

# THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



## Chapter 20: Sam's Warning

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The thought of the race which was to take place within a few days and in which both the Black Growler and the Varmint II were to be contestants was in the mind of every one. In spite of the unwillingness of Sam to express his opinion as to the outcome, Fred insisted repeatedly upon asking what he thought. Again and again Sam evaded a direct reply as in one form or another he explained that all he did know was that the Black Growler would win if she could run more swiftly than the Varmint II.

As to the possibility of developing the required speed he was non-committal.

Conversation did not lag on the voyage down the river. The presence of Mr. Button as well as the fact that Fred apparently was somewhat reserved and uncommunicative concerning his recent experiences in Cape Vincent, caused the Go Ahead boys to neglect the topic of conversation which just then was uppermost in their thoughts. Time did not drag, however, and it was a merry party on the motor-boat which attracted the attention of many of the parties they met. In the most informal manner salutes were given and whistles were tooted whenever boats large or small passed.

In spite of Miss Susie's apparent carelessness she had provided a most excellent luncheon, to which ample justice had been done by all on board, including Mr. Button.

It was late in the afternoon, however, when the two girls were left at their cottage and the Black Growler sped forward toward Chestnut Island.

As soon as a landing was made Mr. Button at once started for the cottage.

Left to themselves Fred's three friends quickly turned upon him and eagerly began to question him concerning his experiences at Cape Vincent.

"Where's your man that wanted the bond?" demanded George.

"Did you get the bond?" asked Grant.

"Did you find out who that fellow is?" inquired John.

"Hold on, fellows," laughed Fred. "I'll take you one at a time, but I don't want you all together. Now then speak up, one of you. What is it you want to know?"

"Did you find out who that man is?" asked John.

"I fancy you're referring to the gentleman who requested us to deliver to him that five thousand dollar bond?" answered Fred.

"You catch my meaning exactly," answered John solemnly.

"Well, then, let me say that he is just as big a mystery to me as he is to you."

"Did he get the bond?" demanded Grant.

"I don't know."

“Weren’t you with him?”

“I was, but not all the time.”

“Did he go to the bank?”

“He certainly did.”

“Weren’t you there, too? Couldn’t you see whether they gave him the bond or not?”

“Not being able to see through a foot wall, and a door still stronger, I am unable to give you the information you so courteously request.”

“What do you mean? Can’t you speak in plain English?”

“I’ll do my best,” laughed Fred, who so often had been the object of attention from his friends that now he was rejoiced that in a measure at least the tables were turned. “Well, we were at the bank,” he continued. “My grandfather told me to stay outside while he went into Mr. Reese’s office. They were in there about five minutes and then Mr. Reese came out and asked me to tell our canal-boat friend that his presence was desired in the office, so I went outside the bank and found the man they were looking for, gave him the message and then I went back.”

“Didn’t they want you in the office too?” inquired John.

“I didn’t receive any strong urging to enter,” laughed Fred, “so I decided it was better for me to stay outside.”

“How long were they in there?” inquired Grant.

“I suppose it was about half an hour, but it seemed a good deal longer.”

“Who came out first?”

“The canal-man.”

“Was he alone?”

“Yes.”

“How long before any one else came out?”

“Five minutes anyway, perhaps ten.”

“What did your friend do?”

“He went out of the bank and that’s the last I saw of him.”

“You don’t know then whether he went to the hotel or the station, or came down the river.”

“I have told you just what I know and all I know. I can’t do any more.”

“So we’re just as wise as we were when we began,” laughed George. “We don’t know what has become of our bond nor where the man that wanted it went. We don’t even know whether or not it is in the bank yet.”

“Don’t begin on the list of things you don’t know, George,” said Fred soberly. “It’ll take too much time.”

“It’s a good thing to know that you don’t know. Some people that don’t know, don’t know that they don’t know. Now, I know some things and among the things I know, I know that I don’t know some things that I think I know.”

The Go Ahead boys laughed as they all started toward the cottage to prepare for dinner.

The following morning Fred and George were the first to dress and together they made their way once more to the boat-house.

In a room above the slip, in which the graceful little motor-boat was resting, Sam Hodge was found. He had arisen two hours before this time and already had eaten his breakfast and was preparing for the duties of the coming day.

It was because of Sam’s own choice that the room he occupied had been assigned him. And what a strange room it was. Sam had brought many of his own belongings among which were various pictures of the human anatomy, both external and internal. A life-size dummy stood in one corner of the room, the expression on its face being almost human in its dolefulness. In other parts of the room were legs, arms, feet and hands in various stages of completion. Sam explained that his love for the work which he did in the winter, when he was employed in the factory on Broome Street, New York, was present with him throughout the year.

“Yes, I like fooling around a boat in the summer time,” he explained, “but you can’t do that when the ice is about two feet thick. And yet if I go back to New York then I am all out of practice with my feet and legs and arms, so the only thing for me to do is to keep in the game. Besides, I like it and what a fellow likes to do isn’t work, it’s play. I’m finishing up that dummy,” explained Sam to the boys when they entered. “One arm is a bit too long and one of the feet ought to have a number four shoe and the other about a number nine. I have seen people that way, but not very often.”

“I should think you would wake up in the night with the nightmare,” laughed George. “I think I should if I looked out and saw somebody over in the corner of the room still, staring and silent.”

“Yes, some folks is easily scared,” acknowledged Sam. “I’ve been over to Alexandria Bay,” he added.

“When?” inquired Fred quickly.

“Oh, I guess I’ve been over two or three times. I’ve been asking some questions about those men that run the Varmint II.”

“What did you find out about them?” inquired both boys eagerly.

“Accordin’ to what I heard they aren’t much good.”

“What do you mean?”

“Why, I think they are a tough lot,” said Sam, shaking his head. “The two fellows that own the boat are both of them sons of very rich men, who give them all the money they want to use. It hasn’t done the youngsters any good, I guess, from what I heard. They bought the motor-boat expecting that there wouldn’t be anything on the river that could touch her. They say they are pretty sore now that they have found that there is a boat which may give them a hard rub and perhaps take the cup away from them after all.”

“Sam, if you win that race for us—” began Fred eagerly.

“I’m not going to win your race,” broke in Sam. “I’ve heard you say that you’re going to do the steering yourself and if you are, why the only thing I can do is to be a sort of court of appeals. I’ll be there to help you out if something goes wrong. Now, we’re up against a pretty serious proposition. Those fellows are bound to win that race and if they can’t win it one way they are goin’ to win it another.”

“I don’t see how they can win, Sam, if they don’t go faster than we do.”

“Maybe they can win,” suggested Sam, “if we go slower than they do.”

“That’s the same thing,” laughed George.

“Not by a jugful.”

“Why isn’t it?”

“Why, they may not be goin’ so very fast and yet if our boat isn’t in good shape it may be that they’ll keep ahead of us and beat us.”

“Well, that’s just what you’re here for,” said Fred; “to see that nothing does happen to us or to our boat.”

“Are you goin’ to take them girls along that you had yesterday?” inquired Sam abruptly.

“Do you mean in the race?” asked Fred.

“What did you think I meant?”

“Well, we’re not going to take them.”

“Then maybe there’ll be a chance to win out. I wouldn’t promise anything with them on board, especially one of them. She’s all right, but she would want to steer the boat and talk to the crew when it might be that the whole race was dependin’ on what we were doin’ right then and there.”

“No, you can rest easy about that,” said Fred. “There won’t be anybody on board except the Go Ahead boys and you.”

“Well, then,” said Sam, “if that’s the case then we’ll have to keep a sharp watch on the Black Growler.”

Sam’s manner more than the words he spoke impressed the boys with the fact that he was holding back something that he had heard or knew concerning the possibilities of

trouble for the swift little motor-boat. Just what they were, neither Fred nor George could conjecture. Their confidence in Sam was great and when they departed from the boat-house they made light of his fears.

“Sam is a regular old kill joy,” laughed George.

“There has to be somebody,” said Fred, “to take the joy out of life. It wouldn’t be worth living if that wasn’t so.”

“Well, Sam does his best,” said George with a laugh, “and the only reason why he doesn’t succeed is because his bark is worse than his bite. We know he doesn’t mean half he says.”

“But why does he seem so worried about something happening to the Black Growler?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said George. “That’s just one of his notions, I guess.”

It was not long, however, before both boys were excitedly aware that Sam’s forebodings had been based upon a knowledge greater than that possessed by any of the Go Ahead boys.