike the marked trail any minute now."

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On they plowed, past fallen trees and then through another stretch of mosquito swamp. By this time Red was mud to his knees. The sleeve of his jacket was torn, and his face had been scratched by brambles. Brad was in little better condition.

For awhile Red kept doggedly on, the older boy plodding behind him. Then they came to another much larger area of fairly deep swamp. Both boys halted, gazing at each other in despair.

"We're lost," Red burst out, "and it's all my fault. I thought I knew the way. Now I'm mixed up."

Brad did not blame his friend for he knew he had tried his best.

"We can't cross this swamp area," he said quietly. "We made a bad mistake leaving the beach route. Now we'll have to retrace part of our way, and try to hit the old trail."

"That will delay us a lot. And Dan—he'll be expecting us."

"I know," Brad said grimly. "We've let him down. But it can't be helped. We made one mistake. The important thing is not to make two of 'em. With luck, we'll still reach camp before it's too late."

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CHAPTER 18 THE POW-WOW

Mr. Hatfield stood in the doorway of the hogan, staring past the Holloway home on the hill toward the main road.

"It's not like Brad and Dan to be late," he remarked to Mr. Holloway. "I can't guess what's keeping them."

"Red's not here either," the Den Dad returned looking worried. "The boys were here early—we know that, because a sack of food was left on our porch. But what's become of 'em?"

The sun had risen high and the hour set for the start of the Pack pow-wow now approached. All the Cubs shared Mr. Hatfield's uneasiness. Without Dan and Brad, particularly the latter, it would be most difficult to carry on the planned ceremonies and competitions.

Already the Den 1 boys were starting to arrive for the big meet, many of them with their parents.

"I've telephoned to their homes," Mr. Holloway added. "All three boys left early, presumably for here. We know they arrived, only to vanish."

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"Brad and Dan wouldn't have wandered off without good reason," Mr. Hatfield declared. "I'm sure they'll be along any minute."

Outwardly showing no uneasiness, the two Cub leaders went ahead with last-minute preparations for the pow-wow. As the hour grew later, more and more parents appeared upon the scene.

Fred, Chips, Mack and Midge were on hand, all four togged out in Indian costumes they had made themselves.

"We can delay the start a little while longer by taking the parents to the ravine to see the big carved face," Mr. Hatfield said. "By the time everyone gets back, the boys surely will be here."

Mr. Holloway guided the assembled parents to the cliff. Deliberately, he made the trip a slow one. But when the group finally returned to camp, Red, Dan and Brad had not put in an appearance.

"It's no use waiting any longer," Mr. Holloway decided. "We'll have to go ahead without them. Frankly, I'm worried. Something serious must have come up, or they'd be here."

The ceremony began with the Cubs from both dens parading in a circle, about the camp fire.

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Mr. Hatfield as Akela then emerged from the hogan.

Solemnly, he raised his hand in greeting.

"How!"

"How!" responded all the Cub Scout Indians.

"You my Indian brothers are the true first Americans," Mr. Hatfield recited.

"How!" again answered the Cubs.

"Do you promise to continue to do your best to do your duty to God and your country?"

"HOW!" the Cubs shouted, howling so loud that the cry reechoed through the forest.

Mr. Hatfield directed the boys to seat themselves about the camp fire.

Mr. Holloway, who had a deep base voice, then led the assembly in singing "Home on the Range," repeating it twice in the hope of gaining more time.

Next came the branding ceremony, or the induction of new families into the Pack. All regular Cubs were recognized as such by branding them as "old hands." Boys who had qualified for advancement in rank next came forward to receive certificates and badges.

Though Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway ran off the ceremonies as slowly as possible, all too soon it came time for the competitive events.

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"Without Dan and Brad, we haven't a chance to win," Midge remarked to Chips. "It makes me sick! After all the work we've done. Then to lose out to Den 1!"

"We haven't lost yet."

"No, but we will. You know that. Look at Ross Langdon! He's strutting around like a peacock. Figures Den 1 already has won the silver plaque."

Deep gloom had settled upon all the Den 2 Cubs. Their uneasiness was shared not only by Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway, but by parents of the three missing boys. Repeatedly, the grown-ups whispered together, apparently uncertain whether to continue the pow-wow or to halt it and organize a search for Brad, Dan and Red.

It was Dan's mother who decided the matter.

"The pow-wow must go on as planned," she declared. "My son wouldn't have disappeared without good reason. I'm confident he'll get word to us as quickly as he can. Meanwhile, he'd want the affair to continue exactly as planned."

Judging of the various handicraft items next began. Above all else, the magnificent sand painting for which Dan had been responsible, drew favorable comment.

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Unquestionably, it would have won top honors. However, Mr. Hatfield explained that only the planning work had been Dan's and that therefore the den could not fairly claim the exhibit for points.

Judges awarded Den 1 ten points for a carved tom-tom, eight for an elaborate Indian head-dress, and three for a skillfully painted paddle. Excellent examples of Indian weaving brought an additional five points.

"That's a total of 26 already," Fred muttered in alarm. "We'll be whitewashed!"

"We'll pick up," Midge insisted, with a confidence he did not feel.

Judges now were grading the Den 2 exhibits. With the sand painting eliminated from the entries, the Cubs of Den 2 could not expect to attain as many points as their competitors. Their

only hope of winning the pow-wow rested in the athletic competition.

Chips was highly elated to win ten points for the paddle he had decorated. Fred added five points for having the best Indian costume. Brad, though not present, was awarded eight points for a cleverly made bracelet.

"Twenty-three points to Den 1's twenty-six," Mack added them up. "We're behind, but it could be worse."

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The first athletic event was called a "Medicine Man's Rattle with the Evil Spirits."

Mr. Hatfield produced a three-foot length of broomstick. The Den 1 boys stood on one side, grasping the stick with both hands. On the other opposing side were Mack, Fred, Midge and Chips.

Though Den 1 to show its sportsmanship, limited their competitors to the same number of boys, they were able to select their strongest Cubs. Den 2 had no such choice.

Without Brad and Dan, they were greatly handicapped.

At the signal from Mr. Hatfield, each side tried to touch an end of the stick to the floor. Den 1 succeeded almost at once, achieving another ten points.

"Thirty-six to twenty-three!" Ross Langdon rubbed it in. "Why, this isn't even a competition."

"Quiet, you!" Midge growled. "It could be different if all our Cubs were here."

"So you're already cooking up an alibi?" Ross gloated. "Poor losers!"

"That's not so!" Midge retorted furiously. "You're welcome to the silver plaque if you can win it. We've beaten you enough times before."

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"Brad and Dan didn't show today because they're afraid of being licked in the canoe race," Ross went on.

"You know that's not true."

"Then why didn't they come?"

"I don't know," Midge admitted. "They may be here yet."

"They'd better hurry then. The pow-wow's nearly over."

The next scheduled event was an Indian dance. The Den 1 group offered a rather uninspired number, characterized by a noisy beating of tom-toms.

By contrast, Den 2 had planned an elaborate version of the Navajo fire dance, using flashlights instead of torches. Brad was to have led this number.

"Fred, you'll have to act as leader," Mr. Hatfield told his son. "Think you can do it?"

"I'll sure try," Fred promised grimly.

The four Den 2 Cubs threw themselves into the dance whole-heartedly. So spirited was their performance that all the parents applauded vigorously.

After a brief conference, judges announced that Den 2 had captured the event, winning back the ten points they had lost.

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"Thirty-six to thirty-three!" Chips chortled, taking heart. "Say, we still have a chance to win this old pow-wow!"

"Only one more event remains," Mack pointed out. "That's the canoe race."

"Then we're sunk," Mack groaned. "Without Brad and Dan, we may as well give up without even entering the event."

"A Cub doesn't quit," Midge said severely.

"Who can we put in besides you?" Mack demanded. "You're pretty fair, but there's no one else to back you up. Chips, Fred or me—we're not in the class of Dan or Brad."

Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway held a brief conference concerning the final event on the program. They too were fully aware that without Brad or Dan, the competition could not be won.

"Even if we do trail miserably, we'll enter the event," Mr. Hatfield decided. "We can't have Den 1 saying we're poor sports."

"Midge is our best bet. He's very nearly as good as Dan."

"But not the equal of Brad," Mr. Hatfield said ruefully. "And we have no one else. Neither Mack or Chips is strong and they're only fair swimmers. Fred can swim well enough, but he hasn't practiced paddling enough to develop much skill."

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"We have no choice," the Den Dad replied. "It will have to be Fred."

A short course had been marked on the river with buoys. In this, Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway had taken no part, leaving the matter entirely to Den 1 leaders.

The two canoes were carried down to the beach, ready for launching.

"Now remember, boys, this is a friendly competition," Mr. Hatfield warned. "No straining to win. Just take it in your stride."

Fred selected a paddle, his heart thumping. The Den 2 boys were being very decent. Both Midge and Mack had assured him that it didn't matter whether or not the race was lost. But he knew better!

Den 2, especially Dan and Brad, had worked like beavers in the hope of winning the silver plaque.

Now, despite very bad luck, the score stood 33 to 36!

According to the rules, ten points would be awarded the two-man team which won the canoe race. None were to be given for second place.

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So, as it stacked up, the silver plaque and Den

2's honor depended upon winning the competition.

But no one knew better than Fred how hopeless was the prospect. Ross Langdon and another powerfully built Cub, Donald Fall, were to represent Den 1.

The boy watched them as they warmed up a bit, dipping their paddles in perfect unison.

He and Midge could not hope to coordinate their movements, for they never had practiced together. Always it had been taken for granted that if for any reason Dan could not compete, the team would be comprised of Midge and Brad.

"Don't look so worried, son," Mr. Hatfield said, slapping him on the shoulders. "This race is only for fun, you know. Win or lose, just do your best."

"Sure," Fred agreed with a grin. He gripped the paddle so tightly that the knuckles of his hands showed white.

"If Ross and Donald take the lead, don't let it worry you," Mr. Hatfield added. "Just stroke at your own speed."

"Which will be plenty slow," Fred replied. "Den 1 already is starting to celebrate victory."

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It was true that several of the Den 1 Cubs were capering about on the beach, laughing and acting as if the plaque already were theirs.

In the stern of the Den 1 canoe, Ross flashed a confident, almost arrogant smile.

"What we waiting for?" he demanded. "Let's go!"

Sick at heart, Midge and Fred took their own places in the Den 2 canoe. Both crafts prepared to line up at the starting point for the race.

Paddle poised, Midge chanced to raise his eyes to gaze toward the forest. He stiffened into alert attention. Dare he trust his own vision?

Midge brushed a hand across his eyes and looked again. No mistake. From amid the trees emerged two disheveled figures. Red and Brad!

"Wait!" shouted Midge, letting his paddle clatter into the bottom of the canoe. "Hold everything! They're here at last!"

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CHAPTER 19 THREE POINTS

To be left alone in the cave with only the unconscious Miquel for companion, was an eerie experience, Dan discovered.

A dreadful quiet settled upon the dark chamber once Red and Brad had gone. Dan sat with his back against a projecting rock, within reach of the old man, should he stir.

The chill of the cavern began to creep into his bones. He arose to feed the fire, noticing that there was very little wood. Scarcely enough to burn another twenty minutes. He dared not venture in search of more, lest the old Indian fully revive in his absence.

For a long while after his companions had gone, Dan sat listening to the melancholy slap of the waves at the mouth of the cave. He could not estimate time very accurately. But as the fire burned lower, he reasoned that Brad and Red should have reached the camp.

At any moment now, he encouraged himself, help would arrive. He hoped that Brad and Red would get there in time to compete in the pow-wow. If they did, his own sacrifices would be well worth while.

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Old Miquel moaned and rolled over on the rock floor.

Instantly alarmed, Dan got to his feet, to place himself between the man and the edge of the pool.

Feeling inadequate to the situation, he rearranged the blanket, tucking it more closely about the figure. Old Miquel's hands were icy cold and clammy to the touch. The cave was cold and, in addition, the elderly man's clothing was wet.

"He may not last long unless Brad gets back here with help," Dan thought. "Wish I could do something besides just sit and wait."

He took off his own light jacket and wrapped it around Old Miquel. The Indian stirred again, showing signs of regaining consciousness. Encouraged, Dan began to chafe his cold hands, trying to restore circulation.

Time dragged on. The fire died down to struggling coals, leaving the cave colder and more terrifying than ever.

Dan huddled beside Miquel, watching the dark pool. He could hear the underground stream gurgling softly as it disappeared into the bowels of the earth. Now and then an object, a tree twig, a board or a leaf came floating in through the tunnel.

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Already he had made minute inspection of the cave's interior, finding only the remains of food stolen from the Cub's camp. Obviously, Old Miquel had taken it to keep alive. Of worldly possessions, the Indian apparently had none except the clothes on his back.

Dan sat motionless in the gloom, acutely aware of a change in Old Miquel's breathing.

The sound was plainer now, harsh and labored.

"He's coming around," the boy thought uneasily. "I sure hope he doesn't make any trouble. I might not be able to handle him."

Dan remembered Brad's advice to quit the cave if Old Miquel caused trouble. But he had no intention of doing so except in a real emergency.

As the minutes passed, the Indian became increasingly active. At first, he merely tossed his

head from side to side. Then suddenly he sat up, staring at Dan with strange eyes.

Dan's heart began to pound. He checked an almost overpowering urge to turn and flee from the cave.

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After the first surge of panic, he quieted his own fears. Placing a hand on Old Miquel's arm, he said:

"Take it easy. You're all right. Just lie still until help comes."

Dan scarcely expected the old man to understand. Therefore, it came as a surprise when Old Miquel answered in plain though halting English.

"Where—am—I?"

"Why, in the cave," Dan returned.

"Cave?" Old Miquel's gaze began to wander about the moss-covered walls as he sought to regain his bearings.

"Don't you remember what happened here?"

The old Indian shook his head, continuing to stare at Dan.

"Who are you?" he presently managed.

"Dan Carter. I'm a Cub Scout. Don't you remember coming to this cave?"

Again the Indian shook his head. "I must get back to my tribe," he murmured.

Again Dan restrained Old Miquel as he would have arisen.

"You must lie still," he directed. "You've been hurt."

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"Hurt?" Miquel repeated parrot-fashion. "The fall from my horse?"

"A tumble into the pool of this cave," Dan corrected. "You struck your head on a rock or something. What's the last you remember?"

Old Miquel was silent for a long while. Dan thought he never would answer, but finally he said.

"I remember—riding through a canyon. My horse shied at a rattler."

"And that's the very last?" Dan demanded. "Don't you recall anything at all about White Nose and Eagle Feather? Or the face you carved on the ravine?"

"White Nose and Eagle Feather are my brothers."

"They've been after you," Dan informed. "They came all the way from the west, picking up your trail here in Webster City."

From the Indian's expression, the boy knew that his words were not being understood. A theory was taking shape in his own mind. From Miquel's words, he believed that the old medicine man had been injured some time before in a fall from his horse.

This fall, perhaps, had shocked his entire nervous system, causing a lapse of memory.

So perhaps Old Miquel had wandered away from his tribe, unaware of his own identity! Now the fall into the pool and another hard jolt had restored some recollection of the past!

"Don't you recall coming to Webster City?" Dan questioned him.

Once more Old Miquel shook his head negatively.

"Do you remember anything about a turquoise toad?"

At this question, the Indian's entire body seemed to stiffen.

"It was entrusted to my keeping," he replied briefly.

"And where is it now?"

"Where?" Old Miquel probed deep into his memory. "I—I—cannot remember."

"Somewhere in the west perhaps?" Dan prompted. "You didn't bring it with you when you came to Webster City?"

"The turquoise—it was hidden in a safe place. No, that is not right. It was given to the white trader at the reservation store. Now it comes back to me. I feared the toad might be stolen. I gave it to the trader to keep in his store safe until the tribe ceremonial."

"This must have been before your hard fall from the horse," Dan deducted. "But how did you get to Webster City?"

Miquel could not answer. His only recollection other than the fall in the desert, had been a vague memory of having been on a freight train.

Exhausted from the effort required to talk, Old Miquel cringed down into his blanket again. Though he did not lapse into a stupor, he seemed to lose all further interest in his surroundings.

"He doesn't know White Nose and Eagle Feather came here to punish him for stealing the turquoise," Dan thought. "The old fellow's in a bad way. Gosh, what can be keeping Brad and Dan?"

He arose and went to peer down the dark tunnel. Not a sign of any help coming! And yet Brad and Red surely had had more than ample time to get to the Cub camp and return with a stretcher.

Old Miquel apparently had regained his lost memory, but nevertheless, he was in a serious condition physically. He needed medical attention and he needed it right away.

Dan was quite sure he had figured out the real story behind the old Indian. Undoubtedly, Old Miquel had told the truth about placing the turquoise toad in the trader's safe. When the old medicine man was better, he should be able to furnish clues which would result in recovery of the tribal treasure.

"He must have wandered off the reservation, not even knowing who he was," Dan reasoned. "The tribe members couldn't understand his strange disappearance. Naturally, they figured he'd made off with the turquoise. So White Nose and Eagle Feather were sent to trail him."

Dan was meditating upon the old Indian's interesting past, when he heard a slight scuffing noise in the passageway.

He listened eagerly. Had help come at last, or might it be White Nose and Eagle Feather returning?

Fearful of the latter, Dan remained silent, the blood coursing fiercely through his arteries.

Distinctly now, he could hear someone at the entranceway of the cave. Abandoning caution, he called:

"Who's there?"

The answering shout from Mr. Hatfield brought intense relief.

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"We're here, Dan! Be with you in a jiffy!"

Powerful flashlights now illuminated the tunnel, dispelling its gloom. The boy could make out several persons splashing along the slippery rock floor. Help had come! His long siege was at an end.

After that, Dan had no further worries. Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway efficiently took charge. Aided by several of the Cubs from both Den 1 and 2, they carried Old Miquel out into the warm sunshine.

There, Dr. Evans, who had been summoned from town, examined the Indian.

"He suffers from under-nourishment and exposure," he told the anxious group. "The head wound appears superficial. If you can get him back to the Holloway place, we'll take him from there by ambulance to the hospital."

Mr. Holloway and Mr. Hatfield personally supervised the moving of the old Indian. They would not allow Dan to help bear the stretcher, insisting that because his clothing was damp, he must hasten on ahead.

"You've done more than your share now," the Cub leader warmly assured him. "You and Brad hike as fast as you can for the house. Put in a call for an ambulance, so it will be waiting when we get there."

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"And don't let Red show you the way," Mr. Holloway added with a smile. "He's not too good at finding the trail."

Brad had no intention of twice losing his way. Taking no chances, he announced his intention of taking the longer but better marked path.

Hastening back to the camp, the two friends brought each other up-to-date on what had occurred.

"Tell me about the pow-wow," Dan urged after he had revealed everything he had learned from Old Miquel in the cave. "Den 1 came out ahead,

I reckon?"

"The pow-wow isn't finished yet."

"Then they didn't go ahead when we failed to show up?"

"All the events except one have been run off. They were just starting the last one—the canoe race—when Red and I hit camp. We'd have been there a lot quicker only we got lost in the woods."

"How's the score?"

"Den 1 leads by three points. But that doesn't mean a thing. Whoever wins the canoe race, wins the silver plaque."

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"When does the race come off?"

"Don't know," Brad answered. "Finding Old Miquel has thrown everything into a mess. Maybe now, the race will be called off. In that case, Den 1 wins."

For awhile, neither Dan nor Brad gave very much thought to the pow-wow. Upon reaching the Holloway home, they immediately telephoned the Webster City Hospital, arranging for an ambulance to be sent.

By the time the men came in from the woods bearing the stretcher, it had arrived.

Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Holloway both offered to accompany the old Indian to the hospital. But as Dr. Evans was to ride with the ambulance, they were assured that it was unnecessary.

Mrs. Holloway provided Dan with a change of clothing. Although the garments were a snug fit, he did not mind.

"Quite a morning," Mr. Hatfield remarked as things quieted down a bit. "Dan, now that I've had a chance to catch my breath, let me say, we're proud of you."

"I didn't do anything," Dan said, flushing at the praise. "I just hope Old Miquel gets along all right."

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"He will, I think. Dr. Evans says he's not in bad shape and has a good, strong physique."

"Yes, it's practically certain he's the artist," Mr. Hatfield declared. "The drawings on the cave wall reveal his skill. Poor fellow! He seems to have no memory of what he did after he came to Webster City."

"Wonder what became of White Nose and Eagle Feather?" Dan worried. "Someone ought to find them and tell them the truth about Miquel."

"We'll attempt to locate them," Mr. Hatfield promised. "Just now, we have a pow-wow on our hands. The Cubs haven't had anything to eat. Furthermore, there's one more event on the program. Or shall we call it off?"

"No!" yelled all of the Den 2 Cubs. Chips added quickly: "Let's have the race now, and then our lunch!"

Mr. Hatfield gazed thoughtfully at Dan and Brad. Both boys, he knew, were somewhat worn

from their harrowing experiences of the morning.

"It might be better to wait a day or so—" he began.

"Not on my account, sir," broke in Dan. "Midge can take my place, if you don't think I should enter the race. I feel fine though! Rarin' to go!"

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"Same here," grinned Brad. "We're ready to test our skill against Ross and Donald any old time you say. The quicker the better."

"And if you get beat—as you certainly will—you'll say it was because you were tired," Ross twitted.

"No such thing," Brad retorted.

Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Holloway and the leaders of Den 1 consulted over the advisability of holding the race that day. Feeling was running a bit too high, they knew. But then, there always had been keen rivalry between the two dens.

The race itself was a very short one, not long enough to place any of the contestants under strain.

"We'll go ahead now since you're all so eager," Mr. Hatfield finally announced. "But remember, this is a friendly competition. How you win is more important than who wins."

All the Cubs and their parents gathered at the beach to watch the event. Fred and Midge willingly relinquished their paddles to Brad and Dan.

"Win that plaque for us!" Fred urged as the pair took their places in the canoe.

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"We'll sure try!" Dan promised with a grin.

At a given signal, the two canoes were off! Ross and Donald made a flashy start, immediately taking the lead.

Flustered by being caught off guard, Brad and Dan did not at once coordinate their efforts. By the time they began to work as a unit, Ross and Donald already had gained an alarming lead.

"Dig in, Dan!" Brad urged, increasing his own efforts.

The course was so short that both boys knew the race would be over almost before they could regain lost ground.

Dan's paddle dipped smoothly and fast. His keen eyes sweeping the water made a startling discovery.

The course had been laid out in such a way that it included a stretch of the swift current which flowed down-river to the hidden cave.

Ross and Donald obviously were unaware that their canoe was traveling parallel to the ribbon of fast water.

"Brad!" Dan exclaimed, directing his companion's gaze to the current.

The older boy instantly saw the fast water, and with a hard surge of the paddle, could have

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steered the Den 2 canoe into it. But he hesitated.

"Would it be fair?" he muttered.

Dan understood what his friend meant. Ross and Donald were unaware of the fast current which if utilized, undoubtedly would give a canoeist a decided advantage.

Once in the swift-moving ribbon of water, the Den 2 canoe easily might overtake the other craft. But would it then be a test of skill? Hadn't Mr. Hatfield said that it wasn't winning that mattered but the manner in which victory was achieved that counted?

"Skip it," he answered Brad's terse question. "We'll win by our own skill, or not at all."

The finish line now was close at hand. Knowing that the honor of Den 2 depended entirely upon them, Brad and Dan dug in with their paddles. They had to win! The Cubs were expecting them to save the silver plaque. But could they do it? The race was so short.

Along shore the Cubs of both dens were cheering for their particular den mates. Dan and Brad heard the shouts but were only vaguely aware of them.

Slash! Slash! Their paddles lashed the water cleanly, sending the canoe forward in smooth spurts.

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"Keep it up!" Brad encouraged. "We're gaining!"

Dan nodded, not wasting breath in a reply. The distance between the two canoes rapidly was dwindling. If only the finish line were not so close!

Ross and Donald realized they were losing ground. Uneasily Ross looked over his shoulder to see how hard they were being pushed. For an instant he held his paddle, missing a stroke. The bow swung off course.

Before Ross could bring it back into a straight line, Dan and Brad surged ahead. The two canoes raced evenly.

By this time all the Cubs ashore were shouting like maniacs. "Come on Dan! Brad!" some of the boys yelled, while others cheered Donald and Ross to greater efforts.

The finish line loomed up. An instant before it was reached, Brad put all his strength into a final thrust of the paddle. The canoe fairly leaped forward, crossing the finish line a half length ahead of the other craft. Den 2 had won! The plaque had been saved!

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CHAPTER 20 THE TURQUOISE TOAD

Dr. Evans had just come from Webster City Hospital with a report for Mr. Hatfield concerning Old Miquel.

"The old fellow's coming around nicely," he informed the Cub leader. "A day or two of complete bed rest and he'll be as good as ever. Quite a character! I had a long talk with him."

"Did Dan guess right about him?"

"Absolutely. The old coot is a Navajo medicine man. He carved the face at the ravine though he has little recollection of doing it. So far as I can determine, he suffered a severe head blow which caused a memory lapse. Apparently, he hopped a freight, and must have been tossed off here at Webster City. Having no money, he took to living in the woods."

"Did he tell you anything about the turquoise, doctor?"

"About the same as Dan learned. The tribal treasure was entrusted to him. He sticks to his story of giving it to a trading post man by the name of Howard Brandall. I wired him and received confirmation. The turquoise is still in his safe. He didn't know the tribe considered it lost or stolen."

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"That's fine!" Mr. Hatfield said heartily. "Then there's no reason why Old Miquel can't soon return to the west?"

"None whatsoever. By the way, what became of those two Indians who tried to avenge the tribe?"

"White Nose and Eagle Feather? No one has seen them since they left the cave this morning."

Dr. Evans consulted his watch. "It's now after four o'clock," he noted. "They should be found, if they're still in Webster City."

"I'll call the Cubs of both dens together and see if we can round them up," Mr. Hatfield promised. "They should be told the truth about Old Miquel."

Though the Pack ceremonies long since had ended, nearly all of the Cubs had remained at the Holloway camp, swimming and enjoying the beach. By now though, all were dressed in their uniforms again.

Summoning the Cubs, Mr. Hatfield asked them to be on the lookout for the two Indians.

"Until they're found, it will be unsafe for Old Miquel to be released from the hospital," he added.

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Brad and Dan were especially eager to join in the search. Their first mission, however, was to return to Professor Sarazen the Navajo blanket found in the cave. After that, they went to the grocery store, thinking that the two Indians might have been seen there.

The storekeeper informed them that neither Eagle Feather nor White Nose had returned that afternoon.

"I'll bet they've left town," Dan remarked as the day wore on.

"It begins to look that way," Brad agreed. "Since we can't find 'em, we'll have to give up the search for the time being."

Disheartened, the two friends started for their homes. The day had been an exciting one, and both were tired. But they felt highly elated. Not only had they won the silver plaque for Den 2, but they had solved the mystery of the strange carved face. Likewise, they had the satisfaction of knowing that Old Miquel had been restored to reason.

Presently the boys drew near the railroad tracks. A flasher light warned of the approach of a freight train.

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Had they hastened, Dan and Brad could have crossed ahead of the long, heavy freight. Instead, being in no hurry, they waited for it to pass.

The train rumbled by, moving slower and slower as it approached the station. Finally, it came to a jerky halt.

"Now we've got to wait," Brad grumbled.

Dan did not answer. His gaze had fastened upon two lean figures. The men had emerged from behind the tool house on the railroad right-of-way. He recognized them as White Nose and Eagle Feather.

As Dan stared in disbelief, the two ran along the tracks. Finding an open boxcar, they leaped lightly inside. By now the boy had come to life.

"Quick, Brad!" he shouted. "We've got to stop them before they get out of town!"

The older boy also had recognized the two Indians. With Dan he darted to the boxcar whose door had been pulled shut from the inside.

The two Cubs pounded on the barrier, calling upon those inside to "open up!" When there was no response, Brad finally managed to shove open the heavy door.

"White Nose! Eagle Feather!" he called.

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He could not see the two Indians anywhere in the dark interior of the car. At the same time, the freight's heavy engine gave a sharp toot. The long string of cars began to move.

Again Brad shouted to the two Indians. Though he could not see them, he knew they must be in a dark corner of the car. The train was moving faster now.

The Cubs ran to keep up.

"You must stay!" Brad shouted. "The turquoise has been found! Old Miquel didn't die! He's told everything!"

The words carried, for from the darkness of the car, the two Indians suddenly emerged. They stood framed in the open doorway, and as Brad again pleaded with them, listened attentively.

The train now was moving so fast that the boys could not keep up.

"It's no use," Dan gasped. "They're gone."

But even as he spoke, the two Indians leaped from the train. They landed on their feet and came back to talk to the boys.

Brad related what had occurred since the two Indians had left the cave, stressing that Old Miquel never had been responsible for his strange actions.

"You can't punish him for something that wasn't his fault," he ended. "Won't you go to the hospital now—tonight—and tell Miquel that everything is all right again? That he can go back to the tribe?"

"We go," White Nose promised. Gravely he and Eagle Feather shook hands with the two boys before departing.

Ten days elapsed before the Cubs saw the Indians again. Their appearance came most unexpectedly at a weekly meeting of Den 2 at Mr. Hatfield's home.

"A little surprise, boys," declared the Cub leader.

He then introduced not only White Nose and Eagle Feather, but Old Miquel as well. The old medicine man had almost fully recovered from his injuries and now was able to be about.

The three Indians made little talks, thanking the Cubs for the collection of clothing which was to be sent to the Navajo reservation. White Nose related the story of why the turquoise toad was so highly treasured by his people, and ended by presenting Brad and Dan with small pieces of carved gems.

"We return to our tribe tomorrow," White Nose said in conclusion.

"Miquel too?" asked Dan.

He was assured that the old medicine man would accompany his two Indian brothers to New Mexico, there to resume his rightful place in the tribe.

Never before had the Cubs enjoyed such an unusual meeting. Not only did the Indians tell them many fascinating stories, but they recited chants and gave several dances. Finally, at a late hour, the meeting broke up.

"Wow! We really picked ourselves a theme when we decided to go in for Navajo lore!" Dan declared, collapsing into a chair. "What's next on the program, Mr. Hatfield?"

"Oh, that's a secret," laughed the Cub leader.

"Is it something as exciting as the great carved face or the cave?" demanded Chips eagerly.

"You know we couldn't expect to run into anything like that again in a million years," Midge protested.

"Oh, yes, we could!" insisted Red. "And we will, too!"

"Sure," drawled Mack, "with Mr. Hatfield to select the Cub theme, and Brad and Dan to carry it out, we're certain to steer a straight course into another ripping adventure!"

Transcriber's Notes

- Silently corrected a few typos (but left nonstandard spelling and dialect as is).
- Rearranged front matter to a more-logical streaming order.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DAN CARTER AND THE GREAT CARVED FACE ***

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