**The Project Gutenberg eBook of Blackie Thorne at Camp Lenape, by Carl Saxon**



Title: Blackie Thorne at Camp Lenape

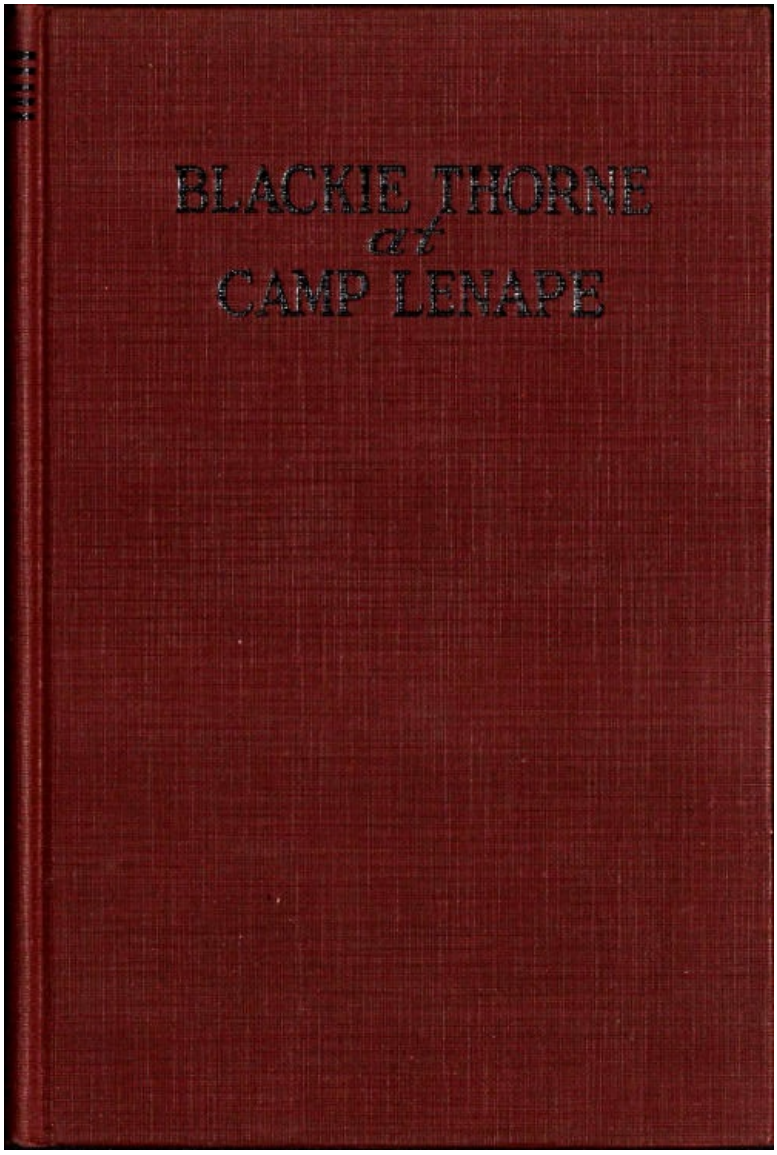
Author: Carl Saxon

Release date: March 23, 2016 [EBook #51539]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Stephen Hutcheson, Dave Morgan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net






# BLACKIE THORNE

# AT CAMP LENAPE

CARL SAXON

*Author of*
*"The Mystery at Camp Lenape"*

BOOKS, INC.
NEW YORK BOSTON



*For*
*BILL SIMMONS*
*companion of tent and trail*

## CONTENTS





# BLACKIE THORNE AT CAMP LENAPE

## CHAPTER I
### TENT FOUR

"We've been working on the ra-a-ailroad
All the livelong day——"

Two enormous hay-wains, full and running over with a tumbling mass of boys, turned a bend in the narrow country road.

Blackie Thorne was the foremost boy on the first wagon. He clambered up on the narrow seat with so much eagerness to view the camp and the lake that he almost knocked over the stolid farmer who was driving the team. His first view of camp!

There it lay on the wooded slope above the shining lake and the boat dock, a large white lodge with a flag floating lazily above it, and two rows of canvas tents lost among trees to the right but showing clearly against the gray mountains beyond, with their heavy covering of tall pines sticking up like spikes along the skyline. Camp Lenape, where the wonderful things his friends told about had happened. Why, anything might happen in such a marvelous place as the camp which grew nearer every minute as the slow horses plodded their way along the dusty road! 8

Blackie squirmed with excitement and jerked his arm so that it hit the head of the driving farmer and knocked his wide straw hat down over his eyes.

“Here now, sonny!” spluttered the man, grabbing at his hat and almost falling off the board which served as a seat. “If you’re a-goin’ to get so het up about seein’ this camp-ground of yourn, you better get out and walk!”

“A good idea!” exclaimed a fellow standing just behind Blackie, holding himself up in the jolting wagon by a hand on Blackie’s shoulder. He was Gil Shelton, patrol-leader in Blackie’s troop back in the city, and a “three-striper” who wore on his camp sweater three green chevrons to show that he had been at Lenape for as many seasons. “What do you say, Blackie? If we hop off now, we can follow the trail through the woods and beat the rest into camp.”

The trail led around the end of the lake, down through a meadow dotted with daisies and buttercups, and on again into the deepening shadow of the pines and birches. 9

They panted as they ran up a short hill, and came out in a little cleared space among the scrub-pines.

“Wait a minute, can’t you?” gasped Blackie. “What’s the use of killing ourselves?”

Gil snorted. “Does that little run make you tired? Wait until you’ve been here at camp a week, and a trot like this will seem so slow you’ll think you’re going backwards.” Nevertheless he stopped and threw himself on the soft ground, and Blackie gratefully followed his example.

“How far are we from camp now?”

“Oh, about a quarter of a mile, I guess. Don’t worry, little one, you’ll get there before dark.” He pointed his grass-stem, toward the hills, where the sun was dropping, a ball of red fire in the west. “The Indian council ring is over that way. We’ll have a pow-wow there to-morrow night, I guess.”

Blackie's eyes followed in the indicated direction, but his attention was immediately claimed by a fan-shaped formation of gray rocks on the side of the western mountains. His dark eyebrows raised, and he whistled. "Hey, Gil, what's that?" 10

"What's what?"

"That pile of rocks there—are they rocks?"

"That's a terminal moraine. Now, ask me another."

"A what?"

"Terminal moraine, dummy."

"Well, who put it there?"

"Say," exclaimed Gil with disgust, "if you listened to the scoutmaster's talks instead of skylarking around at troop meetings and stealing Fat Crampton's hat, you'd learn not to be so ignorant. A terminal moraine is a pile of rocks brought down by a glacier in the days when all the part of the world north of here was covered with ice. You've heard of the Glacial Age, haven't you? Well, when the ice moved down from the North Pole it pushed a lot of rocks ahead of it, right over the ground. Now, when old Mr. Glacier got this far, he heard the five o'clock whistle blow or something, so he dropped that pile of rocks he was carrying, and started to melt. When we hike up there, you can see markings on the rocks where they got scratched being pulled along over the ground." Gil finished his lecture by throwing away his chewed grass-stem and carefully pulling another.

Blackie rose and held up his hand to shade his squinting eyes while he peered at the slide of boulders which, according to Gil's story, had been brought there in such a dramatic manner. 11

"All right, I believe you," he said; but he continued to stare.

Half-hidden among the pines and mountain maples, clinging to the side of the mountain at the end of a thin line of road that ran above, Blackie saw the faded clapboards and weathered roof of a house. There was not a sign of life about it. The sinking sun, nearing its last stand above the Lenape ridge, was reflected in all its bloodiness in two upstairs windows of that dark and ominous dwelling; the afterglow swirled and glinted with the color of molten copper. A little breeze blew up from the lake, a breeze not too warm for late June; and Blackie shivered slightly as it struck his back. He didn't know why, but the sight of that dead, hidden house scared him —just a little. He thought it looked like a skull, lost among the trees. There must be some mystery about a house like that.

"Gil!"

"Well, what is it now, youngster?"

"Does anybody live in that old house up there?" 12

"Sure. That's where old Rattlesnake Joe lives. Some people around here call him the hermit. You can go up and see him some time. Now, have you got your breath back? If we don't get

going pretty soon, the gang will be in ahead of us, and we'll be out of luck for getting a good bunk."

The two boys trotted on along the trail at a fast pace. Blackie would have liked to ask some more questions about the hermit who lived alone in the woods in that mysterious house, but he was afraid that Gil would taunt him about being a greenhorn, so he saved his breath for running. The trail soon broke surprisingly into the campus, and they were among white tents where several of their comrades, already arrived in camp by the same short-cut around the lake, were busily spreading out their blankets on the two-decked canvas bunks that lined the tent walls.

"The tent assignments must be already posted," muttered Gil. "Hurry up to the lodge!"

Blackie ran with him through the little tent-village, but when he reached the flagpole before the spreading lodge he halted as the lake and the far shore spread out before his view. 13

"Jee-miny!" he whistled. He could see the roof of the boat dock below, around which were moored about a dozen broad-beamed steel rowboats.

Gil Shelton came tearing by, laden with blanket and duffle that he had collected from the pile of baggage on the lodge porch.

"Say, Blackie," he called, "you better get on the job! You're assigned to Tent Four, down there. Grab your stuff and hurry down. The first one in the tent gets his choice of bunks."

Several boys, the advance guard of the hay-wagons, came streaming down to the campus from the road behind the lodge. Blackie climbed the steps to the lodge porch and in the welter of luggage there discovered a familiar-looking sea-bag with his initials painted on it in black. Seizing this dunnage, he ran stumbling to Tent Four, his new home in the woods.

Tent Four lay at the end of the row of tents topmost on the hilly campus. Before it lay a cleared space dotted by huckleberry bushes and a few shading pines. The tent was floored and painted a battleship gray, and eight canvas bunks lined the walls, running the length of the tent and making two tiers. A tall boy was already swiftly and smoothly making up a bed in one of the lower bunks. He nodded to Blackie but did not pause in his work. 14

Gil Shelton shouted across from Tent Three, next door. His bunk was already made. With the deftness of an experienced camper, he was setting each thing in its correct place—shoes and hats in a line under the bed, coats and sweaters on the rope swung between the two tent-poles, pajamas under his pillow, and the remainder of his kit in one of the pine-wood lockers that ran down the middle of the tent.

"The bottom bunks are the best, Blackie! If you pick a top one, the fellow under you gets you up in the morning by the airplane method!"

Blackie began unpacking his duffle, slowly and clumsily. He laid out his blankets on a lower bunk as advised, and tried two or three times to

make his result somewhat resemble Gil's bed; but when he had finished, it still looked bumpy and not too soft. Then he sat on his sea-bag and looked about him helplessly.

The tall fellow, who had not spoken until now, looked up and smiled shyly.

"Stuck? Well, follow what I do, and you'll soon get cleared up. This the first time you've been to camp?" 15

It was the first time Blackie had ever been away from home, but he hated to admit it.

"Yeah. How do they put their stuff at *this* camp?" He said it as if he had visited all the other camps in the world before he had happened to drop in on this insignificant little one.

Two other boys now rushed down, and made haste to stake out their claims to lower bunks.

"Can't have that one," warned the tall, quiet boy to one of them who had put his bag on the lower bunk nearest the lodge. "That belongs to the councilor. And a councilor needs a lower bunk because he may have to turn out quick in the middle of the night if he's needed."

"Who is the councilor?" asked the other.

"Mr. Rawn—Wally. He's the fellow that has charge of the swimming. Well, I'm going up to the lodge. He promised to let me be the waiter for the first two days, because I know all about it." He departed in the direction of the lodge.

Blackie sat on his bunk and looked around. Everyone was busily engaged in making up the first night's bed, and shouts and singing came from all quarters as the busy campers shook down in their new homes. From the lodge porch came the brazen blare of First Call sounded by the camp bugler.

A pine bough brushed against the tent, laden with cones. It occurred to Blackie that it would be a good idea to take a few and stick them in between someone's blankets. He lifted off a few that looked to be the most prickly and crossing the tent, pulled down the blankets of the tall lad who had gone to the lodge. The two other boys had now been joined by a third; but none of them were watching, for they were hurriedly preparing for supper, and evidently thought the bunk was his own. 16

Blackie shoved the pine-cones down between the blankets, and looked around to see if anyone had watched him. Someone had. A shadow fell across the front of the tent, a tall and muscular figure stood over him, and a deep voice demanded, "Do you always sleep with pine-cones in your bed?"

17

# CHAPTER II
## THE COUNCILOR

Blackie hesitated.

“Yes, sir, I always do that when I’m camping. It makes it seem more as if I was really in the woods,” he said.

The tall man—he must have been six feet two, and stockily built—looked down at Blackie and frowned. He was big enough to have picked up the boy and used him for a baseball.

“I wouldn’t lie if I were you,” he drawled. “It’s a bad habit for a young lad to acquire. That bunk belongs to Ken Haviland, my aide. By the time he’s ready to crawl in to-night, he’ll be plenty tired from a long day on the job. Don’t you think he’s entitled to a good sleep?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, since we are to be tent-mates, we ought to get acquainted.” He grinned broadly, and held out his hand. “I’m Wally Rawn. What’s your name?”

“Blackie. Blackie Thorne.”

The man grinned as he took the boy’s hand in a firm grip and surveyed the bright black eyes, the shining black hair. 18

“Not a bad name, at that. What’s your mother call you?”

“She calls me Blackie, too. My regular name is Ambrose.”

“I won’t tell a soul. Blackie you are and Blackie you shall be. Now, Blackie, I’m going to offer you a chance to show what sort of a spirit you have for helping to make the Tent Four boys known all over camp. I have, after much thought, decided to paint our tent-poles with pink and green stripes. That ought to start the rest of camp thinking about us. Now, please run up to the kitchen and ask the chef to send you down here with a bucket of striped paint—pink and green.”

Blackie was off like a flash, but his leader called him back.

“While you’re up there, Blackie, you can also ask him to lend you a bunk-stretcher. I find that my feet stick out over the edge of my berth, and I don’t want to wake up in the morning and find the birds roosting on my toes. A left-handed bunk-stretcher—my bunk is on the left-hand side.”

“Yes, Mr. Rawn.”

“Call me Wally. Now, off with you!” 19

Blackie bounded up the short hill to the side door of the kitchen. Through the screen came the tantalizing fragrance of something good; supper was on the way, evidently, and Ellick, that good-hearted king of the kitchen, was at his busiest. Blackie pushed open the door and ran in with an important look on his dark face. He was greeted by Leggy, a skinny, coffee-colored individual whose thin shanks, although they seemed to have no end, did no more than reach the ground. He waved a long-handled spoon, and made a swing with it at Blackie’s head.

“Outside, white boy!” he cried. “Kitchen ain’t no place for little boys at de supper-call.”

“I got a message for the chef—very important. Let me in!”

“Hol’ on dere!” came Ellick’s voice from the far corner of the room. “You ain’t de boy what is lookin’ for de striped paint, is you?”

“Yes, I am, chef.”

“Well, if dat don’t beat all!” exclaimed the surprised cook. “We is just out of striped paint. If I wasn’t busily pre-incapacitated by carving dis yere ham for dinner, now, I would shorely help you-all out. A left-handed bunk-stretcher wouldn’t do as well, would it, now?”

“Say, that was the other thing I was sent for!” 20

“Who-all sent you?”

“Wally Rawn—he’s my leader.”

“Oh, that Wally boy! It must shore be important then. If I could only dis-extricate myself from carvin’ dis yere ham, now——Let me see. De bestest thing to do under de concircumstances is for you-all to go down to de boat dock and petitionate de person in charge to give you de keys to de campus. And, whiles you’m down there, you-all might bring up a cargo what’s waitin’ for some smart young boy to fetch me. Ask him pussonally from me to deliver unto you-all de shipment of fence-post holes and de Royal Official Back-Scratcher.”

“You bet, chef—keys to the campus, fencepost holes and the Royal Official Back-Scratcher.”

“I thanks you. What might be you-all name?”

“Blackie.”

“Hmm. I decalculate from dat name dat you are repartial to doughnuts.” There was a sweet, sugary smell in the warm kitchen air.

“Doughnuts? You said it, chef!”

“Catch!”

The grinning Ellick deftly caught up a doughnut from a bowl beside him, and tossed it in the air. Blackie got under it like a veteran fielder, and sped out the door. The gangling Leggy aimed a parting swing at him with the long-tailed spoon, and missed. 21

On the parade ground, Blackie paused in his headlong lakeward course at the sight of Gil Shelton, hair combed, face shining from a recent scrubbing, and spotless for supper. “Hey, Blackie, where you heading? After fence-post holes?”

“Yep—how did you know? And striped paint and a left-handed bunk-stretcher and——”

Gil started in great surprise. “Don’t tell me,” he exclaimed, “that they picked you to bring the Royal Official Back-Scratcher?”

“They sure have.”

“That’s a great honor, my son. In fact, only the newest and greenest boys are ever picked for it. Say, Blackie, I didn’t think you’d fall for that old stuff. Did you ever see a fence-post hole? Does striped paint come in cans?”

Blackie paused and thought for the first time.

"Well, Gil, it was my leader Wally who sent me. He told me not to tell lies, too, so I thought it was all right."

"Say, did you ever hear of Santa Claus? Why, for a week now the little, new, green, smart, bright city boys will be looking all over the place for striped paint and the key to the lake. And you fell for it the first thing!" 22

Gil's laughter was so deep that Blackie was glad to get back to the shelter of his tent.

Wally greeted him. "So you didn't find it, eh? Well, that's all right—don't be discouraged. You can help me out in another way. Just run down to the dock, will you, and ask if anyone down there has seen the key to the lake?"

"Not on your life, Wally," grinned Blackie. "Send one of the new fellows down, can't you?"

The camp bugler, Ted Fellowes, sounded Assembly Call at that moment, and there was no time for further talk before supper. After the Retreat ceremony and the lowering of the flag, the boys attacked the supper that had been prepared in the depths of the kitchen. Blackie had never found a meal that tasted quite so good.

He met the remainder of the boys of Tent Four at the table. Ken Haviland, the tent aide, was busily serving as waiter at one end; he had to run again and again to the serving window for additional platters of ham, potatoes, and turnips, mountains of bread and oceans of milk. Blackie didn't envy him his job.

Wally had evidently met all the boys in his group. He paused and, between mouthfuls, addressed them. 23

"There's one thing that's worrying me, gentlemen of the famous Tent Four group. There are only seven of us, and there should be eight, counting myself. One of our number has not turned up. I shall call our imposing roll. Haviland!"

"Here, sir." Ken seized his serving tray and dashed off in pursuit of dessert.

"Thorne! Here, I see. Slater!"

"Here, sir!" answered a freckle-faced boy with burning red hair.

"Guppy!"

Blackie looked with interest at the boy with such a beautiful name. He was a little chap of about eleven, at the end of one row.

"Lefkowitz!"

"Present!" came a squeaky voice from across the table.

"Gallegher!"

"Here!" He was a sunburnt, black-haired chap with a scar across his forehead, shaped like a V.

"Crampton! No answer. It is the notorious Mr. Crampton who is missing. Has anybody here 24

ever heard tell of the gentleman?”

“That must be Fat,” said Blackie. “We saw him down at the end of the lake before we hiked up. He was in the wagon then.”

“Maybe that’s the fat fellow we dumped off the wagon coming along the road back of camp,” volunteered Slater. “We told him that walking was the best way to reduce his figger, and dumped him out.”

“To our fat friend’s rescue, then, tent-mates!” cried Wally, drinking down the last of a glass of milk. “As soon as the Chief makes his announcements, we shall be in the saddle and off for the hunt!”

A whistle sounded, and quiet fell on the groups. The Chief was about to speak. He rose, an imposing figure of a man, quiet, dignified, and with a voice full of calm command. He was dressed in camper’s togs, and wore the green “L” on his sweater.

“All I have to say is this, fellows. We are all up here for a good time—the best time ever. Now, I want to mention a few things that will help the new camper to get along and make himself at home. Don’t expose yourselves to the sun too much until you get a coat of tan gradually; you won’t blister then. Don’t cut up or mark the trees on the campus of which we are so proud. Don’t have any firearms in your tents; none of any kind are permitted here at camp, and if you have any, bring them up to the lodge and I will look after them for you. And finally, I only need mention the rule we have about boys who smoke. Now, those are all the ‘don’t’s’ I’m going to mention. In an hour there will be a grand jubilee campfire below the baseball diamond, where I will introduce you to the councilors, who will then have something to say to you. All set for the best camp season ever! Everybody happy?” 25

“Yay!” The resounding, united call of the campers reverberated among the lodge rafters.

“Let the lions roar!”

“Rao-a-ow!” A pack of well-fed lions never sent up such a tremendous roaring to the Sahara moon.

“Dismissed!”

Tent Four remained a little island in the swirling rush of campers that broke up after the meal.

“Are you with me, gang?” shouted Wally. “Onward to the rescue of our wandering brother!” He made for the back door, pushing through the crowd like a fullback carrying the ball to victory, followed by his eager team of tent-mates. Tent Four was on the round-up. 26

No sooner had they reached the road behind camp than the leader began giving directions, curtly and with precision. “Spread out, fellows, and we’ll cover a path on each side of the road. Keep in touch with my whistle—I’ll be in the center. Shout for Crampton at intervals, and we’ll soon have him back in the fold——What’s that?”

A low moan was heard behind him, just off the

road.

“Help! Help!”

Wally bounded off in the direction from whence it came. His muscular legs cleared the low bushes like so many hurdles.

“Behind that big tree!” shouted Gallegher. The six boys dashed off after their leader, and found him staring down at a mournful figure sitting with his back to the trunk of a tall pine. It was Fat Crampton. His bulging cheeks bore the trails of tear-marks; he sat hunched amid the wreckage of his knapsack and accouterment, with the most woebegone look in the world.

“I’m lost in the woods,” he moaned. “I’ve been walking around for hours!”

“Why, you poor nut,” said Blackie, “if you had walked two steps further you would have tripped over the camp!” 27

Fat transferred his doleful gaze. “Oh, Blackie, is it really you? Say, I’m scared. I heard a bunch of lions off in the woods a minute ago, and I thought they were going to get me.”

“Lions, nothing!” The whole tent broke into a storm of laughter. “That was us! Rao-a-ow! Look out for us, Fat—we’re lions!”

“Come on, lion-hunter,” said Wally, “come on and get a meal of raw meat. I think the chef will have saved something for you.” He lifted the rotund lad on his shoulder and set off toward the kitchen, with Fat helplessly waving his arms from his lofty perch. The rest of the boys ran with them, roaring terribly and making quips at the wanderer’s expense.

Little Guppy ran beside Wally, looking up at the leader.

“I’ll make up Fat’s bunk,” he offered, “if he’ll tell me where his blankets are.”

“That’s the spirit! Keep it up, and you’ll make a great aide some day, Gup!”

By the time the fat boy was fed, the bugle sounded Assembly for the campfire. It was now dark, and the campers found their ways down through the baseball diamond to a field above the lake shore, where a group of three or four leaders were standing beside a high pyre of logs and branches, talking to the Chief. They were Mr. Frayne, the burly assistant director whom everyone, even the smallest boys, familiarly called “Happy Face” because of the smile he always wore; “Sax” McNulty, the mournful-looking comedian and saxophone artist who had charge of the shows and stunt-nights; and Lieutenant Eames, the West Pointer. The other leaders were to be found among the crowd of boys settling around the piled fire. 28

In the glow of somebody’s flashlight Blackie caught sight of Gil Shelton’s face in the crowd. Gil saw him, also, and shouted over: “Hi, Blackie! How’s the guardian of the Royal Official Back-Scratcher?”

“Aw, forget it, Gil. Say, what are they going to do now?”

"Light the fire, of course. Then I guess we'll have a song or two, and the Chief will introduce all the leaders, and somebody will tell a story, and then we'll burn all the little new greenhorns at the stake."

Blackie laughed as much as the joke required, and snuggled down next to Wally, in the midst of the Tent Four group. The fire was lighted, and the glow was reflected in the faces of the happy throng of campers who gathered around the first campfire of the season. The boys of Tent Four, already bound together by loyalty to their leader, were content to lie and listen to the calm voice of their Chief, as a spout of flaring sparks rose from the flames to challenge the distant glitter of the stars.

# CHAPTER III
## AFTER TAPS

The musical echo of Tattoo came from the bugle, and a hush fell upon Tent Four. The campfire still smouldered in the field by the lake, but the campers had passed to their tents at the Call to Quarters, and were now making ready to turn in for the night.

Blackie squatted on his bunk and stared at the faces that were half-illuminated by the solitary lantern that hung on the tent-pole. Mindful of the pine-cones that were still in Ken Haviland's bed, he was lying low and watching for developments.

The aide had already stripped, and was climbing into a swathing suit of pajamas. Above him jutted the head of Lefkowitz, already between blankets but still full of interest in proceedings.

"I can't find my nightgown," wailed little Guppy at the other end of the tent.

"It should be under your pillow," said Wally. He stretched his broad arms and yawned prodigiously, making a noise like an enraged walrus. "You ought to have pajamas anyway."

"I put it under the pillow, sir, as Ken told me to. I had an extra one, but that's gone too. And I promised Mother I wouldn't sleep in my—my underthings, sir."

"Well, they'll probably turn up. For to-night you can have an extra pair of my pajamas. I think the pants would be enough for you, though—you're not exactly a giant." Wally produced a pair of outing-flannel pants, stuffed the small Guppy into the legs of them, tied the cord about his neck, and stowed him away between the blankets like a sack of potatoes.

Ken was turning down the covers. Blackie watched him feel the blankets all over, and to the joker's disappointment, the aide touched several suspicious bumps and resuscitated the hidden pine-cones. He tossed them into the night, and winked at Blackie.

"My camp experience has taught me to always feel my bed before I turn in," he grinned. "Some

chaps have a funny sense of humor." He hopped in and sprawled out luxuriously.

Now that his trap had failed, Blackie bethought him of turning in also. Slater, who had been outside gazing at the stars, stepped into the tent. 32

"Lots of meteorites falling to-night, sir," he observed. "Venus is full, too, I think; she's especially bright in the west." He set about his preparations for bed.

Gallegher made a spring and landed in his bunk, just over Blackie's head. A creaking from another upper bunk across the way announced that Fat Crampton had at last been able to climb to his lofty berth.

"Make it fast, Blackie," warned the leader. "You don't want to be the last one in."

Blackie was soon arrayed in the popular evening clothes for the well-dressed camper, and looked longingly at his inviting bunk. He slipped between the warm blankets, and stretched out. Umm—this was the life!

But hold on! Something had him by the leg—something else was biting him on the foot! Ouch! He yelled and rolled over the side, to come to the floor in a whirling pile of boy, blankets, and—pine-cones!

Gallegher snickered above him.

"The oldest trick there is!" he chuckled. "These new guys will fall for anything!"

The crestfallen Blackie struggled upright, and in the dull lamplight began to make his bed anew. 33

"That will be all the demonstrations of playfulness for to-night, gentlemen," observed Wally, sitting on the edge of his bunk. "You are all tired, and need your sleep—I, may it be observed, need mine also. How anybody has the pep left to skylark around the first night of camp—or any other night—is beyond me. As soon as Taps sounds, Tent Four will be as still as the grave. The silence, as the book-writers always have it, will be broken only by the measured breathing of the slumbering woodsmen and the far call of a fillyloo bird across the waste. Key down, now."

He reached for his kit and drew out a book. "I'm talking seriously now. We are all up here at Lenape to have the best time ever. It's my job as councilor to see that we do. And that's what I want to make you fellows understand. I'll help you in any way I can to keep you good campers and to make Lenape proud of you. If at any time you have anything on your mind, bring it to me and we'll talk it out. Now, I'm going to read you one of the finest things that a camper ever listened to."

He opened the Bible in his hand and read by the flickering light, in a clear and sincere voice: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the 34

end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

Softly and sweetly, as if from afar, came the first comforting notes of Taps, the finest of music to a tired camper. Wally doused the lantern, and the glory of the stars came into the quiet tent.

"Good-night, fellows," said Wally quietly. "Happy dreams!"

Blackie lay quite still in his tumbled bed, thinking about the stars. Firmament—that was a word that meant the same as heaven, but not so nice-sounding. The stars were bright, all right.

Gallegher must have put those cones into his bed, when he had been chasing bunk-stretchers —it must have been Gallegher, because he had laughed so hard when Blackie fell out. Well, so much the worse for Mr. Gallegher! He was sleeping right above Blackie, and in the morning, Mr. Gallegher would be surprised. He reached up one foot, tentatively, to see how the airplane method would work in helping Gallegher to rise. The temptation came, and he pushed upward with both feet, hard. 35

Zoom! Gallegher flew into the air and came down to the floor with a wild yell. The experiment was a success. Tent Four was instantly alert.

Lefkowitz snickered. Slater moaned dolefully. Little Guppy said, "What's that?"

Gallegher lay tumbled on the floor among his blankets. He had bruised his elbow against a locker, and it made him mean-tempered.

"Damn you!" he cried. "I'll get even——"

Through the dark came the calm voice of Wally. "You seem to have been around a bunch of pretty foul-mouthed fellows, Gallegher. Gentlemen, and especially Lenape gentlemen, don't talk that way. Chain gang for you Monday morning."

"I don't care!" shouted Gallegher. "I'd say it again if he did that to me. If Blackie was a gentleman, he wouldn't have given me that airplane ride. It's his fault as much as mine. Why don't you give him the chain gang, too?" 36

"Blackie!"

"Yes, sir." Blackie, chuckling happily to himself at the thought of the row he had raised, sat up and leaned on one arm.

"Didn't I ask you and the other fellows to key down after Taps?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Take your blankets and go sleep on the ground by the flagpole to-night."

"But why? I didn't do a thing but get back at him

for sticking pine-cones in my bunk!”

“On your way. When you can behave decently, you can sleep with the rest of us again.”

Sullenly, and making as much noise about it as he dared, Blackie put on his slippers and gathered up his pillow and blankets over his arm. The night air was cool, and he shivered slightly in his pajamas. A pine tree’s branch brushed the canvas tent-roof above his head, and somewhere off up the mountain a dog howled dismally. It didn’t look too inviting out on the darkened campus by the flagpole; but he didn’t want to appear a coward and whine to get out of going.

“Good-night, you guys,” he said with bravado and stalked out of the rear of the tent. As he passed the bunk across from the leader’s, on his way out, Slater stuffed something among Blackie’s blankets with a whispered caution. 37

“Keep it out of sight—you’ve got the chance to get to the flagpole!”

Blackie nodded and went out on the path. The stars were like bright candles against a blue-green silk dome, and somehow their twinkling was not so pleasant now. He passed a line of tents, some quiet, one or two filled with low snickers and cackles and the usual disturbance of the first night under canvas. The white lodge showed pale and strange in the starlight; the campus was somehow changed from what it had been in bright day. He stumbled across to the base of the flagpole and began spreading out his bed on the hard ground. He cleared away one or two stones, and beat down the high grass as best he could, and tried to rearrange his blankets into comfortable shape.

His next care was to examine the bundle that Slater had passed to him. As he had guessed, it was the missing nightgown that Guppy had bewailed at bedtime. He chuckled, thinking of the scheme that Slater had suggested.

He looked around; the coast was clear. The flagpole was only a few steps away. He jumped up, unfastened the halyards, and knotting a sleeve to each end of the rope, hauled away. Then, almost too sleepy to care where he lay, he crawled into his twisted bed and was dead to the world in half a minute, smiling to think that when the morning sun rose over Camp Lenape, it would reveal that the campers had slept under a fluttering ensign that was nothing more than little Guppy’s pink nightgown. 38

39

# CHAPTER IV
## A HARD CASE

Blackie was wakened somewhat rudely the next morning. A sloshing glass of cold water landed on his face, and he jumped up half-awake to find Gil Shelton standing over him in the fresh sunlight with the empty glass in his hand.

“Rise and shine!” called the patrol-leader. “First

Call will sound in about a minute. Gee, you must have been sawing wood not to hear the noise the gang has been making ever since four o'clock this morning! Most of the tenderfeet woke up early and have been horsing around. I couldn't sleep, so Chink Towner and Spaghetti Megaro and I got permission to hike down to the cottage and back. Look at the big frog we found by the brook!"

He held up a monstrous bullfrog by the hind legs, so close to Blackie's face that he jumped backwards in alarm, while Gil's two companions laughed.

"Don't let him scare you," said Megaro, the Italian boy. 40

"I ain't afraid. Say, what are you going to do with him, Gil?"

"Give him to Ellick—he likes to eat frog legs. Come on, here comes Fellowes with his tin horn ready to blow First Call."

Blackie picked up his bed and made his way to Tent Four. All his tent-mates were awake and laughing at little Guppy, who had just discovered that his nightgown was floating in the breeze at the top of the flagpole. The bugle's call routed them all out to formation in front of the lodge, where after a snappy setting-up drill the entire camp flew down the slope to the boat dock for the Indian dip.

The blue waters of the lake reflected a hundred white bodies standing about the edge of the dock waiting for Wally's whistle. No sooner had it sounded than there was a tremendous plunging and splashing as most of them tumbled head-first into the crisp, bracing water. A few younger boys and timid souls waded in from the shore.

"Stick your head under, Toots!"

"Oh, boy! Say, ain't this water cold?"

"It ain't cold, you dummy. Just the way I like it—wakes me up fine!" 41

Blackie took a swift racing dive off the front end of the dock, swept cleanly through the water in a shower of small bubbles, and came to the surface with a speedy overhand stroke. He swam some fifty yards out to the life-saving boat that was stationed there with Sax McNulty at the oars and a leader named Munson at the bow, and there floated a minute. He was surprised to hear the trill of the whistle, followed by cries of "All out!"

Swimming over to the dock again, he shouted in a grieved tone to Wally, who was supervising the general exodus from the water, "What's the idea, Wally? Do you call this a swim?"

"Of course not—this is just morning dip, and you'll get a chill if you stay in long. Swim comes later."

"Aw, heck!" Somewhat disgruntled, he climbed out and raced back to the tent to dress for breakfast.

The morning meal over, there was a period of duty. "We're on police squad, you fellows!"

called Ken Haviland.

“Police?” asked Blackie. “What do we do—go around arresting guys?”

“No, you sap. Get a blanket and I’ll show you.” 42

Blackie discovered that policing camp merely meant going about the campus and picking up bits of paper and destroying unsightly objects that littered the paths. Church Call sounded soon after they finished, and together with the rest of the campers he went to a shady glade in the forest beside the lake and sat on a log while the short Sunday service was held. He liked sitting there in the leafy woods and singing the various tunes, even though they were the same ones they sang in Sunday-school at home; he admired the handiwork of the rustic pulpit that the campers had built the year before; but when the Chief began his talk he was frankly bored. The Chief was saying something about different trees and how they were like different kinds of boys; but Blackie only listened now and then. He was wishing that church was over and that they could go in swimming again; and he passed the time catching ants and dropping them down the neck of a smaller boy who sat in front of him.

As a matter of fact the service was quite brief; but it seemed to him that it would never end. After years of waiting, or so he thought, the brisk challenge of Swim Call came from the lodge porch, and slipping into his bathing suit, he headed again for the dock. He was the first one there, with the exception of the life-saving crew, composed equally of councilors and older boys who had won the Red Cross emblem that was stitched over their breasts. Wally was in charge; he was sending out three boats to patrol the waters about the dock and posting the guards who would stand in various places about the tower to be on the watch for water accidents. When this was done, the man turned to Blackie. 43

“First one down for swim? Say, if you’d only show as much speed doing squad-duty, the rest of the fellows wouldn’t have to do a thing!”

“Can I go in now, Wally?”

“You’ll have to hold yourself down until the rest get here and the whistle blows. The rule is that there’s no swimming except when the life-savers are on duty. There aren’t going to be any accidents while I’m in charge. By the way, I noticed this morning at Indian dip that you’re not a bad swimmer.”

“I’m pretty good, I guess,” said Blackie modestly.

“Do you know the Australian crawl? No? Well, if you want to make speed, that’s the stroke to use. The camp always holds a big boat regatta and swimming meet at the end of each section—that’s two weeks from now—and we compete with our old rivals of Camp Shawnee. I’d like to see you take a few honors and help us to beat them. What say I teach you the crawl some time?” 44

“Now?”

“To-morrow, maybe. Well, here comes the

gang!" He turned away as the crowd of campers, all in swimming togs, trooped on to the dock, and at the sound of his whistle the swim began.

Blackie sported about the water happily for the remainder of the period. He was quite pleased with himself for having thus been singled out by his leader for swimming ability. Tired of circling about the life-boats, he began ducking less experienced swimmers and pushing boys off the dock into the water, until he was reprimanded for this conduct by Lieutenant Eames because of the danger of someone slipping and injuring himself against one of the piles or the superstructure of the dock. This scolding made him sulky, and he swam by himself until the whistle blew, and then tardily walked up to the tent, stopping many times on the way to chase butterflies or to hunt for snakes among the rocks; and thus, when he finally reached the tent, he found his comrades working busily. All the beds were made except his own, and under the direction of Ken Haviland, the boys were sweeping and arranging, cleaning the tent lantern, putting their lockers in order, and tidying up the place.

"Where have you been?" the aide greeted him. "Snap out of it and get dressed and make your bunk and get ready for inspection. Wally had to go up to leaders' meeting at the lodge." 45

"Aw, don't make such a fuss," said Blackie. "I'll do it, won't I?"

"Yes, but we have only a couple minutes before inspection. If the tent isn't in apple-pie order, we don't stand a chance to win the pennant to-day."

"Well, what if we don't? What's the good of having an old pennant in front of your tent? It don't get you anything."

"But don't you see it means that the Tent Four bunch are the best campers? When you're here longer you'll learn not to waste time talking back when we have a chance to show our stuff."

Without haste, Blackie peeled off his swimming suit and cast it on the floor, dressed with tantalizing slowness, and with a scowl at the aide, began to make his bed. He knew that Haviland was angry and thought it a good chance to get the tall camper's "goat." In the midst of his preparations the call came down the line, "All out of tents for inspection!" Haviland and the others jumped outside and lined up at attention, but Blackie delayed to try and shake his blankets into shape. Just as he stepped outside, Mr. Colby, one of the councilors and a scoutmaster known for his strictness, came along with his inspection staff. 46

"Tent Four! Two demerits for having a camper inside the tent after inspection call. The tent seems to be in pretty good shape, but there's a wet bathing suit in the middle of the floor, and one bunk that isn't made. Sorry, Haviland—but this will give you so many demerits that you'll probably get the booby prize to-day! Any excuse?"

"No excuse, sir," answered Haviland, looking daggers at the guilty Blackie. After the inspection crew had passed on, he turned to Blackie and said, "We would have had a good

chance at the pennant if it hadn't been for you! As it is, we'll probably have the booby can tied to our tent-pole until to-morrow! What do you say, fellows—shall I recommend that Wally puts him on the chain gang?"

"Put me on the gang if you want to—I don't care!" exclaimed Blackie boldly; but he was silent all during dinner, and even fried chicken, green corn and ice-cream failed to make him forget that his careless attitude had won him the black looks of all his tent-mates. 47

After the meal there was the usual siesta period. The boys were scattered about lying in their bunks, resting and writing letters home. Blackie crouched in his place with a pencil and pad before him. Haviland sat across from him, now and then looking gloomily up at a big tin can, painted black with the white letters BOOBY across it, which hung swinging in plain sight over the front steps. Slater was writing busily. Fat Crampton was asleep, and Gallegher was tickling the stout boy's nose and neck with a stalk of grass, while Guppy and Lefkowitz watched the proceedings with amusement.

Blackie looked down at what he had written. "Dear Mother—We got here O. K. and Camp Lenape is a fine camp. I am on the Chain Gang already and the swimming is O. K. I will learn the Ostralien crawl soon please send me up some fudge and cake. Last night I slep out-door. I think this is a fine camp o boy and don't forget the fudge and cake and some chewing gum too."

He read this over for the fifth time, wondered what to put down next, and looked up to find Haviland watching him. 48

"What's biting you?" Blackie asked. "Still sore because you didn't win your old pennant?"

"It's not myself I'm worrying about, but after dinner I heard a couple of the other leaders kidding Wally because he is always so proud of having his tent make a good showing, and to-day we were handed the merry razz."

Blackie snorted. "Say, who is this guy Wally that he should boss us around? Always blowing his whistle just when the water's getting good!"

"Yeah," put in Gallegher, who had finally succeeded in awakening Fat Crampton. "Down our way all the guys would think he was sure a sissy, landin' on me just because I cussed a little."

"He wouldn't give me seconds on ice-cream, either," said Fat Crampton mournfully. "Said I ought to start to reduce."

Ken looked at them all pityingly. "Say, don't you know Wally is a senior at Columbia University and on the varsity water-polo and basketball teams? He's coming up here and spending his time teaching you birds how to be good campers, and that's all the thanks he gets!"

"I guess he has a pretty good time," said Blackie. 49

"Of course he does, or he wouldn't be here. But it's no fun to have a tent full of lazy draw-backs like you that object every time he tries to make a

good showing."

There was a short space of silence. Slater looked up from his writing.

"Hey, Ken, do we have council ring to-night?" he asked.

"Sure."

"What's council ring?" asked Blackie curiously.

Slater explained. "Just when it's getting dark, we all put on blankets and go over to council, just like the Indians used to do. We all sit in a circle around a four-square fire, and one of the fellows lights the fire with flint and steel, or else with rubbing-sticks. Then we have report of scouts. Any fellow who has seen any interesting birds or animals or anything like that gets up and tells about them. Then we suggest anything we can do to help make the camp better and offer to do it. Then they have all kinds of contests—hand-wrestling and talk-fests and imitations, and usually end up with a ghost story. It's real fun, all right."

Blackie remembered that Gil had pointed out the way to the council ring the evening before, and suddenly thought he would like to see the place by daylight. He put away his letter, rose, and stretched. 50

"So long, you guys," he said.

"Where are you going?" asked the aide. "Nobody's allowed to leave until after Recall."

"None of your business—and if you ask me, I think you're nothing but a spy on us for this Wally of yours." He dived into the bushes and disappeared before Haviland could follow.

Not only did he want the fun of tormenting Ken, but also wishing to look over the famous council ring, he took a course through the woods that he thought would bring him out at the place he sought. It was quiet; the camp was still even for a Sunday afternoon. He pressed through the underbrush and in a short time stumbled upon a well-worn path that led in the direction he was going. Shortly he caught a glimpse of white birch railings through the leaves, and he trod softly in case there should be anyone there who might question him. His precaution proved to be wise. From a clearing ahead came the low hum of men's voices.

A circle some fifty yards across had been cleared in the woods, and seats built about it, with an imposing stone dais on the north side to furnish a proper elevation for the chieftain. Sitting on this stone were the Chief himself and Wally Rawn, chatting together. 51

They had not seen him, and it struck Blackie that it might be a daring thing to get close enough to overhear their conference. Forgetful of the old saying that eavesdroppers seldom hear well of themselves, he wormed his way around through the bushes and found a place where he could listen without being seen.

"I approve of the life-saving crew assignments you've made, then, Wally," the Chief was saying. He rose as if to leave. "By the way, what do you think of the bunch I've put in your tent?"

"They look pretty good," answered Wally. "They ought to turn out first-rate after a couple of days. Haviland is a pretty capable kid, and Slater is bugs about stars and scouting and doesn't give much trouble. That Crampton lad is lazy, but I hope to have him get over that when we get out on the hikes."

"You have two fellows I put in with you because they need pretty careful leadership. Know who they are?"

"Think I do, Chief—Gallegher and that Blackie Thorne." 52

"Right. Gallegher comes from the worst part of town, and I think he may have picked up a lot of questionable habits. Thorne is a different sort. He's lively and smart as a whip; but his father is dead and maybe he's getting to be too much for his mother to handle alone. He's full of mischief, his scoutmaster tells me, but he ought to turn out right. They're a pair of hard cases, I guess; but keep them busy and they'll soon be real Lenape fellows."

"I like hard cases," grinned Wally. "Blackie is crazy about swimming; guess I can get him interested through that, and the old camp spirit is bound to follow. Well, let's get back."

The two men, arm in arm, disappeared down the path. Blackie Thorne, in his hidden covert, laughed unpleasantly at their backs.

"Hard case, am I?" he said to himself. "Well, Mr. Smart Wally, if you call me that, I guess all I can do is to try and live up to it!"

53

# CHAPTER V
## TREASURE

"This chain gang ain't so bad," remarked Gallegher.

It was after breakfast on Monday morning. He and Blackie, as well as three other culprits, were chopping wood behind the camp kitchen with the supervision and assistance of Jim Avery, a tall, gangling councilor who was a specialist in woodcraft and bird-study.

Blackie split up a knotty stick of oak before replying.

"Sure, this ain't such hard work. The leader does half of it, anyway. Say, you were pretty good, to cuss right in front of Wally the other night."

"Aw, that's nothin'. I guess I'm pretty tough, all right. I used to go down by the railroad lots of times and hook rides on the freight cars. Once I bummed clear out to Scranton and back, that way."

"Gee! No wonder the Chief said you was a hard case!"

Gallegher stopped his chopping, and looked up proudly. "Did he say that?" 54

“Yeah. I heard him talking to our noble councilor about us. He said we were both hard cases, and that Wally would have to watch us.”

“Well, if that’s the way they do in this camp, I’m sure goin’ to get away with everything I can. How about it—are you with me, Thorne?”

“Sure.”

They split wood for a while in silence. Blackie’s back began to ache from stooping over so much. He dropped his ax and stretched.

“Gosh, I’m getting sick of this job. When Jim lets us go, I’m going to head for my bunk and stay there the rest of the day.”

“Say, what did you come to camp for—to be a bunk-stretcher?” asked Gallegher. “They’re goin’ to have tests for the honor emblem this mornin’—ain’t you goin’ to try for one?”

“What’s the honor emblem? What good is it?”

“Aw, you have to pass a lot of tests, and then they give you a badge to sew on your jersey. You’ve seen them—lots of the guys have won them.”

“You mean the things with a swastika and a big L on them? What do you get for it?”

“Say, don’t be dumb all your life! If a guy has an honor emblem he can join the Bugs Society and have an initiation and a feed, and then he can get away with lots of things, just because he’s got a badge, see? It’s somethin’ like the Knights of Columbus.” 55

“Oh. What did you say you have to do to get one?”

“A bunch of things, like knowin’ the names of the parts of a boat and bein’ good at hikin’ and swimmin’ and athaletics——”

“That’s me. I can do all those things.”

“—And collect flowers and tree leaves and rocks, and know the names of the stars, and box the compass, and cook a meal, and build cabins and do stunts—a whole lot of stuff. We can do it easy.”

Blackie considered this, and after his work was done he joined a nature hike. During the hour before swim, he learned much that he had not previously known about geology and ferns, and collected the ten leaves he must identify as one of the qualifications toward his honor emblem.

Since overhearing Wally and the Chief in the council ring, his attitude toward his leader had changed. He now thought of Wally as an irksome guardian and taskmaster, and found excuses for himself to disagree with every suggestion the councilor made. Nevertheless, he remembered Wally’s promise of the previous day, and after all the other campers had come out of the water after swim, he touched Wally on the arm and reminded him that he was to be taught the Australian crawl. 56

The life-saving crew now had its brief moment of fun. They were having a game of water-tag about the boats and up the diving-tower. Blackie

thought it great sport to be with them, and under Wally's direction to seem one of the outfit that was so much at home in deep water. He kept one eye on their antics and with the other watched Wally Rawn demonstrate the approved method of breathing with the crawl stroke that sent him plowing through the sunlit water at a speedy rate. Then it came Blackie's turn to show what he had learned, while Wally stood on the dock and shouted directions.

"That's right—take a breath every fourth stroke, and let it out under water! Don't use that frog kick—use the trudgeon! Keep your fingers together! That's the way."

At first Blackie found it hard to get the correct timing for his breaths, but after some twenty minutes Wally called a halt and put an end to the lesson for the day, pronouncing himself well satisfied with the boy's progress. 57

"If we keep on like this, you ought to win a couple first places in the Shawnee meet, Blackie. I'll give you some diving instruction later on—I think I'll give all the fellows in the tent a chance to learn a few jack-knives and swan dives."

"What do we get if we win?" asked Blackie.

"Award ribbons, and lots of glory for Lenape. What more do you want? You're pretty young yet, kid—but I hope it won't be long before you find out that the biggest rewards in life are the ones you don't get paid for. Money or silver cups or ice-cream don't begin to compare with the ownership of an alert mind, a strong, clean, healthy body, fine friendships, and a reputation for honor and manliness and courage. Do you know there's a treasure buried here on the Lenape campus?"

Blackie was aglow on the instant. "Where? Do you know where to dig for it? Is it a pirate treasure? Let me help you hunt for it, Wally!"

The man smiled. "There you go again—always on the lookout for a selfish, personal gain! The treasure I mean isn't made of Spanish doubloons and stolen jewels; but it's here, waiting for every boy to find it for himself. If you've got the right stuff in you, Blackie, and I think you have, you can take that treasure home with you when you leave camp. It's a treasure you wouldn't want to trade for anything else in the world—the treasure of a true Lenape spirit." 58

Blackie's visions of delving in the dead of night for a glittering hoard in a pirate chest vanished. Somewhat downcast, he muttered, "Aw, don't preach! Just the same, I sure would like to take home a bunch of money that I found up here."

"Well, stranger things have happened. Guess your mother would be proud if you did."

"Sure! It would help a lot; we don't have much money since Dad left us. You see, she runs a little store and sells sewing things and fancy embroidery and stuff like that."

Wally nodded. "Did you ever stop to think how much she is sacrificing to give you a good time camping up here in the woods?"

"I guess so," said Blackie uncomfortably. "Let's

go. We don't want to be late to-day—we don't want to get the booby prize for inspection twice in a row."

"That's the spirit!"

59

# CHAPTER VI
## THE HERMIT'S HOUSE

That night after supper, when the whistle had shrilled for silence, Happy Face Frayne, who was officer of the day, made announcement of the evening's program. "We still have lots of daylight left after supper, so we have planned a few short hikes before dark. Then, after that, we'll gather here in the lodge around the fire and have some songs and stories."

"Hurray!"

"Mr. Munson will take a group up the mountain road to the Devil's Potato Patch. Mr. Colby will head a boating expedition to the dam at the end of the lake, while those who want to visit Rattlesnake Joe, the hermit, will report to Dr. Cannon. Those who stay in camp can have a rousing game of volley ball—Long Jim Avery and Lieutenant Eames will choose sides."

"Hurray!"

"Dismissed!"

"Where you going, you crazy Irishman?" Blackie asked his bosom friend Gallegher when they were outside.

60

"Me? I'm goin' to start out with the bunch up the mountain, and then lose myself. You want to come?" He winked significantly.

"What are you going to do?"

"You'll see, if you come with me. We'll get away from these babies and have a good time of our own."

"All right. Hi, Gil!" shouted Blackie, as his patrol-leader passed by. "Where you heading?"

"Up the lake. Say, you remember when we hiked the short way to camp the first night we came up? You remember that house you asked me about? Well, now's your chance to see it closer. That's where the hermit lives, and he's a queer old bird if there ever was one."

At Gil's words the picture of that secret, sinister house on the mountainside, as Blackie had first glimpsed it, came back to him.

"That's right—thanks for reminding me. I'm sorry, Irish—I'll sneak off with you some other time."

He slipped away and joined the group around Dr. Cannon, the camp medico, at the lodge steps. There were some fifteen or twenty campers who clamored about the short, sturdy figure of the doctor, deluging him with questions about their destination.

“The old hermit, Rattlesnake Joe, is one of the sights of this part of the country,” he said, quieting them with a gesture. “I don’t need to tell you anything more—you’ll see him for yourselves soon enough. Keep together—forward, march!” 61

The boys straggled behind him as he led the way around behind the kitchen and the ice-house and on past the Red Cross tent to the road. Blackie marched in company with the Utway twins and a shock-haired “two-striper” nicknamed “Sunfish” because he had once fallen out of a canoe and when he was pulled up on the dock, it was discovered that he had unwittingly trapped a good-sized sunfish in one of the pockets of his sweater.

The hikers turned off to the right where the road turned up the mountain, and headed down a marshy lane bounded with a stone fence on each side. The small, stinging deer-flies swarmed about their heads, and Jerry Utway, one of the twins, showed Blackie how to fasten a handkerchief around his head so that it would flutter and keep the bothersome insects at a distance.

“See that tree?” asked the Sunfish.

Blackie nodded. 62

“Well, that’s a black birch tree—the kind they make birch beer from. Some time I’ll show you how to tap it and get a drink of the sap—it tastes great. Here, take this twig and chew on it. Doesn’t it taste something like sassafras?”

“Come on—we’ll be back with Elephant Crampton in a minute,” urged Jake, the other of the twins. “Hurry up if you kids want to see the old hermit before dark.”

They increased their pace, and caught up with the vanguard about Dr. Cannon just as the mysterious house came into sight at the end of the lane. Surrounded by the shouting company of the campers, Blackie was not so awed by the place as he had been when, alone with Gil, he had glimpsed it from afar on his first memorable evening in camp. There were the same weathered shingles on the low roof, the same dirty windows and decaying out-houses—but it did not seem so unreal and awful now.

On their approach they were announced by the furious baying and howling of half a dozen hounds that leaped and pulled at their chains beside a rickety kennel by the door. The campers drew back, hoping with all their hearts that none of the dogs would break loose. The door was flung open, and a tall old man stamped out and began quieting the hounds, beating their heads with a stick until they subsided, whimpering. Then he turned and gazed strangely at the group of boys, shading his eyes against the slanting rays of sunset. 63

“Wal, now,” he said after a minute, “if it ain’t the Doctor and the camp-ground boys. How be ye, Doc?” He extended a dirty and claw-like hand. Blackie was near enough to notice that the finger-nails were all about half an inch long, broken, ragged, and encrusted with mold.

Indeed, as Blackie watched him shake hands

with Dr. Cannon and step back to lounge in the doorway, he seemed a far from attractive personality. He was probably sixty years old, with a tall, stoop-shouldered body. He leaned slouchily against the rough doorpost, and the blackened fingers of one hand nervously combed a ragged and greasy beard that was streaked with gray. The same tangled gray prevailed in the straggling hair that crawled from beneath his battered felt hat, and in the discouraged mustache that drooped to mingle with the beard. The hermit's eyes were bleared by sitting beside a smoky fire, and were overhung by bushy brows. Now and then, as he talked, he would profanely quiet the hounds at his feet, who, it must be admitted, were far more intelligent and far cleaner than their master.

"Glad ye've come, boys," he drawled. "Allus glad to see boys here. Glad to see anybody. I been livin' all alone here five year now come fall, sence my boy Jase left me to go over and cut ties in Pike County. Good boy, Jase was, but him and me couldn't get along right well together. Say, Doc, when ye get back to camp-ground ye kin give Ellick and the Chief my regards fer sendin' up that sack of flour last week. Shore did enj'y it." 64

"We thought you might," said the doctor. "These boys wanted to take a little hike to-night, and I brought them up to call on you."

"Thet's fine—allus glad to see boys. Well, boys, guess ye want to see my old thunderbolt, don't ye? I allus show all the boys that thunderbolt ——" He entered his house and with a long knife pried up a flat flagstone, one of those forming the hearth before his fireplace. Blackie saw him kneeling in a shaft of sunlight beside the cold embers, and watched until he drew forth from its hiding-place what seemed to be a long, thin, slate-colored piece of stone or iron. The hermit brought it out and passed it around for all to see. It was pitted and twisted, like a short iron bar that had been exposed to rough use and rust for years.

"Thet's my thunderbolt," the hermit explained. "Ten year ago come August we had a whackin' big storm—black clouds piled high over the hills here till it looked like midnight. All of a sudden, bang! comes a big blast of lightnin', and hit thet old oak tree out thar—it was a big tree then, but it's only a stump now. After the storm was all over I come out thar and saw this stuck right in the middle of the tree—had to cut it out with my old ax. Look at it close, young fellers—ye don't get a chance to see a reg'lar thunderbolt every day." 65

The boys hurriedly passed the famous object from hand to hand, for it was suddenly growing dark and the doctor had announced that it was time to leave. Blackie was not at all regretful to leave the neighborhood of that ruined house, which became more unfriendly as the long shadows of the pines barred and striped its mouldering walls.

"How long has he lived here?" he asked Dr. Cannon as they hiked on the return journey at a rapid pace.

"All his life, I guess," was the reply. "He makes a poor living, cutting railroad ties and raising a 66

few pigs and chickens—just enough to scrape along on. It just shows you what a life of ignorance and dirt can do to a man."

"Was that a true story about his thunderbolt?"

"There aren't really any bolts thrown down during a thunderstorm. That thing he had may be what is called a belemnite, or maybe just a piece of meteoric iron he found, and made up the story about it afterward."

On the return trip Jerry Utway discovered a patch of gooseberries. He and his brother and Blackie and Sunfish clustered about and found a few berries that had ripened.

"Well, Blackie," said Sunfish, talking with his mouth full, "guess you won't feel so lively to-morrow night."

"Why? What's going to happen?"

"Stuck-Ups."

"What's that?"

The two-striper put his thumbs in his ears and waggled his fingers mysteriously. "You'll see," he said meaningly. "They initiate all the new campers then. Big secret society; everybody tries to join, but they don't always stand the tortures."

"Do they have real good tortures at this camp?" asked Jake. "We joined up at Camp Coutrell last year, so we don't have to get initiated here. Oh, boy! We were black and blue for a week afterwards!" 67

"What do they do to a guy?" asked Blackie.

"You'll find out. The Grand Mogul makes the neophytes—the new guys—do all sorts of things and go through all kinds of tortures."

"I won't do it," announced Blackie, with a sudden sinking of the heart.

"Oh, you'll have to, if you want to be one of the society. After you get in, it's lots of fun helping to initiate the ones that join after you do. And some day, maybe you can work up to be one of the officers, like the Exalted Overseers of the Rabble or the Supreme Potent Inquisitors or the Sublunary Administers of the Last Rites."

"That sounds fine, but I don't want to be black and blue for a week. Can't you get in without being tortured?"

"Oh, no!" said Sunfish. "A guy has to go through perils and trials before he ever amounts to anything in the world. Come on—we'll be the last ones in camp as it is." 68

The four hastened after that. A few hundred yards from camp they came upon Fat Crampton, weary but still determined, and cheered him with the news that the tents were not far away. Through the trees was borne the rollicking chorus of the singers gathered about the fireplace in the lodge, united in good fellowship and roaring out the lilting words of the Lenape marching song:

"Oh, I've travelled the world from shore to

shore
And sailed on every sea,
But there ain't no spot in the whole darned lot
Like old Camp Le-na-pe!"

69

# CHAPTER VII
## INITIATION

The coming initiation ceremony of the Stuck-Up Society was the chief subject of conversation during Tuesday. Many were the direful hints and bloodthirsty tales that the new campers heard from the lips of seasoned Lenape boys, who, of course, were all members of the society and who were all occupied in getting out their regalia and ceremonial weapons in preparation for the big night.

Immediately after the supper dishes were washed, the lodge was cleared of all except the dozen members of the society who had been chosen to arrange the mess-hall as the Throne Room. Blackie, sitting on the steps in front of his tent, could hear a prodigious thumping and running and hurly-burly inside the lodge, but could see nothing, because blankets had been hung over all the windows and the door was guarded. He was gravely watching Slater, who had been initiated the year before. The red-headed boy was putting the finishing touches on a war-club he had just made, meanwhile whistling the Funeral March in a dolorous key.

"How's that?" he asked, whirling the formidable club by its thong. "When you're a member, you can bear one of these at initiations too."

70

"Say, how do you make one of those clubs?" asked Blackie.

"First you find a nice little white birch tree. You dig it up and cut it off about two feet above the roots; then you peel it around the base and sharpen the roots. Then you can cut your mark and decorations and designs on the bark, like this. If you soak it in water soon after it's cut, it gives it this nice, red, bloody color."

"All loyal Stuck-Ups come to the Throne Room!" came a call through the megaphone on the lodge porch.

"So long," said Slater. "I've got to go up now. I'll see you later. Take my advice and don't get fresh with the Grand Mogul, or it'll be all the worse for you."

He departed, swinging his club with gusto. Blackie left to join the group of new campers who were gathered under the big black-cherry tree by the baseball field to await the summons to their doom. There were about forty of them; among them he found many he knew, mostly boys who had never spent a season at Lenape. Lefkowitz, Guppy, Fat Crampton, and Gallegher were those from Tent Four who, beside himself, were to prepare to undergo the awful ordeal. They sat about nervously on the stone fence, trying to reassure themselves by bold talk and a great deal of forced laughter.

71

“Here they come!” shouted one boy after a while, and instantly there was silence. All eyes were turned to watch the approach of the Outer Guard, which consisted of four older boys marching toward them in formation. Each one of them wore nothing but a towel caught about his hips and knotted on the side, and fantastic peaked hats some three feet high that had been made by wetting an ordinary felt hat and pulling it over the end of a baseball bat until the crown had stretched to a high point. The faces and bodies of the Guard were barbarically daubed and streaked with colored grease-paint, and each bore over his shoulder a broad-bladed canoe paddle.

They solemnly halted beside the secretly trembling neophytes, and “Kipper” Dabney, who was in charge, spoke in hollow tones: “Line up by the alphabet—those with names beginning with A are in front. You are all about to undergo the dread inquisition of the Omnipotent Stuck-Up Society. Meditate upon your benighted souls, and ponder how best you can serve the spirit of Lenape!” 72

He counted off the first four boys in the line, and marched them away to the lodge porch. Blackie saw Dabney give a secret knock and a password; the portals of the Throne Room unclosed; there was a flourish of trumpets, and then an ominous silence that lasted until the Outer Guard again came to take four more aspirants to the great hall of the society.

Four by four, Blackie Thorne saw his fellows vanish into the echoing Throne Room. He was almost at the end of the line, and did not know whether to be pleased or sorry that he would be one of the last to be initiated; but Fat Crampton went with the second bunch, and both Guppy and Gallegher with the fourth. Blackie was surprised to see the latter, about twenty minutes after he had entered, ejected somewhat roughly through the door and escorted down the steps by two stalwart guards.

“What’s the matter?” he called. “What did they do to you, Irish?”

“Aw, they booted me out of their old society!” mumbled Gallegher. “They let that little squirt Guppy stay in, though. Guess I didn’t bow down and lick their boots enough to suit ’em.” 73

“Key down, you!” ordered one of the guards. “You have been told to go to your tent. You, Thorne, get back in line and wait your turn.”

Blackie returned to his place, wondering at this new development. Gallegher had failed to pass the trials for some reason; evidently the Stuck-Ups did not accept everybody. But he figured that he was at least as clever as Nightshirt Guppy and could stand any test they might put to him.

At last there were only three neophytes left under the cherry-tree—Blackie, a younger boy named “Peanut” Westover, and Slim Yerkes. Peanut had grown more and more timid as the minutes passed, and at last ventured to address the others in quavering tones.

“Do—do you think they’re going to hurt us much?”

“Maybe,” said Blackie. “Who cares if they do?”

“I sneaked my pillow out here with me,” confessed the boy, “and stuffed it in the seat of my trousers. Some of the kids said they paddle you something awful.”

“Well, we’re in for it now,” said Yerkes, pointing. “Here come the guards for us.”

The three neophytes were surrounded by the serious-faced paddle-bearers and marched up the steps to the porch. Blackie assumed a careless expression to conceal his inward misgivings, and whistled with as much bravado as he could muster. 74

Knock! Knock! Knock! Kipper Dabney whispered a password through the keyhole, the door swung open, and they were marched inside. Two boys with sashes about their waists, whom Blackie recognized as Ted Fellowes and his younger brother, put pennant-hung bugles to their lips and blew a clarion call that set the rafters ringing. The huge room was dark except for a space in front of the empty fireplace, where a row of lanterns shed a yellow glare which, however, did not reveal the faces of three men who sat, robed in blankets, upon a high dais made of benches piled one upon the other. About the circle the grotesquely-costumed members of the society sat in grim silence, nursing their war-clubs and looking with threatening anticipation at the three newcomers.

From the darkness came the gruesome chords of the Funeral March, played on the concealed piano; and down an aisle in the center of the seated initiates proceeded the guarded trio. Peanut Westover was shivering with fear, and his knees were knocking together at every step. With a roll of drums they arrived before the dais, and were lined up facing the almost indistinguishable robed figures of the Grand Master and his two potentates. 75

“Three more rash neophytes who would dare the wrath of the honorable Stuck-Up Society,” announced Kipper in a sepulchral voice, and with a deep salaam he stepped back and left the three candidates together in the middle of the lighted space. Blackie could feel everyone’s eyes upon him, and he had a tingling, shaky feeling somewhere inside; but he resolved that not one of them should think for a minute that he was afraid.

The Grand Mogul upon his throne said nothing, but surveyed the three boys before him with tantalizing deliberateness. Finally he spoke.

“You have signified your desire to enroll your unworthy names upon the laurel-crowned roster of the honorable Stuck-Up Society. In order to win to the gates of Glory you must first slay the Dragon of Selfishness, defeat the Giant of Fear and arm yourselves with the Helmet of Knowledge, the Spear of Courage, and the Sword of Justice. Are you ready to make the trial?”

He looked at Peanut at the end of the line, and the boy quavered, “Y-Y-Yes.” 76

“*Sir!*” roared the entire group within the lodge,

bellowing with all their might and beating their clubs upon the resounding floor.

“Y-Y-Yes, sir,” said Peanut, more frightened than ever.

“What is your name?” asked the inquisitor.

“P-P-Peanut, sir.”

“You have a most suspicious bulge in your trousers. Please remove the padding, Master Seneschal.”

A boy stepped forth and removed the pillow that Peanut had placed where he thought it would do the most good, while the circle of campers roared with laughter at his predicament.

“Let’s see how smart you are, Peanut,” commanded the Grand Mogul. “Spell your name with a sneeze and a hiccough.”

Peanut looked bewildered. Blackie nudged him and whispered, loud enough for everybody to hear, “Go ahead, kid—he won’t hurt you. He’s only Sax McNulty dressed up a little.”

The crowd gasped, horrified at such unheard-of impudence from a candidate.

“One bell!” said the Mogul solemnly, looking gravely at the offender. Off at one side, a dishpan struck with a drumstick resounded once with a hollow clang. “Now—go on, Peanut.” 77

Taking courage, the smaller boy began: “P—achoo!—E—hup!—A—choo!—N——”

“That will do. Now get down on the floor and scramble like an egg.”

Peanut gave the best imitation of an egg in the process of being scrambled that he could muster. When he had finished, Sax ordered him to rise, and spoke again.

“Neophyte Peanut, you must learn that the spirit of Lenape is found in sacrifice and self-denial. Through secret channels I am informed that your greatest weakness is wasting the time of your leaders with foolish questions. To remind you that it is better for a camper to discover things for himself, I command you not to ask a single question of anybody all day to-morrow; if any member of the society hears you ask a question, he will be entitled to hot-hand you once. Now, you tall, gangling, skinny drink of water on the other end,” he continued, turning toward Slim Yerkes, “what have you got to say for yourself?”

“Nothing, sir,” said Slim quietly.

“That’s just the trouble with you. You’re always so quiet that nobody ever knows you’re around. I’ll bet a dollar to a flash of lightning that you’ve got lots of talent but are afraid to let anybody know it. Camp is the place where a boy learns to step out of the background and show what he can do. You’re here to-night to help amuse the Stuck-Ups. Let’s see—can you sing?” 78

“No, sir.”

“There you go—I’m sure you’re a mighty fine singer if only you had a little confidence. Now

clear your throat, sound off, and sing in a bold voice 'How Dry I Am,' starting from the end and working forwards."

"Am I dry how——" Slim croaked feebly. The campers set up a groan, but the Grand Mogul pretended to be immensely pleased at the thin lad's singing ability.

"That's not so terrible. Now, just to make you get out of your shell, I order you to put on a free show to-morrow for anybody that asks you. Just pretend you're a whole circus side-show, and when they ask you, give imitations of the Fat Lady, the India-Rubber Man, JoJo the Dog-Faced Boy, the Snake Charmer, or anything else they happen to think up. Now, next case for the executioner!" He transferred his attention to Blackie Thorne.

"All right," said Blackie insolently, deliberately leaving off the title of respect. "What are you going to do to me?" 79

"*Sir!*" roared the assembled Stuck-Ups.

"Two bells! Three bells and the foolhardy neophyte hangs on the red cedar at midnight!" intoned Sax McNulty. The dishpan gong resounded with two slow strokes. "You have twice dared the wrath of the Stuck-Up Society. What excuse have you to offer, you in the middle? What's your name?"

Blackie resolved that he would not be daunted by the rigmarole of the initiation as his two companions had been, and answered as impudently as he could, "Aw, I go by the name of Saxophone McNulty."

The listeners broke into a pandemonium of hooting and roaring, almost drowning out the booming of the gong sounding three bells. For the first time the Grand Mogul's tone became deadly serious, and when he could make himself heard he addressed Blackie with measured calm.

"Though the Stuck-Up Society has assembled here to-night in a spirit of fun, the unwritten code of good-fellowship should govern our every action as much now as at any other time. You, Thorne, have deliberately disregarded that code. Besides being an obvious falsehood, your answer showed a silly wilfulness. In the few days you have been at Lenape you have shown yourself to be a 'fresh guy' and a bully to those who are weaker than yourself; you have shown a lack of self-control and a selfish forgetfulness of the other fellow. You get lots of fun out of playing jokes on somebody else, but as soon as they play a trick on you, you get sore and go off by yourself and sulk. Am I right?" 80

"I guess so, sir." Blackie hung his head; he hated to be talked to this way in front of all the other campers.

"Don't forget, Blackie," went on the leader, "that the difficult things in the world are the ones worth fighting for. It's easy to be fresh, to be a bully, to lose your temper, to stir up mischief; but the worth-while things are gentlemanliness and self-control. Everybody here will help you all they can, but only you yourself can fight the fight to make yourself a good Lenape camper. When you have won that fight and proved that

you possess the spirit of sportsmanship and team-play, you can have another chance to join the honorable ranks of the Stuck-Up Society. The initiation ceremonies will now proceed without you. Go to your tent!”

81

# CHAPTER VIII
## THE SNIPE HUNT

“Last night about dusk, when I was walking by the marsh down where the creek empties into the lake, I was surprised to discover a large flock of snipe. Now, hunting this wary game-bird is one of the sports that Camp Lenape is famous for; and since in my opinion we couldn’t have better weather for it, I suggested to the Chief that we have a hunt this very night.”

Mr. Carrigan, leader of Tent Nine and camp naturalist, was making a report after supper the next day; and judging from the cheer that went up at his words, the sport he spoke of was one of the greatest attractions that camp life could offer. Blackie Thorne, sobered by his humiliating experience in the Throne Room of the Stuck-Up Society the previous night, listened with both ears as the councilor continued his announcement.

82

“I do not need to explain to campers who have spent a season at Lenape that it is exceedingly difficult to capture the elusive snipe. It requires great care and skill to catch them, and since it would be impossible for all of us to go after them, it has become the custom for the old campers, who have all bagged their birds, to give first chance to the new boys and to act as ‘beaters’ and scare up the game for them. They will take care of the inexperienced hunters, see that they are placed in a good position along a well-known snipe ‘run,’ and do all they can to drive the birds their way.

“Now, since many of the new boys will not know about the habits and method of catching this most famous of all game-birds, it will be best to explain a few details. There are several varieties of snipe. The variety that is usually found on the Lenape campus is the ‘coo’ snipe, which may always be recognized by the fact that its eggs are not round but cube-shaped. Another variety, the ‘fan-tail’ snipe, is found a few miles north of here, near Camp Shawnee, our rivals on Iron Lake. The snipe is a bird with long legs and long bill, and the meat is very succulent, tasting like a cross between turkey and lemon pie. Ellick, our genial chef, is well-known for his ability to fry snipe in the most toothsome way, and has furthermore, out of his love for the sport, offered a prize of one watermelon from the camp ice-box to the first camper who brings in his snipe.”

83

Cheers followed, for Ellick, for Mr. Carrigan, and for the watermelon.

“The best method of catching this cunning bird,” continued the leader when the noise had died down again, “is by means of the bag and lantern. Each hunter should provide himself with a burlap bag—or a pillow-case will do—and a

lantern of some sort. When one of the beaters posts him along a snipe 'run,' as we call the trails which the birds make along the ground through the bushes on their way down to the lake for a drink, the hunter should prop the mouth of the bag open with sticks, place a small pyramid of rocks in front of it, and station himself behind the bag with his lantern. He then at intervals gives the snipe mating-call, like this —*coo-coo-coo!*—in a soft and liquid voice. The snipe, aroused and startled by the approach of the beaters through the bushes, flies into the air in alarm. Hearing the mating-call and mistaking the pile of rocks for its nest, it flies toward the open bag, and dazzled by the light in its eyes, blunders right into the bag. Then all the hunter has to do is to grab the top of the bag quickly, and the bird is imprisoned alive and brought back to camp. Remember—the first one to catch his bird wins the watermelon!"

He sat down amidst a tornado of cheering. During the uproar Wally managed to make himself heard at the Tent Four table. 84

"With four hunters in our bunch," he said, "we ought to have enough snipe to-morrow to make a full meal for the whole table. Soon as we're dismissed, you fellows hop around and see if Ellick hasn't got some old bags you can borrow. Don't let anybody else get ahead of you if you can help it—it wouldn't be a bad idea to have some watermelon to eat along with that fried snipe!"

As soon as the whistle sounded, Blackie joined the torrent of boys that poured out into the kitchen to besiege Ellick for bags, boxes—anything in which a bird might be trapped. The chef looked about genially, finding something for most of them, smiling and assuring them that the prize offer was true, showing them the big green watermelon that would fall to the lucky Nimrod. Blackie was fortunate enough to find an empty potato-sack, and after providing himself with the powerful flash-lantern he had brought to camp, was ready to put himself in the hands of the experienced beaters, who would show him the correct place to post himself.

To his surprise, Sax McNulty, the councilor who had served the previous night as Grand Mogul and who had ordered Blackie's ejection from the Throne Room, singled him out. The gloomy-faced comedian nodded somberly. 85

"Hello, Thorne! Going to redeem yourself and make the camp forget last night by being the first to get your snipe?"

"I don't know about that," said Blackie, "but I sure am going to try. Say, Sax!"

"What?"

"I—I'm sorry I was so fresh last night. I won't forget what you said about being a good sport. And I didn't mean to act the way I did."

"Oh, that's all right. You didn't hurt my feelings any. Just to show you we're good friends, I'm going to take you to the best place on the campus for snipe. I know where there's a 'run' where as many snipe have been caught as in all the other places within six miles. I'll be your beater. Got your outfit? Good. Trot along!"

He led the way at a rapid pace and Blackie followed, lugging his bag and lantern. They cut straight through the woods away from the lake; in places it was already so dark that the boy switched on his light to see the way. McNulty made so many turns and twists that it was not long before Blackie lost all sense of direction. At last, much to the boy's satisfaction, the leader announced that they had reached the place. He helped Blackie rig up the sack with the mouth propped and held open by sticks, and arranged a pile of stones in front. 86

"In my experience," said McNulty, "I think Mr. Carrigan is wrong about the mating-call. It really sounds more like *kuk-kuk-kuk* than *coo-coo*." He made the boy practise the call over and over until he was satisfied.

"Now," he said, "you just wait here until I beat a few down your way."

He departed stealthily through the undergrowth, and Blackie crouched waiting behind his glaring lamp. For ten or fifteen minutes he heard nothing but the sweet whistles of the whippoorwill and the timid twilight noises of the woods. Then from the front came a series of halloos and the crackling of a body passing through the brush. McNulty's voice was raised in the beater's call, advancing swiftly toward him. The boy clucked as he had been told. There was a whirr like that of wings, and a flashing shadow in the bright beam of the light. Blackie fell forward on his bag, sure that some wild thing was struggling among its folds.

"Get any?" asked McNulty, rushing up with a long stick in his hand. "Here—let me take a look —careful now! Don't let him out, whatever you do! Easy—I'll hold it, and you reach down and pull him out. Don't be scared—they just peck you a little bit." 87

Gingerly, and not at all sure that he would like to be pecked by a sharp bill even a little bit, Blackie put his arm in the bag and felt about. His fingers closed on something, and hastily he jerked it forth. Instead of a struggling mass of feathers, his hand held only a bunch of tangled grass and twigs.

Sax McNulty snorted in disgust. "Thought you had a snipe! Huh! Here I drove a whole covey of them right at you! Didn't you see them?"

"Yes, I thought I saw one fly right into the bag! How did this get here?"

"You ought to know. Well, guess I'll have to go through it all again—and it's no fun beating these bushes. I'm all scratched up already. If you don't have better luck this time, we'll have to go somewhere else. I'll have to go almost to the top of the mountain as it is—I've already covered the ground near here."

He moved away and disappeared into the July night. Blackie settled himself for a long wait. 88

It was lonely there in the woods. He thought over one by one every incident that had happened since he had landed in camp. Already four days of his slender two weeks at Lenape had passed; only ten days more and he would have to return to the hot city, far from the

exciting adventures of forest and lake and lodge.

It seemed to him that hours had passed since Sax had left him. He listened with all his might to try and pick up the leader's shouting off in the silent woods. Mosquitoes, attracted by the light, swarmed about him and made him miserable with their tormenting hum; he slapped at them, but still they came to sting his neck and wrists and ankles. He would have turned off the light, but knew that if he did so he would miss his chance of bringing in any snipe; and he was determined not to return to camp without at least one bird. By this time many of the new boys should have captured their prey; and he could not think of returning empty-handed. Why didn't McNulty return?

Gradually it dawned upon him that the leader would not return, that he had not intended to return. It must all be a joke! Just another of those innumerable hoaxes which camp custom had decreed should be played upon all tenderfoot campers during the first days of their first season under canvas. It must be just a conspiracy among the experienced campers and leaders to decoy the credulous greenhorns out into the woods alone under the pretext of a hunt for snipe. With a bag and lantern! The whole story seemed so impossible to him that he wondered how he could have been taken in by it. Sitting behind a pile of stones and a gaping potato-sack, cooing and waiting for birds to fly his way! McNulty must have bundled up grass and twigs into a ball and thrown it into the bag when he had approached on the pretense of "beating" the birds toward the light. And how he and the rest of the knowing ones would laugh at Blackie when he returned to camp, shamefaced and abashed at having been hoodwinked by such a ridiculous flimflam! Snipe that laid cube-shaped eggs!



The thing must be faced like a good sport, however. If he hurried back to camp, he might still arrive in time to watch some of the other victims come in, and thus have the laugh on them——He suddenly realized that he was not sure which was the way back to camp. He had depended on the guidance of McNulty, and did not have the least idea where he was, or how far away the tents might be. Well, he would have to explore a bit, pioneer the way home for himself.



Carrying his flash-lamp hooked on his belt, he beat his way through the scrub carefully, on the lookout for snakes and other dangerous dwellers in the forest. He blundered across a narrow ravine, pushed his way through a clump of laurels, and climbed a stone fence. The light showed on the rutted tracks of a lane that wandered through the trees—a lane that seemed somehow familiar. Sure enough! It was the road that led to the gloomy house of Rattlesnake Joe, the hermit; it was the trail he and the others had followed only two nights before!

He knew his way now. The stars were out, and a half-moon was tilted among the tree-tops. He snapped off his lamp, so that it would not draw too many mosquitoes, and found he could follow the lane well enough by moonlight. Taking the direction that led away from the hermit's dwelling and toward the campus, he trudged along by himself, almost laughing to think how

easily the snipe-trick had worked. It was a good joke; and next year, if he came to camp, he could have the fun of taking some scary tenderfoot out into the woods and planting him there for the evening, to coo and wait for snipe that would not come.

Only about five minutes passed before he was aware that someone was coming toward him up the road; he could hear the low mumble of voices only a few hundred yards in front. Could one of them be McNulty, alarmed because Blackie had not yet turned up in camp, and coming to seek him and break the news? If so, he was due for a little scare; the jester would himself be the butt of a jest. Blackie planted himself behind a thick oak trunk, ready to jump out with a shout and throw the bag over the leader's head and give him the fright of his life. 91

The voices came nearer; one of them harsh and bullying, the other sounding strangely weak and pleading. Blackie pondered. Neither of them could be McNulty. They must be strangers, even men who, finding him alone, might do him harm. He resolved to keep quiet and let them pass without noticing him. Inwardly congratulating himself for turning off his light, he concealed himself as best he could behind the friendly oak. The voices grew louder; they were rough, uncouth, and profane.

Two slouching figures emerged from the dark, and stopped right beside the tree Blackie had chosen. He could have reached out his arm and touched them both. There was a scratching sound as a match was drawn across a rock; a red flicker burst forth and revealed two faces bent to light cigarettes. The face of the taller man was seamed and dirty, and the unshaven jowls were covered with gray stubble. A green patch hung over one eye, giving him a peculiar and sinister look. The other man was younger, with a slack mouth and watery eyes, and a vacant face that showed he had little or no will of his own. Both were garbed in loose, patched garments streaked with mud and torn in places. 92

"Tramps!" thought Blackie. "Gee, they sure look hard-boiled! If they ever find me here——" He crouched behind his shelter, fearing that they had seen him already.

"Aw, what ya want to be yeller for?" the older man was growling. "I tell ya it's a sure thing! He lives all alone up there—I heard all about him down in Elmville. The hermit, they call him around here, and everybody knows he's got a silver mine somewheres in the mountains that he won't tell about! Every once in a while he sneaks off and digs up some silver and buries it under the stones of his fireplace!"

"Are ya sure, Reno?" asked the other, in snivelling tones. 93

"'Course I'm sure! I seen him myself the other night, diggin' up the stones at the fireplace and takin' somethin' out that looked like a bar of silver. There ya stand moanin' like a sick chicken, and all we have to do to get rich is just walk in and tie him up and take the silver!"

"We might be seen!" The younger man's terror was increasing every minute. "And he's got dogs, too."

“Blast the dogs! They’re all chained up anyway.”

“But how about them kids?”

“Aw, they’re all in bed by now. If you’d seen that bar of silver like I saw, you’d pull yer freight and get the job done.”

Blackie wanted to cry out and tell them that the hermit was poor, that he had no money or treasure at all, that the man must have seen him looking at his precious thunderbolt which he kept under the hearthstone. But his mouth was so dry with terror that he could not make a sound. He leaned against the tree for support, and the lantern on his belt clinked against the rough bark.

“What’s that?” The weak-chinned man jumped nervously about. 94

“Aw, yer jumpy as a cat to-night! ’Fraid of the dark, ain’t ya, Lew?”

“I thought I heard somebody in the bushes.”

“Not likely. If I thought there was, I’d pull out his windpipe. There ain’t nothin’ to be scared of. Now, will ya come, or will I have to do the job meself?”

“I—I’ll come, Reno.”

The two men moved off in the direction of the hermit’s house. Some minutes passed before Blackie dared to relax his body from the stiffened position his fright had put him into. Reason told him to get away from the spot before he was discovered and would have to face the wrath of the two tramps alone; but curiosity and an uncanny fascination seemed to draw him to the house whose grim face had somehow haunted him since first he had arrived at Lenape. With lagging steps, he followed down the lane toward the fateful, tumbledown dwelling.

As he drew near the door, his terror increased. The hounds were making a dismal racket in their kennel, rattling their chains fiercely. One small, dusty window on the ground floor showed red with firelight; the rest of the house was dark. Drawn and yet repelled by what might be going on behind the weather-beaten walls, he dared the chance of one of the dogs escaping and attacking him, crept to the door, and listened. 95

The sound of voices raised in anger came to him, a bedlam hubbub of words. He thought he could distinguish the peculiar, slouchy dialect of Rattlesnake Joe above the others.

“Ye’re crazed, ye devils! I’ll have the law onto ye!”

“Will ya tell us where yer silver mine is located?”

“No! I won’t tell ye a tarnal thing——”

There was the clatter of a chair overturned on the board floor. A piercing, terrifying scream, hoarse and horrid, came once and broke off. A heavy body slipped noisily to the floor. Afterward endured a hushed, strained silence, during which Blackie heard with distinctness the beating of his own pulse and the hollow ticking of a clock beyond the door.

The wind was rising; a gust swept over the roof of the somber house, rattling the loose shingles and stirring the tops of the pines. Its coming brought panic to Blackie Thorne. He turned and, with eyes starting with horror, fled away into the dark with the ghastly memory of that hoarse, despairing scream still ringing in his ears.

# CHAPTER IX
## A RAINY DAY

Blackie did not mention to a single soul what he had seen and heard at the hermit's house the night of the snipe hunt. He wanted nothing more than to forget the terror which had gripped him by the throat as he stood outside the door of the house in the woods. Indeed, when the crystal clear morning came and the busy camp routine began, it was hard to believe that he had witnessed any dark deed the night before.

As the days passed, he almost forgot he had ever overheard the two tramps planning robbery and violence upon a harmless old man. The glorious Fourth of July came and went, leaving only burnt fingers and a powder-blackened litter of colored papers on the baseball field as souvenirs of the sparkling and explosive celebration. Wally continued his lessons in the Australian crawl, and also taught the Tent Four group many things about the art of diving. Camp Lenape held a field meet, and Blackie was awarded three ribbons of various colors as trophies of his prowess in running and jumping. Tent Four wiped out its bad record by winning inspection three times in succession. On Friday night each tent group put on an impromptu show or stunt, ranging from a vaudeville act with a trick horse (front part, Gil Shelton; hind legs, Spaghetti Megaro) to an uproarious imitation of a tent full of sleepy-heads turning out for Reveille. Blackie and Gallegher spent much of their time studying to pass their requirements for the honor emblem, and at the Indian council on Monday night they both were summoned before the Chief's seat and proudly received the coveted badge.

Blackie was awake twenty minutes before First Call on Tuesday morning, and passed the time stitching the swastika emblem on the front of his jersey. The sky was dull and leaden; for the first time since he had come to camp there was a smell of rain in the air. When the campers were returning up the hill after the Indian dip the storm broke, bucketing down in torrents; the boys went up to breakfast in raincoats and ponchos, and stood assembled for flag-raising on the long porch of the lodge.

"I was going out with the pioneers to help build a signal-tower this morning," Blackie grumbled over his oatmeal at breakfast, "and here it's got to go and rain. Gee, what rotten luck!"

"Why worry?" asked Ken Haviland; "Rain doesn't spoil anything here at Lenape. Last year we had so much fun on rainy days that I've been wishing for a wet day soon. We'll have a good time to-day, and don't forget it."

“What will happen?”

“Oh, lots of things. Everybody stays here in the lodge, and we have boxing and wrestling matches, indoor track meets, or signalling contests. Maybe some of the leaders will tell stories. Rainy days are good times to practise for the big show that comes at the end of every section, or to get the dope on map-making, life-saving drill, forestry and merit badges. Some fellows can work in the carpenter shop on handicraft. I remember one wet day last year we had a big mud-marathon around the lodge. Everybody put on old clothes and went through a big obstacle race; we almost laughed ourselves sick.”

Haviland’s prophecy was correct; the program for the day was more active and strenuous than for a day of sunshine. The campers put the lodge in order, cleared away a big space in the center, and brought in a tall heap of firewood for the cheerful blaze that was crackling in the stone fireplace. Wally Rawn, who as officer of the day was supervising the program, caught Blackie by the arm as he was helping to lay down some large, padded wrestling mats. 100

“Blackie, will you go in to the Chief’s office and get the O. D. report blank for me?”

“You bet, Wally!”

Blackie skipped over to a far corner of the lodge, where the Chief had a small room fitted with a desk and cabinet to hold the camp letters and records. The door was slightly ajar, and two voices sounded beyond. The Chief had a visitor. Blackie paused at the door, hesitating to intrude upon the conversation.

“Just stopped on my way from Elmville,” came the heavy voice of the visitor. “Couldn’t find out anything about the matter there, and as I was riding back over the mountains I thought I might as well stop on the chance that you might know something about it.”

“Mr. Lane, who brings in our provisions, told me what he’d heard in town,” answered the Chief. “That’s all I know. Wednesday night it happened, wasn’t it?”

“That’s what the coroner thinks. The body wasn’t found till Friday—nobody goes up there, you know, and the old man lived alone. It was just by luck that one of the neighbors stopped in to see him, and found the body.” 101

“I’m sorry I can’t help you, Sheriff. It’s a terrible thing to have such a murder so near camp. And the old hermit wouldn’t have hurt a fly.”

Sheriff! Murder! Blackie clutched the doorpost and almost fell over at the words. The hermit!

“Well,” said the sheriff, scraping back his chair as he rose, “if you do hear anything, I live over by Newmiln Center. You can send word to me there. It’s a puzzle, sure enough. As brutal a thing as I ever heard of in all my experience; if it was robbers that did it, they surely didn’t find anything.”

“I hope you catch them,” said the Chief fervently. “And I’m sorry I can’t give you any

clue. Good day!”

Blackie just had time to collect his thoughts and run away from the door before he might be discovered listening. He dashed off and joined the group about the wrestling-mats, covertly watching the man who came out of the office. The sheriff was a heavy-set, black-mustached man in spurred and muddied riding-boots and glistening slicker. He stamped across to the back door and, while Blackie watched at a window, mounted a waiting horse and cantered off down the muddy road through the downpour. 102

The watching boy heaved a sigh of relief; he had escaped being caught and questioned. The two tramps must have tried to force the hermit to tell what he knew. The old man, of course, possessed neither a treasure nor the secret of a silver mine, and in the struggle he had somehow been—killed. Murder! What an ugly-sounding word it was! Blackie shivered. He wanted to forget; but he knew that never in this world would he lose the memory of that sullen, threatening house and the racking scream that had issued from it on that fatal Wednesday night.

He looked about him. The rainy-morning program in the lodge was already in full swing. In front of the fireplace Lieutenant Eames had roped off a square space and was giving boxing instruction to an interested group. Two older boys, their fists hidden in bulging padded gloves, were clumsily sparring together under a rapid stream of cautions and advice from the lieutenant and a perfect hail of cheers and urgings from the howling bunch of spectators.

“Put your body behind it!” counseled the West Pointer. “Place your blows where they’ll do the most good—don’t thrash around wildly. There—not bad! Don’t run away, Pete; stand up to him and defend yourself with the gloves. Whoa!” The two boys, smarting under a few well-placed blows, were mixing it in earnest, their fists whirling rapidly but with little damaging effect. “That’s enough—you can’t fight best when you lose your tempers. Now, who’s next?” 103

“Match me with somebody!” urged Chink Towner. “It’s my turn now, Lieutenant!”

“Whom do you want to take on, Chink?”

The onlookers chorused a suggestion. “Blackie! Blackie Thorne! Here he is now! Take him on, Chink!”

“How about it, Blackie?” asked the lieutenant. “Want to try a round or two with Chink?”

Blackie’s scare was still too close to him to want to think about anything else, but he resolved not to display the white feather before the group. He could not refuse. “Aw, sure, I’m not afraid of him. Give me the gloves!”

Jerry Utway volunteered to serve as his second, and jumped to help him. Jake Utway, not to be outdone by his twin brother, took Chink’s corner and laced on his gloves. The news of the bout spread around the lodge from group to group, until quite a number of campers crowded about the ring. Ellick, the chef, drifted in from the kitchen, and agreed to judge the contest. Tent 104

Three rallied to support Chink, their champion, and the Tent Four boys patted Blackie on the back and whispered words of advice or encouragement.

Wally Rawn came over while Blackie was stripping to shorts and tennis shoes. “You shouldn’t be matched with Towner,” he said. “He’s got a longer reach than you have, and knows more about boxing than you do.”

“I can’t back out now. I’m not scared of him anyway,” Blackie muttered, but his heart was racing and he had a chilly feeling in the pit of his stomach.

“Well, remember to keep your guard up all the time, and don’t lose your head. Another thing—don’t set your body stiff until you’re ready to hit; if you’re relaxed a blow doesn’t hurt so much. But don’t let him take you off balance, or you’ll find yourself chewing the floor.”

Bewildered by the shouting and the hasty advice, Blackie found himself in the center of the ring. The lieutenant was introducing the contenders. 105

“In this corner, Battling Towner, the Chinese challenger; to my right, Kid Blackie, the Bloodthirsty Bantam. Shake hands, gentlemen! First round—time!”

The two boys closed in upon each other warily, exchanged a few watchful feints and passes. Chink led with his left; Blackie sprang out of the way, and swung harmlessly at the air.

“Get into him, Thorne!” squealed Jerry Utway. “This ain’t a pillow-fight! Hit him!”

Chink feinted with his left and aimed a blow with his right that caught Blackie on the arm, whirling him half around. He caught his balance, leaped forward, and closed in a clinch so tight that neither boy got in any blows before they were separated. They parted; there followed a few seconds of brisk sparring; then Chink, with lightning footwork, dodged under Blackie’s guard and planted a thudding glove upon his face. Blackie was knocked backwards; he shut his eyes and crouched with his gloves over his face and his arms tight to his chest. The spectators shouted, cheering for Chink.

“First blood for the Chinese lightweight!”

“Yay, Tent Three!”

“Get into him, Blackie!” 106

Blackie set his teeth. The blow had stunned him for a minute, but it had the effect of making him forget the crowd, forget everything but the crouched figure of the boy before him—his antagonist. The faces of the watchers and the referee seemed to show through an unreal haze. He struck out at Towner, and landed on his body; but Chink retaliated with another crushing blow upon the nose. A numb feeling settled upon Blackie’s senses; his limbs seemed to be yards long, the gloves to weigh tons. What was he doing out here in front of the crowd, jumping around breathlessly and being struck again and again? Even Chink’s face came to him half hidden by a dreamy mist. He fought and fought,

yet Chink never seemed to be touched; he darted about, apparently placing his fists where he pleased.

A gong sounded; hands reached out and pulled Blackie to his chair. He felt a splash of cold water on his face; Jerry Utway was rubbing his arms with a towel. “Round one—won by Mistah Chink!” came Ellick’s voice.

Again Blackie was aware that the gong had sounded, and once more he was facing Towner. The other boy was breathing heavily, but was apparently as light on his feet and as ready with his hands as ever. 107

“After him, Blackie—the best defense is an attack!” It was Wally’s voice, coming coolly to him from beyond the ring. Blackie caught his breath and plunged with whirling arms after the shadowy form of his opponent. Chink closed in for an exchange of body blows and another clinch, in which Blackie got the worst end of it. Towner was depending mostly upon blows to the face, concentrating all his attack upon the nose and mouth, placing shrewd hits on these places one after another. Blackie had the feeling that he was fighting against a ghostly figure, an antagonist as elusive and intangible as smoke. He began hitting out blindly, thoughtlessly, raging and hating Towner with all his might. A red flag seemed to drop before his eyes, and he charged with his fists hammering like pistons, careless of the rain of blows that fell upon his unprotected head. He was seeing red, running wild, losing all his skill and direction in a mad, senseless rush. Through the clamor of the crowd came Wally’s low counsel again.

“Keep your head, Blackie! Self-control!”

The mist began to clear. He felt a jolting, sharp blow on the chin, was aware that Chink was off to one side and that in his blind charge he was nowhere near his antagonist. He fell back, protecting his face; then, suddenly, he whirled and struck out with his right arm extended. His glove seemed to plunge forward of its own accord and land with a smack on Chink’s face. The other boy fell back with an amazed look in his eyes. 108

“Time! End of de bout—no decision!” cried Ellick.

There were shouts of protest; the campers wanted a fight to a finish. Ellick only shook his head and nodded in the direction of Blackie’s corner. Blackie saw his comrades staring at him strangely.

“He tapped you one on the nose, all right,” said Jerry, giving him a cup of water.

Blackie looked with surprise at his hand, still encased in a leather glove. The casing was stained with a few darkening crimson drops.

“What of it? I can still lick him! I’m just getting started!”

Lieutenant Eames crossed over to them with one arm on Chink’s shoulder.

“Sure, you’re not whipped by a long sight, Thorne,” he said. “But we can match up you two 109

again some other time. Now, you two boys have been swatting each other all around the ring enough to satisfy anybody. Another thing, Blackie—I can see that you don't know the first thing about scientific self-defense, but you have two things that are most essential to a good boxer. You have good muscular control, and you keep your wits about you all the time. If you want to spend some time with me, I think after a few lessons I can make a pretty fair boxer out of you."

"Say, will you, Lieutenant? I'd sure like that!"

He relinquished his gloves to another boy, and a third match began, while Wild Willie Sanders and Soapy Mullins began a wrestling bout. The group split up and drifted away, while Blackie slipped into his clothes. His nose had stopped bleeding, and he was feeling a glow of happiness that came from the words of the boxing instructor. He felt a hand on his shoulder, looked up and saw Wally.

"Well, you took a beating to-day, all right!"

"Chink didn't lick me," frowned Blackie. "They stopped us because he tapped me on the nose."

"He hammered you all over the ring; I said you were no match for him. Chink Towner did give you a beating; but I was watching another fight at the same time." 110

"Gee, you talk funny sometimes, Wally. What fight do you mean?"

"You were fighting against your own self, Blackie, when you were there in the ring. And you won that fight. I saw you. For a minute you got mad, lost your control; then you got hold of yourself and began to use your head. It was a good thing for you to go against a fighter better than yourself; you learned to take your medicine and keep your temper. And they're both good things for a young lad to know."

111

# CHAPTER X
## THE LIE

"You put up a pretty good scrap," grunted Gallegher approvingly.

Blackie had donned his shirt and sweater after the boxing bout. "Thanks, Irish," he said.

"I've seen lots of tough fights, and I know what I'm sayin', see? Say, are you tired?"

"No, not very."

"What do you say we take a little walk? I'm sick of bein' shut in this lodge all mornin'."

Blackie looked out a window; the rain had slackened, but still drizzled down with settled persistence. "In the rain?"

"Sure—what's a few drops matter? Put on your raincoat and come along."

The two boys slipped into their rainproof ponchos, and then Gallegher led the way a short distance through the wet woods behind camp. Here he turned off and struck through the brush toward the mountain, following a line of lead pipe that ran from a spring above down to the lodge, supplying fresh, cold water for the use of the camp. A trail had been cut when the men had laid the pipe, but it was overgrown and indistinct, and it was easy to see that few campers ever passed that way. After about a quarter of a mile of trudging in silence through the dripping forest, Gallegher turned off and floundered through the undergrowth until he came to the thick trunk of a fallen tree that lay rotting on the ground. 112

“Here we are,” he said. “Not so bad, eh? I come here lots of times.”

“What for?” asked Blackie curiously.

“I’ll show you.” Gallegher stuck out his chin, and winked meaningly. “Have a good time, away from all the baby kids in camp. See what I mean?”

He fished out a crumpled, gaudily-colored package from his shirt, and held it out to Blackie. Within were a few cheap cigarettes.

“Gee!” exclaimed Blackie, “cigarettes! Where did you get them, Irish?”

“Aw, I always carry some. I like to get away and have a little smoke by myself now and then. Have one.”

“You’ve been smoking all the time we’ve been up here? Say, don’t you know the Chief sends a guy home right away if he’s caught smoking?”

“What of it? He has to catch us first, and nobody ever comes here. Don’t chew the rag so much; light up and be happy.” Gallegher winked again. 113

“Naw—I’m in training for boxing practice with the Lieutenant,” said Blackie uncomfortably. “Smoking is bad for the wind, and I got to have good lungs to be a good scrapper.”

“Aw, one won’t hurt you,” Gallegher jeered. “Know what I think? I think you’re scared you’ll get caught. You’re just yellow, like all the rest of the babies at this camp.”

“I’m not scared. Here, give me one, Irish. I’ll show you.”

Blackie seized one of the white cylinders and hastily lighted the end. Gallegher lit another and settled back on the fallen tree trunk, puffing away expertly.

“Pretty soft, eh?”

“Not bad,” agreed Blackie, fumbling amateurishly with the lighted cigarette. He coughed and wiped away the tears that formed in his eyes as the smoke blew into them. “Say, are you sure nobody ever comes around here?”

“Sure they don’t—especially on a rainy day. I’ve had a quiet little cig here lots of times. Don’t get scared, kid—we’ll be safe. Besides, now we both got the honor emblem, we can get away with lots of stuff. If you wear one of these things on 114

your chest”—he indicated the green swastika and the “L” upon his sweater—“you can put over stuff that would be too raw for other guys to get away with. I’ve been kind of layin’ low lately, but believe me, there’s goin’ to be some fun around this camp pretty soon, and I’m goin’ to get back at the guys that kicked me out of the Stuck-Up initiation. Are you with me, Blackie? They did the same dirty trick to you.”

“Sure—sure I’m with you, Irish.”

“Have another fag, then.”

“No, one is enough for me.”

“Come on, have another. What are you afraid of? We can eat a hunk of candy before we go back to camp, and nobody will ever know a thing about it.”

Blackie accepted another, but threw the stump away before he had smoked much of it. He didn’t like it, but the idea of sitting there hidden in the woods doing a forbidden act that would be heavily punished if it were known gave him a devil-may-care, excited feeling.

Later, after they had sneaked back to camp for swim, he did not feel quite so dashing. The secret act now appeared sordid. He felt uncomfortable and guilty; he could not forget what he had done, and went to bed that night with an uneasy fear that he might be discovered any minute. He dropped off to sleep assuring himself that never again would he let Gallegher or anybody else persuade him to break a camp rule and do an unworthy, hole-in-the-corner deed.

115

He awoke some time later. A pocket flashlight was shining in his face, and he blinked fearfully for half a minute before he came to his senses. Dimly he heard Wally whisper close to his ear.

“Get up and put on your bathrobe, Thorne. I want you to come up to the lodge with me.”

“Wha—what for?”

“You’ll find out later.”

He could hear the heavy breathing of his tent-mates about him as he struggled into his bathrobe; but when he stepped outside the tent he was surprised to find that all of them were not asleep. Gallegher, also attired in his bathrobe, stood waiting outside on the path with Wally, who had not yet undressed for the night.

“What time is it, Wally?” asked Blackie.

“About ten-thirty. Now, keep quiet and don’t wake up the rest of the fellows. Come along.”

The two boys followed him up to the lodge. The rain had stopped, and a crisp, bracing wind was blowing up from the lake. As they mounted the steps leading to the lodge porch, they saw a light still burning in the little office in one corner of the building. The Chief had not gone to bed yet, either. Wally opened the outer door, and stepped inside to let them enter.

116

“This way, you two.”

The boys exchanged scared glances. There was

no time to do more. They stepped inside. The Chief turned in his chair and bent a serious look upon them.

“Sit down, Gallegher, Thorne. Come on in, Mr. Rawn. Now, I have had your leader bring you boys up here because I wanted to ask you some questions.”

Gallegher slumped in his seat with a scowl. Blackie shivered; he did not dare to face the Chief, but looked away, fearing what was to come.

“Mr. Rawn tells me,” continued the Chief in an even tone, “that to-night at Taps, he noticed that something fell out of Gallegher’s pocket as he was undressing. He brought this object to me. Here it is.”

Blackie stole a glance at the man’s outstretched hand. It was as he feared. The Chief was holding a crumpled paper package of cigarettes.

“I asked him to bring Gallegher to me right away. He was seen going into the woods this morning, and as Thorne was with him, I asked that both of you be brought up to talk with me. The directors of Camp Lenape, knowing that smoking is injurious to the health of growing boys, have a rule that any boy who smokes while at camp will be sent home in disgrace at once. Have you both heard that rule?” 117

“Yes, sir.”

“Yes, Chief.”

“I am going to ask each of you a question, and you are on your honor to answer it truthfully. Gallegher, have you smoked cigarettes while at Camp Lenape?”

There was a moment of silence. Gallegher bit his lip and considered. He was caught with the goods. He shrugged and mumbled, “Yes, sir.”

Blackie felt the Chief’s eyes upon him. “Thorne, have you been smoking at camp, too?”

He must not be sent home! Blackie shifted in his chair and tried to think. Sent home in disgrace, away from all the wonderful times at camp; sent back to town, to face his mother’s disappointed eyes, to be in the city and know that he had missed the big camp show, the boat regatta, the swimming meet—— The Chief and Wally couldn’t be sure—Gallegher wouldn’t give him away——

“Answer me, Blackie.” 118

There was only one way out. “N-No, Chief.”

He had done it! He had lied; deliberately he had told an untruth to save his own skin. He was glad the Chief was not looking at him any more, but had turned his attention to Gallegher. Blackie stared at the floor.

“Gallegher, I’m glad you haven’t made it any worse by lying about your act,” the director was saying. “Now, because you’ve owned up to it like a man, and because I know that you have lived in a bad neighborhood back in town and might in that way have picked up some wrong ideas about things, I’m going to give you a choice that

may permit you to stay on here at camp. You can either leave camp to-morrow, or stay here and chop wood for the kitchen three hours a day. You'll lose your honor emblem, of course. Which is it—stay or leave?"

Gallegher turned away, so that the Chief could not see his face. "I'll stay and chop wood," he muttered with a catch in his voice. "And—thanks, Chief."

"I'm glad you took that choice, Gallegher. Camp has done a lot for you, and I'd hate to lose you now. Mr. Rawn, you may all go back to your tent now. Good-night!" 119

Wally nodded briefly, and the three left the lighted office. Not a word was spoken; they walked slowly and thoughtfully back to Tent Four, and turned in silently.

Between his blankets, Blackie drew a deep breath for the first time since he had been awakened. If Gallegher only did not give him away, nobody would ever know, and things would be just the same as before. Nevertheless, he did not find it easy to get to sleep, and woke before dawn to lie wretchedly in his bunk until the activity of the day would begin and he might win forgetfulness in the rush of the day's program.

The first blow fell just before breakfast, when the entire camp strength was lined up after flag salute and morning Call to the Colors. Hungrily expectant and waiting for the command to march in to mess, the arrayed campers were surprised to find that the Chief delayed in giving the command. He stood beside the flagpole with a stern look in his eyes. The boys stirred in the ranks, shifted their feet curiously, uncomprehendingly.

"Why doesn't he tell us to go to breakfast?"

"Gee—I never saw him do this before!"

"Quiet in the ranks!" came the command of Mr. Avery, the officer of the day. "Attention!" 120

The expectant bodies stiffened. The Chief cleared his throat.

"Timothy Gallegher, five paces forward!" he said.

A ripple of astonishment ran down the line. Blackie felt a movement at his side; Gallegher had left his place and now appeared in front of the Chief, standing with a strange white look on his drawn face, swaying slightly in his place.

"Timothy Gallegher, you have been guilty of conduct unbecoming to a Lenape camper. You will here, in the sight of all your comrades, be stripped of the honor emblem which you have been found unworthy to wear."

The crowd gasped. Gallegher never moved, staring in front of him with a blind tenseness. The Chief reached into his pocket and drew forth a clasp-knife, opened one of the sharp small blades. From the end of the line came a muffled tattoo; little Pete Lister, trap-drummer in the camp orchestra, was sounding a rattling roll on his drum, as he had been told to do.

Slowly, in the sight of all, the swastika-L on the front of Gallegher's sweater was cut away. The thin blade slit the stitches, and the Chief's hand tore away the green and white emblem of honor. Blackie watched Gallegher's face, fascinated. He should be out there, too, taking his medicine, suffering along with the Irish boy; he was just as guilty, and more so, for at least Gallegher had not lied about his guilt. Blackie wanted to cry out, to tell them all that he should be standing there, too, with the Chief tearing away his own badge; but he stood rooted in his place with a dry tongue and pale cheeks beneath his tan. 121

Now it was too late. The Chief had put the emblem and the knife into his pocket; the drumming had stopped; Gallegher shambled doggedly back to his place in the line, beside Blackie and the other boys of Tent Four. The chance to confess was past. Blackie rather envied Gallegher; he had owned up and taken his punishment, and however hard the work on the woodpile might be, at least he would have no ugly stain on his conscience.

"Right face! Forward—march!" The files trailed up toward the lodge steps, and instantly a curious babel of voices broke out.

"Gee, what did you do, Irish?"

"Say, you must have done something pretty wild to get stripped like that!"

"Aw, shut up!" said Gallegher. "Key down, see? That's my business. Maybe, if the guys that run this camp knew their stuff, I wouldn't be the only one to get stripped." 122

"What do you mean?" asked Slater.

"I don't mean a thing, see? Not a thing." He looked darkly at Blackie, who pretended he had not heard. The boys of Tent Four clattered up the steps. There was a smell of breakfast in the air; everything was forgotten at the thought of heaping dishes of cereal, hot biscuits, steaming cocoa. But Blackie took his seat in worried silence, bowing his head for grace. As he looked down, there showed before him the emblem sewed on his jersey, the swastika-L he had won but had disgraced and now wore dishonorably. He had a sudden, unreasoning desire to pluck it from its place and throw it to the floor. It wavered before his eyes, the burning badge of his shame.

123

# CHAPTER XI
## KANGAROO COURT

The day dragged on miserably for Blackie.

He had a feeling that the eyes of his tent-mates were always furtively upon him; when he would face them suddenly they would look away, but he could feel their silent condemnation. Gallegher spent the morning hours at work on the woodpile; Blackie saw him now and then bent over his job, toiling alone. They had not spoken together since Wally had wakened them

both the night before; they did not speak at dinner or in the tent during siesta hour afterwards. Blackie felt that the Irish boy was avoiding the very sight of him.

When Recall sounded after siesta and the boys of Tent Four tumbled out for the afternoon's fun, Blackie did not leave his bunk. He found himself alone with little Nightgown Guppy, who sat on the tent step busily scooping out a section of birch wood for a bird-house. He worked along in silence, but finally raised his head curiously and put a question.

"What's the matter, Blackie? Are you feeling sick or something?" 124

"No, I'm not sick, you fool!" growled Blackie, turning over on his pillow.

"Well, then, why don't you get out and play baseball with the bunch? The campers are playing the councilors to-day, and you ought to be in the game. I never thought you were a guy that would spend all his time doing bunk-duty."

"Who cares what you think? Shut up and beat it. I'm sick of hearing you babies bawling around all the time."

Guppy worked on for a minute. "What are you sore about, Blackie?" he asked after some time. "Is it because you're scared the Chief will know you were smoking?"

Blackie sat up with a jerk. "How do you know I was smoking?"

"Oh, everybody knows."

"If Gallegher said anything, I'll knock his block off!"

"He didn't have to say anything. We all know you were in on it, and lied out of it to the Chief."

The bunk creaked as Blackie jumped up and advanced toward the smaller boy with doubled fists. "You say I'm a liar? By Jimmy, I'll fix you for this!" 125

"Don't hit me!" said Guppy, dropping his tools and edging away. "All I said was——"

"You said enough!" Blackie scowled fiercely, seized the lad's arm roughly, and gave it a wrenching twist until Guppy cried out with pain. "That'll teach you to keep your mouth shut around me! Now, will you be calling me a liar any more? Will you? Will you?"

"Ow!" screamed Guppy. "I only said——You let me be, Blackie Thorne, or you'll be sorry——"

Blackie gave the arm another vicious turn. "If I hear you ever say again that I was smoking with Gallegher, I'll kill you, do you hear?"

"No, you won't," said a new voice. Blackie looked up. Facing him were Ken Haviland, Gil Shelton, and a group of older boys who had approached unnoticed.

"Get him!" called Gil in a low tone. He and Sunfish jumped and caught Blackie's arms.

"Don't try to struggle, or it'll be worse for you,"

continued Ken. “All right, Gup—he won’t bother you any more.”

Blackie found himself pinioned on both sides, and a husky guard of four veteran campers formed about him. They put him, still struggling, on a locker in the center of the tent. Ken Haviland assumed a seat on top of an upper bunk, where he could look down upon the prisoner. 126

“The Kangaroo Court will now convene,” he said solemnly.

“What’s the idea?” protested Blackie. “Gil, I thought you and Sunfish and Soapy Mullins were friends of mine!”

“Silence before the judge,” warned Gil. “You are now in court. We’ll let your arms loose if you promise not to run away.”

“But why? If one of the leaders comes along now, you guys will sure look stupid.”

“All of the leaders are down at the baseball field,” Sunfish assured him. “Anyway, it’ll be worse for you if any of them hear tell of this. Now, shut up! The court-martial is beginning.”

Ken Haviland, on his perch above, cleared his throat and began to speak. “Gentlemen of the Kangaroo Court, you have been called together to try the case of Blackie Thorne of Tent Four, Camp Lenape. You will see that justice is done.”

The boys seated themselves about on boxes and bunks. There were eleven of them, all from different tent-groups, and all boys who had spent at least one season at Lenape. Ken looked sternly at Blackie. 127

“Prisoner, you are charged with breaking the camp law against smoking and deliberately lying about your act when questioned on your honor. Are you guilty or not guilty?”

“So Gallegher’s been squealing, huh?” exclaimed Blackie. “Well, what of it? What right have you to treat me like a convict?”

“The right of the Kangaroo Court. You’re a tenderfoot at camp, so I’ll explain to you what we’re doing here. The Chief and the councilors have nothing to do with it now. You were asked on your honor if you had broken a camp rule, and we know that you told a lie. Instead of owning up and taking your punishment like a man, you broke your word and sneaked out of it. The Chief accepted your word; that’s all he could do. But the campers of Lenape have something to say about how a fellow like you shall be treated. This court represents every boy in camp, and every boy will stand by our decision. Are you guilty or not?”

Blackie sneered. “And I suppose if I say I am, you and this gang of yours will run and tattle-tale to the Chief!”

“I said that the Chief has nothing to do with this. And you only hurt yourself by acting ugly.” 128

“All right,” said Blackie sullenly. “I did it. What are you going to do about it?”

“Gentlemen of the court, the prisoner has

confessed his guilt. All in favor of inflicting the usual penalty will rise."

Every one of the eleven boys rose to his feet. Blackie looked from one face to another of those who had been his friends, and read there only reluctant determination. Ken Haviland tore a scrap of paper from a notebook in his pocket, and scribbled on it with a pencil. Soapy Mullins yanked Blackie to a standing position.

"Prisoner," said Ken gravely, "the unanimous decision of the Kangaroo Court is that you shall be given the Black Spot." He held out the scrap of paper, and Blackie took it wonderingly. There was nothing on it save a rude pencilled black disc in the center. "From this moment you are branded as a disgrace to Camp Lenape, and not a single camper will speak so much as a word to you. Court's adjourned!"

The members of the court departed toward the baseball field, taking Guppy with them, and the culprit was left alone with the marked piece of paper still in his hand. He crumpled it with an angry gesture, and tossed it to the ground. 129

"Huh! They must think they've done something smart! The Black Spot! Nobody will talk to me—we'll see about that! And what if they don't? A lot I'd care if I never saw any of this bunch of Sunday-school kids again!"

He caught up a hat and marched down to the ball field, drawn there by a desire to brazen it out and see if his sentence meant anything. The boys' team was at bat, and Lefty Reardon, captain, was coaching off third base.

"Hey, Lefty!" Blackie hailed him. "How about giving me a game?"

Lefty turned, looked him up and down quietly, and turned away again as though he hadn't heard the question. Blackie flushed, and after standing uneasily for a minute, tried to look unconcerned and strolled down to the gathering around the batter. There was a low ripple of whispers at his approach; boys nudged each other and turned to look, turned away with half-hidden smiles of contempt. He did not even dare to speak to one of them. For the moment he was tempted to rough-house one or two of the younger boys just to see whether or not they could be made to speak; but he remembered what had happened when he had twisted Guppy's arm, and knew that any defiance of the unwritten code would be useless.

"What's the score?" he asked of the world in general. 130

Not a boy answered him. Someone at his elbow snickered; no one looked in his face. He felt like a ghost, a branded being who had no right among that bunch of happy campers; he was lonely in a crowd.

The only reason he watched the game to its finish was because he refused to give the boys the satisfaction of having driven him away. It was the most wretched afternoon he had ever spent. He sat, drawn apart from the rest, inwardly seething with fury and wondering how long he could stand it. He forgot the exhilarating, breath-taking delights he had

enjoyed at Lenape; he could only remember the little dislikes he had acquired, the humiliation of his ejection from the Stuck-Up initiation, the crude and unceasing jokes that had been played upon him. He hated the Chief, the leaders; with all the boys against him, staying at Lenape was unbearable. He would leave the hateful place! It was the only thing to do—run away from them all and never, never come back!

He sat there moodily, pondering the plan in his mind. It was easy enough to decide to run away —but where should he go? If he went back to the city, he would have to face his mother with a tale of disgrace, and the boys of the camp would soon discover that their punishment had driven him home like a whipped dog. If he slipped away and went east, toward Elmville and the railroad, Wally would soon discover that he was missing; a hunt would start, he would be easily traced and found before he could get far, and he would be brought back to camp again, baffled and more of an object of reproach than ever. But if he could manage to get too far away to be traced, and stay hidden somewhere for three or four days, they would think him dead, and when he finally did return they would be so glad they would forget all about his crime, would be sorry they had caused him to run off alone. The open road, that was the thing! He would be a hobo for a while, might even bum his way to some city miles off, having an adventurous time on the road while the Lenape kids did their smart little tricks and acted like Sunday-school babies and thought they were having a good time!

After some thought he decided not to leave immediately, but to wait until supper-time. He was watched too closely now; every boy in camp knew of his sentence and was covertly watching to see how he would take it. But if he slipped away when the camp was assembled in the mess hall, it was not likely that he would be seen. Wally might wonder what had become of him, but would not take steps to find out until after the meal; and by that time Blackie hoped to be several miles away in a direction they would not expect him to take. He had seen the county map which hung in the lodge, and knew that Newmiln Center, on Flatstone Creek, was about ten miles as the crow flies northwest over the mountains, in a rich farming region that was separated from camp by miles of wilderness into which nobody ever penetrated. They would not look for him on top of the ridges; they would never suspect that he dared go there. Why, given a fair start and three hours of daylight, he might even make Newmiln Center before dark closed in!

“I’ll do it!” Blackie muttered darkly to himself. “I’ll show them I won’t knuckle under, no matter what they do!”

He would take his blankets, he decided, and also his flash-lantern, ax, and compass. The next problem was food. That would have to be taken —“hooked”—out of the kitchen somehow. But unless there was one of the kitchen crew at work, the place was always kept locked. He would have to manage, somehow.

He thought over his plans during the two hours before Retreat and the evening flag-lowering ceremony. He did not appear for swim, but spent

the time making a neat roll of his blankets, which he hid along with his flash-lamp, compass and ax in the bushes beside the road behind camp. He knew that if his absence at the swimming dock was noted, the boys would put it down to wanting to escape their silent contempt.

He was in his place when Retreat Call trumpeted out over the lake; but when the usual evening rush to tables began and the files clattered up the steps, he slipped around to the back door of the kitchen. He found himself in the pantry; shelves of canned goods lined the walls, under which were bins of vegetables, and the mirrored doors of the huge ice-box took up one side of the room. During the hush that preceded the saying of grace in the mess hall, he could hear Ellick whispering directions to Leggy and his other dusky assistants, who were busied dishing up the meal. This is what Blackie had counted upon, having the kitchen crew so busy at this time that they would not see him. Hastily he slipped a few potatoes and a can of peas into his shirt, and ran to the ice-box. A cool, humid breath of air came out to him as he opened the door and peered inside; it was dark within, and he felt about hoping to locate something he could take. His hand touched a plate of cheese, and he drew forth a good-sized chunk. There was a rattle of dishes from the kitchen. Ellick's voice came to his ears.

"Leggy, you just hurry up now and bring in de butter from de ice-box!"



Leggy's dragging footsteps sounded across the floor. With frenzied haste Blackie grabbed at whatever happened to be under his hand. It proved to be a slice of ham. Slamming the ice-box door, he clattered across to the exit and ran out of the skinny kitchen-helper's sight. That had been a close squeak! Pausing only to stuff the ham and cheese into the pockets of his sweater, he darted around behind the wooden building that was used for an ice-house and gained the rutted road that led toward the mountains. Here he found his blanket roll and accouterments, slipped the roll over his head and hooked the ax and lantern on his belt, and trotted westward through the woods.



# CHAPTER XII
## THE HUT ON BLACK POND

Half a mile up the road, where it turned at right angles to climb the mountainside, Blackie paused and took his first compass observation. His course was northwest; but he remembered that if he looked at the compass only now and then, he might go wide of his goal; the thing to do was to take an observation, note a landmark ahead in line with the NW on the compass, make straight for that place, and from there make a new observation on another landmark. The little shifting needle showed him that his first leg of the journey should take him diagonally up the wooded mountain to a grayish, scarred slide of stones that showed ahead in the dropping sun. He knew what that was, although he had never been there. It was the terminal moraine Gil

Shelton had pointed out to him the day he had first landed in camp—the Devil's Potato Patch, the campers called it—a heap of blotched, round boulders known as a favorite resort for rattlesnakes.

Blackie knew he must hurry if he was to reach the Flatstone valley before dark. Pausing only to stow his plundered supply of food more snugly in his pockets and to shift his blanket-roll to the other shoulder, he set off across an expanse of marshy pasture land toward his first goal. The deer-flies swarmed about his face and neck, stinging pitilessly, and he increased his pace as much as he could to get away from them. He had been prudent enough to wear his heavy hiking shoes, but in several places he floundered into muddy pools and sank into dirty water over his ankles. At last he reached the heavily-wooded base of the mountain, and was forced to slow down and begin a determined climb through the underbrush, up ledges of yellow, mossy rock, and across slippery patches of shale where he had to go slowly and watch his footing. Half-way up the mountainside, he gained the bottom of the terminal moraine. Huge rocks, gray with lichens and scratched in rough, random designs, stretched above him; he was forced to leap precariously from rock to rock, always upward, several times catching himself just in time to avoid a nasty headlong fall. Once, indeed, he slipped on a bit of moss, and toppled sidewise into a cranny between two of the boulders. His blanket-roll saved his body from being more than bruised; but in falling one hand slipped under his body, and his heavy electric flash-lamp banged down upon a rock, crushing one of his finger-tips badly. The darting pain brought tears to his eyes, and he shook the injured finger violently. Scrambling to his feet for fear he might have fallen close to the hiding-place of some vicious, venomous timber-rattler, he struggled on over the great rocks; and after what seemed like hours of toilsome climbing, he at last gained the top of the first ridge.

136

There, on the mountain's top, the evening light was brighter, but in the valley he had just left the shadows were long and cool. He turned and faced toward the east. There was the lake, spreading like a polished deep mirror that reflected the gold and blue evening sky, the serried rows of trees along the margin. There were the ordered rows of white tents, the top of the lodge roof with smoke wreathing lazily from the stone chimney and with the bare flagpole standing up beyond. He could see Camp Lenape as if it were a toy model spread out at his feet, almost hidden in the gray-green foliage of the forest. A slight breeze brought to him the faint clatter of trays from the mess hall, the confused hum of campers' voices. They would be almost finished supper, now. Wally and Haviland and Gallegher and the rest would be sitting about the mess-table, wondering where he had disappeared. Well, let them worry!

137

The thought of supper made him remember that he had had nothing to eat since dinner-time. He pulled out the piece of cheese he had looted from the ice-box, and began gnawing upon it. He could eat a little while he rested. He turned a bit to the left. Beyond the pasture-land he had crossed on his flight, he saw a line of trees that marked a lane. He knew that lane; it was the one

138

which led to the hermit's house, the road he had followed the night he had heard murder done by the two tramps, Reno and Lew. He could barely make out the weather-stained, mottled shingles of the roof of the house, and shivered slightly. He would be glad to go anywhere, anywhere away from the neighborhood of that grim house of crime.

Pulling out his compass, he marked a new line of march across the undulating summit of the mountain. It pointed toward a blasted pine taller than the rest, and he resolved to make for that. The going was easier here on the mountain; the daylight was clearer, and the trees were stunted and far apart, scrub pine and small oaks no more than waist-high, for the most part. Blackie trotted along with assurance, chewing upon a piece of raw ham torn from the slice in his pocket in lieu of supper. He crossed a ravine and stumbled up the other side; this took time, and now he could almost watch the sun dropping inch by inch toward the line of trees in the west. There was not a sign that human beings had ever passed that way; Blackie knew that no one ever penetrated that desolate wilderness except deer-hunters and blueberry pickers in the fall of the year. When he again gained level ground, he found that somehow he had lost sight of the blasted pine he had picked as a landmark. This did not trouble him much; he took out the compass and again sighted toward the northwest. His finger was bothering him more than anything else; the tip had swelled, and the nail was fast turning an angry purple color. It felt double its size, and as the boy swung along it throbbed and ached until Blackie was desperate with pain.

139

He had covered about a mile and a half since landing on the plateau on top of the ridge when he came to a section that was marked by long wooded swales, rank with rotting vegetation, crossing his path. The sun was dropping lower and lower; it shone like a flaming, bloody ball close to the horizon, and its slanting rays blinded his eyes until the woods about him seemed dim and unreal. He determined not to deviate from the line he had laid for himself, for fear of getting off the track; and when he came to the giant bole of a fallen tree, he tried to climb over it instead of going yards around. The knobs and splinters of the rotting trunk caught at his clothing and his equipment; while scrambling over the top he slipped and fell prostrate across it, knocking the breath from his lungs. A train of white ants crossed his arm, and when he crawled slowly and clumsily to his feet, he felt their red-hot stings on his wrist and up his sleeve. It seemed that the insects were everywhere under his clothing, jabbing their poisoned darts of pain into his skin. He jumped from the top of the trunk, landing on his face and scratching it until it was crossed by bloody lines. The ground now became marshy, and he was beset by a humming tribe of mosquitoes. Still he staggered on, until brought to a stop by a spread of green, scummy water that barred his path completely.

140

Blackie considered. At the rate the sun was disappearing, and at the rate he was taking to make a few miles across the mountains, he would never reach Newmiln by dark. It would mean a night alone in this unexplored region, a

141

night of fighting mosquitoes and unceasing watchfulness for rattlesnakes, night-prowling animals, and perhaps worse. He remembered all the tales he had ever heard of lone travellers caught at nightfall in strange and desolate solitudes, of attacks by bears, wolves, ghosts of slain Indians. And suddenly, like a chilling cloak, fear came to him and enveloped him. He felt the short hairs of his neck rise and prickle; an icy finger trailed down his spine. He would have to get on; he must cross the swamp somehow, anyhow!

The water in the slimy pool was only a few inches deep; through the green scum he could see the muddy, coated bottom. Feverishly he looked about him, and seized a number of fallen branches that lay on the ground, filled with the idea of making a rough bridge by casting them across the few feet of swamp ahead. He worked furiously, and soon had a network of branches thrown ahead, across which he hoped to run and so gain the far side. There was no room behind him for a clear take-off; it would have to be a standing jump. He stood for a second, getting up his nerve; and with a leap he landed upon the center of the improvised bridge. There was a snapping crackle of branches—the ones he had chosen were ground branches, and rotten. They gave under his feet, breaking and sinking into the mud; and he fell headlong on his face into the sticky ooze.

The swamp was a sucking enemy, trying to drag him under and hold him close, until the foul waters should close over his head; it bubbled under him, seeming to chuckle like a fiend. Frantically he fought his way to an upright position; he was standing almost waist-deep in the slime. Urged on by fear, he floundered forward, caught at an overhanging bush, and pulled himself slowly to firm ground. There he lay for a minute, gasping with exhaustion and terror after his exertion. The lower half of his body was soaked with filthy mud; his face and blanket-roll were draggled and stained from his fall. But he must not stop; he must push on, onward to the northwest! 142

For ten minutes he wandered through the marshy swales, avoiding the frequent pools whenever he could. The forest was too thick for him to spot any landmark ahead, and he gave up the idea of climbing a tree for an observation, because it would take up too much of his precious time. At last the ground sloped upward again; open spaces began to appear; the footing was easier. He pushed on, deadly afraid to halt in that darkening place of horror. 143

Blackie never remembered afterwards very much what he did during the remainder of that twilight march. He had a picture of himself—a hungry, weary, frightened figure, dwarfed by the bigness and ominous vastness of that solitude, caked with drying muck, scratched with twigs and thorns, and ever followed by a cloud of stinging mosquitoes—fighting his way through the desolation. He had the feeling of one in a nightmare, when the dreamer is pursued by darkness and nameless horrors, and the very ground seems to rise and clutch and hold him back. And he remembered coming to the edge of the rhododendron thickets and feeling that he could not go on.

The tangled network of the rhododendrons fronted an implacable barrier to his steps. There was no way to go around. It offered little resistance as he first plunged into it, but as steadily as he advanced, as surely did the branching horns of the shrub take hold on him. It was like trying to walk through a gigantic wickerwork basket, woven of tough and intertwined saplings. Again and again he plunged like a line-bucking football guard, and inch by inch fought his way. In one place he tried to stoop and crawl beneath the clutching branches, and was caught among the roots as in a vise, until he felt that he could move neither forward nor backward, but would have to stay imprisoned in that dusky brake until he died of thirst and starvation. He gave a frantic heave, and was free to fight his way further. The shadows were lengthening; the clock of the sky warned him that his time was short.

In the midst of his trouble he began talking desperately to himself; and finally he broke into high-pitched, shouting song. Over and over again he roared out to the brooding silence of the woods every hymn-tune he had ever heard. Ridiculously, he thought this would protect him from the unnamed evils of the place, and the singing certainly bolstered his courage.

"Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens—Lord, with me abide
——"

He had lost his hat, he did not remember where. Plunge—plunge—forward through the gripping coppice!

"When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!"

At last! He gave a wild cry and broke through the last entangling thicket, and the rhododendrons crackled closed behind him. He was free again!

He did not pause to take any more compass courses, or to straighten his clothing or pack, or to snatch a bite of food. He broke into a staggering run. His flight took him for about half a mile, into the bloodshot eye of the sun. He was dripping with perspiration, and heaving great shaking sobs. A fallen pine tripped him and he rolled heavily down a steep bank. When he picked himself up he found that he was standing on a dimly-traced path through the woods—a bare, almost invisible trail, but a path nevertheless, leading in what he thought was the direction he should follow.

A path meant that humans passed that way at some time or another, and might lead to habitations and possible discovery. But the forest terrors so clouded the boy's mind that he welcomed any companionship, no matter what kind. It would at least give him company and allies against the loneliness that beset him. It was growing dark; a blue jay somewhere overhead was bickering to himself among the pine branches. Blackie trotted down the path.

It led him along a wooded ledge of naked rock, and down across a marshy flat place where a brook widened and lost itself in a dense hedge of rushes. He crossed on a series of flat stones, and ascended a little hill. One look, and he gave a

shout of surprise.

There, spread before him beyond the margin of the reeds, was a long flat sheet of water, a mountain tarn whose unruffled surface, like a plate of polished steel, gave off the last dying beams of sunset. He had come too far to the south; he was off the course he had laid for Newmiln Center. This must be Black Pond, the long body of water he had seen marked on the map in the camp lodge.

The pond, hidden among the rocks and dark trees of the mountain, at no time had a friendly look; now, at nightfall, it presented to the weary boy a face full of sinister threat. He was several miles out of his way; further progress that night was impossible. He would have to camp here on Black Pond.

He was just turning away to locate a camping place, when his eye was caught by something which he had not noticed in his brief survey of the pond and its surroundings. Through the trees to the right a thin wisp of smoke was curling up in a languid spiral. 147

Someone was camping beside the pond! Blackie did not hesitate; the fear of spending the night alone offered no choice. He ran to the end of the path. There, beside the still waters of Black Pond, was a small shack rudely knocked together from rough pine slabs and chinked with moss. The spreading wings and steel-edged talons of a hawk, shot at some time or another, were nailed to the wall near the low door, in the usual back-country fashion. The smoke of a fire came from a stone chimney at one end. A small rowboat with a puddle in the bottom was drawn up on the muddy shore.

Blackie paused for a moment. He didn't like the looks of the place, but beggars can't be choosers; it was now quite dark, and the smoke indicated a cheery fire inside. Some hunter or fisherman, who used this small hut for his camp, must be inside. Blackie tiptoed to the door and knocked hesitantly.

From beyond the rough barrier came a startled grunt, the sound of a body moving swiftly across the hut. Blackie knocked again, growing more and more concerned as the silence continued.

With a sudden jerk the door was flung open, and a man's figure appeared outlined in the firelight, with one arm menacingly upraised, wielding what seemed to be a short iron bar. Blackie Thorne stared, and gave a shrill scream of fright. 148

He was looking in the face of the man called Reno, one of the two tramps he had overheard on the night of the snipe hunt planning to rob old Rattlesnake Joe of his imaginary treasure! He could plainly see the seamed face, the gray unshaven jowls, and the green eye-patch of that sinister character.

The tramp was as surprised as the boy. "In the devil's name, it's a kid!" he bellowed. "A kid, Lew! Nab 'im, quick!" He made a dive for Blackie, but the boy, pulled by terror, had already taken to his legs back up the path—away, away from that evil face in the hut. He stumbled frantically through the dark—the further away from Black Pond, the better!

Behind him he could hear the baffled howling of Reno. He would escape yet——

He stumbled, felt a pair of gripping arms about him, holding him tight so that he could not struggle. A hoarse voice called, “Here he is, Reno! Got the bloody little rat!”

“Good!” came the response. “Bring ’im here to the light. If he’s a spy, I’ll pull out his little throat, blast ’im!” 149

Helpless and too weary to fight any more, Blackie felt himself being picked up roughly and carried toward the hut on Black Pond that was the hiding-place of the two murderous vagabonds who had done to death the harmless old hermit of the Lenape hills.

150

# CHAPTER XIII
## ROBBERY BY NIGHT

“Bring ’im over here to the fire, Lew,” directed Reno, “and we’ll just have a look at his ugly mug.”

The younger tramp carried Blackie to the hearth and threw him down on his back, still gripping him about the body with both hands. Reno, the man with the patch over his eye, stood up against the fireplace the bar he had been using as a weapon. Blackie recognized that bar at once. It was the object the hermit had shown them when the campers visited him—his prized “thunderbolt” that had been the direct cause of his death. Dazed, he watched Reno stir up the fire and draw forth a blazing brand which he held up for a torch, close to the boy’s features.

“Glory be, it’s just a young kid!” snorted Lew. “From the way he was fightin’ me, I thought it was a wildcat at least! What’s he doin’ here?”

Reno spat, wiped his mouth, and swore terribly with his face close to Blackie’s. “You, now! Who sent you here?” 151

“N-N-Nobody,” the boy managed to stammer.

“No tricks, now!” warned the loathsome tramp. “If you’re alone, what are you doin’ here?”

Blackie was terribly frightened, but kept his head. These men were dangerous; he was alone with them, miles from any help. They could not guess that of all the people in the world, he alone had witnessed the death of the hermit at their hands. But if he admitted that he came from Camp Lenape, they would wonder why he was away from camp by himself, and would suspect that there were others near. He must depend upon his wits, now; and with the shadow of the great lie at camp hanging over him, he felt that one lie more or less would not matter now.

“I’m on the road, Mister Reno,” he said. “I didn’t know you were here—I’m bumming around by myself, honest!”

The tramp laughed nastily. “On the road, huh? Well, we need a kid about your size. Stick with

us, see, and you'll be rich some day. Frisk 'im, Lew."

152 The weak-chinned man called Lew was rapidly going through Blackie's pockets and unstrapping his belt. "We're in luck!" he said. "Grub and a light and blankets! An ax, too; the kid can use it to chop more wood for our fire. Look, Reno—we'll have a regular banquet—peas and ham and spuds!"

"About time," yawned Reno, moving back to the fire. "Get a move on and dish up supper. Blast my eyes if I ain't sick to death of livin' on fish and berries."

Lew permitted Blackie to get up. "Well, what did ya expect to live on while we was waitin' for the Big Job to blow over——" he began, but Reno stopped him with a hasty gesture.

"Shut up! If the sheriff was to hear ya say that ——" he threatened. Lew turned away, muttering, and with Blackie's hand-ax chopped open the can of peas and began cooking the meal at the fire.

Blackie, unharmed for the present but stripped of his supply of food and all his equipment, was allowed to sit in a corner and wonder how he could get out of his plight. Escape for the present was impossible; he was too closely guarded to get out of the hut, and even if he did so, he would be lost in the dark wilderness where every horror in the world might lurk.

153 The supper cooked, the two tramps set to in surly silence and gobbled up every scrap of food Blackie had brought. He did not dare ask for a share, but hungrily watched them devour the meal to the last morsel. Reno finished first, wiped his greasy mouth on the back of his sleeve, yawned loudly, took one of Blackie's blankets and an old quilt he picked up somewhere, and laid out his bed on the floor of the hut. His back was against the low door, the only means of exit from the place, and before turning in, he took the ax and placed it under his ragged coat, which he had doubled to serve as a pillow. Lew, leaving the dirty dishes on the rough table, took the remaining blanket and sprawled out on the floor near the fire.

Blackie ventured a question. "Excuse me, Mister," he said, "but where can I sleep?"

Reno rolled over and glowered. "A lot I'd care if ya never slept, ya dirty whelp! Shut yer face!"

"But—you have all the blankets, and——"

Lew reached out a booted foot and kicked the boy viciously. "I'll kill ya if ya don't stow yer gab!" he growled. "Kids like you don't need covers. If I hear any more out of ya, I'll jam my foot in yer mush!"

154 Blackie spent that unforgettable night squatting on the hearth beside the fireplace. Now and then he would drift off into a restless sleep, troubled by dreadful dreams and startled awakenings. His finger-tip ached continually, and the nail had turned so black that he knew he would lose it. He crouched miserably by the dead fire, shivering from the damp chill that rose from the pond and listening to the heavy breathing of the

two sleepers who barred his way to escape. His teeth chattered as much from fear as from the cold, for he could not forget that he was in the terrible company of a pair of desperate murderers who would twist his throat if they guessed he knew anything about their crime. Once he dreamed that he was back in Camp Lenape, lying stretched out in his bunk at Tattoo, with the stars bright over the pines, the friendly feel of happy boys about him, and Wally sitting beside the tent-pole reading vespers out of his Bible. He woke with a start, and saw the two ugly figures sprawled on the floor in the dim firelight. Camp was behind him; he had left all that, and was “on the road.” His cheeks were wet; he had been crying softly to himself in his sleep.

Gray dawn came at last. The two hoboes roused themselves, and permitted Blackie to wash his face and hands at the edge of the pond, making fun of him for a delicate greenhorn as they watched him. Shortly after, Reno disappeared into the woods and after about an hour, returned with a hat full of huckleberries, upon which he and Lew breakfasted, neither offering any to Blackie nor allowing him to find any for himself. He was not out of the sight of one of them during that whole dragging day. Save for a muttered curse or a blow on the head, they treated him as though he did not exist. The men played with a grimy deck of cards most of the morning, making large wagers against each other and swearing blasphemously when they lost, although the boy could not see that either of them had a penny to win or lose. Around noon, as near as Blackie could judge, Lew took a fishing line and rowed out upon the pond in the leaky old boat. He was gone for several hours. Reno spent the time chewing tobacco and playing a game of solitaire, or else snoring with his back against the door.

Lew returned from his fishing expedition empty-handed and in an ugly humor, and conferred with the older tramp in muttered whispers. Blackie was driven to the other end of the small hut while they spoke, but listened as hard as he could and managed to catch a word now and then. Once he heard distinctly the phrase, “Flatstone Creek,” and again, “the kid can do it.” At the end of the talk, Reno rose angrily and shouted, “I’m sick of yer snivelling like a yellow cur! The whole thing has all blown over by now —anyways, they haven’t anything on us to prove we done it!” He began stamping out the fire, rolled the blankets in an ungainly bundle, and stuck the ax in his belt. Lew also made up his blankets, to which he attached the flash-lamp.

“Here, you kid!” he said, “grab these bundles and tote ’em for us. We’re clearin’ out of here.”

This completed the preparations for departure. Leaving the hut in a litter, with the door hanging open, the two tramps led the way north around the edge of the pond, followed by Blackie, who stumbled along blindly under the burden of the blankets and quilt and the lantern. Reno led at a lazy gait, turning west after the end of Black Pond was rounded and strolling through the forested ridge for about three hours. At each step Blackie grew more weary; he was, after more than twenty-four hours of fasting, almost ready to keel over with starvation. He was only

allowed to drop his bundles and rest a few minutes now and then, when the men felt like stopping. He had no idea where the hoboes were going or what they intended to do.

At sundown, Reno called a halt. Blackie wondered if the mountain would ever end. He threw down the blankets and fell upon them wearily; but to his surprise the two tramps lay on their faces and peered out westward through a clump of bushes. His curiosity overcoming his fatigue, Blackie crawled over to their side, dodged a kick from Lew, and looked in the direction Reno was pointing with outstretched arm. 157

They were on the edge of a steep bluff fronting on a pretty little green valley in the center of which ran the silver ribbon of a brook. Beyond rose, purple-clad, a low range of hills that Blackie judged might fringe the Delaware. He was sure the creek below must be the Flatstone —they had been heading into the sunset for the past hour. To the boy, enslaved by the loathsome vagrants and unable to escape from their abuse and dangerous company, the peaceful valley looked like a promised land. Green, cool pastures spread on each side of the brook, where cattle grazed, fat little cows looking small enough, viewed from the grim cliff, to have come out of a toy Noah's ark.

Almost under them, at the base of the steep mountainside, a white farmhouse lay near an orchard of gnarled apple trees fronting on a yellow dirt road running north and south. Across the road was a rambling red barn, a farmyard full of chickens, and the remains of an old lime-kiln. 158

"That's the place I saw yesterday," said Reno. "Nobody there at night but the old guy and his wife—the hired man lives up at the Center. I found out that much."

"I'm starved," muttered Lew. "How long have we got to wait?"

"Aw, these hicks go to bed early. If we wait a couple hours, they'll be so much asleep you couldn't wake 'em up with a cannon. We'll take anything they got, and then beat it over to Pennsylvania for a while. Lots of good places across the river where we can lay low—this district will be gettin' too hot to hold us pretty soon."

Nothing further was said for some time. Smoke curled from the chimney of the farmhouse; evidently the people inside were eating dinner. A hearty country meal it would be, Blackie thought, and his mouth watered as he visioned smoking joints of meat, thick bread and jam, rich creamy milk, golden-crusted slabs of pie, corn and squash and pickles and beets, chocolate cake—— He tried to pass the time thinking of all the dishes in the world that he liked; but soon had to stop because of the clawing pangs of hunger that gripped him.

Reno and Lew lay watching the house like wolves awaiting the coming of night before attacking a defenseless sheepfold. Once a horse-drawn buggy with one occupant passed along the road, driving away from the Center that showed dimly as a cluster of white houses and a 159

church tower to the north, where a bridge spanned the stream. The sun disappeared; a few lights blinked forth in the house below, giving it a cheerful, friendly look amidst the mysterious dark of the valley.

Blackie, left to himself, thought of nothing but the chances of escape from the ugly pair he had been thrown in with by the fortunes of the road. If he could squirm away unnoticed, and make a sudden dash down the side of the cliff, he might get clear and find his way to one of the houses in the valley. He was more than willing to risk a broken ankle in the dark to win free of the tramps. He rolled over as quietly as he could, and began to worm his way across the ground; but he made the mistake of putting his weight upon a branch which snapped and gave way beneath him, and Reno jumped up and caught him by the collar with a snarl.

"No tricks like that, my hearty!" he muttered. "Try that again, and you'll be black and blue for a month! I'll skin ya, so I will!" 160

Blackie bowed his head under a rain of blows that stunned him and made his ears ring. He lay quietly after that, and did not move until, after about an hour, the two men rose to their feet with an air of determination. By this time the lights in the farmhouse below had disappeared, one by one; evidently the inhabitants were all fast asleep. Reno led the way to the left, picking his path by the aid of Blackie's flash-lantern shielded under his coat; Blackie followed, still stumbling beneath the weight of the blankets; while Lew brought up the rear, cursing softly when he stumbled on the treacherous ground. They picked their way down the steep slope of the mountainside, and after half an hour of slow going, came out on the dirt road near the barn. Here Reno snapped off the light, and without even a moon to guide them the tramps, like the thieves and night marauders they were, sneaked cautiously through the orchard until they reached the back of the farmhouse, and stopped a few yards from the low cellar-door.

Here they paused for a brief consultation, and then Reno crept toward the house, while Lew watched him, meanwhile holding Blackie's arm in a vise-like grip. No sooner had he vanished in the direction of the house than the night was full of the rousing bark of a dog. 161

"Curse the luck——" began Lew; but on the instant the bark died away in a blood-curdling, stricken howl; and afterwards there was silence again. He listened in a strained attitude, still clutching Blackie, who could hear his heart beat so loudly that it seemed as if the inhabitants of the house must hear those throbbing thumps between his ribs and waken in alarm. Finally Reno came back to them, moving like a shadow in the starlight.

"It's all clear!" Blackie heard him whisper hoarsely. "The watch-dog heard me and almost give the show away, but I cut his throat right quick. I tried all the doors and windows, and everything is tight as a drum—but there's a little window in the kitchen that the kid might be able to get through."

"Send him along," said Lew. "Does he know what to do?"

"He'd better know!" whispered Reno sharply. "Listen, kid—ya got to help us. I'm goin' to boost ya through a window into the kitchen, and you pass out all the grub you can find. While I was around lookin' at the windows, I found a gunny-sack they use for a doormat, and we can stuff it full of grub and take it with us." 162

"But—but that's stealing!" exclaimed Blackie.

Reno grasped his throat swiftly, and choked the words in the boy's throat. "Shut yer trap—do ya want the whole house down on us? And what if it is stealin'? Ya ain't above that, are ya, ya little ladylike brat?"

"But what if they catch me in there?" moaned Blackie through his teeth.

"Ya better not let them catch ya, that's all. But let me tell ya, it'd be a sight better to have the old farmer catch ya and put a shotgun full of buckshot into ya than to come back to me without a pile of grub!" There was an edged threat in his voice, and Blackie did not dare say another word. If only he had stayed at camp and obeyed the rules, he would not now have to choose between robbing a house and being beaten within an inch of his life by a murderous tramp!

He allowed Reno to push him around to a small, high window at the rear of the house. "There it is, kid," whispered the man in his ear, "and if ya see anything else worth takin', pass it out to me!" He lifted the boy to the ledge, and Blackie fumbled with the catch. The window opened outwards with a slight creaking noise, leaving an aperture about half a yard square. Making no further protest, which he knew would be useless, Blackie squirmed through after some trouble, and lowered himself slowly into the silent kitchen of the sleeping house. He had a new plan in his head now, and permitting himself to be pushed inside the farmhouse was a necessary part of it. It was his duty to rouse the owner of the farm and warn him of the danger lurking without. If there was a telephone in the place, perhaps help could be speedily summoned in time to capture the murderers outside; if not, at least the house could be barricaded and the tramps driven off. The farmer would give Blackie shelter for the night, he hoped, and anyway he would be free of the domination and driving of the two vagrants; but unless the farmer was awakened with care and quickly comprehended what Blackie would tell him, he might misunderstand and take the boy for a robber before he could explain. Nevertheless, Blackie felt that he must carry out his plan no matter at what danger to himself. 163

He found himself in a sort of pantry leading off from the spacious farm kitchen. A low red fire still glowed in the stove, and he could make out the walls lined with jars and cans and boxes and cooking utensils of all kinds. A low hiss from the window warned him that Reno was still on the lookout. He would have to work rapidly. 164

Looking about him hastily in the dull light, he found a door that seemed to lead to the other parts of the house. Tiptoeing across the uncarpeted floor one careful step at a time, he reached the door and entered a long hallway. This he followed for a yard or two, feeling his

way along the wall, until his hand touched a railing that seemed to be part of the front stairs. He would have to climb those stairs to reach the bedrooms. He advanced one foot cautiously, and was just climbing the first step, when a loose board in the floor creaked with a sickening noise. It sounded to the terrified boy like the crack of Doom.

Instantly his feet were knocked out from under him as a heavy body leaped at him like a football tackle, and he fell with a toppling crash to the floor. Someone was upon him, holding him in a resistless clutch! The wind was knocked from his lungs, and he gagged and fought for breath. The stabbing glare of a flashlight hit his eyes.

Then the strangest event of all that strange night happened. His unknown assailant gave a little whistle of surprise, and broke forth into speech. Only one word, but that word the boy's name.



"Blackie!"

The flashlight twisted around; the stranger was showing it upon his own face. Blackie gasped, and almost shrieked with relief. The person who had captured him in that dark, lonely farmhouse was his own tent leader, Wally Rawn!



# CHAPTER XIV
## THE SPRING-HOUSE

"Wally! What are you doing here?"

Wally Rawn relaxed his iron grip and helped Blackie to his feet. In the glow of the flashlight the boy could see that Wally was fully-dressed in corduroy trousers, blue flannel shirt, and high woodsman's boots with laces dangling. The councilor must have thrown his clothes on in a hurry.

"I might ask the same of you, Blackie," he said with a slight grin. "Have you become a burglar all of a sudden?"

The words recalled Blackie to his mission in the farmhouse. "Shh! Not so loud—they're still outside!"

"Who's outside?"

"The two tramps! They're the ones that killed poor old Rattlesnake Joe, and they made me climb in the window to steal some food for them. The older one stabbed the dog outside so he wouldn't wake the house, and——"

Wally pursed his lips in a low whistle. "So that's who shut up the dog so suddenly! The barking woke me up, and I thought I'd prowl around here and see what was happening. You say these men are—murderers?"



"Yes—the sheriff is after them! Don't let them catch me again, Wally! They kicked and beat me all the time, and wouldn't let me have anything to eat, and I'm scared of them!"

“Don’t worry—they can’t get in here. But if the sheriff wants these men, we might have a try at capturing them. You say they’re waiting for you outside? Well, you might be able to get them to bite on the hook. Are you game to take a chance on locking them up where they belong?”

Blackie’s face fell. “Why, sure, I’ll try if you help me. But how can I catch them? They’d kill me in a minute if they thought I was giving them away.”

Wally considered. “I’ve got it!” he exclaimed softly. “Listen—out there in the orchard there’s a spring-house where the farmer’s wife keeps butter and meat and stuff to cool. I remember it has a strong lock on the door. If you could get them in there, and snap the bolt on them, we could hold them there until Kingdom Come. It’ll be touch-and-go with you if you can’t get them inside, but a pair like that should be under lock and key as soon as possible. Will you try?”

Blackie nodded. “If you think that’s the best way ——” 168

“Good. I’ll wake up the old man, and we’ll be on the lookout at an upstairs window to protect you in case the scheme doesn’t work. We can’t show ourselves or they’ll get suspicious and we’ll never have the chance again. Now, skip back to the kitchen—they’ll be wondering where you went. Good luck!”

Wally began to tiptoe silently up the stairs, and Blackie hastened back down the hallway to the kitchen. On his way to the pantry window he grabbed two or three jars of preserved vegetables and a loaf of bread. He found Reno at the window, almost crazy at the delay.

“What took ya so long, ya little fool?” he raged under his breath. “I thought I heard noises inside, and thought ya were bagged for sure.”

Blackie handed out the jars. “I was just looking around for grub, Mister Reno,” he said. “There isn’t very much here—at least I can’t find it in the dark. This is all I saw.”

Reno grew ferocious with anger. “Well, that’s better than nothin’—but after all our trouble, all ya could get was a mouthful! I’ll fix you for this later! Come on, climb out—don’t stand here jabberin’ all night!” 169

He helped the boy out through the narrow window, and together they crept back to where Lew was standing guard.

“Any trouble?” he asked.

“Aw, the brat couldn’t find enough to make a lunch for a flea.” Reno held out the jars and the bread. “We’ll have to try this game somewheres else.”

Disgruntled, he led the way back through the orchard toward the road. Blackie could barely make out the white-washed side of the spring-house to their left. He plucked Reno’s ragged sleeve.

“Say, I bet that place is full of grub! Let’s have a look!”

Reno turned with a sneer. “Go and see.”

Blackie knew that if he argued, it might breed suspicion. He waded through the tall grass to the low door and felt its rough face with his hand. Sure enough; the outside bore a strong bolt. As he opened the door, a draft of chill, damp air came forth, mingled with the smell of fresh cream and cheese. He stumbled in.

It was the usual type of country spring-house. In the center bubbled up a rill of icy water that was contained in a deep stone basin, filled with tall cans of milk. The two men, attracted by Blackie's easy entrance into the place, followed him quickly, and found him busily gobbling a generous chunk of apple pie, washing it down with milk from a pitcher at his elbow. Hungry as he was, however, Blackie had not lost sight of the deed he had to do; it was part of his plan to entice the men inside. Lew rose to the bait, and began seizing foodstuffs with both hands; but Reno cautiously stood square in the doorway, covering the retreat. His mouth full, Blackie pushed past him, stuffing cookies into his pockets. 170

"Pass the stuff out, Lew," Reno was saying "I'll stick it all in our bag here."

Blackie had meanwhile gained the outside, and stood facing the back of the man in the doorway. "Why don't you go in too, Mister Reno?" he asked. "You might miss something if you don't."

Something in his tone made the man whirl about suspiciously. "What do you mean, you little roach? If you think you can——"

Blackie saw his only chance, and took it. With a sturdy rush, he butted against Reno's legs. The tramp, caught off balance, grabbed at the doorway to right himself, and Blackie, with all the force of his body behind it, plunged his doubled fist into the man's stomach. It was a lucky blow that landed right on the solar plexus, and for a moment Reno was paralyzed. He gave a pained grunt and keeled backwards into Lew, who fell over a tall milk-can and tumbled sidewise into the pool of icy water. Before either of them could flounder to their feet, Blackie had slammed the strong door and shot the bolt upon his prisoners. 171

He sat down in the trampled, dewy grass, overcome with the reaction that sets in after a trying period of strain and excitement. And suddenly, without knowing why, he began to laugh, laugh until his sides hurt, unable to stop.

Wally Rawn came to him on the run from the house, carrying a long-barreled shotgun in his hands. He tested the soundness of the lock on the spring-house door, and then clapped Blackie on the shoulder.

"Neat work, son! You've got them shut up in there like a couple of sardines in a can. Say, what's the matter with your funny bone?"

"He—he looked so crazy!" gurgled the boy. "I knocked the wind out of Reno, and he fell over and pushed Lew into the water!"

From within the spring-house came an angry racket. Reno must have scrambled to his feet again and was shouting at the door; both men were cursing a blue streak, and Reno was 172

making the most terrifying threats as to what he should do if Blackie did not release the bolt on the instant.

Wally patted Blackie's arm soothingly. "Don't you worry your head about that." He stepped to the door and called commandingly, "Listen, you inside there! I've got a gun here, and if you make one more sound I'll wing you both! You're here to stay, and don't forget it!"

The serious depth of his voice must have impressed them, for they maintained a puzzled silence while Wally strolled back to Blackie with a cheerful smile.

"Guess that'll stop their howling for a while. Now, as I was telling you, I woke up the old farmer—he was snoring away as peaceful as a sheep—and now he's telephoning to Sheriff Manders at the Center. The sheriff will be along in his car as soon as he can make it, and until then I guess these birds will stay in their cage. They'd better!" he finished grimly. "Now tell me how you happened to be housebreaking here in the dead of night in such bad company."

Growing more calm, Blackie began his tale, relating how on the night of the snipe hunt he had overheard the two hoboes planning to rob the old hermit, and how he had followed them and heard the scuffle in the house and the scream which had driven him to fly in horror. 173

"You should have told me or the Chief about that," was Wally's only comment. "It would have saved a lot of trouble."

"I was too scared," confessed Blackie, "and besides it all seemed like a dream that couldn't be true."

He told briefly how he had fallen in with the tramps again at Black Pond, and how they had later forced him to enter the house to plunder it. When he had finished, Wally said nothing for a while, but shook his head once or twice in somber amusement.

"Well," he said finally, "guess after all these adventures you won't mind going back to old Lenape for a rest. I've come to take you back to Tent Four."

"But—how did you know where I was? Why are you here?"

"I didn't know where you were, but I had a pretty good guess. You slipped away from camp, and I figured it was up to me to catch you again. The Chief sent Mr. Lane in the car toward Elmville to look out for you along the road to the railway, and there were quite a number of fellows scouting around for your tracks on the campus. I wasted some time after supper down at the south end of the lake, thinking you might have headed that way toward home, and it wasn't until this morning that I got the brilliant idea that you would head right into the big timber for a while. I found your trail up on the ridge, and believe me, you hit some pretty rough going in spots! Right in the middle of a swamp I found a hat with your name on it, stuck in some bushes; and then I knew my guess was right. But after clawing my way through a regular jungle of rhododendrons I lost your track, and naturally 174

thinking you would make for Newmiln, I raced over to the Center. I had no idea you would swing down into Black Pond."

"What did you do then? Gee, you must have been a wizard to follow me that far!"

"I spent the rest of the day sweeping the Flatstone valley for traces of you; I knew that if you had passed this way somebody must have seen you. When I got no news, I came back over this side and the old farmer—his name's Jacob Woods, and he's a friend of mine; I brought a group of bikers over here last year—he offered to let me stay here to-night and to go back into the mountain with me in the morning to look for you. He was telling me tales of lost hunters and mysterious accidents back in these hills until I almost went out to look for you with a lantern. It was just a crazy coincidence that your hobo friends decided to pick this house for their midnight robbery—but I'm glad I was the one that hopped on you in the dark; somebody else might have been rough." 175

Blackie had been drinking in every word. "Say, Wally," he said, "those tramps are awful quiet. I wonder if they're up to anything?"

"We'll see." Wally, with his gun held at ready, circled about the little stone building warily, and was just in time to see Lew, the weak-chinned younger tramp, sticking his head through an aperture he had made by removing a stone where the overflow from the spring found its way out. "Get back there, you!" shouted Wally. He pretended to aim a kick, and the startled hobo, who had counted on tearing away the stones and escaping by the back way, withdrew his head so speedily that he bumped it. Wally closed the opening with several rocks.

The sound of an auto horn from the road made Blackie jump. "That must be the sheriff!" cried Wally. "Hi! Over this way, Mr. Manders! Over here in the orchard!" 176

Three men came tramping across through the grass, two of them carrying rifles. The taller of them Blackie recognized as the man who had been conferring with the Chief on that fateful rainy Tuesday when he had fought with Chink and smoked with Gallegher. It was Sheriff Manders, and he pulled out two pairs of handcuffs while Wally was explaining things to him. Another man he introduced as his deputy, a rugged farmer with red chin-whiskers showing in the light of the lantern he carried. The third, garbed in a pair of overalls hastily donned over his night-clothing, proved to be Mr. Woods, owner of the farm, who since telephoning had been watching at the roadside to direct the officers of the law as soon as they arrived.

The sheriff heard Wally to the end, and then turned to Blackie. "You're a real smart boy, if what Mr. Rawn says is true. I'll be over to your camp-ground later and get your affidavit on all you've told him; and likely you'll be wanted at the trial."

He stamped over to the door and knocked upon it loudly. "In the name of the law, I call upon you to submit to arrest!" 177

When the door was flung open, two cowed and

shaken vagabonds shambled out to face the weapons of Wally and the officers. Their short imprisonment had broken what spirit of bravado they possessed, and under the watchful eyes of the law they appeared as a brace of craven and revolting blackguards caught in the midst of crime. They submitted to being handcuffed, and were bundled off toward the car in short order.

“I’ll go with you and see these fellows safe in jail,” volunteered Wally. “No—you won’t be needed, Blackie; you’ve done more than your share this night. You just trot off to bed with Mr. Woods here, and forget all about everything.”

He disappeared after the two prisoners and their guards, leaving Blackie with the aged farmer. The latter led Blackie back to the house, where his wife was fussing about the kitchen in a faded red wrapper, stirring up the fire and raising a most tantalizing smell of cooking. Mr. Woods, with rare forbearance, did not bother Blackie with questions, but every now and then he caught the farmer looking at him with a puzzled frown, shaking his head and muttering to himself, “Wal, who would have thought it?” His wife mothered Blackie, making him wash his face and hands and seating him at the table, where she piled hot food before him and watched him gorge himself on sausage and fried potatoes, pressing him to eat more pie and cookies until he felt as though his eyes must be bulging with repletion. When he could eat no more, she packed him off upstairs to bed, and left him with a gentle good-night. He undressed, almost dozing off once or twice in the process, climbed into a high four-poster bed, and lay snugly stretched out under a brilliantly-colored old-fashioned crazy quilt. He fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow.



A short time later Wally returned and woke him to say that he had seen the tramps safely under lock and key in the jail at Newmiln Center, and that he need not worry any more. Blackie hardly heard the words before he was asleep again. Wally blew out the lamp and crawled in beside the sleeping boy, and once more all was peaceful in the farmhouse at the foot of the mountain.



# CHAPTER XV
## THE LAST RACE

Blackie and Wally were up at the first crack of dawn; it was to prove an active day for them, and they had no mind to get a late start. After a hearty breakfast provided by Mrs. Woods, they took the road south on foot. The grateful farmer offered to harness his team and drive them back to camp, but Wally knew that he was needed to tend his stock, and courteously refused.

“We’ll take the road down the valley and over the mountains,” explained Wally as the two hiked side by side down the yellow road. “It’s a bit longer than straight over the ridge, but we’ll avoid a lot of tough going, and save time in the long run.”

Blackie was not sorry to be tramping along in

Wally's company on that bright summer morning. His clothing had been neatly brushed and cleaned by the farmer's motherly wife, and his rescued blankets were strapped over one shoulder. The sky was a lustrous, enamelled blue; the fields and thickets sparkled with dewdrops; and a cheerful chorus of birds chirruped a marching song for them. The way led down the valley of the Flatstone, running on a wooded height above the wandering creek. Occasionally they passed orchards and farmhouses, lazy in the sun; once they climbed a spur of the hills and looked down upon a great red mill, with a plashing race of water leaping down through the dripping teeth of a clacking wooden wheel. Several times they were passed by farmers driving wagons or cars, but always they were heading the opposite way, toward the Center; and the two hikers were not fortunate enough to get a lift. As they went they chatted gaily, and all the grim hours of Blackie's flight and bondage seemed like the half-remembered fragments of a nightmare.

By ten o'clock they had reached the crossroads, beside a steepled little schoolhouse with a yard overgrown with weeds, and halted several minutes before turning eastward.

"This route is longer than I thought," observed Wally. "We're only about half-way back to Lenape now, and we still have the hardest part of the journey ahead. I thought we might be back in camp by this time. You see, to-day we hold the big regatta and water-sports. Every fellow in Camp Shawnee will have come down from Iron Lake to compete with our swimmers and divers, and I should be on hand to take the entries and run the meet." 181

"It's my fault you're not there now," said Blackie. "If I hadn't run away, everything would have been all right."

"If you hadn't run away, two desperate characters wouldn't be in jail to-day, facing trial for murder," pointed out the leader. "That's the way of the world—there's no situation so bad that courage and brainwork can't mend it, and many a bad start has ended with a whirlwind finish."

"Then if I hadn't told a lie in camp, I wouldn't have been kangarooed and would never have left, and would never have found Lew and Reno up in the mountains. But all the same, I'm done with lying—forever."

"That's a peach of a resolution to make," agreed Wally. "Lying is either cowardly or silly, and a Lenape camper doesn't want to be either. And now let's be off; we won't get back to camp just by talking about it."

He leaped to his feet and they trudged off up the mountain road at a smart pace. Blackie's short legs had some difficulty in matching the mile-devouring stride of the councilor, but he did not complain, although it had grown exceedingly hot and dusty, and it seemed as if the succession of ridges across which they passed would never end. Each time they would surmount a summit, Blackie told himself that it must be the last; and each time he would find another belt of road stretching on ahead and another ridge to cross. A little after noon they sighted a fine-looking 182

farm in the center of the hills, and on the shady porch sat a red-cheeked man with drooping mustaches. He was clinking out a lively tune on a banjo, but dropped the instrument when he saw them approach, and called out a cheery hail.

“Hi, Mr. Rawn! Ain’t seen you sence last year! Come on in and talk things over—the old woman’ll lay a couple extra dishes for dinner. It ain’t often we have the honor of company for meals, and we like to make the most of them!”

Wally accepted the invitation, and after he and Blackie washed the dust from their faces, they sat on the porch and chatted with the farmer until the smoking hot meal was served. The leader was impatient to be off, but the pleasure of the farmer and his wife at having visitors was so great that it was some time before he could break away. The dinner was leisurely and abundant, and afterwards nothing would do but they must chat with the garrulous farmer about every subject he could think of, from hog cholera to philosophy; and he insisted on playing his entire stock of old country tunes on his banjo before they finally parted. 183

“It’s not far now,” said Wally as they again took the road. “The last ridge is only about a mile ahead.”

This cheered the plodding Blackie a little, but all the same it seemed as if that mile was the longest in the world. At last they reached the summit, and instead of another dreary stretch ahead they were rewarded with an exhilarating prospect of the lake below and the flat countryside beyond in the direction of Elmville. As they paused to get their breath, a bugle call trilled up to them from the lodge.

“Come down and wash your dirty neck——” sang Wally, keeping time to the trumpet-call. “He’s sounding Swim Call. That means they must be starting the swimming meet! Hurry, Blackie—it must be at least two o’clock; everybody will be streaking down to the dock. See that bunch of fellows over in the baseball field? That must be the gang from Camp Shawnee.”

The two broke into a run which took them past the spring and down to the signal tower. Here they left the road, which bent at right angles, and plunged down the hillside through the green woods, following the trail beside the pipe-line. Inside of twenty minutes they were stumbling into Tent Four, where they sat on their bunks to catch their breaths. 184

They found the tent rows deserted; evidently every camper was assembled down beside the lake. Wally recovered his breath first, and urged by the necessity of going on duty at the dock, slipped out of his clothes and into his swimming suit. Blackie, after five minutes’ rest, began to undress slowly.

“You’re not so crazy for a swim you want to hustle right down now, are you?” asked Wally in surprise. “You better take a nap, son.”

Blackie shook his head. “I’ve got to get in the meet, Wally! It’s my last chance—you know I have to leave camp to-morrow; I’m only signed up for the first two weeks. And you’ve put in a lot of time teaching me the Australian crawl

stroke, and I want to show what I can do in a real swimming meet. Will you enter me in the distance swims and the high dive?"

The councilor grinned. "You sure are a glutton for punishment! I wouldn't think, after the last couple of days, you'd have steam enough left for swimming contests! But I admire your gameness, and I'll sure put your name down." He buttoned the strap on his bathing suit, thrust his feet into a pair of tennis shoes, and dashed off down the path toward the dock, from the direction of which came a confused babble of shouting and cheering. The swimming meet was already in full swing. 185

Blackie went down to the lake only a few minutes later, meeting no one on his way. The boat dock and the shore were lined with swimmers and spectators; about a hundred of them were strange boys and leaders, wearing the red arrowhead of Camp Shawnee, who had hiked down from Iron Lake to accept Lenape hospitality for the day and contest Lenape superiority in the water. The life-saving boats were stationed further out than usual, and Wally Rawn, with a whistle about his neck and papers and a megaphone in his hands, was stationed on the upper deck of the tower, directing the events, assisted by the chiefs of the two camps.

The first person Blackie encountered as he stepped on the dock was Ken Haviland. The aide gave him a stare of contempt.

"Humph!" he snorted. "So you came crawling back to camp just as I knew you would! Well, you might just as well have stayed away. What's the idea of the bathing suit? You needn't think we want a fellow like you to represent us against Shawnee." 186

"Wally has entered me in the meet," said Blackie stoutly. "You shouldn't kick if he thinks it's all right."

"Wally's running the meet, and what he says goes," admitted Ken grudgingly, "but as far as the campers are concerned, you don't count." He turned away, refusing to speak further.

"Third event—underwater swim, junior class!" came Wally's voice through the megaphone. The six contestants, three from each camp, lined up at the end of the dock and when the whistle sounded took off with flat racing dives. The spectators cheered as the boys hit the water; and the wearers of the arrowhead gave a happy yell as their contenders took first and third places. Steffins of Lenape ran a close second with a fast breast-stroke.

"What's the score now?" Blackie asked the boy next to him. It was Slim Yerkes, and he favored Blackie with a stare.

"I'd keep quiet if I were you," he said. "Don't forget you're still on the blacklist around here." He moved off, and Blackie sat down weakly on a rock on shore. He had hoped that by this time the edict of the Kangaroo Court had been forgotten and that he could once more speak freely with his comrades; but since his return not one of them had spoken to him in friendship or asked about his adventures. 187

He did not try to talk with anyone again, but sat where he was and watched the progress of the swimming meet with dull eyes. The Shawnee team was a good one; a red-headed, slightly-built lad named Lawrence took honors in the junior class in diving, winning several first places in the form and fancy events, and a husky kid whom his Shawnee camp-mates called “Hobo” starred in the sprints. They both helped to give Lenape the worst of it, and at the end of the junior contest the score was Shawnee, 37; Lenape, 23.



Blackie caught sight of Irish Gallegher among the groups on shore, but did not want to speak to him. The senior diving events were now called, and Blackie answered to his name among those competing in high-diving. There were about seven contestants entered from each camp, and every entrant was entitled to three dives. They assembled on the upper dock platform, where a runway and springboard jutted out over the end of the piers. In this event Lenape, thanks to Wally’s careful training, was in its glory and took all three places. Steve Link, who was a member of the life-saving crew, took first; Blackie, in spite of his weariness, won second; and Terry Tompkins came third. Blackie had conquered his tired muscles and performed a very creditable back jack-knife dive, but not one of his team-mates shook his hand or dropped him a “Well done!” Disgruntled, he retired to his place on the rock and watched the Lenape team slowly shorten the difference in score as the senior events progressed.

The “funny dive” came last of all, and was won by Fat Crampton, the pudgy lion-hunter. He had been entered at the last moment by the joke-loving Sax McNulty, and his victory came as a surprise to everybody, but most of all to Fat himself. He had timidly approached the board, for he was not used to diving in any form; and while he stood at the end debating with himself what to do, his foot slipped and he toppled heels over head into the water. His arms became entangled in his legs as he fell, and he came up with such a pop-eyed, startled look on his puffy face that the judges immediately awarded him the blue ribbon, although he had to be pulled out by a delegation of volunteer life-savers.



The diving events in the senior class were finished, and the score stood somewhat closer, with Lenape standing 42 against Shawnee’s 48. Wally summoned the contestants in the fifty-yard dash, in which Blackie had not entered, wishing to save all his power for the more demanding distance events. A rangy, sandy-haired youth with the emblem of the Junior Red Cross on his jersey stepped forward and was hailed by a volley of cheers from the wearers of the red. “Dunning! Show ’em how to do it, Dunning!” He was evidently their champion, and he had a confident smile on his face which might betoken bad news for the Lenape supporters.

As a matter of fact, Dunning did win the fifty-yard with ease, although his triumph was offset by Link and Gil Shelton, who took second and third places for the Lenape side of the score. The representatives of the green and white also took first and second in the underwater swim, making the tally read Shawnee, 52; Lenape, 50, with only three more events yet to be contested.

“Hundred-yard swim!” came Wally’s voice hoarsely through the megaphone. “Shawnee team—Dunning, Coombes, Lipsky; Lenape team —Haviland, Link, Thorne!” 190

Blackie rose and walked stiffly to the end of the dock; he was more tired than he had thought, for no boy can hike with a heavy pack through mountain roads for seven hours and still hope to be fresh and springy in a gruelling distance swim the same afternoon. He lined up with the six contenders, between the confident Dunning and Ken Haviland. The latter twisted his mouth when he saw Blackie beside him.

“Still trying, huh? Well, let me tell you, Thorne, I’d rather lose the meet than have a fellow like you help to win it—and every fellow in Lenape thinks the same!”

Blackie said nothing, but a red tide of resentment climbed to his brain. So that was what they thought of him! But at least they couldn’t say he was a quitter; he would do his best in spite of what any of them said! He clamped his jaw, and stared out over the sparkling waters of the lake, over the course that had been marked out by two of the life-boats, trying to recall everything that Wally had taught him about the crawl-stroke—trudgeon kick, powerful overhand pull with the arms, measured breathing once in four strokes.

“Ready—set——” 191

The shrill purl of the starter’s whistle sounded, and six lithe bodies cleaved the water. Blackie, full of anger and determination, put every ounce of his waning strength into his strokes, fighting to keep his head and time his muscles scientifically. He did not dare look around to see how the other contestants were coming, although he was aware of a sandy head driving through the water a little to his left and half a length ahead. The course seemed short, but a stiff hundred-yard swim will try the power of even a swimmer in the best of training. He headed for the line stretched between the two boats, his arms moving over his head in a steady rhythm that kept time with the beat of his legs, his face buried in cool bubbling water. He’d show them! Summoning up his last straining ounce of power, he spurted to win ahead of the swimmer to his left, and passed him just as the shadow of the life-saving boat fell upon their faces.

“Thorne wins!” came the voice of one of the judges from the boat. “Dunning second, Coombes third!”

There was an uneasy silence among the Lenape supporters, but after half a minute there rose a belated cheer from the wearers of the red arrowhead, who were disappointed that their favorite had not won, but who consoled themselves with the thought that Shawnee was still in the lead. 192

Blackie took his time paddling back to the dock. He did not expect congratulations for his victory; but he was now beyond the stage of caring. All he had wanted to do was to show Ken Haviland that he was game; and the taunts of the aide had given Blackie just that extra ounce of vitality that had enabled him to spurt ahead of Dunning.

He climbed unassisted to the dock, and stood watching the next event, breathing deeply to get his wind in preparation for the concluding event of the meet, the two-hundred-yard swim that was the most demanding of all contests upon the grit and capabilities of the racer.

Some thirty boys were lined up for the next contest, a free-for-all marathon over a triangular course that led around two boats stationed some yards apart in front of the dock; and at the summons of the whistle there ensued a scrambling battle-royal for places in the water. Most of the bunch dropped out before the first boat was reached, but among the remaining swimmers there was a desperate contest to see who would touch the wharf first. The Lenape cohorts broke into mad cheers when they found that their entrants in this helter-skelter marathon had placed first and third, and the yells of all the spectators grew and swelled out over the water when it was found that the tallies for the last two events had brought the score to a dead tie, with 57 points for each camp. 193

The excitement was at fever heat as the contenders lined up for the final event of the afternoon's sport, the two-hundred-yard swim. The entries were almost the same as for the shorter distance, except that Link had been replaced by Soapy Mullins. Dunning, somewhat crestfallen, eyed Blackie with a vengeful air, as if resolved to wipe out the memory of his previous defeat. Coombes, who had placed third in the hundred-yard event, looked pale and tired. Blackie stole a look at Ken Haviland, who was again ranged at his side, but the aide paid no attention. Blackie saw him feeling the right side of his abdomen tenderly, and thought he caught Ken making a slight grimace of pain; but the signal for ready came at that moment, and Ken straightened his body and gritted his teeth as the starter put his whistle to his lips.

Brr-r-r-r! The six racers took the water and the gruelling contest began, with two hundred pairs of eyes fastened upon their shining muscles, sleek heads, and straining bodies. The last race —the race upon which depended the camp championship of the season, the victory of the green and white or the red arrowhead! No wonder the air was filled with cheers and shouts of encouragement! Once or twice Blackie caught the sound of his own name rising from that bedlam of excited watchers. He smiled to himself, filled with a great elation. He had whipped Dunning before, and knew he could do it again. Turning his head with a jerk, he saw that Coombes was already out of the race, had dropped behind, too exhausted to continue. Beside Blackie, the speedy Dunning whipped through the water, followed by Ken Haviland and Soapy Mullins and closely pursued by Lipsky. It was to be a close race, in spite of the distance. 194

Onward Blackie Thorne churned his way, tossing diamond-like drops from his hair as he surged through the water. Ahead he could see the dipping life-boats that marked the end of the journey. Tie score—if he nosed Dunning out for first place, it was almost a sure thing that one of the other Lenape contenders would finish ahead of the slow-going Lipsky, and end the meet with a slender lead of two points that would,

however, give Lenape the day.

Ken Haviland was shooting ahead, and was now close on the flailing legs of Dunning. Blackie, with his eyes on the goal, was slowly but surely increasing his half-length lead over the Shawnee favorite, when he heard a low cry that made him turn his head and halt his even stroke. 195

Ken was in trouble. His pallid face was twisting with pain, and his arms floated helplessly at his side. “Blackie!” he gasped. “Cramps! I’m done ——”

Dunning forged ahead, either not hearing of Haviland’s plight or else, still smarting from his defeat, determined that nothing should interfere to lose him this last and decisive race. Blackie held his stroke, and Dunning caught up with him in an instant.

For only a split second did Blackie hesitate. Two voices seemed to be shouting in his ears at the same time, arguing against each other.

“Ken is out of it, but there’s still a good chance that Mullins will beat Lipsky for third. Go ahead and win!” counselled the first.

“But Ken has cramps—he’ll drown if you don’t help him!” contended the other voice.

“He hates you—don’t throw away your big chance to win just on his account! He said himself he’d rather lose the meet than have you win!” 196

“No, he’s sick! He needs you!”

A clock was ticking somewhere in his brain, ticking off the fractions of seconds in which he must make up his mind what to do. Already Dunning was beyond him, plowing determinedly for the goal. Blackie made his decision. In a few speedy strokes he was by Ken’s side.

“I’ll hold you up—don’t struggle!” he shouted in the aide’s ear, and put forth a supporting arm. Ken’s face was blanched and torn with pain, and he floundered about helplessly, the muscles of his limbs knotted in paralyzing lumps, his abdomen gripped with shooting pangs. Blackie knew that he must be very sick indeed.

Soapy Mullins passed them some yards to their right, followed by Lipsky trailing unsteadily in his wake.

“Take it easy!” said Blackie. “Don’t get scared! It’ll pass off soon.”

Of a sudden Ken’s muscles relaxed, and he found he could move his arms and support himself somewhat. “What happened?” he gasped. “Did they stop the race?”

A voice through a megaphone from the boats answered his question. “Dunning wins! Mullins, second; Lipsky, third. Shawnee wins the meet—score, 61 to 59!” 197

From the shore came the wild hurrahs of the victors, and a sportsmanlike cheer from the Lenape campers for those who had vanquished them. In the excitement of the race, few of the watchers had noticed that Blackie had gone to the aid of Ken, and most of them had assumed

that the two had merely dropped out, overcome by the cruel demands of the contest.

Ken's face was a blank. "But—but that's not fair! We ought to run the race over again—you would have won easy if you hadn't come to help me, Blackie!"

Blackie shook his head. "The meet's over. No use kicking up a fuss and having the Shawnee bunch think we're a gang of poor sports who start crabbing when they lose. It's our hard luck, and we might as well take our medicine. If you feel better now, come on and I'll tow you over to the boat."



# CHAPTER XVI

## THE END—AND THE BEGINNING

The campers from Iron Lake departed northwards about five o'clock in holiday mood, singing their camp song as they hiked, more than contented to have won the close-fought victory in the water. Some of the Lenape tribe accompanied them a mile or two on the road, and were forced to swallow a lot of good-natured chaffing about their defeat, which they felt keenly.

Blackie did not go with them. He had helped Ken Haviland ashore, and seen him carried off toward the hospital tent and the ministrations of Dr. Cannon; and then he returned to Tent Four and dressed in a clean outfit. He was agreeably tired, but the swim had braced him immensely, and he was comfortable in body for the first time since he had run away. His mind was far from easy, however, as he answered the bugle's summons and stood Retreat ceremony with the tent groups. He was still in coventry; not a boy spoke to him, and many were the black looks cast in his direction.



It was the same at supper. Wally presided over a quiet table that night. Gallegher sat gloomily next to the vacant chair that belonged to Ken Haviland. Fat Crampton, with his usual good humor, was attacking his food with gusto, rather pleased with himself for winning a first place in the diving; Guppy and Lefkowitz chattered together now and then; but Slater could not forget how easily Lenape might have held the championship had things been a little different.

Once Guppy turned to Slater and said, "Gee, that fellow Dunning wasn't any slouch of a swimmer, was he?"

"He was pretty good, all right—but he would have been beaten in that last race if a certain guy—I won't mention any names—wasn't yellow. It would have won us the meet, too." Slater looked meaningly at Blackie, who flushed and gazed down at his plate, biting his lip to keep back a bitter retort.

After the dessert, Wally leaned over to Blackie. "The Chief wants to see you in his office, son," he said, "right after supper. He's got a friend of yours in there with him now."

“All right, Wally.” Blackie knew who that friend of his was; a saddled horse was tethered outside that could belong to no one but Sheriff Manders. When the dismissal signal was given, he went over to the office door with a pounding heart, and entered at the Chief’s cheery invitation. 200

The Chief nodded as he saw Blackie. “Come in, Thorne. You’ve met Sheriff Manders, I hear. He’s ridden over to get your affadavit against the two men who attacked Rattlesnake Joe. Just tell him slowly everything that happened, and don’t keep anything back.”

The sheriff had paper and pen before him, and with a gentle kindliness asked Blackie many questions, writing down the boy’s answers in a round, careless hand. The Chief said no word, but listened with increasing attention as the tale of Blackie’s adventures was unfolded. When the officer pronounced himself satisfied, he looked over at the Chief with a quizzical air.

“Kind of a lot of trouble for a kid his size to get into, eh? Well, you’ve helped the state to prosecute a pair of brutal criminals, young Thorne, and I think I may venture to say that ——”

The Chief cut in on his speech. “We won’t talk about that now, Mr. Manders, if you don’t mind.” 201

“Just as you say. Well, I’ll be going now. Thank you both. ’Night!” He stamped out of the office.

Blackie made no move to leave, but cleared his throat huskily. He had the most distasteful task in the world before him, the job of admitting that he was a coward who had sought to shield himself from punishment behind a lie.

“Chief, I—I want to tell you something.”

“Go ahead, Blackie.” The Chief’s face betrayed nothing of what he might be thinking. “They say that confession is good for the soul.”

“I lied to you the other night. I was with Gallegher when he broke the camp rule against smoking, and I smoked too. I’m sorry I lied, and I’m willing to take my punishment.”

“You know what that means?”

“Yes, sir.”

“All right. You can go now.”

The Chief nodded that the affair was ended for the present, and Blackie left the little office. He had done it. A great load was lifted from his heart; he had confessed like a man, and things were understood between the Chief and himself. However painful might be the outcome, at least he had cleared away the black stain on his conscience.

A busy crew of stage-hands was arranging the lodge in the semblance of a theater, for that night was to be given the musical show, “Coo-Coo,” in which Sax McNulty and an imposing troupe of camp talent were to perform for the amusement of the campers, a few visitors from the city, and some neighboring farmers. As Blackie passed out to the porch, it was just growing dusk. From the lake he could hear laughter and shouts of gaiety; in spite of the 202

afternoon's defeat it was to be a night of merriment. Chinese lanterns gleamed from the dock, which was crowded with campers dressed in masquerade regalia; boat-loads of boys in costumes ranging from African wild-man to pirate were rowing about amidst song and fun-making, watching a canoe-tilting contest, at the end of which one crew or another would be pushed over with a long bamboo pole and precipitated into the water. Blackie turned away and headed for the hospital tent. There was little happiness in his heart, and he did not wish to be reminded of the gaiety of others.

Ken Haviland was sitting up in bed when he arrived, and invited him in with a voice that showed he had quite recovered from the mishap of the swimming race. "Sit down here on the bed, Blackie," he said. "The Doc filled me up with hot water and ginger, and I'm as well as ever, only he won't let me get up. It's too bad, because I feel fine, and don't want to miss the big show." 203

"That's great, Ken."

"What's the matter? You look about as happy as a corpse."

"Aw, the guys in the tent are still jumping on me because I didn't win the last race. Slater called me yellow at supper, and all the others thought I was, too."

"Did they? Well, soon as I get out of here, I'll fix that! Wait till they hear what really happened; they'll be sorry they didn't have better sense. By the way, I'm passing around the word that the Kangaroo Court decision is all off, and we've forgotten all about it. I'm sorry for what I've been thinking of you all along."

"I deserved it, Ken. I've been just a fresh kid ever since I hit camp—I see it all now. I—I guess the gang will be glad to see me go back to the city to-morrow."

Ken leaned forward, and put his hand on Blackie's shoulder. "Don't you think it! You've only been here two weeks, but you've done a lot for Lenape. I don't know what the Chief thinks, but as soon as Doc Cannon lets me out of here, the bunch is going to find out what kind of a hero you really are!" 204

"The Chief knows," said Blackie dully. "He's going to square up with me in the morning."

Blackie left the tent thinking of what the morning would be sure to bring, and in a dejected mood went down to Tent Four. It was dark and deserted; the whole camp was now assembled in the lodge, from which came down to him the lively strains of music from the camp orchestra, the overture of the show. The happiness of the campers only emphasized his pangs of loneliness, and he slowly donned pajamas and climbed into his bunk. The strain of the day soon proved too much for him, and lulled by the music, he drifted off to sleep, from which he did not waken when his tent-mates tumbled into their bunks when Call to Quarters sounded at eleven o'clock.

Blackie woke in the misty dawn the next morning, and softly, so as not to wake his 205

slumbering tent-mates, dressed in his city clothes and began packing his blankets and stuffing his camping-kit into his sea-bag. To-day he would leave Lenape, leave the lake and the hills and go back to the hot city. Well, that was the only thing to do. He was in bad with the boys and the Chief, he told himself; he had failed in almost everything he had attempted to do. After two weeks of the Lenape life, he was not any better a camper than when he first landed in Tent Four. True, he had won his honor emblem, but that was sure to be stripped from him. He wore it on his jersey still, buttoned under his coat; but he knew that he had no better right to wear it than Gallegher had, as everyone would soon discover.

Reveille blew before he had finished his packing, and he continued making ready for departure while the pajama crew went down for Indian dip. He noticed that about a dozen other boys, who were also leaving at the end of the first section, were also getting into their unaccustomed travelling clothes and stowing their camp things into suitcases and bags. By the time Assembly sounded, Blackie was ready to leave for the station at a moment's notice.

He lined up with his comrades before the flagpole. All during the ceremony of flag salute and while the buglers were trumpeting Call to Colors, his nervousness increased. He dreaded what was coming; it was worse than a trip to the dentist. The Chief was sure to speak this morning. In a few moments he would be disgraced before all the campers. He looked toward the end of the line hastily. Little Pete Lister was standing there with his drum strapped about his neck. 206

"Attention!" came the Chief's command. He stood with dignified sternness before them, and the files straightened.

"Blackie Thorne, five paces forward!"

There was a stir among the campers as Blackie marched forward with chin up, arms at his side, and a set face. They, too, guessed what was coming now.

"I wish I hadn't said he was yellow yesterday," whispered Slater behind his hand. "That kid's got nerve!"

"He sure has!" responded Gallegher. "I know what he feels like now, and believe me, it's no joke! But it was all my fault—I really dragged him into it."

"Silence in the ranks! Blackie Thorne, you have admitted to me that you have been guilty of conduct unbecoming to a Lenape camper, and have signified your willingness to abide by whatever punishment is inflicted. Is that right?"

Blackie flushed, but looked his Chief straight in the eye. "Yes, sir."

"You will here, in the sight of all your comrades, be stripped of the honor emblem which has been made unworthy by your act." 207

Blackie braced himself, waiting; the Chief stepped forward with the blade of a knife gleaming in his hand. Now it was coming! He

felt the Chief pulling away his coat and cutting the stitches of the green and white badge. The clattering tattoo from Lister's drum was in his ears. The Chief stepped backward, putting away the knife. Now it was all over. Blackie made a move to return to his place in line.

"Stay where you are, Thorne!"

The campers started with surprise; they had not anticipated this. Blackie waited, expecting some further reprimand.

"I still have another duty to do," announced the Chief evenly. "But first I want to tell a story which some of you may have read in a book by Victor Hugo, a book called 'Ninety-Three.' It tells there of an incident which happened on board a French warship. Through the carelessness of the chief gunner, one of the huge cannons on the deck broke away from its chains, and pitched about by the rough sea, rolled from one end of the ship to the other like a monstrous metal battering-ram on wheels, killing many sailors who could not get out of its way, smashing the other cannons that were to defend the ship from the enemy, and battering the timbers until the vessel was in danger of sinking. It seemed impossible for the brutal rushes of the gun to be checked; but one man, armed only with a handspike and a rope, jumped down on the deck and struggled to halt its mad career. It was the chief gunner, the man who was to blame for the deadly danger to the ship and her crew; and after a superhuman battle in which he nearly lost his life, he succeeded in overturning the cannon and lashing it so that it could do no further harm." 208

The Chief paused a moment. Blackie was listening in a daze, wondering what this tale could have to do with him.

"When all was safe again," continued the Chief, "the gunner was brought to be judged by the general who commanded the ship. The general first pinned upon the gunner's jacket the cross of St. Louis, the medal for military merit, as an award for his bravery in capturing the cannon. He then ordered the man to be shot because his negligence had endangered the ship. The gunner was executed with the cross of honor on his breast, rewarded for his courage and punished for failing in his duty."

Again the Chief paused; the boys looked at each other wonderingly. 209

"Sooner or later all of us get our just rewards for what we make of ourselves, as that wise general knew. Blackie Thorne broke a camp rule, told a lie to escape punishment, and ran away from camp rather than face the consequences of his act. But when you hear what other deeds he has done, you may agree that he has wiped out some of the counts against him. Yesterday he threw away the glory of winning the swimming meet for his camp in order to go to the assistance of a stricken tent-mate, a boy whom he disliked; and afterwards he did not mention anything about his reason for dropping out of the race, fearing to be a poor sportsman. The winning of even a contest against Shawnee is, in my opinion, nothing to be compared with the display of bravery shown by Blackie in the water yesterday afternoon."

A cheer rose from the campers, involuntarily bursting forth from their lips. Excitement ran high. Blackie listened, abashed by this sudden turn of favor.

“Blackie was again put to the test when he encountered a pair of dangerous criminals who were wanted by the law. With courage and discernment, he captured those men at great risk to himself. Now, although he did not know about it, there was a reward offered for the person who led to the arrest of these malefactors, and last night the sheriff brought over to me a check for three thousand dollars, which I am now presenting to Blackie Thorne.” 210

The Chief was unable to speak further; his words were drowned in a torrent of cheers that made the mountains echo. Somehow the command to march was given, and the hungry horde stamped off to breakfast, still shouting Blackie’s name to the skies.

Blackie stood bewildered, clutching the check in his hand. Three thousand dollars! Wally, who had left the line, put his arm around the boy’s shoulder and looked down into his face.

“How do you like being rich, Blackie?” he laughed. “Does it feel funny at first?”

“It sure does!” exclaimed Blackie. “Say, when I think how happy my mother will be when I tell her I can buy lots of things we couldn’t have before, I——”

“Don’t trouble to explain. By the way, when the Chief told me about this check last night, I sent a telegram off to your mother asking her if you could stay for the rest of the season if she didn’t have to pay any more money. I didn’t break the news about your reward to her—you can do that yourself—but just a little while ago I got a wire from her, and she agrees that you can stay at Lenape clear up to September! Six weeks more of camp for you, Blackie—how does that sound?” 211

“Great!” There was a lump in the boy’s throat as he looked out over the campus he had come to love. Six weeks more of free, out-door comradeship with Wally and the Chief and the whole gang of good fellows! “Say, Wally, remember how you told me one day that there was a treasure around here?” He looked down at the check in his hand. “I didn’t believe you then, but I do now.”

“Blackie,” his councilor assured him solemnly, “you found that treasure right in your own heart —the rich treasure of true Lenape spirit!”

THE END

## Transcriber’s Notes

- Copyright notice provided as in the original—this e-text is public domain in the country of publication.
- Silently corrected palpable typos; left non-standard spellings and dialect unchanged.

- In the text versions, delimited italics text in _underscores_ (the HTML version reproduces the font form of the printed book.)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BLACKIE THORNE AT CAMP LENAPE ***

anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

## Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

## Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

## Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements,

we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

## Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.