

THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



Chapter 4: The Lost is Found

“He isn’t there,” exclaimed George gleefully. “I’m safe on my dinner.”

“I believe you are right,” said Fred in a low voice after he had glanced along the docks several times searching for his missing friend.

“Of course I’m right,” said George. “I am always right. That’s the reason why your fond parents wanted me to go with you on this trip. Somebody has to go along who understands modern life, so I reluctantly gave up my own convenience and came along to look after these poor benighted Go Ahead boys.”

“Keep quiet a minute, George,” said Grant, “we all appreciate your kindness. Just now, however, I would rather see String than hear you.”

“Not seeing String you must listen to me,” laughed George again. “Let me see, I don’t buy the dinner, and it seems to me that one or the other of my friends agreed to provide one if I was mistaken about John.”

“No such agreement was made,” declared Fred sharply.

“Is that so, Grant?” demanded George, turning to the remaining member of the party.

“It certainly is,” declared Grant. “You were the only one to make the offer.”

“Then I suppose I shall have to put up with it,” said George disconsolately. “Now as soon as we get everything ship-shape, we had better go up to the hotel.”

“Shall we take our bags or send down for them?” inquired Grant.

“If we don’t take them some one else will,” said Fred quickly. “We can lock up everything else, but we don’t want to leave anything on board that can be taken away.”

“Just as you say,” said Grant, as taking his bag in his hand he stepped quickly to the dock.

Already a small assembly had gathered and was commenting upon the beauty of the little motor-boat. The pride of Fred had been satisfied so many times throughout the day that he was not unduly moved now by the words which he overheard. In a brief time he and his two companions were walking up State Street and soon secured rooms for the night in their hotel.

An hour later when they entered the dining-room they were amazed to behold their missing friend John seated at a small table at which there were three places besides the one he had taken.

For a moment the three Go Ahead boys stopped and gazed in amazement at him, and then, without a word being spoken, all three silently advanced to the table which he had reserved and apparently without recognizing the presence of their friend at once seated themselves.

“Why don’t you say something?” demanded John, a grin appearing on his face as he spoke.

“I’m going to say something in a minute,” said George. “I want to read through this program first to find out what I’m to have for my dinner.”

“‘Program’ is a good word,” said Grant soberly. “When George has such a chance to get a square meal he always has a regular program mapped out.”

“That’s all right,” retorted George, without glancing up from the menu card.

“Why don’t you say something?” demanded John again.

“My friend,” said Grant soberly, gazing a moment at John as he spoke, “words are not adequate to express our feeling. How is it with you?”

“I’m fine,” said John. “Why don’t you ask me where I have been and how I came to Albany?”

“You’re in Albany and that is enough to satisfy all the curiosity we have,” said Grant.

“It doesn’t satisfy me,” said John. “When three fellows run away from you and leave you high and dry in a city like Poughkeepsie why all I can say is that—”

“That’s enough to say, Johnnie. That will do,” interrupted George, waving his right hand at his friend.

“You are simply mistaken,” said John, the grin appearing on his face once more. “I want to tell you that whether you want it or not you are going to hear from me and in more ways than one.”

“‘Threatened people live long,’ “ spoke up Fred. “At the same time, String, you’ll have to own up that we waited for you as long as we thought we could before we started for Albany. I didn’t want to be out after dark in the Black Growler.”

“I appreciate all your kind feelings,” laughed John. “Now I want you to sympathize with me. I had gone to half a dozen different places doing my best to select certain good things for our luncheon. I had a choice assortment too, let me tell you. Why Pop’s eyes would have popped out if he had seen what I had obtained, but alas when I came down to the dock I saw the Growler running up the river as if she was trying to get away from me.”

“Did you come up by train?” inquired Fred.

“I did not come up by train,” retorted John, speaking deliberately.

“How did you come?” asked George, interested now in spite of his effort to appear indifferent.

“Didn’t you see the aeroplane?” asked John.

“Aeroplane? No, we didn’t see any,” said Grant quickly.

“Well, I didn’t either,” said John, “so that’s one way that I didn’t come.”

“Oh, leave him alone,” said George, “he is just bursting with his story. He wants to tell

us and we shan't be able to stop him, so let's have our dinner and you may rest easy that before we are done you'll know all of John's story and some beside. To-morrow it will grow big and fast. It's like the pumpkins out in South Dakota. They say that a man has to be on horseback when he plants them."

"How's that?" laughed John.

"Why the vines grow so fast that the only way he can escape is to put his horse into his best paces. Even then they don't always escape."

"What happens if they are overtaken?" asked John.

"Oh, the pumpkin vines grow right around them and cover them up and choke off their wind and do other various stunts."

"Fine! Fine," laughed John, "My story isn't growing like that though let me tell you. This story is true. It's a complete narrative of truthful John. I was about to turn back and make inquiries when I could get an express train for Albany, when what should I see coming up to the dock but the Varmint II. As soon as the people on board saw me they immediately began to urge me to come with them. They had seen the Growler just pulling out and leaving me in my unfortunate plight."

"I guess they suspected what you had in the basket," laughed Fred.

"That may be," acknowledged John. "At all events it saved them buying a good spread, for they took me on board right away and we trailed you all the way up the Hudson. I tell you, Peewee, it's a comfort to ride in a good boat. That Varmint II can travel! Oh, I don't know how many knots an hour!"

"Can she beat the Black Growler?" inquired Fred anxiously.

"Beat her! Beat her!" retorted John. "Why you would think the Black Growler was standing still the Varmint can pull away from her so fast."

"I don't believe that," said Fred, shaking his head.

"Well, you will have to, for they are going to the same place we are. They have entered her in the motor-boat races and as she belongs to the same class that your tub does you will have a fine chance to see her win the cup. That's about the only chance you'll have too, in my opinion." John winked at George and Grant, who immediately in doleful tones expressed their sympathy for Fred.

"It's too bad," declared George, "after a fellow's father has given him a boat such as the Black Growler to find out that it doesn't stand any show in the race. Now if you had found that out before you had bought the boat, Fred, just think how much money, time, labor, trouble, perplexity, sleeplessness, loss of appetite—"

"Never that," broke in Grant, shaking his head. "All the other things, yes, but loss of appetite, never. Just look at him!"

John insisted upon relating his experiences and increased the interest of his friends in spite of their efforts to appear indifferent when he said there were three young people on board the Varmint, who were expecting to spend the summer on an island near Fred's grandfather's and were also confident that the boat race was to be the supreme event of the summer.

In spite of his declaration that he was not anxious, it was plain to his friends that Fred was somewhat cast down by the glowing reports which his companion had brought concerning the swift rival motor-boat.

"To-morrow we'll be on the 'ragin' canawl,'" said Grant. "Now then, I want to know if there is any fellow in this crowd who knows anything about the world's great canals."

"We don't know anything," said Fred. "We heard you talking this morning, but how much of what you said is true nobody knows, not even yourself."

"It's all true," retorted Grant. "As I told you I wasn't willing to start on a trip like this without knowing something about what I was doing."

"When do you start on that new line?" laughed George.

"It doesn't make any difference," said Grant. "Now the Panama Canal, for example belongs to the United States, doesn't it?"

"It does," acknowledged Fred.

"Well, now as a future citizen of this country just tell me between what places that canal extends. If there is one fellow in this crowd who can give me the right answer I will pay for the dinner for all the Go Ahead boys."

"Panama," said John promptly.

"Panama what?" retorted Grant sharply.

"Why the Panama Canal is located at the City of Panama," said John somewhat abashed by the manner of his friend.

"That's good as far as it goes," said Grant, "but I want to know if you know where the other end of the canal is located."

The three boys looked blankly at one another and for an instant no one spoke.

"The canal extends between Colon and the City of Panama," said Grant hastily.

"That's exactly what I was going to say," said George. "You took the words right out of my mouth. You did it so that you wouldn't have to pay for the dinner to-morrow. I guess every one of us knows where the Panama Canal is."

"All right," said Grant. "I'll take your word for it, if you'll tell me how long it is."

Again there was silence among the Go Ahead boys as they glanced foolishly at one another.

"Of course every young American is sure to know such simple facts as that," said Grant

condescendingly, “but for my own satisfaction, I am willing to state that it is exactly fifty and one-half miles long.”

“How deep is it?” said Fred sharply.

“It is about forty-one feet,” answered Grant promptly. “Of course in the lakes it is deeper than that and it is from three hundred to six hundred and forty-nine feet wide. Why, I don’t believe,” he continued, “that some American boys I happen to know although they passed right through it, could tell me how long the Sault Ste. Marie Canal is. I have a dim suspicion too that they don’t know what it connects.”

“I know that,” said George. “It connects Lake Superior with St. Mary’s River and Lake Huron.”

“I’m glad you’re right once in your life,” said Grant. “Now tell me how long that canal is.”

“I can’t tell a lie, Mr. Schoolmaster,” said George, “the Sault Ste. Marie Canal is two miles long.”

“All right, I don’t have to buy the dinner to-morrow,” said Grant.

“There may be some other things you’ll have to do though,” said John. “You’re not done with me yet. No, sir,” he added emphatically “that is NOT all!”