

# THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



## Chapter 24: The Man in the Boathouse

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When the Go Ahead boys drew near the dock they separated, George and Grant moving to one side of the boat-house while John and Fred approached from the opposite side. There were two large doors in the front of the boat-house, both of which now were closed. The upper part of each, however, was of glass and was so made that the boys were able to stand on the dock and by leaning forward could peer into the building.

“He’s there,” whispered George excitedly, after he had looked within. Quickly withdrawing, Grant took his place and silently peered into the slip. At the same time John and Fred were making their investigations on the opposite side of the slip, although Fred was having his difficulties because he was not tall enough to enable him to look through the glass.

The man whom George had discovered apparently had not moved from the place in which he had first been seen. Perhaps he too was listening and was fearful of an attack.

Their excitement now greatly intensified, George beckoned for John and Fred to come to the place where he and Grant were standing on the dock.

“He’s there,” whispered Fred.

“I told you he was,” whispered George in reply. “Now the question is how shall we get him?”

“How did he get in?” inquired Grant.

“I don’t know,” replied George, shaking his head. “There isn’t any window open and the doors are locked.”

“He must have dived under the door and come up that way,” suggested John.

“This isn’t any time to be discussing how he got there,” remarked George. “The thing for us to do is to find out how we are going to get him out or get him. Let’s go around to the window on the river side.”

In response to the suggestion the boys stealthily crept along the dock and then one after another cautiously peered through the window. Not one of them stood in full view of the man within, for they were aware of the peril that might follow such an action.

“He’s still there,” whispered Fred, “and I don’t believe he has moved once since we came back.”

“He’s scared,” suggested John. “He doesn’t know which way to turn.”

The suggestion that the intruder might be alarmed was new to the Go Ahead boys and did much to revive their courage.

John and George each had secured a bat when they had left the house. And now they

were prepared to defend the motor-boat and themselves also if the need arose.

“Knock on the window,” suggested Grant. “Let the fellow know we’re here.”

“He may get away,” warned George, who still was the most excited of all.

“If he tries to, we’ll get him then anyway,” said Grant. “Go around and look on the other side of the boat-house,” he directed Fred and John. “We’ll wait here. I’ll rap on the window and we’ll see what he does.”

Grant waited until sufficient time had elapsed to enable his friends to take their position in front of the entrance on the opposite side and then rapped lightly upon the window. No response was made to his summons.

“He couldn’t hear you,” whispered George. “You’ll have to make more noise than that.”

Again Grant rapped upon the glass, pounding on the window sash also in his efforts to arouse the attention of the man within.

All four boys now were keenly excited and all were eager to discover what the intruder would do, now that his presence had been discovered.

To their surprise the man did not respond to the summons. Even his position was unchanged and in the dim light the boys were unable to decide whether or not he had even glanced in the direction from which the hail had come.

“There’s only one thing we can do,” said George.

“What’s that?” demanded Grant.

“Go around to the other side and tell Fred we’ve got to have the door unlocked. Then we’ll make a rush on the fellow before he knows that we are after him.”

The suggestion was quickly followed and soon the four boys were standing together in front of the side-door which opened upon the dock.

“Now, then,” said Fred, who insisted upon retaining his key, “when I unlock the door all four of us must make a rush together.”

“That’s right,” whispered George as he grasped more tightly the bat which he was holding in his hand.

“Let String and George go ahead. They are the best armed,” said Grant.

For some reason Grant was less excited than his companions, a fact which escaped the attention of the boys at that time.

“All ready!” whispered Fred. Quickly turning the key he opened the door and together the four boys darted into the boat-house.

Although the moon was shining, the interior of the room was somewhat darker than it had been on the dock. The boys, however, were able to see clearly the man who was still standing near the Black Growler. Not even when they rushed upon him did he turn his face

toward them.

In their eagerness to secure him all four did their utmost to leap upon him at the same time.

A most amazing result, however, followed their desperate attempt. Despite his efforts to save himself, Fred, who pluckily was in advance, was pushed over the edge of the slip and with a loud splash fell into the river. Before he could check himself John followed his example. A yell came from Fred when he arose to the surface because at that moment the intruder, whom they had discovered in the boat-house, also followed the example set by the boys.

Meanwhile George and Grant had broken into loud laughter. George was bowed and slapping his sides as he moved about the room. Grant was laughing almost as loudly as his companion, although he did not move from the place where he was standing.

“Give us a hand,” called Fred. “I can’t see the ladder.”

“It’s right in front of you,” suggested George, advancing to the edge and looking down into the water which was only about four feet below him. “There it is. Follow the sound of my voice.”

“I don’t see what there is so funny about all this,” sputtered Fred as he climbed to the floor.

“Funny!” exclaimed Grant. “It beats anything I ever experienced.”

“What’s the trouble?” demanded John, who now also had climbed out of the water. His elongated form only partly clothed, his garments dripping and clinging to his slim body, increased the weirdness of his appearance.

“I think the joke’s on George more than even it is on Peewee and String,” laughed Grant.

At this moment Sam, who had been asleep in his room appeared, rubbing his eyes and gazing in surprise at the boys. “What’s wrong?” he demanded gruffly.

“Nothing,” said George, beginning to laugh again.

“It seems to me you make lots of fuss when nothin’ is the matter. What are you all down here for anyway?”

“Why, George got us down here to help him get a man who was in the boat-house.”

“Huh, what’s that you say?”

“Why, George discovered somebody in the boat-house and he routed us all out to help him get him.”

“Did you get him?” inquired Sam.

“We got all there was to get,” laughed Grant.

“What do you mean?” demanded Sam, looking around the room and for the first time

suspecting what had taken place.

“Why, we mean that you had that wax figure of yours down here and we all thought it was a man.”

“I don’t blame you,” said Sam solemnly. “That’s one of the best wax dummies I ever made.”

“But why did you leave it where you did?” inquired George.

“Why, I figured it out this way,” said Sam slowly. “If a scarecrow will keep crows out of a cornfield, why couldn’t I rig up something to scare off anybody that wanted to damage the Black Growler?”

“That’s good sense,” said Grant soberly.

“Of course it is sense,” declared Sam. “I put the dummy down there so that if anybody looked into the boat-house he would see it and he would think somebody was on guard.”

“That’s right,” said Fred. “We had two dummies on guard to-night. One inside the boat-house and one outside.”

“That may be all true,” spoke up George, “but there was only one of them that followed you into the river.”

“You would feel better if you had,” declared Fred. “Now, then, I don’t see that there’s anything more for us to do except to go back to bed.”

“But where’s my dummy?” demanded Sam.

“That’s right,” said Fred. “We never fished it out of the river. I guess you’ll find it all right, Sam, somewhere in the slip.”

In a brief time Sam’s possession was rescued from its place of peril, but the boatman’s lamentations were the last words the boys heard when they departed.

“Color’s all washed out. It doesn’t look more than half human,” Sam was declaring as he stood in the moonlight examining the dummy which he had fashioned after his arrival at the boat-house. “Sam has an extra assortment of legs and arms in his room,” exclaimed Grant, as the boys entered the house. “He seems possessed to have them around him.”

“Perhaps they will come in handy some day,” laughed George.

“I don’t know how.”

On the following morning, however, when the Black Growler was withdrawn from the slip and once more was sent over a part of the course there was a goodly supply of Sam’s legs and arms on board. Just why he had insisted upon taking them, he did not explain. So human were the pieces in their appearance that a stranger might have been startled when he first saw the heap.

As usual the Varmint II was speedily trailing the Black Growler. Indeed it was not long before the two boats were moving side by side, only a few feet intervening.

The Go Ahead boys had been singing a song which has long been famous on the St. Lawrence,

*“Saw my leg off,  
Saw my leg off,  
Saw my leg off,  
Short!”*

“That’s what you’ll have to do,” called one of the men on board the Varmint II, “to lighten your load the day of the race.”

“We won’t wait until then,” called back George. “We’ll see if we can’t lighten up a bit right now.”

As soon as he had spoken, taking one of the artificial legs from the pile he flung it far behind the swiftly moving motor-boat.

Instantly the men on the Varmint II rushed to the stern of their boat and in astonishment were all looking at the leg which now could be seen floating on the surface of the river.