

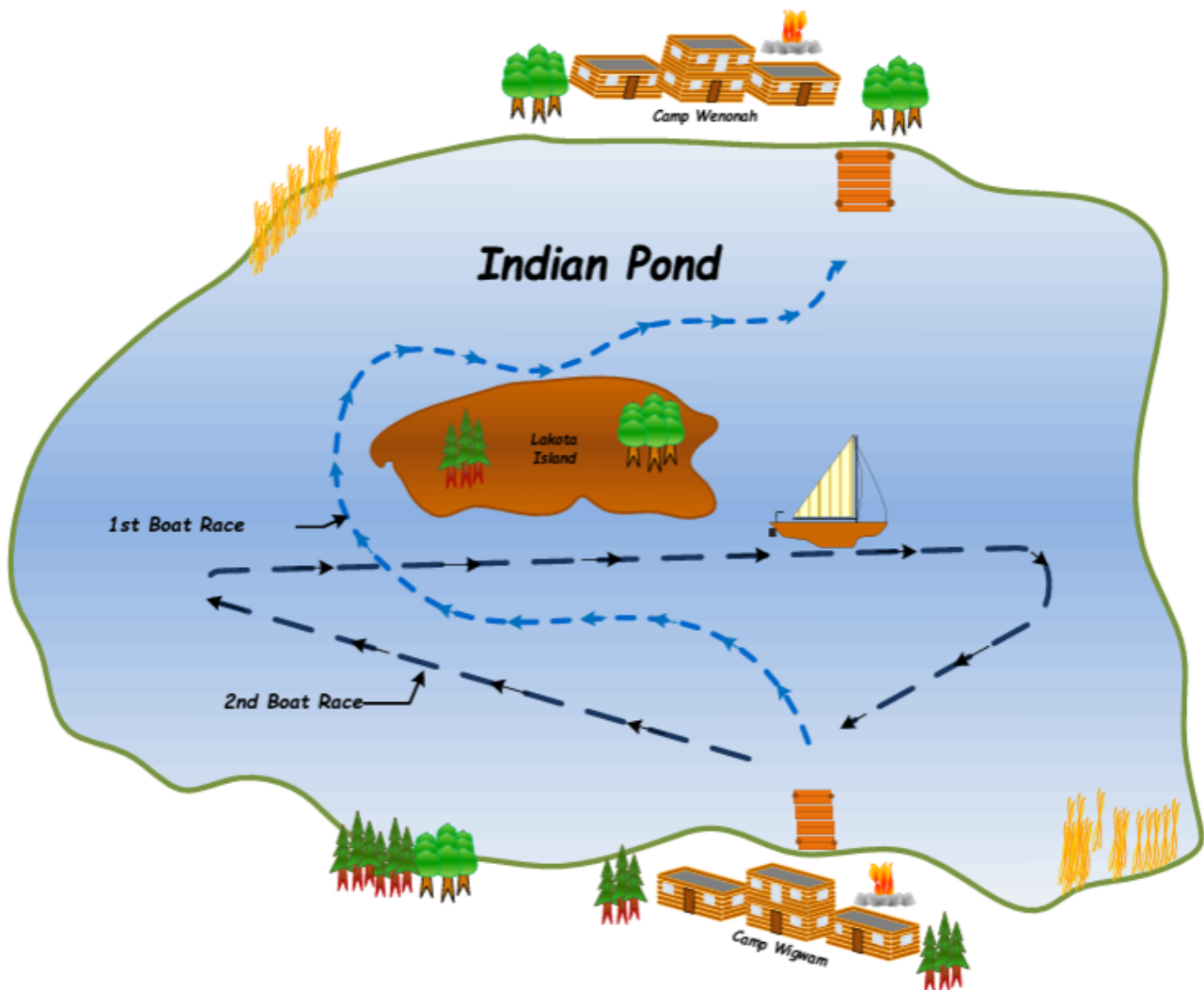
JASON AND THE DETECTIVES

The Case of the Haunted Summer Camp

By Karl F. Milde, Jr.

*TACK: (Nautical) (1) n. A course or heading of a sailboat.
(2) v. A change of direction of a sailboat in which the sail
or sails shift from one side of the vessel to the other.*

Webster's New World Dictionary



Chapter 1: On the Road to Adventure

It was the last day of school. Jason, Matt and Luke sat in their sixth-grade class at Fairview Intermediate School, watching the clock as their teacher, Miss Alvarez, handed out the homeroom assignments for their seventh-grade class next fall.

“The moment I’ve been waiting for!” Jason exclaimed enthusiastically as Miss Alvarez handed him his envelope. He slit the envelope open with his pencil point and pulled out the slip of paper inside. Unfolding it, he read, “Room 210. Mr. McLaren.”

Yes! The science teacher! Just whom Jason had hoped for.

Matt received his envelope with a polite “Thanks, Miss Alvarez.”

Jason leaned over to find that Matt had been assigned to Mrs. Golden, the English teacher. Somehow, that seemed to fit perfectly too.

Luke was the last of the three to be given his room assignment. It was almost as if Miss Alvarez was intentionally keeping him in suspense. “All right. I give up. Let me have the bad news,” said Luke as he grabbed the envelope from her hand and quickly ripped it open. “Not so bad!” Luke turned around and mouthed the words *Mr. Hackett* to Jason and Matt. The mathematics teacher. Such was the mysterious way of the school system.

The bell finally jangled for the last time, and Jason and the others hurried from their classroom and joined the larger crowd of students filing noisily out the front door into a bright, balmy spring day. Summer vacation had begun.

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Three days later Jason, Matt and Luke left together for Camp Wigwam, which was smack in the middle of Maine. “I sure hope we get the same cabin,” Matt said as the big chartered bus came into sight, right on schedule. Already half full in its journey from New York City, the bus

had only a couple more stops to make—one in Rhode Island and one in Massachusetts—before continuing north to deliver the thirty-five eager young boys to their summer home away from home.

Jason, Matt and Luke received hugs and kisses from their parents and then got in line to board the bus. When all the boys had finally boarded, stowed their gear and found seats, the driver closed the big heavy door and gave two sharp toots on the horn. The boys pressed their hands and faces to the windows to catch a last glimpse of their parents as the bus roared off. None of them noticed the tears welling up in their parents' eyes as they waved excitedly nor did they see two of the mothers break down and cry. Amy, Jason's younger sister, and Karen, Matt's younger sister, stood next to their parents and waved furiously. The girls were leaving for their sleep away camp the very next day.

As the bus moved out, Jason, Matt and Luke sat back and relaxed after the hectic morning of getting ready. Jason closed his eyes and tried to imagine himself at Camp Wigwam. Of the three, only Matt had seen this camp. He had attended the summer before because his parents had taken a round-the-world cruise.

"How big is the lake?" Jason broke the silence.

"Indian Pond? It's pretty big. 'Bout a mile across. But it has a little island in the middle."

"Oh yeah? Can you swim out to it?"

"You've got to be a real good swimmer."

"Do they have boats?"

"Yeah. Canoes mostly. And sailboats. It's great for learning to sail."

"I've never been in a canoe, or a sailboat for that matter," admitted Jason.

"No problem. They give you lessons on everything."

“Are there any other camps on the lake?” asked Luke.

“There’s one. It’s the girls’ camp where Karen and Amy are going tomorrow. Camp Wenonah. We have a few dances with the girls from that camp on Friday nights. Otherwise, we don’t have much to do with them.”

“We can change that,” remarked Luke, prophetically.

As the bus sped on, the boys talked, played “UNO” with a deck of cards and sang camping songs, led by a camp counselor named “Tonto” who had joined them at the bus stop in Providence, Rhode Island. After another stop along Route 128 near Boston, the bus continued on the final leg of its journey. When the bus crossed the Portsmouth bridge over the Piscataqua River, the boys pressed their noses to the windows.

“We’re on the Portsmouth bridge boys. When we get halfway across this bridge, we’ll be in Maine!” announced the bus driver over the loudspeaker system.

“Hooray!” A large cheer rang out and several boys clapped as the bus crossed the midway point of the bridge. The bus soon passed signs for Kittery, the town where company outlet stores were invented, and then stopped at the entrance to the Maine Turnpike to pick up a ticket.

“From here, boys, it’s about a two-hour drive to Camp Wigwam,” announced the driver.

“Hooray!” came the screams again and then the bus fell strangely silent as each boy thought about his own personal adventure that lay just ahead.

At long last the bus rolled off an exit ramp from the Maine Turnpike and stopped to pay the toll. After another half hour on a two-lane highway, the bus finally slowed and turned onto a narrow dirt road. It passed beneath a wooden archway with the words “Camp Wigwam” across the top and followed the dirt road downhill with dense forest on either side.

“We’re here! We’re finally here!” exclaimed Matt with excitement.

“It’s about time,” replied Luke, who was more than weary from the journey.

The bus emerged from the forest and came to a stop. Just ahead lay the camp: unpainted log buildings arranged across an expanse of green lawn. In the center, an American flag flew atop a towering flagpole. In the distance, a blue lake—Indian Pond—sparkled in the sun. Beyond the lake, extending almost to the clouds, was a giant mountain dressed in green.

Goosebumps prickled Jason’s skin. *This will be a summer to remember.*

Chapter 2: Welcome to Camp Wabanaki

“Where’s the girls’ camp?” asked Luke as the boys filed off and claimed their foot lockers from the side compartments of the bus, where they had been loaded by their parents about six hours before.

“Over there!” Matt pointed to the far side of the lake.

Jason could just make out a row of buildings nestled among the trees at the base of the mountain. In front of the buildings, a small flotilla of aluminum canoes floated silently on the surface of the water.

“What’s that mountain?” Jason asked.

“That’s Indian Mountain. We’re all going to climb it later this summer,” replied Matt.

Luke squinted at the scene across the lake. “The girls aren’t scheduled to arrive ‘til tomorrow. How come there are boats in the water?”

“Must be the camp counselors,” Matt replied.

“Listen up, everyone!”

The boys turned their attention to a tall, slim man who had just walked over from one of the buildings. He was followed by a group of camp counselors in their late teens.

“Welcome to Camp Wabanaki! I’m Chief Rain Cloud and these are my braves,” he said, nodding toward the counselors. “Each brave has an Indian name for the duration of the summer. They’re not allowed to tell you their real names.”

“Oh, yeah?” whispered Luke to Jason and Matt. “We’ll find out. We’re detectives, remember?”

“Weird,” Jason said.

“Don’t worry,” Matt said calmly. “They have some pretty cool stuff here. Wait ’til the campfire on Saturday night. You’ll see.”

Chief Rain Cloud referenced the list in his hand. “David Adler.”

“I’m here,” said David.

“You’re in Cabin Five...Bill Duffy.”

“Present.”

“Cabin Seven.”

Jason, Matt and Luke were all assigned the same cabin, Cabin Three, along with two other boys, Tony and Kevin. Because of their age group, they were called “Foxes.” Younger boys, assigned to different cabins, were called “Racoons.” Older boys were called “Wolves” and “Bears,” in ascending order of seniority. They were housed in various separate accommodations, including a lean-to, a tree house and a large wigwam. Each group had a resident counselor, or brave, in charge.

“I slept in a Racoons’ cabin last year,” said Matt. “The older kids didn’t bother us much, but they sure gave the Foxes a hard time.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jason.

“They’d wake them up in the middle of the night. Put booby traps in their cabin. Lobbed water bombs. Things like that. Now that we’re Foxes, we’d better watch out.”

“Hmm. No problem,” replied Jason. “In a case like this, preparation is the key.”

“Preparation?” Luke wondered. “What kind of preparation?”

Jason smiled. “We’ll think of something.”

“I get your drift.” Luke winked.

Matt seemed not so sure.

After stowing their gear in their cabins and eating a satisfying meal of spaghetti and meatballs in the “Indian Stone Hall,” the boys returned to their cabins for their first night’s sleep at Camp Wabanaki. Tonto, the resident brave in Cabin Three, turned the lights out at nine o’clock. It had been a long day. Jason collapsed onto his bed and pulled the covers to his shoulders right before sleep overtook him.

Chapter 3: Exploring the Camp

The next morning, after devouring a huge breakfast of pancakes and sausage, all the new campers set out to explore the camp. Jason, Matt and Luke struck out on their own. Down by the water, they found a sandy beach and a dock with a diving board. On shore, next to the beach, was a cabana for changing clothes and a boat house, which sheltered a number of canoes and sailboats. A motor launch waited nearby, tethered to the end of the dock, in case of an emergency.

“What’s to keep us from taking this boat out for a spin?” asked Luke, eyeing the powerful outboard motor.

“Probably an ignition key,” Jason replied.

“Yeah, and about ten counselors who watch every move you make around here,” added Matt.

“No fun!” Luke moaned.

“That’s the main problem around here.” Matt surveyed the surrounding trees. “You can’t do anything on your own.”

Luke flopped onto the dock and let his legs dangle over the edge. “Authority is such a bummer.”

“What else have they got?” Jason wondered aloud.

Matt turned and gestured back toward the camp, where a hum of activity could be faintly detected in the breeze. “A lot of sports: baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis, even archery.” Jason surveyed the many buildings and saw faint smoke oozing out of chimney above the mess hall. “Oh, and there’s something you’ll really like, Jason. A complete wood and metalworking shop.”

“Yeah?” Jason perked up. “I’d love that. Let’s go see.”

The boys walked across the soft green grass to a rustic cabin at the edge of the clearing, under the trees. Entering the cabin, after their eyes adjusted to the indoor light, they found themselves in an open room filled with all manner of machine tools. A smile grew on Jason’s face. “I think I’m going to like it here,” he said after surveying the equipment. His eyes landed on some thin strips of wood he saw standing against one wall and he went over to examine them. His interest piqued, he searched and found other materials he could put to good use.

“You’re going to spend your time cooped up in here when you can be outside on the lake? Yeah, right!” remarked Luke.

“Well, as a matter of fact, I’ve made this new invention I’ve been wanting to try out.”

Jason couldn’t take his eyes off the many woodworking tools. “And with this workshop, I can do just that.”

“Why do I have this feeling that we’re going to help him with it?” Luke wondered aloud, his eyes rolling upward.

Matt moved to a table and picked up a chisel. “So, what’s your invention?”

“It’s a special kind of sailboat. It’s supposed to go faster than the wind.”

“You can’t do that. It’s impossible.”

“It’s not only possible—it’s been done many times before. But my invention is—”

“How can any sailboat be pushed faster than the wind that pushes it?” demanded Luke.

“It’s easy. Think of a pinwheel or, better yet, the flat blades of a windmill. If the blades are angled at, say, thirty degrees, the blades have to move *faster* than the air that blows on them to let the air through. The same principle applies to a sailboat.”

“Hmm.” Matt seemed impressed.

“But my invention will make the sailboat go even faster.”

“How is that?”

“Let me explain.” Jason found a blank piece of paper and a pencil on a workbench and began to sketch, while at the same time explaining the theory. He would try to increase the force of the wind with a new kind of sail.

“I’m not sure it will work, but it’s worth a try.”

“This might just be the edge we need,” Matt said. “If it works, that is...”

“What do you mean?” asked Luke.

“Well, after about four weeks, after everyone has learned to sail, we have these sailing races,” Matt explained. “Each cabin enters a boat in the race, and there is this challenge for the racing trophy. It’s always the older boys that win it, though. I’ve heard that the trophy was won by cabin number eight the last four years in a row.”

The three boys looked at each other and grinned.

“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” Luke wanted to know.

“Yes!” Jason answered, echoing Matt. “Let’s go find our cabinmates, Tony and Kevin, and get to *work*.”

Chapter 4: Camp Wenonah for Girls

Across the lake, Camp Wenonah for Girls was coming alive. Mary Nestor, an intelligent but unassuming young lady, was doing her best to make new friends among the camp’s sometimes too-fastidious females. Mary was assigned a small sleeping cabin with three others: Christine, or “Chris” for short; Elizabeth, known as “Beth”; and Felicia.

“I’m from Maine,” explained Mary as she unpacked her suitcase and hung up her sports clothes in the closet space assigned to her. “I’ll bet I’m the only one.”

“I’ve never been north of New York City, ’til now, that is,” replied Felicia, a tall young black girl with an angelic face.

“Ah’m new here too,” Beth chimed in, holding up a frilly party dress for her roommates to admire. “Isn’t this sweet. Ah’ll be wearin’ it to the first dance... But ah’ve traveled almost *everywhere* with my mum. We’ve been explorin’ different parts of the world ever since she divorced my daddy. Never been to Maine, though.”

“We had a religious retreat in Maine once. A place called Ocean Park, on the coast,” said Chris, a tall slender girl with long straight hair the color and texture of corn silk. “It was really nice. It’s, like, a place where ministers go with their families to spend the summer.”

“You’ll love it here,” added Mary. “This camp is one of the best-run girls’ camps in the whole state. Our headmistress, Miss Hardeker, doesn’t put up with any nonsense.”

“Just as long as she lets us meet the boys across the lake,” said Beth. “That’s what I came for...”

Felicia giggled. “What happens at those dances, I wonder?”

“If it’s anything like last year, not very much,” explained Mary. “I couldn’t go last year because I was too young, but I heard that Miss Hardeker goes along with a couple of counselors and watches every move you make. If you so much as look at a boy in a funny way, she’ll send you back to camp.”

“Oh, m’gosh! That’s no fun at all!” Beth pouted.

“Even though we are eligible this year, Miss Hardeker won’t let you go if you have too many demerits,” Mary continued. “So, we have to watch our p’s and q’s.”

Chris folded her arms, her expression thoughtful. “That’s fine with me. I don’t want to be mixed up with some rowdy boys. I just want to meet that one special guy God has chosen for me. No one else.”

“How’d y’all you know he’s the one, dearie?” Beth teased.

Felicia came to Chris’s aid. “She’ll know it when she meets him, and that’s that.”

Beth frowned and held up her hands defensively. “Let’s not get huffy.”

“What if no one asks me to dance?” Felicia asked Mary.

“Why not? What’re you, chopped liver?”

“Just look at me. I’m about a foot taller than the boys my age.”

“Let’s make a pact. If no one asks you to dance, we won’t dance either.”

“That’s a great idea! Count me in,” said Chris.

Beth groaned and tossed her party dress onto her bed, as though she might as well part ways with it now. “Y’all realize what you’re asking? Ah’m not so sure ah’ll go along with this.”

“But it’s the *right* thing to do,” Chris reminded her.

“Miss Goody Two-shoes again.”

“Don’t worry. We’ll watch out for you,” said Mary firmly.

“Thanks, guys, but I can take care of myself,” Felicia said appreciatively.

The girls finished unpacking and set about decorating their own areas of the cabin with family photos and posters of their favorite singing groups.

“Less than two weeks till the first dance,” Mary reminded everyone.

“Gosh, I can’t wait,” Beth added, briefly admiring herself as she unpacked her mirror from her suitcase.

Chapter 5: Jason Tests His Sailboat

Over the next few days, Jason and his four Fox cabinmates spent every free moment they had at the workshop, constructing a new sail for their sailboat. They started by measuring the sail on one of the sailboats and, using the wooden slats Jason saw in the workshop, and they configured a replacement sail to fit in its place.

Every couple of hours, the boys had to break for one of the many lessons in camping life, given by various braves: campfire building, plant recognition, trailblazing, animal husbandry and even archery.

The boys were also taught swimming, diving, canoeing, and sailing. Especially sailing, these were skills they knew would come in handy someday.

However, during periods allocated to team sports—soccer, baseball, lacrosse, and volleyball—the boys worked instead on the sail, cutting the slats to length, and sanding them to form airfoils, and assembling them using string until they were finally ready to install on a sailboat.

“Don’t we have to get permission to try this out?” Matt asked as they were nearing completion.

Luke forced a laugh. “Oops! Now we start with the permission thing, *after* we’ve built the sail already?”

“That might be a problem,” Tony warned. “We’d better ask the chief.”

“I’m way ahead of you guys,” Jason said. “I’ve already talked to Tonto. He says if we bring our new sail to the boathouse, he’ll check it out and maybe let us try it on a boat.”

“What if he doesn’t like the idea? Then what?” Matt wondered aloud.

“And who said Tonto’s the man? Shouldn’t we ask Chief Rain Cloud?” Kevin asked.

“Yeah, what makes you so sure, Jason?” Luke also seemed skeptical.

Jason raised his hands in mock defense, not understanding where all the sudden doubt was coming from. “Trust me, I have it covered,” he said, trying to exhibit a lot more confidence than he really felt.

“Well, we’ll soon find out, won’t we?” Matt said finally, then added, “Jason, what time did you ask Tonto to meet us at the boathouse?”

“I didn’t give him a time. I figured we’d go find him when we’re ready to have him look at the sail.”

“Okay. I’ll go get him then. I’ll bring him to the boathouse.” Matt dropped what he was doing and ran off to find Tonto.

Jason and the rest of his crew lugged the various pieces that made up the new sail from the workshop to the boathouse, then ran back to collect the parts and tools they needed to rig the sail to a boat. Finally, they selected one of the sailboats and set to work installing the new sail. Before they were finished, Matt ran up and shouted, “Stop! I couldn’t find Tonto, so I ended up telling the Chief Rain Cloud what we were doing. He said this wasn’t allowed.”

“I knew it,” said Tony. “I knew we should have asked permission.”

Jason had never been faced with a problem like this before. At home his parents had always allowed him to pursue his ingenuity — to build things and try them out – and now, for the first time, he was faced with rules. He hesitated a moment, but they were so close to testing the sail.

“It’s okay,” he said to his friends. “What can he do? Have us undo this sail and then put the old one back on the boat? Let’s finish up and try out this sail before anyone sees us.”

Matt reluctantly joined with the others in erecting the sail. When they were finished, they carried the modified sailboat out of the boathouse and set in it the water. Jason jumped in and took hold of the tiller. Steering away from the wind, he felt the boat lurch forward and gain some momentum. He looked up at the sail and adjusted its angle of attack with a control wheel.

The sail was made from the slats arranged like a vertical venetian blind to catch the wind. The angle of attack against the wind could be adjusted by rotating a small wheel in either direction. The position of the entire sail was also adjustable in a conventional way using a horizontal boom attached to the mast.

Once underway, Jason could sense that the sail was working hard to pull the boat along. Each slat of the sail was forcing the wind over an adjacent slat creating a difference in pressure between its two sides, thus creating a force. Elated, he moved the tiller to angle the boat into the wind and watched the slats press sideways against their supporting harness. For a brief moment, the boat sped forward as if yanked by an invisible rope. Then, as the direction of the sail slats changed to head into the wind, instead of pulling the boat forward, they acted as a brake and stopped the boat dead in the water. To prevent the boat from locking itself in irons, Jason threw the tiller to one side and allowed the boat to be pushed backward by the wind, changing its direction as it went. Once the boat had turned around and started moving forward again, Jason sailed it directly back to the dock.

“Awesome!” Jason blurted out, unable to contain himself. “I can’t wait to race it against another boat.”

The boys quickly removed the sail and were in the process of replacing the old one when a brave called Longbow, the camp counselor in charge of sailing, walked up. “What the heck are you doing?” he shouted at them, in the most unfriendly tone imaginable.

“Just looking at the boats,” Jason replied as calmly as he could. “And we’re taking this junk to the workshop.”

Jason and his cabinmates, Matt, Luke, Tony, and Kevin, all walked off in the direction of the workshop, carrying off all evidence of the new sail. However, Jason felt troubled. He knew he had broken the rules – rules which stood in the way of what he wanted to do.

Chapter 6: Campfire at Camp Wabanaki

It was Saturday, less than a week since the campers had arrived. After supper, the boys lined up at the entrance to the camp amphitheater, a special place that was “off limits” at all times except on Saturday evening when the entire camp assembled for a “powwow.”

At Tonto’s signal, the boys entered: first the nine-year-olds, then the tens, elevens, and so on until all the campers and counselors had filed in and taken their places in ever-widening circles from the center out, around a small stack of fire logs encircled by a ring of stones. The youngest sat with their legs crossed Indian style at a respectful distance from the ring. The older campers surrounded them, also sitting, while the counselors stood in the rear.

It was dusk. The evening orange sun had long since disappeared behind Indian Mountain. The campers sat and waited in anticipation of their first late-night experience at Camp Wabanaki.

Chief Rain Cloud entered in full Indian garb, from the chief’s headdress and war paint down to his rawhide moccasins.

The chief walked straight forward, staring ahead without looking from side to side, arms folded in front of him, until he reached the stack of fire logs. Then he stopped, paused for a moment, and began to chant: “Oowaw, oowaw, God of fire, come to us and light this pyre.”

He repeated this chant slowly and deliberately, as the boys looked on with awe and wonder on their faces. Jason leaned forward slightly, mesmerized, trying not to blink as the chief repeated the chant slowly and deliberately. A hushed awe settled over the boys around him, their faces lit with the same wonder Jason felt coursing through him.

“It’s the same as last year,” whispered Matt. “Just wait. Something really neat will happen.”

Jason watched in anticipation and waited. He eventually saw a tiny wisp of smoke rise from the stack of wood, hardly noticeable at first, but then the wisp thickened, becoming unmistakable, and within a moment or two, a small flicker appeared within the center of the fire logs. The fire then suddenly came alive and burned briskly.

The chief held forth as the surrounding darkness crept in, filling in the gaps of background light with the black of darkness, leaving only the orange firelight radiating outward and reflecting from the boys’ faces around the campfire. The chief spoke of camp history, camp legends, and camp events for the summer. Now and then during this discourse, the chief gave a knowing nod, and a brave brought in a stick of firewood to keep the campfire burning brightly.

“This next week we will concentrate on swimming. I want everyone to be able to swim or at least tread water for one-half hour. This may save your life someday.

“And next Friday night, we will have our first dance with the girls from Camp Wenonah. All campers, except Racoons, are invited. You will hear more about this later in the week.”

Finally, the chief fell silent and looked down at the fire reflectively. Then he looked up and announced, somewhat apologetically:

“Boys, I believe you have a right to know. Our camp and the camp across the lake, Camp Wenonah, have been haunted for some time. Haunted by Indian ghosts. And I think I know why.”

Everyone, even the braves, sat up and stared in disbelief, appearing unsure if they had heard correctly.

“Some time ago, an Indian tribe lived in this region,” the chief went on. “Their village was at the base of the mountain on the other side of our lake. That is why we now call them ‘Indian Mountain’ and ‘Indian Pond.’

“I have done some research, and based on the historical documents, I learned that the Indians left this area about one hundred years ago. Up to that time, they were self-sufficient and lived in peace with other nearby Indian tribes and in harmony with nature. They hunted and fished all year round, but in the summer months, they planted and harvested corn and other grains.

“The ghost story, which was told by the chief to a white fur trader who had done business with them for many years and gained their trust, goes somewhat as follows...”

The chief paused again for effect.

“Once upon a time, there was a young Indian squaw named Winnie, who lived in this Indian village. Over time, Winnie learned the Indian ways from her mother and the other women in the tribe. From the deer that were hunted and killed by the braves, she used hides for clothing and blankets, and she prepared the meat, venison, for meals. She learned to plant and grow both grain and corn, and each year at harvest time, she worked with the older women to thresh the

grain and shuck the corn to provide their stores for the long winter months. In the winter, she kept the fire burning in their teepee from the firewood she had gathered during the summer months. She was a fine young squaw, for she did whatever was asked of her and more.”

Another log was fed to the fire, raising the flames and warming Jason’s face. He could almost see Winnie, her hands busy with the corn, determination woven into every task.

The chief’s eyebrows were pinched tight as he continued.

“Winnie’s father was one of the elders of the tribe. He was a proud and unbending man. At home, he was very strict, forbidding Winnie from joining the social activities of the young people of the tribe. He secretly wished that Winnie would stay at home and help his wife, rather than marry and start her own family.”

Jason frowned, picturing her strict father. What that must have felt like for her to be forbidden from joining her friends. A quick glance around at the others confirmed that the chief had everyone’s attention.

“When it came time for Winnie to find a husband, her father stood in the way. Winnie did not want to cross her father, but she knew that she was coming of age for marriage, and she longed to get on with her life. Written deep inside of her was a tradition she must follow: a tradition of founding a home of her own and having children.

“As time went on, this urge within her became stronger and stronger, but her father was adamant. She must stay close to her mother at all times. He prevented her from even seeing the young braves in the tribe whenever he could. But try as he might, he could not stop true love from blossoming in Winnie’s bosom.

“As it happened, Winnie was down at the lake one summer day, washing clothes with her mother, when a young, handsome brave happened by and caught her eye. It was love at first sight for Winnie, who couldn’t stop thinking about this chance encounter.

“Winnie’s mother was not unmindful of the longing in her daughter’s heart, but she was unable to persuade her husband to let Winnie go. If anything, he became even more determined to keep Winnie under lock and key.

“Finally, Winnie could stand it no longer. She felt she had to take matters into her own hands, or she would lose her chance for true love. One night, she waited until her father and mother were sleeping soundly, then slipped out of the teepee. She knew that what she was doing was wrong and that her father would punish her severely when he awoke, but she felt she had no choice.

“She headed straight for the teepee of her heart’s desire and awoke her young brave. He was surprised to see her but immediately came to her side. Together they walked through the darkness down to the lake. There, in the quiet night, with the waves of water gently lapping at the shore, they exchanged their vows of eternal devotion and joined themselves in marriage. Then they both slipped off their clothes and dove into the water.”

The boys giggled aloud at the thought of the two Indians skinny-dipping. But the chief continued without interruption.

“The next morning, both Winnie and her brave had vanished. Winnie’s parents traced her footsteps to the lake, found where she had left her clothes when she had entered the water, but the trail ended there. No one, not even an Indian, can follow a trail through the water.

“Winnie and her brave were never heard from again as living persons. But some strange things have happened on these Indian grounds, so strange that we think that Winnie and her

brave come back to us from time to time to haunt our camp and Camp Wenonah, which stands at the exact spot where the two Indians disappeared.”

The campfire flickered its last and went out. The boys sat in total darkness for a moment, lost in their thoughts. In Jason’s imagination he tried recreate what it was like to be an Indian years ago when Camp Wabanaki was their home.

Finally, Tonto appeared at the entrance of the amphitheater, bearing a lighted torch and a basket of candles. The counselors came forward, one by one, each taking a candle and lighting it from the torch. Then the campers did the same and left the amphitheater single file. With the counselors in the lead, the campers headed out toward their cabins for the night, forming trails of candlelight throughout the camp.

Chapter 7: The Ghost of Camp Wenonah

Amy and Karen were in the youngest group of campers at Camp Wenonah, called “Honeybears.” During the first week at camp, they divided their time between swimming, arts and crafts, and basic nature studies. In nature studies, they took walks through the woods and learned to recognize plants that made them “happy,” such as herbs and flowers, and plants that made them “sad,” such as poison ivy and certain mushrooms.

During the second week, called “water week” at the camp, they concentrated on learning to swim and on climbing into and sitting properly inside a canoe without tipping it over. Several of the girls actually did cause their canoes to tip over, much to their chagrin and to the glee and laughter of the others, but Amy and Karen learned their lessons well and kept their canoes upright and steady.

As the week wore on and Friday night approached, the girls at Camp Wenonah turned their thoughts more and more to the Friday night dance with the boys at Camp Wabanaki.

“That’s such a bummer,” Amy told Karen when they learned that Honeybears were too young to attend the dance. “We can’t even go and see our own brothers.”

“It’s not fair!” agreed Karen. Never before had she been considered too young to do anything she had wanted to do, least of all talk with her jerk of an older brother.

“Maybe we can sneak across the lake in a canoe after Miss Hardeker leaves with the older kids,” Amy whispered.

Karen smiled. “Good thought! But I don’t think we’re ready yet. After they teach us to paddle, then let’s do it. We’ll crash the second dance with the boys’ camp in a couple of weeks.”

The two girls made a pact to keep their plans an absolute secret, even from their fellow Honeybears at Camp Wenonah. To play it safe, they would stay in their cabin on the night of the first dance.

* * * *

When Friday came, Mary, Felicia, Chris and Beth spent the better part of the afternoon getting ready.

“How do ah look?” Beth swirled completely around, causing the skirt of her dress to flare out in a cone.

Felicia observed the display appreciatively. “Amazing, dearie.” She returned to her mirror as she applied lipstick.

“Let’s not forget our agreement, everyone,” Mary chimed in. “If no one asks Felicia to dance, we won’t dance either.”

“That’s all right, guys. Don’t worry about me. You go ahead and have a good time.”

“No.” Chris shook her head, adamant. “What are friends for? Boys can be so cruel sometimes. I, for one, am standing with you. You don’t dance, I don’t dance.”

“How about you, Beth?” asked Mary.

“I don’t know yet. It depends...”

“Depends on what?”

“On who asks me to dance. Suppose the guy is soooo dreamy...”

“I think it’s only fair if it applies to each of us,” Chris insisted. “How would you like it if no one asked *you* to dance?”

“Somehow, I don’t think that will be a problem,” Beth replied, glancing in the mirror.

“Don’t be so full of yourself,” said Mary. “It’s agreed then. We stand or fall as a group. Now let’s go knock their socks off.”

* * * *

Amy and Karen watched from their cabin door as the older girls boarded a green school bus that would take them to the other side of the lake. With the other, more senior campers gone, the few Honeybears were the only ones left in the cabin. Miss Hardeker and several counselors stood by the bus until the last camper climbed aboard, then stepped up themselves and disappeared inside the vehicle. Finally, the bus door closed, and the bus moved out toward the camp exit.

“We’ve got nothing to wear anyway,” Karen said. “Maybe next year...”

“Maybe the next dance!” Amy shut the door of their cabin. “But we’ll be wearing jeans and warpaint.”

The early July sun sank lower over the trees and daylight merged slowly into darkness as the girls read books and wrote letters to their parents. They switched on the cabin lights for a

while but then changed into their pajamas and brushed their teeth in preparation for “lights out” at nine o’clock.

“I’m not tired at all, are you?” Amy asked her friend.

“Not really. I’m excited, wondering about what goes on at the dance,” Karen confided.

At nine, Amy turned off the overhead light and climbed into her bunk. She stared into the darkness, waiting for sleep to overcome her.

A whooshing sound caused Amy to bolt upright, ears alert. “Did you hear that?”

“No, what?” Karen sounded wide awake and alert.

“That!”

The swishing sound was like rushing air. Amy looked to the small open window near the ceiling and saw something white flying into the cabin.

“What’s that?” Karen gasped.

All the Honeybears jumped out of their bunks and ran to the door.

“Help!” they shouted as they all escaped the small confines of the cabin and ran as fast as they could toward the camp administration building.

There, the counselor on duty dropped the book she was reading and jumped to attention. “What’s the matter?” she faced the girls as they rushed into the building.

Amy doubled over, hands on her knees, and tried to catch her breath. “W...w...we...we sssaw a ghost!”

“A what?”

“A ghost. A white ghost. In our cabin!”

Amy looked at Karen, who was still as white as a sheet.

The counselor lifted an eyebrow. “Come on. You’re putting me on.”

“No, no! We saw it. Honest!” All the girls shouted at once.

“Nonsense. Ghosts don’t exist. You must have seen something else.”

By this time, Amy had calmed down a bit. She could brave going back there. “Come and see for yourself!”

“Okay. Let’s go then.” The counselor grabbed a flashlight before leaving and locked up the administrative building on her way out.

The girls led the counselor back to their cabin and pointed to the open door. “I...In there!” they said.

The camp counselor eased up to the door and peeked in. She saw nothing in the darkness, so she reached inside and turned on the light switch.

“What’s this?”

The girls came up behind her and looked in also.

What they saw was a thin layer of water on the cabin floor.

Chapter 8: The Intercamp Dance

Jason stood with the other campers and counselors of Camp Wabanaki and watched as the green bus from Camp Wenonah pulled in and stopped. The bus door opened, and an older woman stepped onto the soft green grass. The chief came forward and grabbed her hand a little too warmly.

“Welcome to Camp Wabanaki, Betsy.”

Matt leaned over to Jason. “That’s Miss Hardeker. She’s headmistress of the girls’ camp.”

“We’re here again, George,” Ms. Hardeker told the chief. “I hope that our girls will be treated with proper respect.”

“Oh, I’m sure, Betsy. You can count on that.”

“Well, let’s not have another incident like last year.”

Jason raised an eyebrow, wondering what that meant.

“You don’t have to worry. Our boys will be on their best behavior.”

“We’ll see, George. We’ll see,” Ms. Hardeker said dubiously. With that, she turned sharply and gave a nod to a girl counselor standing in the bus doorway.

First the girl counselors and then the girl campers stepped carefully onto the ground and assembled in small groups. Jason thought they looked out of place in the natural wooded setting of the campgrounds, dressed as they were in their frilly clothes and matching shoes.

Ms. Hardeker signaled silently again, and the girls filed into the Great Meeting Hall of Camp Wabanaki. The boys followed them like sheep as the chief and Ms. Hardeker looked on, silent and stone-faced.

Inside, the hall had been decorated with crepe paper streamers and festive balloons. At opposite ends of the room stood tables with soda and snacks, while the walls in between were lined with a single row of chairs. The lights were dimmed to add a touch of atmosphere.

Jason looked around. “Where’s Tonto, I wonder? I haven’t seen him at all today.”

“Who cares?” Luke said. “Just feast your eyes on these girls!”

“Yeah. How are we supposed to choose?” Matt asked.

The chief and Ms. Hardeker followed the campers into the room. The boys and girls eyed them and quickly hushed to silence.

The chief raised his right hand in an Indian greeting. “Counselors and campers from Camp Wenonah, I am Chief Rain Cloud, and on behalf of all the braves and campers here at Camp Wabanaki, I bid you welcome. This is the first of three dances we will have together. The first two are here at our camp, and then, for the third, we will come to visit you. Ms. Hardeker and I both hope that you will enjoy each other’s company.”

With that, a Camp Wabanaki brave took out his smartphone and used it to play music over several loudspeakers. The sound filled the room, making Jason feel lighter. He couldn’t help smiling.

At first, all the boys congregated near the food table at one end of the room and pretended to ignore the girls, who congregated at the other end.

Eventually, Jason, Matt and Luke sneaked looks in the girls’ direction, looking for ones their own age.

“Over there.” Luke prodded Jason in the ribs, nodding toward a group of four girls who, at that moment, were scanning the large group of boys, probably in hopes that someone would ask them to dance.

They certainly are pretty, Jason thought to himself. “Let’s go talk to them,” he said, his voice carrying a mix of determination and nervousness. The three emerged from the crowd and headed in the girls’ direction.

One of them noticed first, and she nudged her friends. The group turned toward the approaching boys, their expressions appearing reserved yet welcoming.

Jason’s pulse quickened as he stopped in front of them. “Hi, I’m Jason.”

The girl he was looking at smiled. “I’m Mary Nestor. And these are my friends, Felicia, Chris and Beth.” All three girls, especially Felicia, were taller than Jason and his friends.

“I’m Matt.”

“And my name’s Luke.”

There was an awkward silence.

“Well,” Mary offered cheerfully, “you have a very nice camp.”

“Oh, yeah. Sure. We have most everything...” Jason wasn’t sure what he was supposed to say. Small talk was not one of his strong suits.

Luke came to the rescue. “Would you like to dance?” he asked Beth.

After another awkward beat, during which Beth looked nervously at the other three girls, she stammered, “I...I’m not sure.”

“Uh, not sure?” Luke seemed baffled by the response.

“You go on ahead,” urged Felicia.

“No! It’s not right,” exclaimed Chris.

Jason stared at his friends, wondering what to do next.

Just then, a tall, handsome Camp Wabanaki brave, who looked to be around seventeen or eighteen, walked over and introduced himself. “Hello, girls. I’m Fox Eyes, a city-starved brave in this out-of-the-way place. We don’t see many girls here, so I’m not losing any time. Which one of you wants to dance with me?”

“Ah sure will!” Beth gushed, clearly over the moon at the opportunity to dance with a *counselor*.

“Well, that’s settled,” Mary said matter-of-factly as Beth was whisked away.

“Right.” Chris appeared relieved. “Let’s dance.”

“Felicia, you take Matt,” Mary arranged, taking charge. “Chris, take Luke. I’ll go with Jason here.” Mary firmly grabbed Jason’s hand and led him to the dance floor.

Jason barely had time to process the arrangement, but he was happy to comply—and it seemed Matt and Luke felt the same.

“Do you like camp?” Mary asked after giving Jason a moment to catch the beat. She looked him squarely in the face.

Jason hoped she liked what she saw. “I...I guess. It’s not too bad. How’s Camp Wenonah?”

“I’m having the absolute best summer of my life.”

“Do you happen to know my sister, Amy Brooks? She’s just started at Camp Wenonah this year.”

“No. How old is she?”

“Eleven.”

“Oh, she’s a Honeybear. I’m sure I’ve seen her, but I didn’t know her name.”

“Matt has a sister at your camp too. Karen. The same age as Amy.”

“I’ll make a point to get to know them.”

Jason tried his best to think of what to say next. “Say, did you know that your camp is haunted?”

“It’s what?” Mary’s face revealed her astonishment.

“Haunted. You know...by ghosts.”

“Ah, sure. Haunted.” The soft lights overhead cast shadows on her face. “And I’m the tooth fairy.”

Jason glanced briefly around the dance floor, watching a few campers shuffle awkwardly to the beat, then quickly returned his attention to Mary.

“Well, I’ll keep a lookout for the, ah, Indian spirits,” she said, teasing, her lips curved in amusement.

Jason's eyes shifted to the dance floor again, wishing he'd just kept quiet about the whole thing. "Yeah, it's stupid maybe, but that's what our chief told us," he said half-heartedly. "He made it sound so real."

"You're *serious*? This is a joke, right?"

"No joke."

"What did he say exactly?"

"Not a whole lot. Just that a couple of Indians walked into the lake a long time ago and were never seen alive again. They like to come back now and then as ghosts."

"Why at our camp and not yours?"

"Because that's where they lived. On your side of the lake."

"That makes sense, I guess."

"I just thought you ought to know," said Jason, trying to change the subject.

"Well, thanks for the heads up," Mary said appreciatively.

* * * *

Betsy Hardeker and the chief sat watching the dancers from the corner of the room. By this time, quite a few other boys had invited girls onto the dance floor.

"It's a beautiful sight, Betsy," remarked the chief.

"Yes, it is. And your boys seem to be behaving themselves. So far."

"They'll be fine. You'll see."

"The evening's still young, George. Two hours and thirty-two minutes to go before we board the bus, but who's counting."

"Have you ever thought about selling your camp?"

“Have you lost your mind?” Betsy Hardeker stared at Chief George with laser eyes to emphasize her displeasure.

“No. I just assume you’ll want to retire someday.”

“What made you think that?”

“Well, my company could buy your land and make you very rich.”

“Sorry, George. Not interested. I’m leaving my land to my children and grandchildren.”

Just then, the cell phone on Betsy’s belt beeped a little tune.

“Hello,” she answered. “Ms. Hardeker speaking...What did you say?...The girls are crying? What happened?...What? You tell them I’m on the way. We’ll all get on the bus and come back right away. Yes, goodbye.”

Betsy Hardeker turned to the chief. “We must go. I’m very sorry. There is some kind of trouble at the camp and everyone’s upset.”

“What kind of trouble?”

“You won’t believe this, but the counselor I left in charge said it was a *ghost*.”

“A ghost?”

“That’s right. A ghost.”

Chapter 9: Was It Really a Ghost?

Amy and Karen sat in the counselor’s office and couldn’t stop crying. At first, the counselor was not sure what to do, but when the crying continued, she was convinced that the two young girls had seen something real. Eventually she made the call to Ms. Hardeker.

The green school bus turned into the campground a short time later. Amy watched through one of the administration building's windows as all the campers filed out and headed to their sleeping cabins with their counselors. Ms. Hardeker, however, hurried into the office and took Amy and Karen into her arms.

"There, there, girls," she comforted. "Tell me what happened."

"It happened so suddenly." Amy and Karen proceeded to tell the story, interrupting each other in the gush of words.

"You two come and sleep in the head cabin tonight. Tomorrow we will investigate and get to the bottom of this."

"You don't believe us?"

"There are no such things as ghosts, you know. There must be some other explanation."

"We don't really believe in ghosts either, but we saw what we saw," Amy said, wiping the drying tears from her face.

"Let's try to get some sleep, girls."

"Ms. Hardeker?" Karen said.

"Yes?"

"Our brothers are at Camp Wabanaki. And they are really good detectives. Could we ask them to help us?"

"You have brothers? At Camp Wabanaki?"

"Yes, Jason Brooks and Matt O'Connor. And Luke is there too. They worked together before to solve a mystery and..."

"Why didn't you say so! Would you feel better if we called your brothers and—"

"Yes," both girls said in unison.

“And tell them to come and investigate the ghosts,” Amy added.

“Well, we’ll call them anyway,” Ms. Hardeker said. “Let them know what happened and that you are safe. Then we’ll see about this investigation.”

Ms. Hardeker reached for the phone and dialed a number. “George. I’m sorry to have left so abruptly. I’m back at the camp now and everything’s all right... A ghost? Of course there’s no ghost. But we’re going to get to the bottom of this...”

Amy gave Karen a look.

“Indian story? No, I never heard of such a thing. What Indian story?...That sounds preposterous. Anyway, I just learned that two Honeybears who saw the...ah, ghost...have brothers at your camp. Jason Brooks and Matt O’Connor...Yes, could you find them and put them on? Call back? Okay.” Ms. Hardeker turned back to the girls. “They’ll call right back as soon as they get them from their cabin. Amy, you take this phone, and, Karen, you pick up that extension over there.”

A few moments later the phone rang, and the two girls answered together.

“We’re on speakerphone,” Jason said with concern in his voice. “I’m with Matt and Luke. What happened? Are you all right?”

“It’s scary!” Amy told him. “We think we saw a *ghost!*”

“Really? A ghost?”

“Yeah! It was white. And it floated in the air and made this strange whooshing sound.”

“Have you heard that Indian story?”

“No, but I think Ms. Hardeker just talked to someone on the phone who knows about it.”

“Ask her to tell you.”

Amy and Karen looked at each other, wide-eyed.

“Come over here,” Amy told him. “We need you!”

“It looks like a job for the detectives!” the three boys said on the speakerphone.

Amy let out a deep breath. She felt anxious, but just knowing her brother would be on the case brought a measure of relief.

“We’ll talk to Tonto, our counselor, and try to get over there in the morning,” Jason said.

“Well, hurry!”

The two girls hung up, and Amy stared at Ms. Hardeker suspiciously. “What do you know about this?” she asked, trying her best to suppress an accusatory tone. “We need to know.”

“Nothing, girls. Honest. I don’t know any more about it than you do.”

“What’s this Indian story?”

“Just a story I heard today from the head of Camp Wabanaki. Something about two Indian newlyweds who come back to haunt this place. Ridiculous really.”

“Well, it doesn’t sound so ridiculous to us now!”

“Come. It’s late. Let’s get you off to bed.”

Amy stood, annoyed that Ms. Hardeker was making light of the ghost story. “We can walk ourselves back to our cabin. Thank you very much.”

With that, the two girls marched off into the darkness.

Chapter 10: The Detectives Hit a Snag

The next morning, Jason was the first to awaken. The early light of dawn was just creeping into the cabin through the open windows. Jason climbed from his bunk and felt his way in the darkness toward the cabin door. As soon as his hand touched the doorknob, he had a premonition that something was wrong, but he continued to open the door. When he did, a load of stinky slime fell from above and splattered onto his head and shoulders.

“What! What the heck?” He smeared the disgusting substance across his forehead before it could get into his eyes. “What is this stuff?”

All his cabinmates, including Tonto, awoke from the noise and stared at Jason, standing in the open door, with a white substance on his head and dripping down his face.

“Looks like white paint!” exclaimed Luke, rushing to his aid. “It’s a lot more liquidy, though.”

Tonto sprang from his bunk and grabbed a towel. “Here, use this!” he said, throwing it to Jason. “Must be the Wolves. They got theirs last year when they were Foxes.”

“Run down to the lake and jump in,” Matt suggested.

“No, that will pollute the lake water. Wash it off in the shower,” Tonto said. “Boys, you take Jason over to the bathroom cabin. I’ll dismantle this booby trap.”

“Don’t do that yet,” Jason mumbled, rubbing his face with the cloth. “We want to check it for clues first.”

“Clues to what?” asked Tonto.

“To find out who did this.”

“Yeah,” said Matt. “It’s called *revenge*.”

“I’m not sure I can authorize that,” Tonto cautioned. “This hazing is a camp tradition, but we don’t want to start a war.”

“So, Foxes have to just sit and take what the older guys dish out and not strike back?”
Luke was incredulous.

“That’s about it,” Tonto confirmed.

Jason scrubbed at the slime still clinging to his hair. “Anyway, guys, we’ve got to get across the lake and investigate the ghost.”

Tonto glanced back and forth between them. “Ghost? What ghost?”

“Don’t you know? Our sisters saw a ghost last night.” Matt seemed surprised that Tonto’s face stayed blank and didn’t reflect any knowledge. “That’s why the whole girls’ camp had to leave.”

“Oh, I wasn’t here last night. I took the car and went into town. By the time I came back, everyone was asleep.”

“Well, we need to get across the lake. Can we take a boat?”

“Sorry, guys. I can’t authorize that either.”

“Then can you drive us?” Jason pressed.

“No can do. You’re not allowed on that side of the lake.”

“But our sisters are there. And Ms. Hardeker wants us to come.”

“Sorry. I can’t let you go.”

“Now, let me get this straight,” Luke broke in. “Jason’s and Matt’s sisters were so scared of a ghost that they had to interrupt the whole dance, but we can’t even go and visit them to see how they are?”

“That’s about it,” Tonto said with a wave of his hand as he dismissed the boys and walked off toward the administration building.

“Now what do we do?” Matt whispered after Tonto was out of earshot.

“I think it’s time to go sailing,” Jason replied with a conspiratorial wink and a smile.

“Good idea!” Luke said.

Jason left to take a shower while the other boys disconnected the garbage can from above the cabin door and looked around for clues to the hazing of the Fox campers.

Chapter 11: The Great Escape

Jason, Matt, and Luke ran over to the workshop. Jason didn’t ask Tony and Kevin to join them because, as they’d been told, a boat could only hold three people. The three of them grabbed the new sail and some tools, then headed down to the boathouse. They quickly and quietly installed the sail on one of the sailboats and dragged the boat to the water’s edge.

Longbow, the counselor in charge of sailing, sat in a nearby boat but he was busy demonstrating the basics of sailing to a group of campers on shore and didn’t notice them at first. The three Foxes put on life vests, stepped into their boat and raised their sail.

So far so good, Jason thought. He and his two friends knew that using the sail was against the rules, but Matt and Luke joined in willingly. Jason relied on their loyalty as well as the fact that, almost as much as he did, his friends wanted to join in the fun of sailing across the water.

“Hey! What do you think you’re doing?” shouted Longbow, finally noticing them after they had pushed off from shore with their new sail.

“We’re taking the boat for a spin,” Luke shouted back and waved to Longbow with a smile as Jason grabbed the tiller, adjusted the sail and headed out toward the open water.

“You can’t do that! I just told you yesterday. You can’t use that sail. And none of you are certified to take a boat out by yourselves.”

“Catch us if you can!” Luke challenged.

Jason tightened his grip on the tiller as their sailboat picked up speed under full sail. Although Longbow was a strapping lad, his weight was certainly less than the total weight of Jason

and his two friends, which meant that their heavier boat would displace more water and had to push additional water out of the way as it moved forward. But their boats’ sails were different, and Jason hoped the one they had crafted would make up for the weight difference. This would be a *real* test for his invention. Was his sail more efficient than the old-style cloth sails? We’ll soon see, he thought.

Jason quickly saw Longbow had adjusted his course to steer toward them and he must have trimmed his sail. He could see Longbow’s boat lurch forward in a gust of wind. Jason felt a thrill shoot through him. The race was on.

“Don’t head for the girls’ camp! We don’t want to let them know where we’re going!” shouted Matt.

“Don’t worry! They’ll never figure out what we’re up to,” replied Jason. “Ready about; hard alee!”

The boys’ boat came about and set a new tack in the same direction as Longbow’s boat, which at this point was just one boat’s length behind. Jason watched as Longbow, who probably had many years of sailing experience, trimmed his sails and adjusted the helm for maximum speed. The certainty written on Longbow’s face made clear that he fully expected his lighter

boat to close the gap and overtake them. But try as he might, the gap between the two boats didn't shrink. In fact, to everyone's amazement, the gap seemed to be getting wider!

"Hey, guys! Slow down!" Longbow called.

"Bye-bye! See you when we get back," Luke shouted back.

"Wow, sailing is really fun!" Looking up, Matt watched the invisible wind as it passed through the fluttering slats of the sail.

"Hooray! It works!" Jason shouted, impressed with the success of his invention. He could hardly believe they were pulling ahead of the counselor, who clearly had more sailing experience.

Within a few minutes, Jason's sailboat had gained a significant lead over Longbow's boat.

Longbow veered off and tried a different tack. Soon the boys were so far in the lead, it was useless for Longbow to continue. He headed back toward the camp dock, either to give up or to try the motor launch. Jason continued on and sailed around to the other side of an island in the middle of the lake, thereby losing sight of Longbow before he had reached the dock.

Jason, Matt and Luke sailed on serenely, tacking in a zigzag back and forth to keep the island between them and Camp Wabanaki.

"Do you hear anything?" Jason called out.

"Nope. I think the coast is clear," answered Matt, listening carefully for the sound of Longbow's motor launch.

"Okay. Camp Wenonah, here we come!" shouted Jason, moving the tiller over and adjusting the sail. Within a few minutes, the boys pulled into the dock at the girls' camp and

pulled down the sail. From a distance, their sailboat would look like any other sailboat tied up at the girls' dock. For the moment, at least, they were safe from Longbow.

Looking up from their boat, the boys were surprised to see a large group of girl campers staring down at them.

Luke greeted the crowd with a wide smile. "Hello, girls! We're here!"

"Hooray!" shouted all the girls, pushing and shoving each other to get a closer look. "It's boys!"

Jason, Matt and Luke looked at each other in wonderment. They were celebrities!

"Take us to your leader," said Jason, pretending to have come from a distant land.

"You mean Ms. Hardeker?" one of the girls asked, still staring at them in disbelief.

"Yup. That's who we want," Luke said, caught up in the novelty of the situation.

"Numero Uno. The head honcho."

"We're from Camp Wabanaki," Matt said dumbly, not knowing what else to say.

That's probably pretty obvious to them, Jason thought, being as "CAMP WABANAKI" was written prominently on the side of their boat.

In the meantime, the hubbub on the boat dock had attracted the attention of other eager campers, who came rushing down the ramp to the dock. Mary, Chris, Beth and Felicia were among them.

"What's going on?" Mary asked, speaking to no one in particular.

"Some boys came in a boat from across the lake," came the reply.

"Oh my gosh! It's them!" cried Beth. "Hi, Jason! Hi, Luke and Matt!"

The boys grinned and waved politely.

“Sorry to drop in like this,” Jason said. “We just want to talk to Ms. Hardeker, and to our sisters...”

Just then, Ms. Hardeker appeared on the dock, and all the girls stepped aside to make room for her.

“What is the meaning of this!” she barked accusingly as she spied the three boys.

“Hello, Ms. Hardeker. I’m Jason, and this is Matt and Luke. We came here to speak with our sisters, Amy and Karen, about the ghosts they saw last night.”

“Well, hello boys! You came to see your sisters? What took you so long?”

“Were we expected?”

“Just a little attempt at a joke. Welcome, boys. Come on up.” Ms. Hardeker smiled and reached down to help the boys onto the dock. The girl campers behind her gave a collective sigh of relief.

“Let me take you to their cabin.”

Chapter 12: The Investigation Begins

“Hi, girls!” said the three boys as they entered the cabin.

Amy and Karen were lying on their bunks, reading. They looked up and saw their brothers with Luke, staring at them, grinning from ear to ear. Ms. Hardeker stood in the doorway.

“You came!” they screamed as they jumped up and ran to the boys. There were hugs all around.

“I’ll leave you campers alone now. I’m sure you have a lot of private matters to talk about,” offered Ms. Hardeker after the greetings were over. “Come on over to the administration building after you’re through.” Ms. Hardeker disappeared out the door with a wave of her hand.

“Did you really see a ghost?” asked Matt earnestly as they settled down on chairs and bunks.

“It sure looked like it,” Amy began. “It was white and shaped...shaped like a tube or something.”

“Yes, and it just flew in that window!” Karen added, pointing to the small window near the ceiling where the rafters came to a peak.

“Did it... like, hover in the air?” asked Matt.

“Well, kind of. Some of it seemed to float up there and some came down to the floor. We didn’t stay here long enough to find out. We freaked out and ran,” Karen admitted.

“Where did you go?” Luke continued the questioning.

“We ran to the counselor on duty. In the administration building.”

“What did she do?”

“She didn’t believe us, of course.”

“Well, you saw what you saw,” Jason said sympathetically.

“So she took us back to the cabin to look in.”

“Did she see the ghost too?” Luke queried.

“No, it was gone by that time. But she saw something that convinced her a ghost was really here,” Amy said excitedly.

“What was that?”

“She saw a puddle of water on the floor. It was eerie.”

“So she ran back to the administration building and called Ms. Hardeker,” Karen said, concluding the story. “And we went with her and waited for Ms. Hardeker to return.”

“Let’s take a look around.” Jason stood and stared at the open window where the ghost had entered. Nothing seemed out of place. “Where was the water on the floor?”

“Right where you’re standing, I guess. I didn’t really mark the location, you know,” Amy replied, a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

Jason studied the floor. The water had long since been mopped up by the camp custodian. He went outside, followed by the others, and walked around to the side of the cabin with the open upper window. First, he looked up at the window, and then he looked down. Matt and Luke did the same.

“What are we looking for?” asked Matt.

“Clues. Clues to where the ghost came from.”

Neither Matt nor Luke saw anything out of the ordinary. Jason walked away from the cabin a short distance, looking carefully at the ground as he went, and then returned.

“Did you hear any cars or trucks nearby before you saw the ghost?”

“Not that I remember. I was almost asleep when it happened,” replied Amy. “Did you?” she asked Karen.

“No. I may have heard some sounds, but it wasn’t a car.”

“What kind of sounds?”

“I don’t know. Hissing sounds, I guess.”

“Did you see anything unusual?”

“No, it was dark.”

“Did your counselor see or hear anything?”

“I don’t think so. You’ll have to ask her.”

“Where is she now?”

“She’s probably at the administration building. With Ms. Hardeker.”

“Let’s go talk to her.”

The two girls led the band of detectives up the path to the administration building. Jason could sense that a hundred pairs of eyes from every nook and cranny of the camp were watching as they walked along. Mary Nestor and her cabinmates watched too, from a respectful distance.

In the administration building, Ms. Hardeker sat behind a desk, talking with several counselors. All of them looked up as the group entered.

“Ms. Hardeker,” Jason began. “We would like to talk with the counselor on duty last night.”

“That’s me,” said one of the counselors, stepping forward.

“Could we just ask you a few questions?”

“Go ahead, dear,” Ms. Hardeker urged warmly. “The boys are here to reassure everyone that there was no ghost.”

“Oh, Ms. Hardeker, but there *was*,” the counselor replied, somewhat nervously.

“Did you see the ghost too?” asked Jason.

“No, but I’m sure that the girls did. They were scared out of their wits!”

“Ridiculous. There are no such things as ghosts,” Ms. Hardeker said firmly.

“Did you see or hear anything unusual just before the girls saw the...ghosts?” asked Jason.

“No, I was inside the building here, so I wouldn’t have seen or heard anything. But when the girls came screaming, I walked them back to their cabin and saw...I saw...the remains of the ghost.”

“You saw the water?”

“Yes, it looked like...like the ghost had sort of...melted down.”

Just then, Mary Nester poked her head in the open door of the administration building.

“Hello! Can I come in?”

Jason whirled around. “Mary! Hi! Remember me? I’m—”

“Of course I remember you, Jason. I just wanted to remind you to tell the story about the ghosts of the Indians.”

Hearing the further mention of the ghost story, Ms. Hardeker turned and stared at Mary. Jason could see Ms. Hardeker’s face had turned white.

Chapter 13: The Supply Room

Jason, Matt and Luke bid farewell to their sisters, Ms. Hardeker, and the rest of the girls at Camp Wenonah and then sailed away amid loud cheers and much hand-waving at the dockside. Mary Nestor and her roommates seemed particularly touched by the visit of the young band of detectives and promised to help them in any way they could.

As they approached Camp Wabanaki, the boys were on the lookout for Longbow, but to their great relief, the sailing lesson was over, and they were able to dock their boat and stow their sail without being apprehended or even seen.

Back at their cabin, they began to look for clues to the Wolves' prank that morning. Luckily the bucket and string used for the prank were still where Tonto had placed them: in the trash can next to the cabin. Trash pickup occurred only once a day, toward evening.

"So, this is what it was," said Jason as he lifted the bucket and inspected it. "Whitewash."

"It's not as bad as paint. Easier to wash off," Matt said helpfully.

"That's a clue," Luke suggested. "I'll bet one of the counselors had a hand in this. To keep the tradition going, he gave the whitewash to the Wolves. How else would those guys get a can like this?"

"I agree. There must have been at least one counselor involved." Jason nodded with a knowing smile. "And if you were going to pull a prank and you needed a counselor to help you with it, who would you choose?"

"A counselor who knows our cabin?" volunteered Luke.

The three boys looked at each other.

"*Tonto*." Matt and Luke said together.

"Precisely. And since Tonto couldn't have stored the can of whitewash in our cabin, where we could find it, where do you suppose he kept it?" Jason wondered aloud.

"The camp supply room, maybe?" Luke replied.

"I think you're right. I'll bet if we looked in the supply room, we'll find more cans just like this one." Jason said.

"But we can't get in there. It's locked," Matt said with a long face.

"Who has a key?" Jason persisted.

"Chief Rain Cloud for sure," Matt replied.

"Anyone else?"

“A *counselor* maybe?” Luke said hopefully.

“Tonto again!” Matt was on a roll.

“For sure,” Luke noted. “But how do we get him to give us the key?” he asked, picking up the thread.

“I give up. How do we do it?” Matt asked, exasperated.

“Let’s ask him for the key to something *else*, and maybe, just maybe, he’ll let us have his whole set of keys,” Jason answered.

“Well, there’s no time like the present to try it. Here he comes!” Matt glanced sideways in the direction of a distant figure heading their way.

Jason quickly closed the trash can, and the boys slipped inside the cabin.

Tonto poked his head in. “I thought I saw you guys come in here. I heard a report that you went out sailing without permission.”

Matt and Luke looked down at their feet, as if to duck the question.

Jason spoke up. “We were just testing our new sail. Did Longbow tell you we had a race?”

“No. He just said he told you to stop and you didn’t. That’s against camp rules!”

“Sore loser. We had a race and we won.”

“You did?” Tonto broke into a grin. “Well, I’ll be! Longbow thinks he’s such a great sailor. And you guys beat him?”

“Yeah. By a mile. It wasn’t us, though. It was our sail.”

“Don’t be modest. Wait ’til I tell the other counselors that you beat the Admiral with a sailboat! He thinks he’s so special, and he let a bunch of amateurs take him on the water. He’ll be the laughingstock of Camp Wabanaki.”

“Please don’t tell anyone,” Jason pleaded. He had a plan.

“Oh? And why not? Don’t you want to be famous?” Tonto looked at him, curious now.

“We don’t want anyone tampering with our sail. If you tell anyone that we beat Longbow with it, then everyone will want to try it.”

“Hmm. Must be some sail. I know what we can do. We’ll lock it up in the supply room whenever you’re not using it.”

“Good idea!” Luke exclaimed. “Let’s go get the sail right now and bring it to the supply room.”

“I have a better idea.” Jason turned to Tonto. “Why don’t you let us borrow the key to the supply room for a few minutes so we can stow the sail away. We’ll give the key right back after we’re done.”

“I don’t know. You guys won’t take anything?”

“Heck, no. You can trust us.”

“Okay, then. Here’s the key.” Tonto unfastened the key from his key ring. “I’ve got to get over to the tennis courts right now and give a lesson. Bring it back to me there.”

The key felt warm in Jason’s hand. *That was a lot easier than I thought!* “Sure,” he said. “Thanks a lot.”

Tonto headed out across the field as the boys went down to the dock and retrieved their sail. They then carried it up to the building with the supply room. Jason pulled out the key and unlocked the door. Reaching in, he felt around for a light switch and turned it on. The boys stood in the doorway and gaped at the jumble of supplies and equipment.

“What is that?” exclaimed Luke, pointing.

The three boys entered the supply room and stared at an odd contraption right in front of them.

Jason frowned as he examined the cluttered shelves, some sagging under the strain of their loads. Rusted tools protruded out in random angles, as if they had been hastily returned. Matt pointed to the contraption, which had a pump, a tank, a hose and a nozzle. “What the heck is that?”

“Some kind of a fire extinguisher, I think,” replied Jason. He brushed a cobweb away and tapped the tank lightly with his knuckles.

“Yeah. Must be,” agreed Luke, squinting and appearing doubtful.

“Anyway, there’s the whitewash. Just like we thought,” added Matt, pointing to a stack of cans in the corner. His eyes scanned the rest of the supplies and equipment. “Some stuff!”

Luke clambered over the contraption and crouched to look closely at the group of cans. “It’s whitewash. We can use a can of this to get back at those Wolves.”

“No!” Matt warned. “It wouldn’t be right. We promised not to take anything, remember?”

“They won’t miss just one can.” Luke looked at Jason for support.

“Matt’s right, Luke. A promise is a promise.”

“Okay. So, what do we do now?”

“Well, one thing is certain,” he said. “Tonto was in on the gag. The Wolves don’t have access to this place on their own.”

“So, let’s get back at Tonto!” Luke suggested.

“I agree. Tonto’s the problem,” said Jason.

“And he’s right in our cabin,” noted Matt.

“Let’s lock up. We’ve seen enough.” Luke turned to go.

“Just a minute,” Jason said. “I want to take a good look at this fire extinguisher, or whatever it is.” He stepped closer to the equipment. “Hey! See here! It says right on it: Snow King.” He lifted the hose and extended it with both hands. “I’ll bet it’s some kind of snowmaking device—turns water into snow!”

“Sure, that makes sense. We’re in ski country, remember? I’m outta here.” Matt joined Luke at the door.

“Hold it! What did our sisters see on the floor after the ghost came and went?”

“A puddle of water,” Matt said.

“And what did the ghost sound like?”

“A whoosh.”

“And what did it look like?”

“It was white...as *snow*!” Luke answered this time, catching on fast.

“Yeah. And who used this equipment? Who was missing last night?”

“Tonto!” Matt and Luke said enthusiastically.

“Right! Now, one more question: If Tonto did make snow and blow it into our sister’s room, *why* did he do such a thing?” asked Jason.

“Gee, I don’t know,” replied Matt.

Luke shrugged. “We give up. Why?”

“Heck, I don’t know either! I just thought I’d ask...” Jason smiled. “What do you think, I can read Tonto’s mind?”

“Why don’t we confront him with it? We’ll tell him what we found out and demand that he tell us the reason,” Matt declared firmly.

Jason shook his head. “That won’t work. He’ll just deny it. And we have no proof.”

“Yeah,” Luke agreed. “Then he’ll know we’re onto him and he’ll be on his guard.”

“Then, there’s only one thing to do,” suggested Jason. “We’ll put a tail on him, night and day, and see if he does it again.”

Matt squinted. “That will be difficult. We’re not supposed to leave the camp at night.”

“Well, we’ll watch from here, and your sisters can be our eyes and ears over at Camp Wenonah!” Luke said.

Jason agreed. “We just have to get a message to them somehow.”

“How do we do that?” Matt wondered aloud.

“We’ll use the phone.”

“They won’t let us call our sisters, remember? Get real.”

“We can say it’s an emergency. They’ll have to let us talk to them.”

“So, how many times will that work? Once maybe? And how are they going to call us back if they learn something?”

Luke, who had been silent during their exchange, suddenly brightened and said, “Walkie-talkies!”

“What?” said Jason and Matt together.

“Walkie-talkies. I packed a couple of walkie-talkies in my trunk to take along on our overnight hike. If we gave one to the girls, we could talk to them all we wanted.”

“I don’t know,” said Matt. “What’s the range of those things?”

“Only a thousand feet or so,” Luke admitted. “They’re just toys, really.”

“Case closed. The lake’s nearly a mile wide.”

“It’s worth a try,” offered Jason. “We’ll find a line of sight without trees or anything in between, and maybe the lake will act as a reflector, as it does with sunlight when it hits it below the critical angle.”

“The critical what?”

“The critical angle. When the light comes in below a certain angle with respect to the vertical—straight up and down—*all* the light is reflected, rather than penetrating the water.”

“I didn’t know that.”

“That’s why we see the image of the sunset on the lake, like it was a mirror.”

“So let’s try it!” agreed Matt. “Now, how do we get a walkie-talkie to the girls?”

“We can simply mail it,” said Luke. “They’re always telling us to send letters and stuff to our families.”

“We’ll mail the walkie-talkie with a letter,” Jason said. “In the letter, we’ll explain our ghost theory and ask the girls to join our detective team. We’ll tell them to switch on their walkie-talkie every day at a certain time, and we’ll do the same. That way, we’ll save the batteries.”

“Great idea!” said Matt. “We’ll solve this mystery if it’s the last thing we do at camp this summer!”

Chapter 15: The Foxes’ Revenge

The next morning, Tonto awoke to find all the Foxes had left his cabin. Daylight had not yet penetrated the trees that surrounded all the cabins of the camp, and although their absence was startling, Tonto assumed that the boys had risen early to see the sunrise over the lake. Tonto

pulled on his jeans and walked out the cabin door. The only sound was that of a hundred birds chirping and twittering in the trees. The camp was still in nighttime mode.

Tonto walked toward the Great Meeting Hall to scrounge up a cup of coffee. On his way, he caught the pleasant odor of breakfast—bacon, toast, scrambled eggs and hashed brown potatoes—being prepared by the camp cooking staff. Looking up at the sky through the trees, Tonto smiled as he saw it was going to be another beautiful, warm summer day in Maine.

Suddenly, several screams echoed through the camp.

“Eeeek!”

“Help!”

The sounds seemed to be coming from the area of the Wolves’ cabins. Tonto turned on his heels and ran in that direction as fast as he could.

When Tonto arrived, the campers were tumbling out of their cabins in their underwear and pajamas. “What happened? Is anybody hurt?”

“Snakes! We’ve got snakes in our cabin!” someone yelled. It had happened, Tonto thought. The Foxes had wrought their revenge upon the Wolves.

* * * *

Off in a grove of trees a safe distance away, Jason, Matt and Luke secretly watched the pandemonium unfold with stifled laughter. Unseen by the Wolves, they peered out from behind a clump of bushes.

“That was amazing!” Matt whispered. “We really woke up those sleepyheads!”

“We had just enough snakes. Two for each cabin.” Jason grinned from ear to ear.

“Boy, were they scared! They practically peed in their pants!” Luke could hardly keep from laughing out loud.

* * * *

Tonto entered each Wolves’ cabin in turn and searched for loose snakes. “They’re harmless, you guys! Just little garter snakes. You’re a bunch of big babies...” At this stage, at least, Tonto was not amused by the event.

“Who did this?” asked one of the Wolves.

“Ask the Foxes. They know, but they won’t tell.” Tonto had to admit it was a clever idea, brilliantly thought out and nicely executed.

“Yeah! I’ll bet you’re right! Getting back at us for that whitewash!”

“Where’d they get those snakes?”

“There’s one place I know of....” Tonto was thinking aloud. “I can’t imagine how they found it.”

* * * *

Behind the bushes, Jason looked at the others and smiled. All in a day’s work for the band of detectives. Finding the source of snakes for the nature program was a piece of cake. It was all in the manuals Tonto stored in his footlocker in the cabin. Since the boys had Tonto’s keys, they had just taken a quick peek in the locker before they gave them back.

Chapter 16: The Detectives Communicate

Two days later, Amy and Karen received, along with several postcards from their friends and the usual letters from home, a small brown package addressed to both of them. Its return address was Camp Wabanaki. The two girls raced back to their cabin from the administration building and tore it open. In it, they found a single walkie-talkie, three AA batteries and a letter signed by Jason, Matt and Luke. Amy recognized Jason's handwriting.

Dear Amy and Karen,

We need your help.

We have just figured out that the ghost you saw coming in your upper window was actually snow. Yes, snow! We found the snowmaking machine right here at Camp Wabanaki. And we know who did it, too. None other than our own cabin counselor, Tonto. What we don't know is why.

Also, we can't prove any of this, but we are pretty sure.

We are enclosing a walkie-talkie you can use to communicate with us. In order to save battery power, don't leave it on. Just turn it on once a day, between 6:00 and 6:30 PM. We can sneak into the woods to talk to you without anyone noticing. If this is a bad time for you, write us a letter. Otherwise, let's use the walkie-talkies to speak every evening at that time.

Love,

Jason, Matt, and Luke

PS: We are not sure the walkie-talkie will work this far away. We can only hope!

"What time is it?" Karen asked.

Amy checked her watch. "Four thirty."

"Let's see. Six to six thirty is usually supper. That would be a good time to sneak back to our cabin and talk to the boys."

"That's right! It works out perfectly. I just can't wait to make our first call."

The girls looked at each other and smiled.

The hour and a half went by very slowly, but finally it turned six o'clock. The girls had been first in line at the mess hall when it opened. After they'd wolfed down their food, they ran out to make the call. At precisely 6:00 p.m., they sat down on Karen's bunk and turned on their walkie-talkie.

Karen pressed the talk button and spoke into the microphone.

"Amy and Karen calling the detectives. Amy and Karen calling the detectives." She released the button and listened. All she and Amy heard was a loud hiss.

"Amy and Karen calling the detectives." She released the button again and there was the hiss, clicking on and off. "Where are those guys?"

"Maybe we're too far away, like they said," Amy volunteered.

"Darn!"

"What's that clicking?"

"Maybe it's the boys trying to reach us!" Karen said urgently.

"What can we do?"

"We could send...maybe Morse code?" Karen suggested.

"Do you know Morse code?" Amy stared at her, surprised at what Karen said.

"No, do you?"

"Of course not." Amy went to the window and scanned the surrounding forest, imagining their brothers somewhere in the woods across the lake, trying to reach them. "I know! Maybe we're too far away here in the cabin. Let's get as close as we can."

"Down by the dock. That's as close as we can get."

The girls switched off their walkie-talkie to save battery life and scooted out of the cabin, letting the screen door slam. They ran as fast as they could toward the lake to keep as much of

the precious half hour as they could. When they arrived at the dock, they found it deserted. Everyone else was in the mess hall.

Karen turned on the walkie-talkie. As soon as she did, she heard Luke's voice.

"This is Luke. Come in, Karen and Amy."

"It works!" Amy and Karen said together.

Karen eagerly pressed the talk button. "Hello! This is Karen."

Chapter 17: A Plan is Hatched

"Karen, it's Luke. Do you read me?"

"You're comin' in loud and clear!"

"That's great! You read our letter, right?" Luke asked.

"Yeah. We think you nailed it. That stuff we thought was a ghost was really just *snow*."

"Right! But there's something weird going on. Tonto was the only one missing at the dance that night, so we know it was him. The question is *why*." Luke wanted to know.

"We'd like to help you find out. What do we do?"

"Here, let me put Jason on," Luke handed the walkie-talkie to Jason.

"Okay, I'll give the radio to Amy."

"Hello, Amy," Jason said. "There has to be a reason Tonto blew snow into your cabin. He wouldn't just do it as some kind of prank."

"It sure was scary."

"We figure it won't be the only time. He'll probably do it again."

"Tough for him. There's a lot of people here and someone will see him."

“That’s the whole point. He did it during the dance when practically everyone at your camp was over here. The logical time to do it again is during the next dance.”

“That’s coming up next weekend.”

“Precisely. We figure he’ll target you again because you were so scared last time.”

“What can we do?”

“Be on the lookout for him and take pictures if you can.”

“We can hide in the bushes near our cabin.”

“Good idea. And why don’t you ask the counselor who’s there to help you. If he finds you taking pictures, there’s no telling what he might do...”

“Depends on who the counselor is that night. Some of them are really stuck-up. We Honeybears keep pretty much to ourselves.”

“There’s a nice girl there called Mary,” said Jason. “Mary Nestor. You met her at Ms. Hardeker’s office when we were there. Tell her you’re my sister and she’ll help.”

“Okay.”

“We’ll try to get away and sail across the lake that night. We can’t promise, though. It’s totally against the rules.”

“Don’t worry. We can handle it on our side,” Amy confirmed.

“I know you can. We’re counting on you.”

“Does this mean you’re letting Karen and me join the detectives?”

“You’re our deputies now. You pull this off and you’re on the team.”

“Hurray! Talk to you tomorrow. We’ll contact Mary Nestor in the meantime.”

“Same time, same place.”

“Over and out.”

Chapter 18: The Girls Conspire

The very next morning after breakfast, Amy and Karen walked over to the older girls' cabin area and knocked on the screen door of one of the cabins. "Anyone here know Mary Nestor?" they asked of no one in particular.

"Next cabin over," came the reply from within.

The girls walked next door and knocked again. "We're looking for Mary Nestor."

"I'm Mary," a girl replied softly, coming to the door. "Who are you?"

"I'm Amy and this is Karen. We're sisters of Jason and Matt at Camp Wabanaki. Jason told us to come and see you."

"Yes, of course. I remember. Jason told me about you both and we met at Ms. Hardeker's office. Please do come in!" Amy stepped into the cabin with Karen as Mary held open the screen door. The two young Honeybears glanced around to see what an older girls' cabin looked like. Amy couldn't help noticing it looked messy.

"Amy and Karen, these are my roommates: Felicia, Beth and Chris," said Mary, gesturing to each roommate in turn.

"Hi, girls!" greeted the three together, smiling.

"Any sister of Jason or Matt is welcome here," Felicia said sweetly.

"Are you girls having a good summer?" Chris tried to make the two visitors feel at home.

"Between ghost visits, that is," added Beth, who still seemed a bit miffed at having to leave abruptly from the dance at Camp Wabanaki.

“Well, that’s what we came about. We want to ask you for help trapping the perp,” replied Karen.

“The what?”

Amy cleared her throat. “The perp. The perpetrator. It’s detective talk,” she said, acting as grown up as she possibly could.

“What do you mean by...perpetrator?” asked Mary.

“Well, our brothers, and also Luke, have been doing some investigating. They found out who the ghost really was.”

Felicia’s eyes widened. “They did?”

“It wasn’t easy to figure out. It turned out to be *snow*, blown in through the window by a snowmaking machine.”

“Snow? Really? Why would anyone want to do such a thing?”

“That’s what we don’t know. But we figure, whatever the reason, the perp will try it again, and that’s why we need you.”

“What can we do?”

“Here’s what we propose...”

The four older girls sat down and listened as Amy and Karen revealed their plan.

“This is so excitin’!” exclaimed Beth. “This is better than attending that stupid old dance...”

Chapter 19: The Trap is Sprung

The six girls could hardly wait until Friday night, the night of the next dance at Camp Wabanaki. When the time came to leave, the four girls in Mary's cabin all came down with a stomachache, or so they said. Their counselor agreed that they should stay back in their cabin and rest rather than board the bus for Camp Wabanaki.

"It must be pretty bad for you girls to want to stay in bed," said the counselor.

"Oooh. It's just awful!" cried Beth, holding her tummy.

The bus departed with all the campers from Camp Wenonah except for the Honeybears and the four older girls: Mary, Felicia, Chris and Beth. Only one Honeybear counselor remained to care for the needs of those who stayed behind. She stood guard at the administration building.

After the camp fell silent, Mary and her roommates tiptoed out of their cabin and snuck through the woods to Amy's and Karen's cabin. It was nearly dusk when they knocked on the screen door.

"Hi, guys. We're here!" Mary announced.

Amy and Karen exited the cabin to greet them.

"I have our cameras here," Amy said. "Loaded and ready. Did you bring one?"

"We all brought one. That's a total of six cameras. That should be enough," Beth said excitedly. "Let's go hide in the woods."

"Before we go, I want us all to smear this over our faces so we'll be harder to see." Amy pulled a bottle of brown liquid shoe polish out of her pocket. "Karen, you start."

Karen took the bottle, poured some liquid onto her hand, closed her eyes and rubbed it on her face.

"You look great! It's better than white," remarked Felicia.

"Does this stuff come off?" asked Karen.

Felicia grinned.

“Who cares? Give me that bottle,” said Chris. She colored her face and passed the bottle to Beth.

“Ugh! Do I have to?”

“Yes, you do. The only one who doesn’t is Felicia,” Chris replied.

“I’ll do it too if it will make you feel better,” said Felicia.

“Okay, okay. It’s...it’s not the color. It’s...just the thought of puttin’ somethin’ on my beautiful skin.” Beth took just a little and smeared it on lightly.

“My turn,” said Mary and splashed it on.

Amy took the bottle back and rubbed a coat of liquid on her face. “Now we’re ready!” All the girls blended nicely into the creeping darkness around them.

“Let’s go, detectives!” Amy led the team out to a strategic spot, out of sight but within view of the nearby cabins of Honeybears. They made themselves comfortable and waited.

Shortly after dark, a black panel truck appeared on the access road to Camp Wenonah. It proceeded along the dirt road without headlights. When it reached the entrance to the campgrounds, it paused briefly and then continued slowly and quietly to the area of the Honeybear cabins. When it reached Amy and Karen’s cabin, it came to a stop.

Watching from behind a bush, the girls could hardly make out the dark vehicle, but they switched on their cameras. Each of the cameras made its own distinctive little humming noise as it powered up.

“Sshh. Let’s wait and see what happens,” Mary said in a whisper.

“Oh God!” Amy gasped under her breath. The other girls gasped too.

Although it was initially too dark to see anyone in the driver's seat, a white ghostly figure suddenly appeared where the driver should have been and alighted to the ground. The apparition walked toward the back of the van, opened its two rear doors, and started taking some equipment out. The figure glowed whitish-blue from head to toe.

"It...it must be him... T-Tonto," Mary stuttered. The other girls stood transfixed, silent.

Mary raised her camera and pointed it toward the apparition. Her hand trembled, but she managed to squeeze off a picture. The camera flashed in the darkness. The figure turned and faced the bushes where the girls were hiding.

"Who's there?" a man's voice bellowed.

The other girls composed themselves sufficiently to take their pictures too. Suddenly the night was filled with the light of five camera flashes, going off almost at once. Mary, who first took a picture, was able to discern that the apparition was really a man, dressed in all white.

It was most evidently *not* a ghost. She stepped out of the bushes.

"Come on, girls," she whispered behind her. Then to the figure she said, "The question is, who are *you*?"

All the girls stepped out of the bushes and carefully approached the man, who was still standing beside his van. He made no threatening moves.

"My name is Joe. I'm a ghostbuster."

"A *what*?"

"A ghostbuster. Here, let me give you all my card."

The man walked back to the door on the driver's side of the vehicle, reached in and took out a business card. He handed it to Mary, who showed it to the other girls. It read:

JOSEPH M. WHITE, Ghostbuster
"We Take the Garbage Out"
RR 1, Box 666
Squants Pond, METel: 1-800-GOGHOST
Chapter 20: The Ghostbuster

"Are you really a ghostbuster? I thought that such a thing was only in the movies," said Mary, eyeing the card.

"Yup! That's what I do for a living," said the man in white. "Here, let me show you my equipment..."

"Why do you glow in the dark?" asked Amy critically.

"That's just the black light I use on the job. It makes me look like a ghost too, doesn't it?"

"Y-yes," agreed Beth. "You sure look scary."

"Well, it helps with the ghosts. They think I'm one of them."

"We thought so too," Karen acknowledged. "You sure fooled us."

"I don't believe in any of this supernatural stuff," said Chris. "You can't scare me."

"Most people don't," replied Joe. But I wouldn't be in business if they didn't exist."

"You mean you've seen a real ghost?" Chris pursued the subject, curious now.

"Of course! Many times! It's my job to eradicate them. Or at least get them to move on to some other place."

"Who hired you? How did you know we had a ghost here?" asked Felicia, who, until now, was quietly observing the whole situation.

“Why, Ms. Hardeker, of course. She told me she thinks a ghost showed up here last week, when the whole camp was at a dance across the lake, and scared the pants off some of you youngsters.”

“Well, we can tell you, it wasn’t really a ghost that we saw,” said Karen.

“Oh, how do you know?”

“We don’t know for sure...” Amy eyed Karen to warn her not to divulge too much information. “It could have been a ghost after all.”

“Yeah,” Karen agreed. “Are you going to catch it, if it shows up tonight?”

“I’ll try. But with all this noise we’re making, I doubt if it will come back.”

“Yeah, likely story,” Felicia said dubiously. “We might as well go back to our cabins.”

“Bummer! You mean that’s it? The fun is over?” cried Beth.

Felicia gave her a sharp look and turned to leave. “Let’s go, girls.”

The older girls followed while Amy and Karen headed for their cabin.

A sharp breeze rustled the leaves in the towering trees above them and Mary’s eyes glanced upward. Moonlight peeked through the shifting clouds above. “At least we got his picture and his business card,” she said.

Beth huffed louder than necessary when she nearly tripped over a tree root. “We missed the big dance for *that*?”

“How many times do you meet a real ghostbuster?” Chris replied. “Look on the bright side.”

“I’m not so sure this is over,” said Felicia after they were out of earshot from Joe. Mary caught her troubled expression and then glanced behind them, ensuring the mysterious man wasn’t creeping along their path.

“What do you mean?” asked Beth.

“First of all, I don’t believe that bologna about a ghostbuster for a minute,” replied Felicia. “I think it’s all a sham. Ms. Hardeker must have hired some kind of security guard to keep the younger girls safe.”

“Why would he *say* he’s a ghostbuster, then?” asked Mary.

“Yes, he had a card and everything,” added Chris.

“I don’t know. Maybe he wanted us to *think* we were being protected.”

“I wish we could get to the dance somehow,” Beth pouted.

“How would we get there? Let’s face it—we’re stuck here for the night,” said Mary.

“We could take a boat! The same way that the boys got over here,” Chris said brightly.

“Well, if he is truly j a guard, we can leave, right?” Beth’s countenance brightened.

“In the dark? Are you crazy?” Mary’s was the voice of reason.

By this time, the four girls had reached their cabin steps, cameras in hand, and were about to enter the screen door when the darkness was suddenly pierced by the screams of the two Honeybears they had left behind.

Chapter 21: The Ghost

“Eeek! A ghost!”

“Help!”

The girls turned and sprinted back toward the source of the sound.

Through the darkness, Mary could see an eerie light coming from Amy and Karen’s cabin window, and she heard the two young girls running in their direction.

“We’re here, girls! We’re coming!” shouted Mary.

Amy and Karen ran up to them and grabbed Mary and Chris for security.

“Save us! There *is* a ghost in there! We saw it!” Karen was emphatic.

“Just a minute,” said Mary. “I’m going in there to see.”

“Don’t go!” cried Amy.

Mary held her camera tightly and crept toward the Honeybears’ cabin. She climbed the steps heading toward the light inside, opened the screen door and peeked in. What she saw took her breath away.

There, in the middle of the cabin, was the image of a partially transparent, ghostlike figure. Off to one side, Joe, the ghostbuster, held a wand with a hose that extended to a pack on his back. Joe had aimed the wand directly at the ghost figure, and from what Mary could tell, the figure was shying away from the wand’s effect and was moving in her direction. Mary stared at the apparition and saw it resembled an Indian maiden.

“Get out of here, quick!” shouted Joe

“Yikes!” Mary was terrified but had the presence of mind to squeeze off a photo with her camera before turning tail and escaping down the cabin steps. “Head for the admin building!” she yelled as she ran toward the other girls. “Fast! We have to call Ms. Hardeker!”

All six girls sped away as fast as they could.

Running up the steps to the administration building, they encountered the counselor on duty.

“What’s the matter?”

“Another ghost!” Amy called out, out of breath. “We have to call Ms. Hardeker!”

“Oh my God! Come on in here. Let’s get to the phone.”

The counselor dialed Ms. Hardeker’s cell phone number and handed the phone to Amy.

“Ms. Hardeker? Ms. Hardeker! It—it’s happened again! We saw another ghost! Mary saw it too this time. Here, let me give the phone to Mary.”

Mary put the phone to her ear.

“Ms. Hardeker, you’ve got to come back. There’s a man here—Joe, the ghostbuster, who you hired. He’s grappling with the ghost and trying to get it out of Amy and Karen’s cabin. I just saw it. It’s really a ghost and he’s zapping it with this...this *thing*.”

Mary paused to take a breath, and what Ms. Hardeker said next drained the warmth from her cheeks. “What?” She stared in disbelief at the girls surrounding her. “You *never* hired a *ghostbuster*?” She almost dropped the phone. “Then who is that *man*?”

Chapter 22: Running Scared

“All right, girls. Let’s not all speak at once,” said Ms. Hardeker, trying to calm the excited group of six campers surrounding her in the administration building. “Who actually saw the ghost?”

“We did!” Amy and Karen said excitedly, raising their hands.

“Mary did too, and she took a picture of it!” volunteered Felicia.

“Oh, really? Mary, you took a picture?”

“Yes, Miss Hardeker. I tried anyway. The ghost was kind of...transparent.”

“What did it look like?”

“It looked something like an...an Indian squaw. It had long black hair and brown skin.”

Ms. Hardeker appeared startled by this revelation.

“And we all took pictures of Joe,” Felicia said.

“Just who is this ‘Joe’?”

“The ghostbuster. He said you hired him to protect us,” said Karen.

“I did no such thing. My goodness, I never knew such a person existed.”

“Maybe you should speak with him. He drove up in a black van, and...”

“Ms. Hardecker, there’s no such van,” volunteered the counselor on duty. “I checked the area where the girls said it was.”

“Well, you said you took pictures...”

“And there should be tracks on the lawn!” said Amy. She did not want Ms. Hardecker to think that she and the other girls had simply dreamed up their story.

“Quite right. We’ll investigate in the morning. And we’ll have the pictures developed too.”

Just then the telephone rang. Ms. Hardecker reached for the receiver. “Hello? Oh, hello, George. Yes, it’s the same thing as before. Everyone’s upset. Several campers saw it this time. They said it looked like an...an Indian...”

Ms. Hardecker paused. “Well, maybe you’re right, George. I can’t run this camp with this happening all the time. Make me an offer, if you will...”

“Oh, and George: I know that the last dance is scheduled to be here at Wenonah at the end of the month, just before we close for the summer. This would be a good time to sign the papers, don’t you agree? ...Yes, goodbye.” Ms. Hardecker hung up the phone and closed her eyes for a moment.

“All right, girls. Let’s get back to our cabins. It’s bedtime.”

“Ms. Hardecker?” Amy inquired politely.

“Yes, Amy?”

“What did you mean when you asked the man to ‘make you an offer’?”

“Chief Rain Cloud wants to buy my camp, it seems.”

“Do you want to sell it?”

“Well, at first, I told him definitely no. But with all of this trouble...”

“Would he turn your camp into a boys’ camp?”

“Yes, I assume so. That will be the end of Camp Wenonah.”

“That’s terrible!”

“I know, but I just can’t face the troubles we’re having. Now girls, it’s time for bed. Amy and Karen, you can sleep here in the administration building if you wish. I know it’s been quite a scare for you and...”

Amy and Karen shook their heads and Amy spoke. “No thank you, Ms. Hardeker. All our stuff’s in our cabin. We’d like to go back there.”

The six girls all said good night to Ms. Hardeker and headed out the door. As they walked along, they made plans for their next move.

“Let’s meet tomorrow morning and examine the tracks of the van,” said Mary.

“And we’ll have all our film developed,” offered Felicia.

“And tomorrow evening, at six o’clock, we’ll talk to our brothers,” added Amy, “and tell them the whole story.”

“You’ll call them up?” asked Chris.

“No, we have a walkie-talkie,” Karen explained.

Beth could not contain herself. “This is soooo excitin’!”

* * * *

Jason and his cabin-mates were at the dance, not knowing what was going on at Camp Wenonah. He enjoyed watching the boys of his Camp Wabanaki trying to interact with the girls

of Camp Wenonah. They were supposed to ask the girls to dance, but many of them were shy and tended to cluster together near the food table. The girls pretended to ignore them but Jason could see they repeatedly glanced over at the boys, hoping to attract their attention.

To his great surprise, Tonto was at the dance this time, standing next to Chief Rain Cloud deep in conversation. This made Jason wonder if Tonto were really the one who had created the “ghost.” Maybe the ghost was merely a prank and, without Tonto, it wouldn’t appear again. Amy and Karen should therefore have nothing to worry about. He could relax, he thought, and maybe even ask a girl to dance. He was looking forward to seeing Mary Nestor again but she hadn’t gotten off the bus. He was disappointed she didn’t come, but he knew there must be a good reason. There were many other nice-looking girls he could dance with but he didn’t feel like dancing.

He was about to make a move in that direction when he saw one of the braves on duty run over to Ms. Hardecker and tell her something. She rushed into the office where, Jason assumed, she took a phone call. When she emerged, she first walked over and whispered something in Chief Rain Cloud’s ear. Her face looked grim as she spoke. Jason watched closely and detected a slight smile cross the chief’s lips against his otherwise sorry expression as he heard the news. He offered a slight bow to Ms. Hardecker and sympathetically held her hand.

Ms. Hardecker then turned and spoke briefly with one of her camp counselors. The counselors were there to chaperone the female campers, Jason knew, but most of them were taking the opportunity to interact with the male counselors of Camp Wabanaki. As Jason watched, Ms. Hardecker quietly slipped out the side door, leaving her counselors in charge to chaperone the rest of the dance and to see that they all returned safely that night to Camp Wenonah.

Chapter 23: The Ghostly Evidence

The next day the girl detectives were up at the crack of dawn and met outside where Joe's truck had parked the night before.

"Yup! The tracks are still here," announced Karen, pointing at the ground.

"Ah'm glad we found 'em. When we all woke up this mornin', I had the feeling it was all just a dream," Beth said with relief.

"Now let's get our pictures developed. Maybe Ms. Hardeker can take them into town right away so we can have them back today," suggested Mary.

"Good idea!" Chris agreed.

As they were talking, Amy and Felicia were squatting together, looking closely at the van tracks.

"Say, come over here! Look at this..." Felicia directed everyone's attention to a spot where the grass had been worn away, leaving bare ground. "Here is a perfect imprint of a tire tread."

Amy studied the mark, noting the width of the tread and its distinctive design. This tire tread is kind of unusual, with those squiggly grooves. Suppose we make a cast of the imprint so we can try to match it later, kind of like matching a fingerprint to a person."

"How do we do that?" Beth wondered aloud.

The girls looked at each other, hoping for ideas.

"I know!" Amy volunteered. "We'll go to the crafts cabin and make up a batch of gooey liquid plaster. Then we'll pour it on the tire marks and let it harden."

"Done!" agreed Mary. "Now let's go into the cabin and look for clues."

The girls scoured the area of the cabin, inside and out, but found no further clues to the ghost's appearance.

Amy sighed and slipped her hands into her back pockets, disappointed that they'd come up empty-handed in the most crucial location. She couldn't shake the nagging feeling that they were missing something important. But maybe a break would be good for everyone. "Come on," she said. "It's time for breakfast."

After breakfast, the older girls took charge of preparing a plaster cast of the tire track while the younger girls took all of the films to Ms. Hardeker to be developed. Ms. Hardeker dispatched a counselor with the films to a one-hour photo shop in a nearby village. By noon, the plaster cast was finished and the counselor had returned with the photographs.

All the girls sat in Ms. Hardeker's office and received their envelopes of developed photographic prints from the counselor. The plaster cast lay tread side up on Ms. Hardeker's desk.

"It's a very unusual tire, Ms. Hardeker," Amy explained. "We could probably track down the van with it if we had to."

"Frankly, I don't see the need for it," replied Ms. Hardeker. "A van is a van. But let's look at the pictures."

Each of the six girls shifted through her photos and pulled out the pictures they had taken the night before.

"Darn! It's too dark," Felicia exclaimed, looking at a nearly black image. "I guess we were too far away for the flash to work."

"Mine too!"

Each girl looked at her photos, disappointed at the results.

“Here, one of mine came out!” announced Mary, holding up a single photo.

All the girls and Ms. Hardeker turned their heads in its direction.

“Wow!” said Ms. Hardeker.

“Oh my God!” screamed Beth.

The photo showed the inside of Amy’s and Karen’s cabin, illuminated by Mary’s flash. To one side stood Joe, the ghostbuster, with his backpack, aiming a wand toward the center of the small room. A glow extended from the end of the wand, which reached as far as a partially transparent image—the image of a ghostly figure that resembled an Indian maid.

“That’s proof I saw a *ghost*,” Mary pointed out.

“We saw it too!” Amy and Karen chimed in.

“I wouldn’t have believed it unless I saw it,” admitted Ms. Hardeker. “That settles it. I’m going to sell this camp, for sure.”

“Just wait ’til we tell our brothers,” Amy said, looking straight at Karen.

Chapter 23: The Sailboat Race

It was one of those balmy, breezy and crystal-clear summer days that only the state of Maine can deliver. And it was the day of the great sailboat race at Camp Wabanaki.

Jason studied the lake, how the wind stirred up little wavelets that moved a short distance and then disappeared, sometimes in a flash of white water. *A perfect day for testing what the new sailors can do*, he thought. *And for testing what his new sail can do.*

However, not all of the campers at Wabanaki were ready and willing to enter the race. Jason had overheard that the youngest of them were ineligible due to their age and lack of experience in handling a boat. Of those in the age of the Foxes and above, only a few were

willing to stake their reputations on the outcome of the race. For every team of young men who could boast of winning at least one heat in the race, there would also be a team of poor unfortunate boys who would come in last in all the heats and would endure the ridicule of their fellow campers.

But almost worse than the ribbing a losing sailing team would receive from their peers was the severe scorn they would face from Longbow, the sailing counselor. Longbow was relentless at heaping insults upon the boys who could not “cut it,” equating their lack of success in sailing to a prediction that they would forever lose in the game of life. Longbow’s attitude toward his charges could have been written in the training manual of a boot camp drill sergeant.

All in all, only six teams entered the race: five two-man teams from the Wolves and Bears, and a single three-man team from the Foxes—Jason, Matt, and Luke.

One additional boat also entered the race, manned by Longbow himself. One could argue that Longbow had the advantage because he alone weighed less than any two-man or three-man team, but no one dared to mention that fact. Longbow was expected to pilot his boat faster than any of the campers anyway.

Jason fished Tonto’s key out of his pocket and slid it into the lock on the supply shack.

Matt swung the door open. “There it is,” he said, staring at the sail they hadn’t touched since the day they’d sailed to Camp Wenonah and left Longbow fuming.

Luke grabbed one of its corners, and Jason and Matt followed. The sail felt heavier than Jason remembered as they carried it out into the light.

They’d practiced with Longbow plenty, to be sure—he’d drilled them over and over with the standard sails from the boathouse. But this wasn’t a standard sail, and Longbow still had no idea they’d used a different one on the day of his defeat. Which meant he wouldn’t see it coming in the championship regatta.

“He’s not gonna like when we show up with it,” Luke said, eying the other racers a short distance away.

Jason scanned the crowd until he spotted Longbow, facing away from them. “Let’s just put it on quickly.”

They hurried to their boat and began installing the sail when Matt’s eyes widened suddenly. “Guys.”

Jason pivoted to see Longbow storming toward them.

“What is *that!*” Longbow screamed when he saw them installing the sail on a boat.

“It’s a sail, of course,” Luke replied, not impolitely or disrespectfully, but with a slight edge to his voice.

“Let me *see it*,” Longbow bellowed as he continued heading their way.

Jason, Matt and Luke quickly inserted the bottom of the mast into a hole in the boat’s crossbeam and raised the mast to a vertical position until it dropped into place. They then lowered the boom to its horizontal position, revealing a row of parallel airfoil-shaped slats.

Longbow stood on the dock, aghast. “You can’t use that...that *thing*. It’s against the rules.”

“Oh? What rules? We haven’t seen any rules,” Jason retorted.

“*My* rules. I make the rules around here.”

“Did you post them somewhere, or do you make them up as you go along?”

“Listen, you punk. I run the race around here. What I say goes! Now get that damn excuse for a sail out of here, or you’re out of the race.”

As Longbow spoke, Tonto walked onto the dock and noticed the disturbance. “What’s going on? Is there a problem?”

“No, I just eliminated these boys from the race. They have a non-regulation sail.”

“Non-regulation sail? I’m not aware of any regulation.”

“There wasn’t any, until now. We didn’t need a regulation because everyone used the standard sail.”

“Well, if there wasn’t any regulation about a particular sail, you can hardly fault the boys for using a different sail.”

“I can, and I will,” Longbow shouted. “I’m the boating captain and I’ll make the rules.”

“And I say, let those boys race with their sail. You can’t make up rules after the fact.”

“And who the heck are *you*, Tonto? I don’t see the word ‘boss’ tattooed on your forehead.”

Tonto didn’t reply but quietly reached into his pocket, took out his cell phone and dialed a number. He spoke a few words into it and then handed it to Longbow. “It’s for you,” he said.

“Oh, who is it? God?” Longbow sneered.

“No, Chief Rain Cloud.”

Longbow immediately changed his expression and grabbed the phone. “Hello? This is Longbow...Uh, yes. Yessir. Yes, I understand...That’s right. Yes sir, I’ll do that. Thank you, sir. Goodbye.” Longbow pressed the hang-up button and stared at Tonto.

“Well?” Tonto said after a beat.

“The boys can sail,” Longbow admitted, handing the phone back to Tonto.

Jason, Matt and Luke let out a loud cheer and slapped their hands together in triumph.

“Hooray!”

“We’ll see who wins the race,” Longbow added in disgust.

The teams of sailors now readied their boats in earnest in preparation for the big race. As they did so, Longbow blew a whistle to alert the entire camp that the race was to begin. Everyone in the camp, including Chief Rain Cloud, came down to the lake's shore to watch.

Longbow stood on the dock, facing the assembled camp, and announced the regatta. He smiled as he looked out at the campers' faces, all looking his way with rapt attention.

He enjoys being the center of attention, Jason thought.

"Hello, everyone," Longbow began. "This afternoon we will hold the annual sailboat races. There will be two races: the first to eliminate half of the boats and the second to determine the winner.

"Six teams have entered the race. I will be racing too, just to show how it's done and to serve as a judge. If any boat breaks a rule of right-of-way or any other rule, I will eliminate it."

Jason paid close attention to what Longbow was saying. He and his crew needed to be careful, he knew. Longbow would do whatever he could to eliminate his boat.

"In just a few moments, we will get in our boats and sail out to the starting area. When I think everyone is ready, I will blow my whistle and we will all head across the starting line, which is between those two yellow buoys." Longbow pointed straight out on the water. "By the way, that is the finish line too."

Everyone looked out across the lake and gawked at the buoys.

"The race will have three legs: a first leg out to a red buoy over there," Longbow said, pointing toward the left to a buoy out beyond the distant end of the island. "The second leg will be along an imaginary line this side of the island from that red buoy to that blue buoy near the far shore." Longbow pointed to a distant buoy near the right end of the lake. "The boats will round

that buoy and then head home. The first three boats to cross the finish line will go on to the final race.”

Longbow glanced at his watch. “It’s three thirty now. We should conclude the final race just in time for supper.”

Longbow bowed and everyone on shore clapped and cheered. Longbow basked in the applause, then turned and spoke to the young sailors.

“All right, let’s go.”

The six teams of boys, who had been holding their boats by the bow ropes, climbed in and raised their sails. Longbow followed with an expert flair, very aware that everyone was watching.

The breeze was brisk and quickly filled the sails as they were hoisted up the masts. In the Foxes’ boat, Luke extended the sail sideways, away from the mast, out along the boom. The boats quickly set off and headed out to the starting area.

Jason scanned the other boats as they tacked and turned in tight circles in the starting area, each crew trying to stay as close as possible to the starting line and in a good position to head across it when the whistle sounded. When it appeared like all the boats had a near-equal advantage, Longbow blew the whistle. The first race was underway.

Jason, Luke and Matt were the last to cross the starting line in the race.

“We’re already falling behind!” Jason yelled. Their sail flapped uselessly as Jason wrestled with the tiller. They were dead last.

Luke and Matt scrambled to adjust the rigging, but their movements were clumsy. The other boats had tacked cleanly and surged ahead, while theirs lagged behind like a drifting log.

A gust of wind whipped through Jason's hair as Longbow's boat sliced through the water. Longbow had waited for all the boats to cross before setting forth but quickly caught up with them.

"Next time get a real sail!" he mocked as his boat sped past.

"Darn! Head out from the wind! Head out from the wind!" screamed Luke to Jason, who was at the tiller. He and Matt were struggling to control the sail, which fluttered miserably.

Jason did so and the sail took hold, but this required that he tack in a direction quite off of the line to their goal, the first buoy. The other boats were able to tack much closer into the wind.

By the time they finally reached the first buoy, tacking back and forth, the other boats were far in the lead, halfway on their downwind run toward the second buoy.

"What are we doing wrong?" Matt shouted over the wind.

Jason shook his head. "I don't know, but we've gotta catch up."

The three of them extended their sail and moved along behind, not losing any further water between them and the pack—but not gaining either. Finally, after reaching the second buoy, they headed home, with the wind coming directly in on their port side. They set the sail at forty-five degrees and their boat lurched forward.

Far ahead, Jason could see the pack of other boats with Longbow in the lead.

This was the tack where the boys' sail performed at its peak. The sail caught the wind perfectly, and their boat, buoyed up by the speed, began to plane on the water, reducing the drag against its forward motion. The more the drag was reduced, the faster it went. And the faster it went, the more its drag was reduced. Eventually their boat was speeding along like a bullet, much faster than the other boats—so fast that it seemed to outrun the very wind that propelled it.

Jason, Matt and Luke caught up with the slowest boat in the pack and passed it. Then they quickly caught up with the second slowest. Longbow, in the lead boat, crossed the finish line, followed by a boat manned by a team of Bears, and then another manned by two Wolves. A third Wolves' boat was not far behind, but Jason, Matt and Luke were closing fast.

Longbow maneuvered his boat toward one of the finish line buoys so that he could see directly down the line. He glanced across just as the two boats crossed the line together.

"The winner is the Wolves' boat!" Longbow announced triumphantly.

The counselors and campers on shore, who also intently watched the finish of the race, were aghast.

"The Foxes' boat won!" shouted Tonto, who was standing on shore next to Chief Rain Cloud and was even with the finish line.

The other spectators began chanting, "The Foxes won! The Foxes won!"

Longbow looked sheepishly at the Wolves' boat and apologized. "Sorry, fellas. I tried." And then stood tall in his boat and announced, "The jury has decided! The Foxes won!"

Jason felt an adrenaline rush of pride, but quickly checked himself. He didn't want to boast. He high-fived his crew members, still feeling a little shaky from the excitement.

The occupants of the three losing boats sailed back to shore. Their friends met them at the dock and held their craft fast while they pulled down their sails and made ready for tie-up. Jason was grateful to see that none of the counselors or campers made fun of their plight, as some of the crew had expected. In fact, they were treated with great admiration and respect by their peers, all of whom had been too shy to even enter the race.

Out on the water, the three remaining campers' boats and Longbow were aligning at the starting area. As they did so, Jason looked up at the tell-tail at the top of their mast and noticed a

small shift in the wind. Instead of coming in toward them from the direction of the first buoy, the wind had picked up slightly and came in from the left, about forty-five degrees off the first leg in the race. Jason nodded toward the tell-tale to alert his teammates to the change in strategy. They looked up and smiled back, knowing that, for the first two legs of the race at least, their new sail would no longer be a disadvantage for them.

Longbow blew the whistle, and they were off. This time the Foxes team took the lead. Longbow, who had waited for all three boats to cross the starting line before setting off, quickly caught up and passed first the Wolves' boat and then the Bears' boat.

Tacking off the wind, Jason and his team headed out toward the island, about ten degrees to the right of the first buoy. Just short of the island, before the waters calmed due to the island's interference with the wind, they tacked sharply to the left and sailed tightly into the wind until their boat appeared to be in alignment with the first buoy.

"Ready about!" shouted Jason. "Hard alee!"

Meanwhile, Longbow was sailing closely into the wind and heading straight for the first buoy. He passed to the right of Jason's boat as they were tacking to the left. When Jason tacked to the right again, Longbow was well in the lead and heading directly toward the red buoy.

Jason and his team aimed to the left of the buoy and held their course. The wind was strong and propelled them forward over the choppy water. Longbow tried desperately to make the left side of the buoy, but the harder he tried, it seemed, the farther his boat was eased to the right.

Just before Longbow came even with the buoy and realized he could not round it to the left, he tacked to starboard, heading directly into the path of the Foxes' boat, which was now approaching the buoy.

“Watch out!” Longbow yelled. “I have the right of way!”

Jason knew that Longbow was correct. With two boats heading on a collision course, the one on the right had the right-of-way. Normally Jason would have to steer away, giving up all chance of reaching and rounding the buoy without tacking again.

However, Jason reached out and twisted a wheel on the side of the boom, allowing the wind to momentarily flutter through the Venetian blind sail, slowing his boat and allowing Longbow to pass from right to left across his bow. Just as soon as Longbow passed, Jason flipped the wheel back again and the Fox boat shot forward in the same direction toward the buoy. Longbow tacked back to the right just in time to see the Foxes’ boat round the buoy and head outward in the direction of the blue buoy.

On this leg of the race, the wind blew directly perpendicular to their direction of travel, and the Foxes’ boat took off like a rocket, planing long the surface of the water. By the time Longbow had rounded the first buoy and started his downwind leg, the Foxes’ boat was already a quarter of the way to its next turning point and was increasing its lead over Longbow with every passing minute. The remaining two boats in the race were battling it out together, still on the first leg.

Chapter 24: The Rescue

Over at Camp Wenonah, most of the girls were down at the dock to watch what they could see of the Great Sailboat Race. Unfortunately, the island blocked their view of a large portion of the first and second legs of the race, but they could see the blue buoy and the two yellow buoys marking the finish line.

“Darn!” exclaimed Mary to her roommates. “We can’t see a thing!”

“I know a way to watch the race so we can see everything,” Beth replied coyly.

“I know what you’re thinking. Don’t even go there,” warned Chris.

“No, really! Let’s take one of these canoes and paddle out...”

“We don’t have permission,” Chris protested.

“So, dummy, let’s *ask*.”

“They’ll never let us. The wind is too strong.” Chris stood her ground.

“No, it’s not,” Felicia chimed in. “Besides, nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

“Okay, I’ll go ask,” Mary said finally and marched off.

In a few minutes, Mary returned, excitedly holding a key to a padlock. “We can go!”

The girls quickly ran down to the boathouse to retrieve two paddles and unlock one of the canoes. Working swiftly, they stepped in and sat down gingerly on the tippy craft, Felicia at the bow and Mary at the stern. The two lighter girls, Chris and Beth, sat in the middle. Mary and Felicia paddled out while the rest of the girls at the dock, including Amy and Karen, cheered them on. Within minutes the canoe was far out on the lake, between the tip of the island and the blue buoy.

As they came broadside to the wind to get a better view of the race, the boat began to sway slowly, rocking side to side like a pendulum, each motion becoming a little more intense than the last. Mary gripped the sides of the boat, realizing that the timing of the waves was intensifying the motion, matching the natural rocking frequency of the boat. As the swaying became more extreme, the boat tipped just a little too far, lost its stability and dumped its contents into the water.

“Help! I can’t swim!” Beth screamed as she scrambled to grab the overturned boat.

Mary quickly swam toward her and tried desperately to grab onto Beth's flailing arms. Chris ended up far out in the water. Felicia was nowhere to be seen.

* * * *

On shore, Amy and the other campers and their counselors stood aghast, unable to assist the helpless canoe crew far out in the water. A couple of counselors dove into the water and started to swim toward the mishap but eventually turned back when they saw how little progress they were making against the wind.

As Amy and Karen watched from the dock, they saw Jason, Matt and Luke come into view from behind the island.

"Look! There are the boys!" Amy shouted, pointing. "They can save them!"

All the girls on the dock started screaming together. "Help them! Help them! Hurry!"

But the boys were far out on the water and appeared to be focused only on one thing: sailing their boat toward the blue buoy just as fast as it could go.

"They can't hear us," Amy said, her frustration mounting. The boys were completely oblivious to the tragedy taking place just a short distance away.

"Oh my God! They don't see them!" Karen gasped, staring out at the distant scene unfolding before their eyes.

* * * *

Jason, Matt and Luke caught their breaths as their boat approached the blue buoy. They prepared to round it and head back toward Camp Wabanaki, tacking into the wind for the final leg of the race. As the boat came even with the blue buoy, Jason shouted, "Ready about!"

Just then he heard a loud beeping sound.

“What the heck is that?” Jason shouted, maintaining his course with a puzzled look on his face.

“It’s this!” Luke removed the walkie-talkie from his jacket pocket and held it up. He pressed the talk button and shouted, “Luke here!” then held the instrument to his ear. In an instant, he jerked his head in the direction of Camp Wenonah.

Jason looked too and saw the overturned canoe with the girls struggling in the water.

“Guys, look!” Luke shouted, pointing.

“Jason, go over there!” ordered Matt.

Jason immediately jammed the tiller hard to the right, causing the boat to swerve left while maintaining its forward momentum so that it moved rapidly in the direction of the overturned canoe. Within seconds, the boys were alongside the accident. Jason turned the wheel on the boom to feather the sail and stop the boat while Matt reached out and grabbed Beth’s hand. Luke dove into the water and disappeared. First Beth, then Mary and finally Chris were lifted into the boat to safety.

“Felicia’s still out there,” Mary told Jason, nearly breathless.

Jason’s eyes scanned the disturbed water. *So is Luke.*

The two remained missing for what seemed like an eternity. Everyone on board, and all of those on shore at Camp Wenonah, collectively held their breath with worry.

Minutes passed.

Jason squinted against a burst of wind as hope drained from his chest. *It can’t end like this.*

Then suddenly, the upside-down canoe began to rock back and forth and tipped over on its side, revealing Luke and Felicia, who had arisen in the air pocket underneath. The two raised both hands to indicate that they were safe, and a loud cheer resounded all over the lake.

Relief nearly engulfed Jason. Matt slapped him on his back, tears in his eyes.

Longbow, who by this time had arrived at the scene, offered a hand to Luke and Felicia and pulled them into his boat. The girls at Camp Wenonah waved and cheered when the two sailboats delivered their four wet female passengers safely back to the girls' camp dock. Before alighting on the dock, the girls kissed the three young rescuers on the cheek.

"Thanks for saving our lives, guys," Mary said. The three boys blushed blood red.

Amy and Karen, who were jumping up and down on the dock with excitement, rushed up and hugged their brothers. Jason, gentleman that he was, made sure the girls included Luke in the big hug.

"We need to talk," Amy said. "We've got a lot to tell you about our ghost."

"We're all ears," Jason said, giving a nod to Matt and Luke to join in. The boys listened intently as Amy and Karen filled them in about the strange goings on at Camp Wenonah.

After they finished, Jason, Matt, Luke and also Longbow climbed back in their sailboats and headed back to Camp Wabanaki. The annual sailboat race had come to a successful end.

Chapter 25: The Last Campfire

After supper that evening, all the counselors and campers at Camp Wabanaki headed to the special amphitheater for the final campfire ceremony of the year. As the boys entered the arena single file, Chief Rain Cloud stood at attention, arms folded Indian style and dressed in full

ceremonial regalia. Directly in front of the chief was the open fireplace, heaped with split fire logs.

When the boys had finally settled down, the chief began his chant. “Oowaw, oowaw, God of fire, come to us and light this pyre.” As had happened during each of the campfire ceremonies that summer, a wisp of smoke rose from the firewood and eventually the logs caught fire.

“This is our last powwow together,” the chief began. “Let the Great Spirit join us tonight as we harken back over our long summer adventure and think about what we have experienced together.

“First of all, we learned something about our Mother Earth. We gained an appreciation for her out here in the wilderness, an appreciation we could not find in any city. We examined a few of her plants and met a few of her creatures. And we were awed by her complexity.

“Next, we developed our physical skills. We improved our abilities in playing all manner of sports. We learned archery and repelling. We learned about the joys and the dangers of water. We became stronger swimmers and better divers. We learned to sail. We expanded our horizons. We climbed a mountain just to get to the top.”

Chief Rain Cloud paused a moment while he looked up at all the eager young faces reflected in the firelight. “And finally, within ourselves, we learned to be independent in thought and deed, while at the same time we learned the value of cooperation.

“It is time now to announce the awards to you deserving campers. I would like to call upon Tonto to lead this ceremony. When Tonto reads your name, please come forward to accept your arrowhead.”

Tonto took center stage and spent the next half hour honoring all those boys who had excelled in some sport or activity or had shown the greatest improvement. The entire camp

applauded warmly as each individual received his award. When finished, Tonto stepped aside and Chief Rain Cloud spoke again.

“Now I would like our boating captain, Longbow, to announce the sailing awards. Longbow, would you come forward, please?”

Longbow came to the front and bowed politely, first to the chief and then to the audience. He seemed different somehow. It appeared to Jason he had lost some of the cockiness that was once his trademark. He seemed almost shy on stage as he began to speak.

“My fellow campers, I want to thank you all for coming out for sailing. I know I was tough on you...really tough. Too tough, in fact. I used to think that it was for your own good. That you would be better sailors if I made you feel small for your every mistake. Well, I’ve learned something recently about myself. I made you feel small because it made *me* feel big.

“Instead of inspiring you and showing you the joy of sailing with the wind, I did just the opposite. For this I am truly sorry, and I humbly apologize. This I guarantee: It will be different next year. So please come back and take up sailing. It will be a lot more fun...Now let’s get to the awards.”

Longbow called the names of the winners in each category: the most proficient in rope tying, in navigation, in the rules of right-of-way, in meteorology, in sailing theory, and in handling a boat. He selected one winner and one “most improved” from among each age group: the Racoons, Foxes, Wolves and Bears. He finally came to the annual race.

“It is now time to grant the awards for the winners of the race yesterday. You all watched the race, and you saw when each boat crossed the finish line. Some were ahead of others. And one boat was even last. But I want to tell you that *everyone* who entered the race was a winner. You know as well as I do that it took courage to get out there and participate. Participation, by

the way, is the key to a successful life, just as it is in sailing. So, this year I am awarding a trophy to *everyone* who entered.” As he spoke, Longbow reached into his satchel and took out a trophy with a small sailboat on top. “I went out and bought these today.”

The entire camp broke out in spontaneous applause.

“Will all of the participants come forward, please?”

Tonto walked up from the side with a tray full of trophies and held them out as Longbow gave one to each boy.

When the boys returned to their seats, Longbow continued. “Now, there is one more award I want to present. During the time I spent learning to sail, I used to think that the more knowledge I absorbed, the smarter I was. I was proud of the fact that I learned a lot about sailing and looked down on anyone who did not know as much as I did. In all this time, it never occurred to me that I could use my head to create *new knowledge* and actually *improve* the art of sailing, rather than just remembering the knowledge that others had passed down through the years. Then along came three boys who invented and made a new kind of sail that made one of our little dinghies go faster than it has ever gone before. This has been a humbling experience for me.”

Longbow signaled to Tonto, who brought up a trophy with a tall sailing ship on top. “When I was out getting trophies today, I bought this one too. I offer it to Jason, Matt and Luke in gratitude for teaching *me* something about sailing, and about life as well.”

The three young boys stepped forward and shook Longbow’s hand, each in turn. Jason felt a swell of pride, standing there alongside his friends, and all three held the trophy high in the air amid the cheers of their fellow campers.

After they had taken their places again and the camp had settled down, Chief Rain Cloud stepped forward with his arms folded. “Now is the time,” he began, “for our ghost story. I know that some of you don’t believe in ghosts. Frankly, neither did I until some honest-to-goodness ghosts started appearing at our sister camp across the water. Yes, I had heard the story about the Indian maid and her brave. It was a good ghost story, and I enjoyed telling it to you, but I never for a minute thought it was real.

“But when I learned about the ghost at Camp Wenonah, I looked around and found an expert on the subject: a person whose job it is to chase ghosts away. I want you all to meet Joe White, a true ghostbuster.”

Chief Rain Cloud turned and nodded in the direction of the entrance to the amphitheater. Out walked Joe, lugging a large bag of equipment. All the campers and counselors stared at him in awe.

Joe looked out at the audience and shouted, “Let me see a show of hands! Raise your hand if you believe in ghosts!”

Only two or three boys raised their hands.

“That’s okay! That’s the usual response. Now raise your hand if you definitely do *not* believe in ghosts!”

A sea of hands went up.

“How many are not sure?”

A sprinkling of hands.

“You guys are the smart ones. Unless you’ve seen a ghost, as I have, why would you believe they exist, eh?”

There was a titter from the audience.

“Well, I am here to tell you they do exist. They don’t appear often, but when they do, it’s really scary. That’s when people call me. I have this stuff here”—Joe pointed to his bag—“to shoo them away.” He reached into the bag and pulled out a wand attached to a large hose. “Now, this thing doesn’t kill them, you understand. You can’t kill a ghost. They’re already dead, eh? But it makes them pretty uncomfortable. Shocks the bejesus out of ’em so they don’t stay around. Here, let me demonstrate.”

Joe held up the wand which looked for all the world like the business end of a vacuum cleaner. The hose extended from the wand to the bag. The nature of the equipment was difficult to make out in the flickering firelight, but Jason thought there was something strange about it.

“When I see a ghost,” Joe continued, “I just point this wand at it and press this button.” Joe aimed the wand at the fire with his right hand and then pressed a button on a control unit he held in his left.

What happened next took everyone by surprise. The fire flared up and seemed to try to attack the wand. Sheets of flame darted out and touched the wand, then retreated only to attack again.

Suddenly, the entire fire drew back into the pile of logs, as if it were escaping from some unseen danger, and disappeared completely. The amphitheater was plunged into darkness.

“I’ll be darned!” Luke exclaimed.

Out of the darkness came the voice of Chief Rain Cloud:

“Stay in your seats, please! Joe has just shown us his power over the great god of fire. The same power that he uses with the spirits of the night. Tonto, will you turn on the lights for us?”

When the lights came on, Joe was gone.

Mystified, the boys quietly marched out of the amphitheater and headed back to their cabins. As they passed the beach on the lake shore, they looked across to Camp Wenonah and saw what seemed like a hundred little points of light, flickering on the water.

Chapter 26: The Last Dance

The following Friday, Jason could feel the energy buzzing through Camp Wabanaki, and he was certain Camp Wenonah was abuzz with the same activity. Both camps were closing the very next day, and everyone was preparing to leave. But there was one more very special event that all the campers and counselors looked forward to: the final dance party at Camp Wenonah.

Ms. Hardeker arrived at the boys' camp in an old green school bus. The bus had to make two trips since all the campers and counselors at Camp Wabanaki were invited, even the youngest Racoons.

When Jason stepped off the bus, music was already playing in the background. Strings of twinkling lights hung from the trees leading to the dance hall. Inside, counselors stood near the snack table, chatting, while a group of boy campers from the first bus ride over huddled together. A few were already dancing.

Jason searched the room for Mary, and as soon as a new song started playing, he approached her, nerves tingling. "Want to dance?" he asked.

She smiled. "I'd love to," she said and took his hand as they moved to the center of the room.

"I can't begin to thank you for saving our lives out there on the water," Mary began.

"I...I just did what anyone would do," replied Jason, embarrassed.

“Don’t be so modest. A compliment is good for you,” said Mary, showing a motherly side to her personality.

“I disagree. It just might go to my head.”

“Not you, Jason, of all people.”

“That’s nice of you to say.”

“Are you glad the summer’s almost over?”

“Gosh, no. I like it here. I wish we could stay for another month.”

“Me too. Last Saturday we had our going-away ceremony. We each made a little boat out of wood and placed a candle on it. Then we floated the boats out on the lake. It was beautiful.”

“So *that’s* what it was. I looked out and saw your boats across the lake. Like little points of light.”

“This sure is a wonderful camp. It’s such a shame that Ms. Hardeker is selling it. Isn’t there anything we can do?” Mary pleaded.

“We’re stuck. We can’t figure out what’s going on.”

“I’ll tell you this. Ms. Hardeker wouldn’t sell unless she was really convinced, we were in danger.”

“How do you know?”

“I’m from Maine. And everyone around here knows of Ms. Hardeker’s dedication to her girls. She loves this camp. She’s put her heart and soul into it.”

“You’re from Maine? You live around here?”

“I’m not exactly local. I live in Bar Harbor, about 200 miles away. But Maine’s a small state, and we’re proud that we’re the nation’s vacationland.”

“The what?”

“Vacationland. It’s on every Maine license plate.”

“I know, but that’s just in the summer. Just two months of the year: July and August.”

“That’s not so! We have a gorgeous spring, even though it does come to us a little late. Great weather in the summer months. The best fall foliage you’ve ever seen, and in the winter, well...We have tons of snow and the longest skiing season on the East Coast. There’s only one problem.”

“What’s that?”

“There’s not enough mountains here in the state.”

“Not enough mountains?”

“Yes, the Appalachian range kind of ends here. Most of the state is pretty flat.”

Jason stopped dancing and stared at Mary.

“Wha...what’s the matter?”

“Mary, come with me. We haven’t a moment to lose!”

“Come...where?”

“To the administration building. We’ve got to stop Ms. Hardeker from selling the camp!”

“Sure, but...” Mary followed Jason to the door.

“Matt! Luke! Amy! Karen! I figured it out!”

The four detectives heard Jason’s call and moved to join him.

“Felicia! Chris! Beth!” Mary called out in the room full of dancers. Her roommates quickly excused themselves from their dancing partners and heeded the call.

The music suddenly stopped, and everyone stared in Jason and Mary’s direction.

“We’re going to save Camp Wenonah!” Mary shouted as loudly as she could.

The room responded with an enormous cheer.

Jason, Mary and the rest of the group left the assembly hall and walked briskly across the lawn to the administration building. They entered the outer door and came face to face with a secretary seated at a desk, who looked up at them inquiringly.

“We need to see Ms. Hardeker,” Jason explained politely but urgently.

“I’m afraid she’s busy. She cannot be disturbed.”

“Where is she?”

“She’s in there, with Chief Rain Cloud and some other men,” the secretary said, pointing to a door. “Wha—You can’t go in there!”

Jason and his entourage swept past the secretary and burst into the room. A group of adults, including Ms. Hardeker, stared at the intruders, startled.

“Stop!” shouted Jason. “Ms. Hardeker, don’t sign those papers!”

“What is the meaning of this?” screamed Chief Rain Cloud. This is a private meeting. You get out, right now!”

“We came to explain what is going on. Chief Rain Cloud wants to buy your property cheap so he can build a ski resort on Indian Mountain!”

Surprise, then realization, flickered across Ms. Hardeker’s face. Is that true, George?”

“That boy doesn’t know what he is talking about.”

“Ms. Hardeker, it’s true. All summer long, Chief Rain Cloud has been trying to scare you with those pretend ghosts so that you will turn your property over to him. First, he sent Tonto over here with snowmaking equipment to blow ghostly-looking snow into Amy and Karen’s cabin. When we figured that out, he hired a phony ghostbuster named Joe to come over here and pretend to eradicate another ghost.”

“But there *was* a ghost. We have a picture...”

“Joe made a holographic image of an Indian. That thing on his back was a laser generator, and he used it not only to create the holograph but also to pretend he was shooting it away.”

“Well, I’ll be damned!” Ms. Hardeker was incredulous. “You mean that the story about the Indian maiden and her brave was just a bunch of malarky?”

“Chief Rain Cloud made up that story so you would believe the ghosts were real.”

Ms. Hardeker turned to Chief Rain Cloud and glared. “George! I always knew you were an odd duck. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!”

Her eyes met Jason’s. “You came here in the nick of time. Thanks to you, I’m not signing anything.” Ms. Hardeker put her pen down on the table next to a stack of papers. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going over to the dance. I have a girls’ camp to run!”

Ms. Hardeker stood up with dignity and walked out of the room. Jason and the group of campers followed her out, leaving Chief Rain Cloud and a contingent of lawyers at the table.

Chapter 27: Home Again

As they had arranged during their bus ride home, Luke and Matt came over to Jason’s house on Sunday afternoon to talk about the events of the past summer. Karen joined Matt to visit with Amy, and after greeting each other like long-lost friends, they all sat around the kitchen table, eating popcorn and drinking soda to their hearts’ content. For the past two months, they had been forced to eat healthy food and drink either milk or fruit juice. They had experienced, as Luke expressed so well, “junk food withdrawal.”

“Thinking back on the summer,” Jason began, “I have one question.”

Amy shot him a teasing smile. “Only one? We have a whole lot!”

Karen nodded dramatically. “Me too!”

Matt frowned and shifted forward until his elbows rested on the table. “Let’s go over it again. I’m still not clear on a lot of things.”

“What’s your question?” asked Luke.

“How did you guys happen to have the walkie-talkies just when you needed them?” asked Jason, referring to the moment when the girls’ canoe had overturned.

“That’s easy,” said Amy. “We thought that your sailing race might go on until 6:30, and we always call you at 6:30. So we took our thingy with us.”

“And I *always* carry mine with me,” added Luke. “You never know when somebody might call!”

“I think it saved some lives,” said Jason. “I just wanted to know.”

“I have a question!” Luke raised his hand as if he were in class.

“Sure, Luke. Fire away,” replied Jason.

“Who was Tonto anyway? How come he was involved in everything?”

“Tonto was the key, really. I knew early on that he must be related to Chief Rain Cloud. He’s the guy who saw everything, knew everything and did everything for his dad. Without him, the chief couldn’t have accomplished a thing.”

“His *son*? How’d you figure that?”

“Well, first of all, he had the coolest Indian name. You don’t get a handle like ‘Tonto’ unless you have some pull in really high places. And second, I found that Tonto had a lot of authority for just a counselor. Remember when we needed permission to use our sail? But what

really convinced me was the way Chief Rain Cloud and Tonto worked together. I knew he and Tonto were probably related.”

“Okay, my turn,” said Matt. “How did you know about the holograph?”

“Well, at first, I didn’t know. When I saw the picture, I thought, like you did, that Joe White was really ghostbusting—trying to get *rid* of a ghost. But when he came to our camp with his machine and put out our fire, I realized that he could have used *any* type of equipment he wanted. From there, it was just a small step to understand he could have come to the girls’ camp to *make* a ghost: an image in space. And what type of equipment do you need for that? Holographic, naturally!”

“What about when he controlled the fire?” Matt wondered. “You can’t do that with a holograph.”

“True. But he didn’t have the same equipment when he came to our campfire. It was different. He had a couple of gas tanks, a valve and a long hose with a wand, like on a vacuum cleaner. I figured one of the tanks was filled with oxygen, so when he let the oxygen out of the wand, the fire burned brighter. The other tank was filled with an inert gas, like nitrogen. When he turned the valve and blew this gas at the fire, it smothered the flames. Without oxygen, the fire went out.”

“Very clever!” Luke exclaimed.

“I agree. Chief Rain Cloud hired just the right guy to convince everyone, especially Ms. Hardeker, that her camp was haunted.”

“Then why did Joe White tell us that Ms. Hardeker hired him?” asked Amy.

“Chief Rain Cloud must have told him to say that to throw us off the trail.”

“And that story about the Indian ghosts? It was just to fool Ms. Hardeker?” queried Karen.

“Yup. But she wasn’t so easily fooled. Even after Tonto sprayed that snow and you guys were sure you saw a ghost, she held out.”

“She was almost convinced. Why didn’t Tonto do it again?”

“Chief Rain Cloud must have known we were onto him. That’s when he found Joe and hired him.”

“I have a question,” Amy chimed in again. “How could you possibly know about the ski resort?”

“Oh, that was the hard one. I knew there had to be a good reason for the chief to want Ms. Hardeker’s camp. He went to a lot of trouble to convince her to sell. But I couldn’t figure it out at first. Even after we found that snowmaking equipment, nothing seemed to make sense! It wasn’t ’til I learned that Maine prides itself for its skiing that I put two and two together.”

“Well, I’m sure glad you saved Camp Wenonah,” Amy said. “Now I can go back next summer.”

“Yeah. Me too. It is a really good camp,” agreed Karen. “Are you guys going back to Camp Wabanaki?”

“If they’ll have us. We still have some unfinished business up there,” Jason replied coyly.

“Oh? What’s that?”

“We met a few nice girls, remember?” Jason blushed.

“Yeah,” Matt said. “I’ll second that.”

“Me too!” agreed Luke.

Jason and Amy's mom came into the kitchen and poured herself a cup of coffee. "Well, guys, I don't mean to interrupt, but I just came back from showing that old Victorian house up on the hill to a nice young couple that is moving to town. The owner is desperate to sell and is willing to accept almost any reasonable price, but would you believe they refused to make an offer."

"Oh? Why is that, Mrs. Brooks?" Luke inquired.

"Because they heard somewhere that the house may be haunted."

"Now *there's* a ghost story!" said Jason.

THE END