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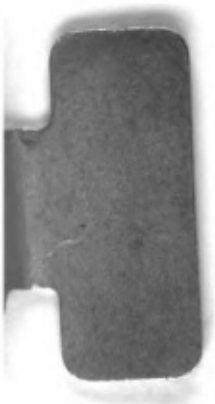

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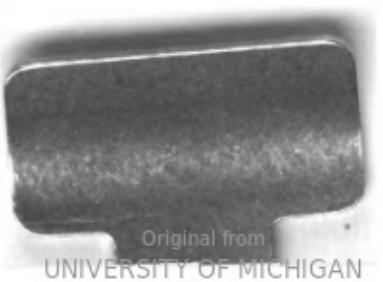

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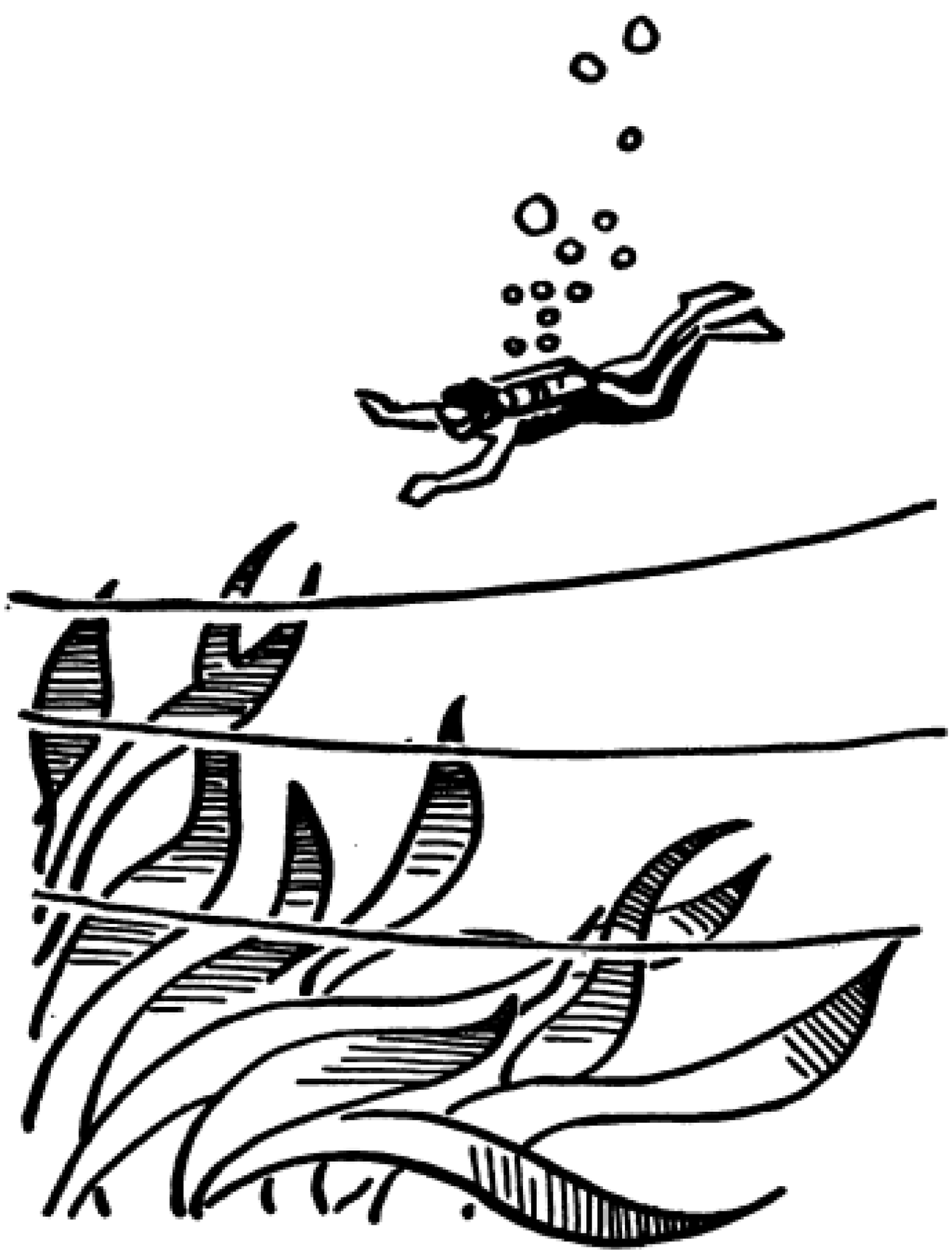

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Haunt of High Island

Bernice C. Wexstaff

Illustrations by Harold E. Kohn

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Grand Rapids, Michigan

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1

BEWARE THE SEA SPIRITS!

Benjy Crandell bounded out the double doorway of the red-brick schoolhouse. With a grin and a loud "Wow-eeee!" he tossed his skipper cap high in the air, catching it on his head at a jaunty angle. School was over for another year in the town of Indian Village on the northern tip of Lake Michigan.

Benjy's friend and classmate, Suzanne Bentley, wasn't far behind him, following him as always with adoring eyes. Suzanne was pert and pretty in full pleated skirt and blue sweater. Her thick pony-tail hairdo was tied with blue-and-gold school colors in a narrow velvet ribbon. When she caught up with Benjy at the end of the school's broad cement entrance, she pushed him to one side, teasing him with a bright smile.

"Anybody would think you were the only kid in the whole building who was glad to get out of school. I suppose it's that boat of yours as usual!" she said.

"You bet! This is going to be the best summer vacation I've ever had!" Benjy answered with a

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broad grin that made small wrinkles around his eyes.

Suzanne pouted, and there was a tinge of jealousy in her voice as she said, "There's other things in a summer vacation besides a *boat!*"

"Not for me, there isn't, but I'll be seeing you around," he answered in a lofty tone as he turned and sprinted for home.

It was too early in the resort season for many customers, so Benjy's mother had locked the front door of her gift shop for the noon hour. She and Granny were eating a leisurely lunch when he burst in the door of their living quarters at the rear of the shop. "I passed, Mom. Here's my card. Wow! Next year I'll be in the *ninth* grade."

"How can I forget, Benjy — the way you're growing! Honest, the way you're shooting up frightens me. You'll be grown up before you know it. Already I'm beginning to feel as old as Whistler's Mother."

"Oh, Mom, you're not really *old*. You haven't any gray hair yet," Benjy said, attacking his bowl of thick homemade vegetable soup. After two bowls full plus a generous piece of Granny's spiced apple pie and a tall glass of milk, downed with the speed of a sprinter coming into the homestretch, Benjy pushed his chair back from the table. "Well, I gotta get down to the lake and get to work," he said, opening the screen door.

"I suppose you have to get the *Black Panther* ready for summer tourists. But don't forget, Benjy, there are other things in life besides boats," his mother said a bit wistfully as though she begrudged all the time he spent with his beloved *Black Panther*.

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"Not for me there isn't anything more important than boats and never will be!"

Down at Harbor Lake Benjy found his friend Old Jake dressed in his usual paint-spattered woolen shirt and ill-fitting work pants. Old Jake was patching a length of planking on a summer resorter's cruiser high up on the ways beside his workshop at the edge of Harbor Lake. Old Jake's pet cat, Biffer, sat perched on the bow of the boat where he could watch his master's busy hands while he sunned himself.

Old Jake pushed back his skipper's cap which had been shading his eyes from the bright midday sun. His face lit up with pleasure as Benjy appeared. It was plain that, along with Biffer, Benjy stood high in the old sailor's affections. But scorning any show of his regard, Old Jake was all business when he spoke.

"That compass you wanted me to order for you came in today. It's over there in the shed," Old Jake said, pointing with a grimy finger.

Benjy's eyes sparkled. "Did you unpack it? What does it look like? Can I put it in the *Black Panther* today?"

"Stow your gaff, boy! No, I didn't do nothin' with it. I thought we'd unpack it together," Old Jake said as he put down his hammer and wiped his hands.

Together the two worked on the heavy packing surrounding the fragile compass. Then, as though holding a king's jeweled crown in his two hands, Benjy carried the instrument carefully down to his boat moored at Old Jake's dock. "Isn't it a beauty, Mr. Jake? Isn't it a beauty?"

Old Jake's eyes were twinkling as he shook his head in amusement. "Even a mangy dog is beautiful

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when you're young, son. Now I suppose you and Bobo will have a whale of a time looking for adventure in out-of-the-way coves and rivers," he chuckled.

"Hey, I forgot to tell you." Benjy fumbled deep in his jacket pocket. "I got a letter from Bobo, yesterday. He'll be here next week."

"I hope you two boys will be *friends* this summer," Old Jake spoke seriously. "When I think how you young-uns were at each other last summer, it's a wonder to me you both got through it without cracked skulls!"

Benjy laughed. "That was before we really knew each other. Here, I'll read you what he says about bringing up a couple of sets of swimming fins, face masks and snorkels so we can go skin-diving this summer."

Old Jake scowled. "You mean you two young-uns are going to go poking around the bottom of this lake here? You wouldn't catch me down there for a million pounds of good old Lake Michigan trout!"

Benjy grinned. "You couldn't go down if you wanted to. You'd have to learn to swim first."

"I don't aim to! Lake water is for washing your face and hands. You'll never catch me getting wet all over in no lake, less'n a rain squall soaks me up before I can get under cover."

"Weren't you scared, Mr. Jake, when you were out on the lakes in all those storms you've told me about and you didn't know how to swim?" Benjy asked.

"Sure I was ascairt! I'm more ascairt of falling in the lake than anything. Nearly got swept overboard in lots of storms too, but I always managed to grab

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ahold and hang on. No Davy Jones's locker for me. No siree!"

The grizzled old man jabbed Benjy's chest with a stern finger as he emphasized his words. "Way I figure, the lake holds on to its treasures and it's jealous of anybody who tries to get 'em. You've heard that the ocean don't give up its dead!" He shook his head ominously. "As for skin-diving — well, don't flirt around under water, Benjy! Don't tempt the sea devils!"

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2

TEST RUN

Benjy finished tightening the last screw in the binnacle that held the new marine compass he had just bought for the *Black Panther*. He unwound his rangy legs from around the steering post. It had been a cramping chore to secure the compass to the instrument-panel bulkhead and he straigtened up painfully, shaking himself to loosen kinks in his shoulder muscles. Benjy had added three good inches to his height during the winter and he hadn't quite grown accustomed to his long legs.

As he pulled himself up to full height he looked proudly about his boat. The *Black Panther* looked trim as the sea gull soaring aimlessly high above. The bright red kapok-filled cushion life preservers made a splash of gay color against the gray-blue interior. Satisfied that all was shipshape, he funneled his hands to his lips and called toward the ramshackle workshop abaft the wharf to which the *Black Panther* was moored. "Hi, Mr. Jake!"

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Seconds later Old Jake stuck his head out through a broken windowpane. "Be right with ya, Benjy!"

Old Jake followed his promise in less than a minute, wiping his greasy hands on an oil-blackened chunk of cotton wadding. He stomped to the wharf's edge and peered intently into the open cabin of the *Black Panther*. "I see ya got her set all by yourself," he said, motioning with a grimy thumb toward the new compass.

"I sure did, Mr. Jake." Benjy stretched a leadline from steering post down amidships to demonstrate. "See, a line joining the pivot and lubberline are parallel to the keel — just like you said."

Old Jake squinted down at the job. "That's right, Benjy. Now we gotta figure the deviation and correct it."

"Deviation?" Benjy answered with a puzzled frown.

"Yup! Any magnetic stuff like iron or steel anywhere on the boat can throw your compass readings off a country mile. Without a true compass reading it's mighty easy to pile a boat up on the rocks in good weather and easier in stormy weather."

Old Jake turned toward his workshop. "Wait here a minute, Benjy. I'll be right back."

Benjy whistled impatiently as he waited, wondering what Old Jake had on his mind. The promised minute became five, then ten, then fifteen. He could see his friend rummaging around as though searching for something, and he wasn't surprised when the old sailor finally emerged with an armful of soiled dog-eared papers.

Old Jake jumped down into the cabin of the *Black Panther* and carefully unfolded outsize dingy square

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sheets of paper on the top of the engine box. "See these charts? Start up the enjin, Benjy. We'll follow this course a bit," he said as he pointed with a grubby forefinger. "Then we'll check the direction shown by the compass."

Benjy still looked puzzled, but suddenly his face lighted up with understanding. "Why, that's what we learned in Power Squadron classes last winter. Sure, I remember now. Every boat makes some compass-deviation. All we have to do is take a bearing on shore, make a few trial runs on known courses and check the number of points my compass needle swings off course. Then I'll always be sure of my direction in the *Black Panther,* when I make up a deviation chart for my own boat."

Benjy slipped the moorings loose from the dock and edged the *Black Panther* out toward Lake Michigan. Both he and Old Jake watched the compass needle point northward as they settled back to check the charted course against marine speedometer and marine compass.

Once outside the slow zone in the channel, Benjy accelerated the engine. The *Black Panther* jumped ahead like a frightened jack rabbit. Cruising along at top speed, Old Jake turned to Benjy with a puzzled grunt of annoyance. "There's something awfully wrong here that wasn't here last summer when we used my old box compass. Let's see that compass of yours."

Old Jake studied the newly installed compass with a critical eye. "Compass looks all right," he said with a frown. "You didn't leave an iron crowbar or somethin' like that around, did ya?"

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"Once outside the slow zone in the channel, Benjy accelerated the engine. The Black Panther *jumped ahead like a frightened jack rabbit," p.* 14.

Without waiting for an answer from Benjy, Old Jake continued to look the compass over with care. Suddenly he straightened up. "Ah, I found it! You used a steel screw here on the side of the binnacle. What in time did ya do that for?"

Benjy looked up shamefacedly. "I didn't think, Mr. Jake. When I lost one of the brass screws overboard, I used a steel screw I found in your workshop. It fitted okay."

"It fits all right, but it won't do. We better remove it for the time being and put a brass one in when we get back. And that just goes to show how

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important some little things can be." Old Jake rubbed his chin reflectively. "Brings to mind a story about a new doctor in Indian Village. 'Course, that was many years ago — long afore your time. This Doctor Heathen, or some such name, got himself a boat to visit sick folks on the islands. He didn't know nothin' about checking out a compass and when a sick-call came in he took off on a stormy afternoon. He wound up on the rocks at Hog Island, twenty miles from the sick woman. The woman died afore he ever got to her and he lost his boat to boot. Almost lost his life, too! Just shows ya, son, you can't be too careful 'bout little things!" Old Jake pounded his clenched fist against the steering wheel in emphasis.

"And another thing ya gotta remember, Benjy, is that the compass needle points to the magnetic pole. There's a whale of a difference between the magnetic pole and the geographic pole. Courses and bearings taken in relation to the geographic pole are called true. Courses and bearings taken in relation to the magnetic pole are called magnetic. This here compass always shows magnetic direction."

Benjy smiled wryly. "You sound exactly like Power Squadron class. Commander Morris explained to us how meridians and parallels of latitude, like the ones on our world globe at school, indicate true directions. Variation is the *angular* difference between the true and magnetic poles at any given point. He said it was very important to know all that stuff if we planned to sail beyond the sight of landmarks ashore."

"I guess that's okay if ya know what it means, Benjy," Old Jake said with a look of doubt on his face.

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"I think I do. Variations are easterly or westerly, depending on the position and location of a ship. There's only one place in the whole world where the magnetic and geographic poles are in line with each other and that's right here on the Great Lakes. At a line drawn downward from the poles through Lake Superior, there's no variation at all."

Old Jake pushed his sailor cap up, exposing his broad forehead and quizzical eyes. "You're right and it sure sounds easy the way ya say it. But then ya learned it the easy way, outa a book. Us fishermen learned the *hard* way, by getting into trouble in bad storms and then getting ourselves out of trouble by hook or by crook! Some never did make it."

"Didn't seem very easy when I was studying it," Benjy said.

"Maybe not, but all I can say is, I hope that fancy education stays with ya when you're out on the Big Lakes in storm and fog. That's when ya'll know if ya really learned it or not!" Old Jake replied soberly.

The engine of the *Black Panther* purred steadily on as Benjy and Old Jake cruised out toward the far, wide horizon of Lake Michigan. Benjy was at the wheel with his cap at a jaunty angle that gave evidence of self-confidence, while Old Jake stood behind him, a pleased expression on his age-lined face. The lake was calm with only a few long swells to rock the boat gently while on the distant shore the swells broke into sparkling breakers of white foam as they hit the fringe of pebbles outlining the sandy beach.

Except for the hum of the engine, all was quiet aboard the *Black Panther* as Benjy and Old Jake continued to check the chart against compass read-

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ings. While Benjy made a wide circle for the return trip, he grinned with pride and spoke aloud the dream that had been in his mind the whole winter long and was the big reason for purchasing the expensive compass which had taken such a bite out of his savings.

"Well, we didn't get to High Island today, but one of these days we'll do it," Benjy said, a light of eagerness in his eyes.

"High Island!" Old Jake growled. "Now what in tarnation do ya want to go to High Island for? No fisherman will go near High Island and ya know it." Old Jake sputtered in exasperation. "If you're going to High Island ya can count me out."

"Aw, I don't believe all that stuff about a Mormon curse on High Island, or any other island!" Benjy said stoutly.

"Ya don't, eh? Well, maybe ya can explain all the shipwrecks that have been pilin' up since that wicked old King Strang banished anybody he didn't like from his colony. He left 'em high an dry to live or die as best they could on High Island!" Old Jake spat as though to get a bad taste out of his mouth. "Ya stay away from that place, ya hear!" Old Jake finished with a scowl.

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3

FIRST ADVENTURE UNDER WATER

The summer days passed swiftly. Benjy and Old Jake made a half-dozen test runs with the *Black Panther* and Benjy worked out a deviation chart for his boat. Days in the sun and wind had already tanned him to a light bronze shade and given him the appetite of a Northwoods' lumberjack. At night he slept like a bear during winter.

With such deep slumber, it wasn't surprising that he didn't hear the shower of small stones that his summer friend, Bobo Werthmann, tossed against his window screen early one June morning. Bobo tried again and again to waken Benjy, hurling pebbles and whistling softly, until he finally gave up in disgust and sat down on the porch step to wait.

Bobo hadn't long to wait. In no time he heard kitchen sounds and the click of a key in the door as Benjy's Granny walked out in the warm morning air to look over her garden before breakfast. Granny was startled when she saw Bobo impatiently pulling up blades of grass from the lawn beside the step. She

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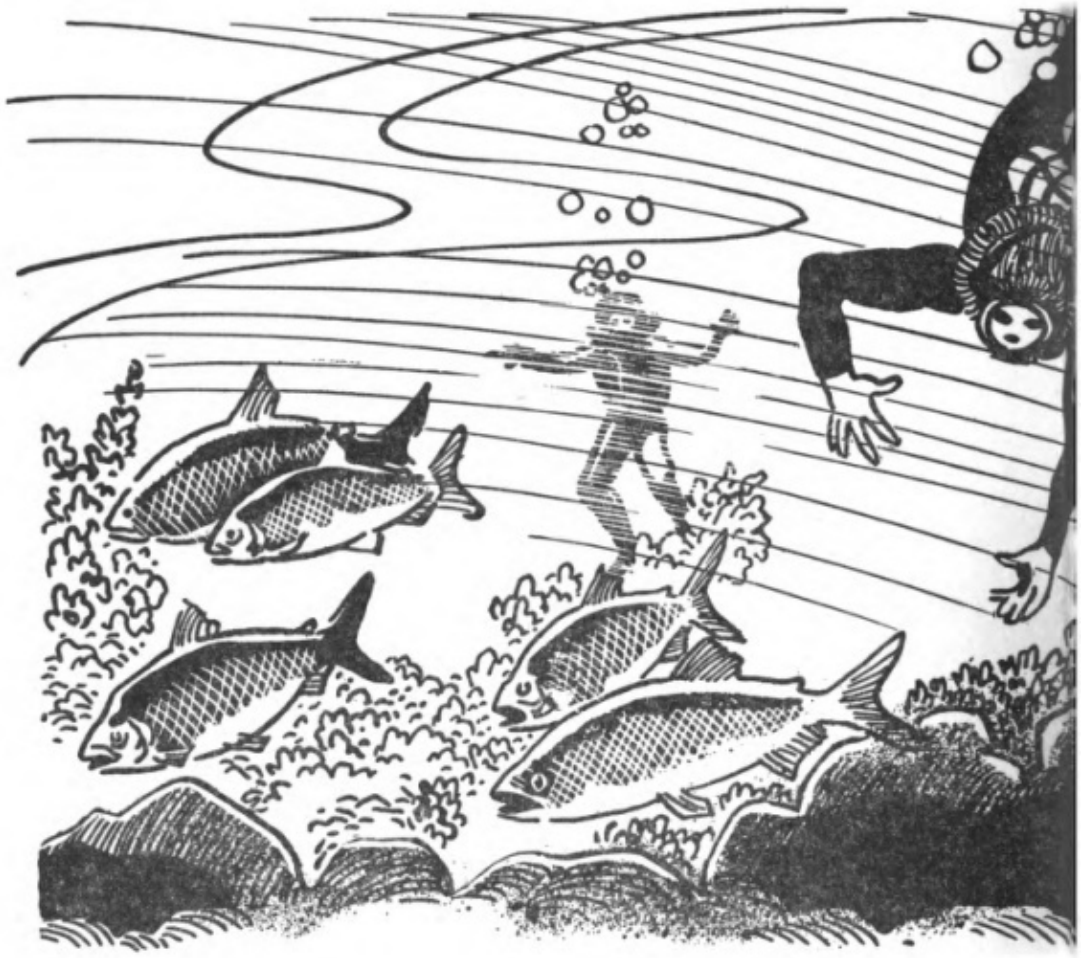
was even more startled at the array of weird-looking objects piled beside him on the porch.

At Granny's exclamation of surprise, Bobo darted through the open doorway with a polite but brief "Good morning, Mrs. Chester. Where's Benjy?" Without waiting for a reply he ran into Benjy's bedroom and stripping the covers from his sleeping friend, shouted, "Wake up! Wake up! We're going skin-diving today!"



" . . . the two began swimming side by side

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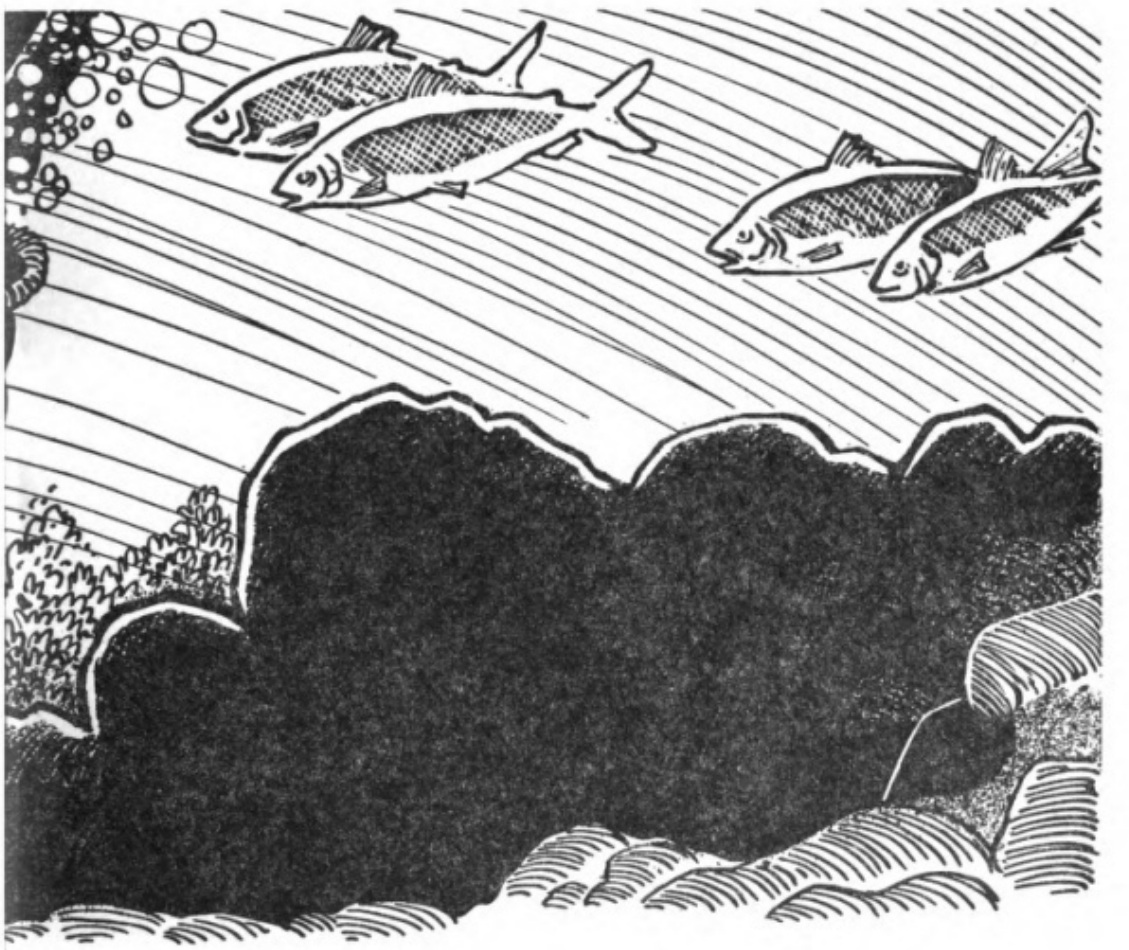
Benjy jerked up into sitting position, the sleep leaving his eyes at the sight of his friend. "Bobo!" he yelled. "You finally got here!"

With a grin he tossed a pillow at Bobo as he jumped out of bed and chased him around the small room in glee. It was the signal for a happy skirmish of leaping across the bed, dodging, shouting and tussling in high spirits.

Benjy's mother, hurriedly tying the belt to her



in a new world, an eerie world . . . ," p. 25

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robe, rushed into the room. "Well!" she explained, "I thought we were struck by a tornado!" Then she smiled at Bobo. "We're glad to see you. Did you have a nice winter?"

"You bet! I learned to skin-dive in my Christmas vacation while we were in Miami. I'm going to teach Benjy, Mrs. Crandell," Bobo answered with a grin.

"Here's my swim trunks. What are we waiting for?" Benjy said as he grabbed his satiny briefs from a closet hook.

"You're both waiting for breakfast, that's what," Benjy's mother said as she turned to go. "Simmer down and I'll fix toast and eggs."

"Oh, Mom! You're the worst! If we eat breakfast we can't go into the water for at least an hour or we'll get cramps and maybe drown!"

"Benjy, everybody needs a good breakfast — most of all two growing lads. An hour isn't so long to wait," Benjy's mother said as she started toward the kitchen.

Benjy looked at Bobo with a resigned air. "She means it, Bobo. We might as well give in. Mom's always lecturing me on this good breakfast deal."

Seated in the breakfast nook a few minutes later, Bobo explained that the Werthmann family had arrived late the night before, to spend the summer at their cottage on Bankers Bluff in the village. Excited about showing Benjy the skin-diving equipment, he had sneaked out of his own room before dawn, eager for Benjy to try out the paraphernalia his father had purchased for them.

"It was most kind of your father to think of Benjy, but is it safe for you two youngsters to go down un-

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der water without some older person with you?" Benjy's mother asked, a worried look in her dark eyes.

"Oh, sure, Mrs. Crandell. I had instructions from a professional skin-diver. I can teach Benjy. It's easy!" Bobo spoke with confidence.

Benjy's mother frowned. "I still don't like it. It sounds dangerous to me. It's risky enough on the surface without going down to the bottom of the lake! Can't you wait until some other day later in summer? The water will be warmer then," she said, hopeful of postponing her immediate anxiety.

"The day doesn't matter, Mrs. Crandell. It's only the surface water that gets warm in the sun. Ten or twenty feet down below the surface the temperature stays cool in spite of the hot sun. So you don't need to worry about us staying down too long," Bobo explained. "We can't stay down long until we get some regulation diving suits and tripleknit G.I. underwear to keep us warm in the cold water."

Benjy's mother looked dubiously at the equipment Bobo had brought. "I don't see anything that looks like a diving suit in that pile of stuff."

"No. My Dad said we could *maybe* have the suits later in summer after we learn to use the masks and fins and snorkels. A good suit costs about eighty bucks, so he won't spring for that until he feels sure we're going to be careful in using them."

"I wish your father would postpone the suit purchase forever. It's enough to give me chills to think of Benjy down at the bottom of the lake for five minutes!" Mrs. Crandell sighed. "But I realize skin-diving is the popular sport now, so I suppose you two boys won't be satisfied until you try it a few times."

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Breakfast over, Benjy and Bobo waited impatiently on the Crandell lawn for the required hour to pass following their early meal. Stripped to swimming trunks, they tried the rubber fins on their feet and adjusted face masks and snorkels. Bobo showed Benjy how to spit on the glass window of the mask and smear the saliva around evenly so the mask wouldn't steam with body heat when they submerged in the cold water of the big lake. They both tried breathing through their snorkels and grinned with glee.

The long hour ended, and Benjy and Bobo took off for the beach and the pier that reached out into Lake Michigan and formed one side of the channel leading outward from Harbor Lake. Sitting on the pier, minutes later, they continued to grin with delight as they put on fins, masks and breathing apparatus.

"We'll drop off the ladder out by the little kids' diving board first. The water can't be over five feet deep there," Bobo said, keeping in mind Mrs. Crandell's last warnings. "Then we'll swim out to the end of the pier for practice with the snorkels."

Benjy nodded agreement. He knew Bobo had been under water with diving equipment and he relied on his friend for instructions. Of course, Benjy had been swimming and diving for three summers, but this promised to be quite different from a quick high dive and quick return to the surface. This kind of diving was actually swimming around under water. Benjy knew the lakes were safe enough once he learned to use the equipment. There were no man-eating sharks in Lake Michigan. Still, there were lamphrey eels and sometimes they fastened themselves on the bodies

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of swimmers who ventured into deep water. Benjy felt a little squeamish about eels, but he didn't mention it to Bobo.

Bobo went down first, with Benjy close behind him. But Benjy soon caught up and the two began swimming side by side in a new world, an eerie world, where the rocks beneath the huge pier seemed as formidable as grotesque giants. With a start Benjy realized that instinctively he had begun to use his snorkel. It seemed strange to be able to breathe the pure surface air while he swam along under water.

As Benjy's eyes grew accustomed to the ghostly light, he noticed a bright trout lure caught between two boulders supporting the pier. With a grin of satisfaction he dove down and loosened the shining piece of metal from the rocks and fastened its barbed hook in the thick elastic waistband of his swim trunks. "My first lost treasure!" he murmured with glee as he motioned to Bobo and pointed out another lure still attached to a length of nylon line waving gently in the water near the pier.

Benjy and Bobo swam around, diving to pick up odd pieces of long submerged fishing tackle, until they began to feel chilled by the cold water. At a shiver and an unspoken signal they both swam to the ladder and pulled themselves up out of the water. Sunning themselves on the pier, they counted their first trophies from the lake bottom. "Wait until Old Jake sees this stuff," Bobo said; "he'll think we have something pretty good, I'll bet."

"Hah! You don't know Mr. Jake. He's against anybody picking up anything out of the lakes," Benjy said in disgust.

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"But why?" Bobo was frankly puzzled.

"Oh," Benjy scoffed, "he says the ocean never gives up its dead, and that goes for treasure as well as people. He says Davy Jone's locker is supposed to stay locked!"

"We'll show him," Bobo said boastfully. "Wait till we bring up something valuable. He'll change his mind, I'll bet!"

But if Benjy and Bobo could have foreseen the dangers they would encounter before they brought up a treasure to show Old Jake, they too might have been more fearful of the unknown hazards of the deep and the sea spirits for whom Old Jake had such dreaded respect.

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4

MAN OVERBOARD!

It was a bright, warm Saturday for the month of June in the Northland. As Benjy came out of the house he looked up at the sky and smiled. Lost in his own plans for the day, he was startled when a girl's voice broke the spell. "And just what are you grinning up at the sky for, Benjy? Looking for a satellite?" asked Suzanne Bentley, only daughter of widower Reverend Bentley of Indian Village Community Church.

"Well, no, not exactly. I guess I was looking in the wrong direction. I was thinking about all the sunken treasures out there," Benjy replied, his eyes twinkling as he pointed toward Lake Michigan.

"I've heard about you and Bobo taking up skin-diving and it sounds terribly exciting. Wish I could do it too — you know how I love to swim. But I guess it's too dangerous to try skin-diving alone." Suzanne's tone was both wistful and an invitation to an invitation.

"I planned to go out in the *Black Panther* this after-

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noon. Bobo has gone away with his folks for the week-end. You can come along with Mr. Jake and me, I guess. That is, if you want to."

"Want to? I dont know what I would have done if you hadn't asked me." Suzanne's eyes sparkled. "I'll be ready any time you say." She waved good-bye as she walked toward the parsonage which was her home.

Benjy's invitation to Suzanne snowballed until it included Suzanne's father, Benjy's mother and Granny, as well as Old Jake. Mrs. Crandell packed a picnic lunch and they all boarded the *Black Panther* to enjoy the beauty of a summer afternoon on the wide expanse of lakes boardering the village and near-by farmlands.

Benjy allowed Suzanne to guide the boat as he explained to her some of the intricacies of navigation with the aid of his new compass. Old Jake told them about the boner Benjy had pulled when he used a steel screw in the binnacle in place of the brass screw that had been lost overboard in the process of installing the instrument.

"Even a real expensive compass is no good, less'n it's put in right. It ain't easy to remember all them little things about boating, but it's all-fired important if ya aim to stay alive in storms and fog." Old Jake spoke emphatically with the voice of long experience.

The *Black Panther* hummed slowly up the south arm of the inland lake as Benjy and the others chatted and enjoyed the panorama of neat farmhouses, cultivated fields and green woodlands sloping down to the shoreline on either side. In the lee of a small island Benjy dropped anchor while his mother un-

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packed the lunch and handed out lap trays for the feast on the open deck.

After lunch the picnic party sat around on the deck and bow, Benjy and Suzanne in swim suits, chatting and relaxing in the sunshine. Suddenly they were startled when a small boat with a large outboard motor roared up from the north and passed the *Black Panther* with a shower of spray. The *Black Panther* rocked violently in the wake of the speeding boat, whose bow was high in the air as the heavy motor pushed it along with the velocity of a jet. As the party watched, the boat was seen to make a sharp turn in reversing its course, and almost instantly it flipped high up in the air, spilling its occupants into the water as it capsized. Old Jake muttered, "Tom-fools," in a voice loaded with disgust, but his voice was drowned out by high-pitched cries of "Help! Help!"

The picnic party watched in sheer excitement as two bobbing heads and thrashing arms appeared on the surface of the water. Old Jake took one look and pulled frantically on the anchor line. "Get that enjin going!" he roared.

In less than a minute the *Black Panther* was underway, heading toward a rescue. Benjy approached the two bobbing heads cautiously, slipped the engine gears into neutral and turned off the ignition switch. He nodded to Old Jake to take over as he pushed his feet into his rubber swim fins. Taking a deep breath, he dove overboard.

With a few swift strokes Benjy reached the first bobbing head and tried to take the drowning man in tow. But the man, hysterical with panic, clutched

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Benjy's throat convulsively as though he meant never to let go.

"Let go of me! I'm trying to save you!" Benjy screamed.

Choked, but still conscious, in spite of the man's death-grip on his throat, Benjy, in desperation, raised a firm fist and knocked the drowning man unconscious. Then, as he held the inert head above water with one hand under the man's chin, he swam side-stroke back to the *Black Panther*. Old Jake and Reverend Bentley were waiting to reach down and pull the unconscious man up and over the side and into the boat.

Benjy started back, swimming with long powerful strokes toward the second victim. But Old Jake shouted after him, "No use going back! The other feller went down now for the third time."

Without a second's hesitation Benjy turned back to the *Black Panther* and, grasping the lower rung of the boarding ladder, shouted, "Hand me my mask, quick! I'll see what I can do!"

Old Jake's face was stern. "Now don't try nothin' foolish! We've had enough recklessness for one day!"

"But there's a man down at the bottom of the lake! Hurry, hand me the mask! I've got to try to save him!"

"Benjy's right, Mr. Jake! Here's your mask, Benjy!" Reverend Bentley spoke with conviction.

Benjy adjusted the mask, slipped away from the *Black Panther,* and swam rapidly toward the capsized boat where the second bobbing head had last been seen. Aboard the *Black Panther* his mother and

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friends saw him drop below the surface of the lake, and they anxiously watched the spot where the air bubbles rose.

Finally Benjy's head broke through the waves once more. But Benjy seemed to be having trouble. It seemed hard for him to hang on to the body of the unconscious man. He was young and strong and he had done it the first time without too much effort, but now he was tired and even a strong boy's endurance was challenged. Those on the boat could see the strain on Benjy's face.

"I'm going in! Maybe I can help!" Suzanne said, and before anyone could stop her she was over the side and into the water. Suzanne was a good swimmer and with a dozen quick strokes she reached Benjy's side.

Benjy gave her a grateful look as she took a firm hold on the victim's shoulder. Together they towed him to the *Black Panther*. Again Old Jake and Reverend Bentley came to the rescue and hoisted and pulled the inert body on the deck of the boat.

"Why, it's just a young boy," Benjy's mother said with tears in her eyes as they propped the body beside the first victim.

Old Jake took command then. "You, Benjy, start the enjin! Mr. Bentley and I will do what we can for the two!"

While Benjy drove the *Black Panther* at breakneck speed back toward Indian Village, Old Jake and Reverend Bentley worked over the survivors, practicing all they knew about artificial respiration. The older man was breathing, although he was still unconscious from Benjy's knock-out blow. The younger

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was slow in responding, but before the boat reached home port they began to detect signs of life.

When the *Black Panther* had been firmly secured at her home moorings and the accident victims delivered to the hospital, the picnic party waited at Old Jake's for several hours until news came from the hospital.

"Thank Heaven, they're alive!" Benjy's mother said fervently. Her eyes filled with tears as she looked at her son. "Thanks to you, Benjy."

"Ya did a good job," Old Jake said with approval, "but nobody should have to risk his life to save such tom-fools! Folks wouldn't go in a jungle full of cobras, less'n they had on snake-proof boots, but landlubbers will go out on the lakes in a lightweight twelve-foot boat with a heavy thirty-five horsepower motor. They step on the gas and next thing ya know the boat flipflops and spills 'em in the water. They can't swim and they ain't got sense enough to put on life-jackets afore they start out." Old Jake shook his head in disgust. "Serves 'em right if they get in trouble!"

"Well, Benjy and Suzanne did their best and I am proud of them," said Reverend Bentley with great feeling.

"Now I guess we'd better take a cruise out on the south arm," Old Jake said, "and see if we can salvage that boat that's floating around upside down out there! I reckon the enjin fell off and is in Davy Jones's locker, but we'll get the boat." Then Old Jake loosened the mooring lines from the dock while Benjy eased the *Black Panther* out to sea.

As they pulled away from the dock, Benjy whis-

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pered to Suzanne, "Don't say anything to the others, but I'm going after the engine on Monday. It will be easy with Bobo to help."

Benjy spoke confidently. Little did he know that salvaging a heavy outboard motor from the bottom of the lake was a lot more difficult than picking up a few fishing lures around a Lake Michigan pier. He was in for trouble — *big trouble!*

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5

BOBO TURNS HERO!

On Sunday Benjy could hardly keep his mind on Reverend Bentley's sermon. He was thinking about how he would tell Bobo about the accident and the rescue. That evening when Bobo had arrived back at the village, the two of them sprawled out on the engine box of the *Black Panther* which was moored to Old Jake's wharf. Even though the old sailor was nowhere in sight the two boys were talking in low tones, fearful of being overheard.

"That perfectly good motor is still down there on the bottom of the lake. If we could get it up, we could use it!" Benjy said in suppressed excitement.

"Do you think you could find it?" Bobo asked with an enthusiasm that equaled Benjy's.

"I didn't have a buoy or anything to mark the exact spot, but I did take a kind of quick sight-bearing on a tree close to shore. The motor must have gone straight down. It's too heavy to drift with the current," Benjy said with an air of self-confidence.

"Okay then. Let's take off while Old Jake is work-

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ing over at the Blue Horizon Boat Basin tomorrow. My father told me the Club had hired him to do some repair work. That should keep him out of our hair for at least a week. It'll give us plenty of time to raise the motor. The superstitious old goat will never know we're looking for it!"

In spite of the fact that Benjy didn't like to have Bobo speak unkindly about Old Jake, he agreed to Bobo's proposition. "It's a deal! See you tomorrow," Benjy said as they jumped up on the dock and started off for their homes.

Early the following morning Benjy and Bobo met at the dockside as soon as they saw Old Jake leave for work on the opposite side of the lake. Bobo checked their gear while Benjy warmed up the engine of the *Black Panther* in preparation for the day's activities. As they cast off and headed out toward the south arm of the inland lake, Bobo snickered aloud. "Guess we put one over on Old Jake this time. No matter what he says about sea spirits, we'll get the motor and he can't yap at us if we already have it!"

A slight frown creased Benjy's forehead. He didn't like the way Bobo seemed to be always making fun of Old Jake. Loyalty was strong in Benjy's heart. If it hadn't been for Old Jake he wouldn't even own the *Black Panther*. He remembered the past summer when his old friend had advised him and helped him get his boat in shape. He could never forget that.

A half hour later Benjy brought the *Black Panther* to a full stop in what he thought was the same spot where he had rescued the accident victims the

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" 'It's a deal! See you tomorrow,' Benjy said," p. 35.

day before. He shut off the engine while Bobo dropped anchor to keep the boat from drifting across the lake in the brisk breeze blowing offshore. In seconds they were struggling with their diving gear.

"Hey! You haven't got your mouthpiece in right!"

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Bobo said as he helped Benjy with his air cylinder. "You aren't supposed to swallow the thing. Just ease it between your jaws and cheeks. Now, bite down on those two little plastic tips and hold on tight with your front teeth. Gotta have your mouthpiece secure unless you want to stop breathing permanently!" Bobo laughed as he showed Benjy how to fasten the web belt of the harness across his chest. Then, with face masks, foot fins and air cylinders secure, Bobo nodded approval and shouted, "Last one in is a muttnik!"

Benjy did a back-flip and followed Bobo overboard and quickly swam away from the *Black Panther*. As he dove below, he soon found how difficult it was to stay down in deep water. The thirty-pound air tanks had no weight in the buoyancy of the water and it wasn't easy to remain at a level where they could search the bottom for signs of the lost motor.

Benjy, legs tired with flutter-kicking, signaled Bobo as he tried to stand on the sandy bottom. But the cold thermal layer was bone chilling and he allowed himself to rise above it. Although he could see no trace of the lost motor, Benjy realized he was enjoying the new experience. The water seemed almost alive as the soft, diffused sunlight filtering downward changed constantly with the shadow-play of the swells above. Several times Benjy clapped his hands as hard as he could for the pure fun of seeing the shimmering school of minnows dart away in alarm at the strange vibrations in the water. Benjy felt happy all over and he thought he must not forget to thank Bobo's father again for buying the new air tanks for them.

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The south arm was deep and cold and it wasn't long until Benjy began to feel chilled after half-swimming, half-walking in a search for the submerged motor. He had no idea of the length of time which had passed since he and Bobo entered the water, but he knew their air tanks would last only one hour without refill. He signaled to Bobo and started upward slowly, using his breathing lung all the way. Bobo had warned him of the danger of nosebleed, or even rupture of the lungs in a too rapid rise to the surface. Some minutes later they were climbing up the boarding ladder of the *Black Panther,* having mastered one more phase of skin-diving.

The warmth of the bright morning sun felt good as they sat on the engine box on the open deck. "I can't figure why we can't find that motor, Benjy! Are you sure this is the right spot?"

"We were opposite that old dead tree," Benjy replied as he pointed shoreward to a high elm blackened by storms and lightning. "The accident happened right over there!" He pointed to a spot dead ahead of the *Black Panther.* "The motor has got to be down there somewhere!"

Bobo shook his head. "There's something fishy about it. You don't suppose somebody else got here first, do you?"

"Nobody knows about it 'cept us and Old Jake. No, the way I figure the boat may have drifted some before the motor fell off. But we've still got a good half a tank of air left. Shall we give it another whirl before we quit?"

Without further words the two boys went over the side of the *Black Panther* to look around once

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more for the lost motor. There was plenty of debris mingled with rocks, weeds and patches of clay and sand bottom. They found an old water-logged row-boat and shook it for the fun of watching a pair of rock bass hiding underneath dart quickly away from their outstretched hands. They turned over a few old boards and logs but nowhere could they find a trace of the motor they were searching for. As they swam back to the *Black Panther* and pulled themselves wearily aboard, they began to realize that looking for treasure on the bottom of the lakes wasn't as easy as they had first thought. However, as Benjy stepped on the starter and headed the *Black Panther* homeward he agreed with Bobo to try it again after they had their air tanks refilled on the following day.

Benjy and Bobo continued to search for the lost motor throughout the week. They swam over acres of lake bottom and had given up hope of finding it when suddenly Benjy touched Bobo's arm and pointed ahead. They had swum over the same spot dozens of times without seeing it close beside a black rock. It was a perfect although accidental job of camouflage. Unless seen at exactly the right angle it wasn't distinguishable from the rock itself.

Now began the most difficult chore of all for Benjy and Bobo. Together they tried to lift the heavy motor, but it was stuck tight in clay that seemed to have no bottom. The motor couldn't be budged. With all the strength of their young wills, they lifted and tugged until they finally raised it a few inches. Now the natural buoyancy of the water gave them some assistance, and with determination

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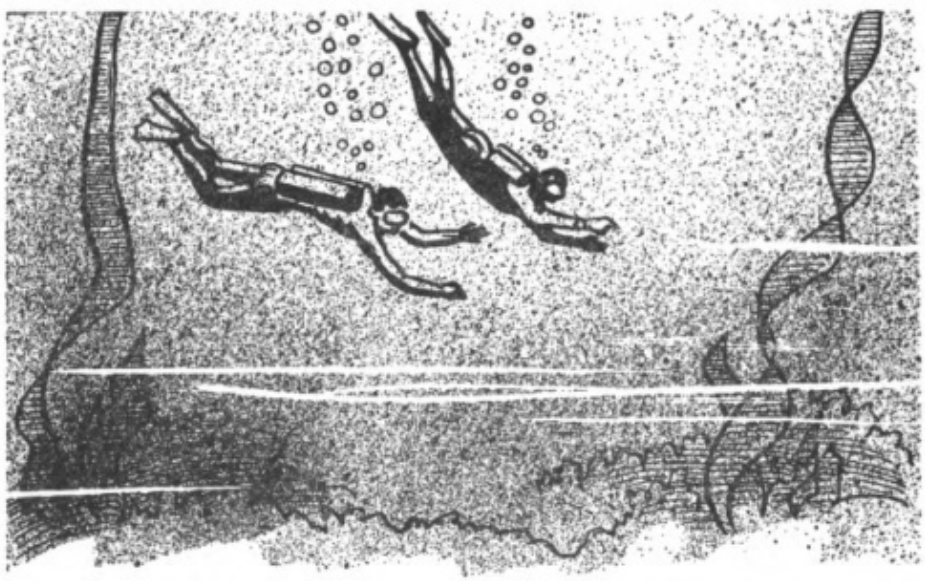
plus much grunting and straining they began to make progress toward the dangling rope line that marked the location of the boarding ladder in the *Black Panther.*

After a long half hour of effort they finally reached the rope line. Now they must raise the motor to the surface of the water and haul it into the boat. They stood motionless in the bed of weeds on the bottom of the lake for a moment's rest before beginning the upward climb, the motor dragging between them like a sack of potatoes headed for market.

Together they reached the submerged first rung of the ladder, and then realized that the ladder was too narrow for both to make the ascent at the same time. With a nod and an upward motion of his hand Benjy signaled for Bobo to go up first.



"Benjy and Bobo continued to search for the lost motor throughout the week," p. 39.

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Bobo grasped the rung of the ladder with confidence and pulled with all his might. As the motor broke the surface, no longer buoyed by the waters of the lake, it regained all of its original one hundred and forty-odd pounds of weight. Bobo held on until his knuckles whitened but it was no use. He couldn't hold the motor! In the wink of an eye it slipped from his grip and fell crashing into Benjy below.

Bobo gasped in fear! Peering into the water he could see Benjy's clenched hands as he held fast to the ladder, and then he saw a red stream spurting from Benjy's arm.

In a split second Bobo was overboard. By frenzied strength he managed to keep Benjy upright to help him up the ladder. But the air tanks, which had shifted in the web harness on their backs, impeded their progress.

Without a second's hesitation Bobo reached for the emergency knife in the holder strapped to his waist, and with bold strokes he slashed the straps which held their new air tanks to their shoulders. With a crash that sent the water spewing in all directions the air tanks followed the motor to Davy Jones's locker. Seconds later they could see the partially filled cylinders floating just below the surface as the current took them farther and farther away from the *Black Panther*. But Bobo had no time for regrets as he hauled and pulled Benjy up the ladder and into the boat.

Benjy was frightened but conscious as Bobo grabbed a soiled wet bath towel drying on the deck. He wound it around Benjy's arm in a tight tourni-

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quet to stop the flow of blood. "Now, Benjy, it's my turn to rescue you!" he said as he started the engine and headed the *Black Panther* homeward. "We'll come back and get the air tanks later! We'll get the motor too! We aren't skunked yet!"

"Yeah," Benjy said weakly, wondering what his mother would say about his arm. He was afraid that she would start worrying all over again about his activities on the lakes. He loved his mother. He didn't like to see her worrying. But he loved the lakes too. If only he could hide his arm injury from her, but he knew he couldn't. She would have to know.

What Benjy and Bobo didn't know was that it would be a long time before they would get the lost motor or the air tanks, and many things would happen to keep them occupied in the meantime.

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6

BENJY GETS A PROPOSITION

Benjy's mother was in her gift shop when Bobo brought Benjy home after the accident. "What happened now?" she said half exasperated, half fearful, as Benjy walked through the doorway, the bulky towel still tight about his arm. She clutched at the bandage. "Granny, call Dr. Notestein!"

"Now calm down, Estelle," Benjy's Granny said in a soothing tone. "Something's always happening to boys. You should know that by now." Her experienced old fingers removed the towel. She examined the raw, red slash carefully. "You're right. The doctor should have a look at it," she finished, patting Benjy's shoulder with affection.

In his office Dr. Notestein dressed the arm and turned to Benjy's white-faced mother. "Lucky for him the propeller blade didn't cut deeper. He has lost a lot of blood, but at his age he'll snap back fast," he said as he dismissed them.

That evening it was Granny again who came to Benjy's defense when his mother began fretting about

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the dangers on the lakes and Benjy in the midst of them. "Benjy could get hurt just as bad playing plain baseball! He could get killed caddying on the golf links if a golf ball hit him at the right angle. You can't wrap a boy in a fancy gift package and tie him up with blue ribbons to keep him safe. A boy has to learn by his own experience, same as everybody else," Granny said with set lips.

Benjy was weaker than he realized. Shock and loss of blood made him happy to loaf around home, so he was in his bedroom on the following day, reading, when his mother called cheerily from the gift shop door. As he answered her call, she pointed to a large package that had just been delivered from the express office. "Looks like somebody is sending you a ton of roses, son," she said in a teasing tone. "Come, let's open it and see what's in it."

Together they ripped the carton apart. Benjy's eyes were big as buckets as he beheld the contents — *two rubber diving suits complete with masks, fins, and air tanks.* "Who! What! Where did this come from?" Benjy was so excited he forgot his injured arm.

"Those two you saved from drowning," his mother explained. "They came here after they were discharged from the hospital. They were so grateful, it was heart warming, Benjy. They wanted to see you, but you weren't here. This is their thank-you, son."

"Wait'll I tell Bobo!" Benjy said with a whoop of joy.

"Now hold on a minute, my eager beaver. That second set of diving gear is for Suzanne. The donors

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said so. Remember, Suzanne was the one who helped you rescue the men."

Benjy looked disgusted. "What'll a *girl* do with a diving suit? Now she'll want to be tagging along all the time."

Benjy's mother rumpled her son's dark hair. "I guess you'll just have to put up with this girl you don't like," she said with a smile.

"Oh, I like her all right — but not tagging along!"

A week later the soreness had left Benjy's arm and he was back on the *Black Panther* ready for business. Old Jake's face was a storm cloud. "I told ya to leave the sea devils alone," he growled. "They ain't going to let you take what rightly belongs to *them*. Might as well forget the outboard motor and the air tanks too! Good riddance to them things," the old man said with flashing eyes.

Benjy said nothing. He didn't even mention the gift package, knowing how his old friend felt about skin-diving. He kept on cleaning and polishing his boat, hoping some tourist would soon be looking for a boat and skipper for hire. With the long Independence Day week-end coming up, he knew he should soon have some fishing trips booked. He was eager to earn back the money he had withdrawn from his savings account to buy the compass. He wanted the compass for his own pleasure, but he knew it would also be helpful in hiring out the *Black Panther*, because he had enough experience now to go farther out in Lake Michigan in search of good fishing grounds.

But it wasn't until late that afternoon that he saw a prospect drive up and stop his car close by Old

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Jake's wharf. The stranger got briskly out of the long, low-slung foreign import. He stopped at the workshop door and said to Old Jake in a commanding tone of voice, "I'm looking for a boy who does skin-diving."

"I suppose ya mean Benjy. He's right over thar." Old Jake flipped his thumb in the general direction of the *Black Panther*. "'Course, he ain't doin' no skin-diving now. Lost his gear in a accident more'n a week ago. He's just taking fishermen out in his boat from now on."

"I've a little job I want done. You just point out the boy; I'll take care of the gear!"

Old Jake grunted. It was plain he had no time for meddling landlubbers with a yen for underwater exploration. He turned his back on the stranger and went about his own work with an air of finality that discouraged further conversation.

The stranger walked over toward the *Black Panther*. Looking down into the open cabin he spoke affably, "My name is Kent Swope. Are you the boy who does the skin-diving?"

"I was, a couple of weeks ago. Now, I'm not so sure," Benjy answered politely as he pointed to his bandaged arm.

"I see you have a bad arm. Will you be laid up long?"

"No, I guess not. The doctor says another week — maybe two. Then I'll be down fighting fishes again," Benjy replied.

Kent Swope jumped down into the cabin of the *Black Panther*. "That's fine. Just fine. You seem

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to be the kind of a lad I'm looking for. Mind if I come aboard and talk business?"

For some reason Benjy felt uneasy in Kent Swope's presence. Swope had a way of flashing his right hand as though to show off the big diamond-set ring on his finger. The mannerism irritated Benjy but he remained polite. After all, Kent Swope was a prospective customer for the *Black Panther*.

An hour later, Old Jake, looking out his workshop window, glowered as he saw the stranger still talking to Benjy. He laid down his tools and walked out the door and across the wharf to the *Black Panther*, just as the stranger glanced down at his watch and vaulted up on the dock. "It's a deal, Benjy! See you next week!"

The stranger spoke hurriedly as though he feared the old sailor's interference. "And a good day to you, sir," he said pleasantly as he rushed past the unsmiling old man and strode swiftly to his car and drove off.

Old Jake's bushy eyebrows came together in a scowl. "Now what kind of a deal are you up to, Benjy? I don't like the looks of that man. I don't like his looks at all." Old Jake's voice was harsh.

"He didn't look so bad, Mr. Jake," Benjy said in a pacifying tone. "Besides, he has a good deal for me. He knows where there is some valuable stuff in a wreck not more than thirty feet under water. He'll pay me well, more than I'll ever make fishing. And the stuff really belongs to him. He says so."

"I don't like it! The man's too — too flashy to be true and he can't look ya straight in the eye, either."

"But, Mr. Jake," Benjy protested, "if I'm ever

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going to earn enough money for college I can't afford to turn down a good offer with extra profits."

"Maybe you can't and then agin maybe you can! Where is this gold mine anyway?"

"Mr. Swope says it's just off Rock Point at High Island!" Benjy answered as he pointed out the location on a chart Mr. Swope had marked for him.

"Benjy, you can't go to High Island! Hear me? I'm going to tell your mother you can't go. I don't care if that big-chested ape gives ya the whole blasted mine. You can't go!" Old Jake shook Benjy's shoulders in emphasis. "Don't get me riled up! I don't want to hear no more about High Island!"

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7

ADRIFT AND LOST!

Benjy was helping his mother unpack a new shipment of figurines for the gift shop one afternoon when he turned to her and asked, "Hey, Mom! How about another picnic on the boat on the Fourth of July? We could invite Suzanne and her father, and Bobo — Mr. Jake, too."

"Sounds like a swell idea, son. That is, if it's a good day. If it's real warm Granny might enjoy it too. Did you plan to go anywhere in particular?"

"Well I kinda thought it would be nice to take a longer cruise, now that I have my new compass. How about High Island? That's not too far, is it?" he asked hopefully.

"The evenings are lovely now that the sun doesn't set until late. I think it would be fine as long as we get home before dark. I don't relish being out on Lake Michigan at night."

Benjy was pleased that his mother consented. He wished Old Jake wouldn't be so superstitious about High Island. If only he could persuade his old friend

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to join their picnic party. He was sure he could convince him there was nothing to be afraid of on High Island. But he decided to play safe and not invite him until the fourth. That would keep him from scolding two days ahead of time.

The morning of the fourth was bright and warm with clear skies. After the picnic party had met at the dockside where the *Black Panther* was moored, Benjy went up to the workshop to fetch his friend, but Old Jake wasn't there. Benjy looked around. As he reached to pet Biffer, who was dozing in a patch of sunshine that shone through the window pane, he noticed a scribbled note on the homemade table. He read the words: *Can't go with ya. Got to fix a enjin for a resorter.* Benjy thought it strange that Old Jake had agreed to work on a holiday, and as he returned to his friends, he wondered if Old Jake was only trying to find an excuse for not going to High Island.

The picnic party aboard the *Black Panther* was gay as Benjy took the boat out through the slow zone in the channel into the open waters of Lake Michigan. Suzanne had brought her new diving gear because she knew Benjy kept his outfit on board, safely locked in the head under the foredeck of the boat. She offered Bobo the use of her rig when she realized that he had lost his air tanks in rescuing Benjy the week before. "I don't guess you two want a girl tagging along under water anyway," she said with a smile. "I'll practice some other time by myself."

"Thanks a lot, Suzy," Bobo said, "but we won't be going down today. There won't be time if we want to get to High Island and back before dark. My father

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will buy me another outfit. I'm sure he will. Then we'll all three practice together."

Once out on the Big Lake, Benjy's mother spread the picnic lunch on the engine box while Benjy set up folding stools after putting the boat on course. The lake was calm as a mill pond and Benjy and Bobo took turns at the wheel, steering lazily. Reverend Bentley had brought along his harmonica, and the music had them all humming and keeping time with their feet.

It was mid-afternoon before the picnic party had finished off the last crumb of ham-salad sandwiches, strawberry pie, molasses cookies and lemonade. After Benjy's mother had cleared the improvised table, everyone settled down for a pleasant cruise. Benjy, Bobo, and Suzanne had fun trying to find suggestions of animal outlines in stray cloud formations.

Suddenly Bobo noticed that Benjy had an odd expression on his face. "What's wrong, Benjy?"

"That's funny!" Benjy said as he checked his wrist watch. "By the speedometer and time, we should be in sight of High Island." He checked his chart once more and scratched his head in perplexity.

Bobo looked at Benjy with a startled expression. "What do you mean? You checked the compass out, didn't you?"

"Sure did, but something's fouled up. *I don't even know where we are!*"

Reverend Bentley looked disturbed, but Benjy's mother was plainly frightened, although she was doing her best to conceal it. Even Granny's stout courage failed her. "What are we going to do, Benjy," she asked, her voice quavering in apprehension.

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"I don't know. I just don't know!" he said in bewilderment.

He picked up a yardstick close by and stuck the end down deep into the intake opening of the gasoline tank. Then he exchanged a sober look with Bobo. "We had enough gas to get to High Island and back. But now, I don't know!" He chewed worriedy on his lower lip. "We're lost!! There's no land in sight! There's nothing to get our bearings by!"

Reverend Bentley spoke cheerily in spite of his concern, in an effort to keep the picnic party from quick panic. "If you checked your compass and you know it's okay, then something must have happened since you last checked. Think hard, Benjy," he said gently. "Have you added anything to the boat that could have changed your compass reading?"

Benjy looked around his boat. "No, I'm sure I haven't," he said with sober eyes as he looked anxiously at his mother, knowing her fear of both boats and lakes. He smiled at her reassuringly as he straightened his shoulders manfully. "We'll have to send up some flares. Some other boat will see them and report our position to the Coast Guard," he said and patted her arm confidently.

Time passed as slowly as the toll of a funeral bell, and the worried occupants of the *Black Panther* felt as cheerless as a funeral party as they scanned the horizon for evidence that someone, pleasure cruising like themselves, had seen their distress signals. Benjy didn't mention to his mother, who was nervously biting at her fingernails, that the flares might not be seen in the light of the mid-afternoon sun. He did mention that in case the signals weren't seen, that

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he had three flares left which he would fire after sundown.

Benjy had shut off the ignition switch of the *Black Panther's* engine, for he knew he needed to conserve gasoline. They might still have to try to find land by themselves if nobody came to their rescue. As the *Black Panther* lost the momentum of forward motion and began to drift back and forth at the whim of wind and swells, Benjy's mother began to get seasick. Her misery added to the worry and concern of the once gay party.

Except for Benjy's mother, whose face was drawn and gray from the sickening roll of the boat, everyone began to feel hungry as the afternoon wore on. Reverend Bentley tried a few half-hearted notes on his harmonica, but no one had any enthusiasm for music and he soon stowed it back in his pocket as he heaved an audible sigh.

"We've hung around here long enough! I'm sure the mainland is off there somewhere," Benjy said, pointing in an easterly direction. "If we turn away from the sun, we might see some landmark we can recognize, soon," he said flipping the ignition switch.

The engine of the *Black Panther* purred steadily as six pairs of eyes scanned the horizon anxiously for a sight of land. The wind had begun to blow harder and dark clouds were forming swiftly in the western sky. "A storm is all we need to make things just jim-dandy!" Bobo said with set lips.

An hour later the picnic party could see hazy outlines of land greenery looming against the gray skies far ahead. Minutes later, with the *Black Panther* at full speed, they could discern what seemed to be

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"An hour later the picnic party could see hazy outlines of land greenery looming against the gray skies far ahead," p. 53.

miles of gray rocks with a thin ribbon of sandy beach separating the rocks from the backdrop of green hills, but nowhere was there any sign of human habitation.

"I don't care if I have to spend the night on the beach in a thunder storm. I'll feel safer there than on this little boat!" Benjy's mother said, anguish in her eyes.

"If you want to go ashore here, you'll have to swim for it! I can't beach the boat with all those rocks piled up every which way!" Benjy said as he searched out the shoreline with the big old-fashioned binoculars which his friend, Old Jake, had given him. "Our best bet now is to drop anchor and stay right here until the storm blows over!"

As the sun became a fiery circle of flame in the racing mountains of gray clouds, early twilight began to settle over the water and Benjy, in grim desperation, got his last remaining flares ready. "It's dark enough now for somebody to see our signals!"

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To reassure his mother, he spoke in hearty tones with a confidence he was far from feeling.

Seconds later, one, two, then three bursts of rocket-flame were hurtled skyward from the deck of the *Black Panther* drifting aimlessly in the gathering dusk.

Again the boating party settled back, watching and waiting, not knowing whether from their position far out on the waters of the Big Lake their distress signals could be seen at the Coast Guard Station at Indian Village. It was getting too dark now for much hope that other pleasure cruisers would be cruising about so far from their home ports.

When black night settled over the waters the party still sat huddled together with sweaters pulled tight around them against the chill of the night. Benjy, shivering but determined, sat perched atop the cabin, scanning the horizon for a sign of rescue. Suddenly he let out a whoop. "I can see a light in the sky! I think somebody is looking for us!" he said in excited tones.

Instantly the party forgot their misery and rushed out of the *Black Panther's* cabin to join Benjy on the open deck, aft. They all watched hopefully as the darting rays of the monstrous beam shot higher and higher in the black sky. "They're coming nearer!" Bobo shouted in glee. "They'll find us! They'll find us! I know they'll find us!"

Bobo was right. In no time the bright beams of light were playing across the marooned *Black Panther* whose cargo of anxious people were straining their eyes toward the distant horizon and frantically waving their white handkerchiefs to aid the rescuers in case

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the small speck which was the *Black Panther* wasn't visible against the vast expanse of undulating swells.

It was with shouts of happy relief that the party answered the "Ahoy!" from the Coast Guard cutter. In seconds the cutter was alongside and a seaman jumped aboard the *Black Panther* with a towline which he quickly made fast to its bow. "What happened? Run out of gas?" he asked the group who were watching him with smiling faces.

"Our compass is off. We're lost. Didn't know which way to go to get home," Benjy said in explanation.

"Old Jake Ward told us to look for you a couple of hours ago. Said something must have gone wrong — you were so long overdue," the sailor answered as he looked the compass over with careful scrutiny. From the compass his glance followed the beam of his flashlight about the small cabin. As its rays touched the seat opposite the pilot's bench, his hands pounced on a small object lying close beside Reverend Bentley's camera. "Here's your culprit, young man. Exposure meters have strong magnets. That's what makes 'em tick. That's the gimmick that threw you off-course."

Towed homeward by the Coast Guard cutter, the *Black Panther* made good time. Soon Benjy hopped out to make fast the boat to its home moorings at Old Jake's wharf. Benjy's mother, still weak from her seasickness, was greatly relieved and spoke with gratitude. "Well, we're home! I thought we'd never make it. Something seems bound to happen to the Crandells on the lakes. Something will happen to Benjy, too," she said grimly. "I feel it in my bones!"

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"Don't talk like that, Mom! This could have happened to anybody. An old exposure meter doesn't mean that lakes are bad!" Benjy answered his mother in a tone of hurt pride that he would ever let anything bad happen to his own mother on his beloved boat.

But on the way home, as he strode beside his mother in the midnight darkness, he kept remembering Old Jake's caution. *Was there really a jinx?* Was there some strange superstition connected with High Island? Old Jake was seldom wrong. Maybe he should pay more attention to the old sailor's warnings.

Benjy didn't dare tell Bobo about his doubts. He knew Bobo would only laugh at him if he did. But he was worried and he wondered if he *dared* take the *Black Panther* to High Island!

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8

OLD JAKE'S WARNING

Summer days pass swiftly and Benjy was as busy as a bee in a clover patch. Tourist fishing and boating parties had kept him on the jump and he had forgotten Kent Swope until early one morning when he was going about his chores of cleaning up the deck and cabin of the *Black Panther* for the day's operation. At the sound of a heavy footfall on the dock, Benjy glanced out the cabin porthole. He was startled to see a swarthy face bending low at the opposite side of the opening.

Kent Swope smiled and leaped aboard on the afterdeck. "Hope you didn't figure I'd forgotten our business deal," he said as he puffed and wheezed with the unaccustomed exercise.

Benjy shook his head as he answered: "No, I didn't forget, but I'm afraid I can't help you right now. I have a lot of fishing parties booked and I don't know when I'll have the time."

Kent Swope frowned, but quickly recovered his

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wheedling manner and with a broad smile and a show of friendly affection he placed his arm about Benjy's shoulders. "Now let's not make up our mind too fast, young fellow. If it's money, I'll pay you more than a hundred fishing parties."

Benjy politely but firmly turned away to continue his clean-up chores. "It isn't entirely the money, Mr. Swope. You see, I have an obligation to these people who are depending on me. Besides, Mr. Jake doesn't want me to work for you. He says High Island is jinxed and maybe he's right. I know I tried to cruise over there last week and I didn't make it."

"I'll take care of your Mr. Jake. Money talks!" he chuckled. "Wait till I tell him we'll cut him in on some of the profits. That'll change his mind!"

"You can try if you want to, but I don't think it will do any good. I've been trying to change his mind on a few things too, but I haven't been able to," Benjy answered as he rinsed the deck mop and dangled it across the overboard to dry.

But Kent Swope's enthusiasm held high, and a few minutes later he had persuaded Benjy to tackle the job if Old Jake would agree. Swope and Benjy approached the workshop just as Old Jake was emerging loaded down with tools for his day's chores on his work boat.

"Good morning, Mr. Jake. You remember me? I'm Kent Swope. Me and my young friend here would like to talk business with you."

Old Jake was gruff. "If it's about your danged treasure in forty foot of water off High Island, I ain't interested!"

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"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" Swope said with his most ingratiating smile. "That treasure you're speaking of is *real!* My own grandfather was skippering the *Tekakwitha* (Te-gah-kweet-ha) when she ran aground and sunk. He lost his life, but some very valuable family possessions were lost too. If I can raise the strongbox that went down with that schooner, I'll be set for the rest of my life. I can afford to pay you well, you know."

Old Jake eyed Kent Swope coldly. "I'm an old man. My days are numbered, but I'm still eating three squares a day and your strongbox don't hold enough money to get me out there in the middle of nowhere, riskin' my old bones so you can live high on the hog!"

Kent Swope tried a new tack. He spoke with deep feeling. "Well, if you don't want money for yourself, how about your young friend here?" Swope asked as he laid his hand on Benjy's shoulder in a paternal gesture. "Benjy isn't afraid to tackle the job, and at his age he can use that kind of money for his education and such."

"Maybe you want the box bad, but I notice ya ain't riskin your own neck," old Jake growled. "If Benjy wants to risk his'n I won't say nothin' more agin it. I suppose Benjy has gotta do things on his own and get his own experience. Kids never listen to old folks anyhow. But ya understand, I ain't havin' no part of it for myself and if Benjy's smart he'll leave it be too!" He turned aside with set lips.

Kent Swope followed Benjy back to the *Black Panther*. He flailed his arms wildly as words fairly

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leaped from his lips in his frantic efforts to undermine the effect of Old Jake's pronouncement.

Benjy was polite, but it was apparent that Old Jake's fears were beginning to have some effect on him. "I'd like to do it, Mr. Swope, but I can't do it alone. Without Mr. Jake's help, I don't see how I'd manage, unless Bobo would go along. You see, it wouldn't be safe for you and me. You don't know how to run a boat, or skin-dive either, and that would sure give that High Island jinx — the one Mr. Jake is always talking about — a good chance to foul up the detail!"

"Well, then, let's get this Bobo. Where do we find him?"

"Stick around, sir. He'll probably show up soon. But even if he will help, I can't cancel all my boat bookings. I'm in business, you know, and when you're in business you take care of your customers if you want to *stay* in business. It will be at least two weeks before I'll have any free time."

Kent Swope looked glum as he answered, "Two weeks! I hadn't counted on a delay."

"Why don't you see a professional diver, if you're in such a hurry?"

"I guess I can wait, Benjy. Just don't take any more bookings, kid. And to tell you the truth, I don't trust professionals, that's why. That strongbox belongs to me and I don't aim to give any professional diver high pirate rates to get it for me. I don't know exactly how much the loot is worth but some of those old coins should be worth double or even triple their original value. I'll pay you ten percent, kid, and you

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take your chances, too, but I'd still say your cut would be more dough than you've ever seen!"

Kent Swope haunted the *Black Panther's* docking space for the full two weeks that Benjy was busy with his boating parties. He grumbled at the delay and took it upon himself to discourage any and all inquiries about future appointments for Benjy's boat. "The *Black Panther* is booked solid till Labor Day," he told everyone as he perched most of the day on the narrow ledge of a pair of upright pilings. Impatient and restless, he begrudged the time Benjy spent with his fishing parties and was always on hand to greet Benjy with enthusiastic accounts of the treasures he knew were at the bottom of the Great Lakes just waiting for an adventurous boy like Benjy.

Swope and Bobo soon became cronies. Plotting like a couple of rebel conspirators they studied charts of shoals and current drifts around the rocky island where the *Tekakwitha* lay buried in a century of shifting sands. Bobo was far more excited than Benjy at the prospect of the search. Like Kent Swope, he too was impatient for the day of the treasure hunt.

"Wait till we find the *Tekakwitha!* And after that, Benjy and I will probably find a lot more sunken ships. Oh, boy!" Bobo said with a gleam in his eye.

But Old Jake was cautious and irritating with his glum warnings. "Yup! ya may find more trouble than ya bargained for, too! I think Benjy would be ahead to stick to his fishin'! You wait and see! Time will bear me out!" he said with an ominous scowl.

Later, alone in the workshop after Kent Swope and Bobo had gone their separate ways for the night, Old

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Jake was even more emphatic in his warnings to Benjy. "I still don't like the looks of that Swope man, Benjy! Be mighty careful in your dealings with him. Those eyes of his are a mite too shifty and his smile too quick. Ya notice his eyes are cold as a dead fish! Just take care, that's all I gotta say!"

In the cozy security of the familiar workshop Benjy smiled at his old friend's seriousness, but later, much later, when he was a captive of the High Island jinx, he was to remember the warnings and wish he had heeded them.

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9

A SUBMERGED MYSTERY!

At last the day arrived when Benjy made his final fishing trip, and he was free to take off on a search for the strongbox aboard the schooner *Tekakwitha* which was thought to be lying in deep and treacherous water off High Island in Lake Michigan.

Benjy and Bobo met Kent Swope at the dock where the *Black Panther* lay moored. Each boy carried a sack filled with thick hearty sandwiches and a thermos of cool milk. This lunch would have to do them for the entire day. The trip to the island was almost a four-hour run in itself so there would be only a few hours in the middle of the day for actual treasure hunting.

After checking their skin-diving gear and filling the gasoline tank on the *Black Panther*, they cruised down the channel and out into Lake Michigan. Benjy and Bobo chattered as fast as a cage full of monkeys, but Kent Swope was silent. His eyes had a scheming look, as though in his imagination he were already

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spending the treasure he expected Benjy and Bobo to salvage from the bottom of the big lake.

In the late morning they decided to eat a portion of their lunch so they could begin diving operations as soon as they reached the shores of the island. In spite of the inward excitement of beginning the search for real treasure, neither had forgotten the importance of the safety rule of never, never going out into deep water for at least one hour after a meal.

They arrived at Rock Point off High Island at noon and dropped anchor. Together they hooked and secured the boarding ladder on the afterdeck. Adjusting fins and masks and air cylinders, they slipped quickly down the rope anchor-line into deep water.

In a second they bobbed back to the surface as though catapulted upward from some undersea cannon. They both grasped the anchor-line and held tight with one hand as they loosened the neck openings on their rubber suits with the other. The trapped air rushed out with a hiss like that of an angry rattlesnake. Upon release of the added buoyancy that had held them near the surface, they worked their way deep toward the bottom of the lake. On deck Kent Swope leaned far over the side of the boat, eyes straining downward, trying to fathom the secrets of the big lake and to follow the movements of the two young swimmers creeping cautiously about.

The first twenty minutes Benjy and Bobo spent in the pale green depths seemed like many hours. It was all so new and strange to be stumbling on the bottom or swimming slowly above the cold thermal layer amid rocks and sand and gently waving underwater weeds.

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"Adjusting fins and masks and air cylinders, they slipped quickly down the rope anchor-line into deep water," **p. 65**

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Often they tripped over heavy water-logged planking that had once sailed the lakes as a vital part of the hull of some long-forgotten freighter or passenger ship. They strained their eyes in search of an object large enough to be the *Tekakwitha.* But although they sometimes saw dark shadows just beyond their range of clear vision, they found on swimming closer that it was always a huge black rock and not the hull of the long-submerged sailing vessel.

Swimming along alone Benjy suddenly saw a shadow that filled him with panic. It was so big, he felt his breath go in sheer fright. His teeth chattered in quick chill. *"Maybe a killer whale from the North Seas has found its way here!"* he muttered to himself in unreasoning fear. Whatever it was, it looked bigger to Benjy than a circus elephant.

To Benjy the beautiful green water had suddenly become a prison. He wanted to get out! He wanted to get back to the familiar world of sun and soil and atmosphere. His body shook now. He had to go up. He couldn't stay down another second!

Benjy looked frantically around for Bobo. He finally saw him dimly through the rippling water, bending low as he examined a spot on the bottom of the lake. He must get to Bobo! They must leave this place of horror at once!

Benjy tried to swim the few feet that separated him from Bobo, but his arms seemed to be held tight in a vise-like grip. He clawed the water with stiff fingers, but he couldn't make any headway. He tried to kick his legs in his usually powerful swimming stroke, but they seemed to be dead weight too. He screamed hard

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and the sound echoed in his ears like the roar of a hundred freight cars crossing a trestle.

Time meant nothing as he struggled to free himself from the paralysis that had enveloped him. It seemed like hours instead of seconds until he reached Bobo's side. Benjy's face was set in a grimace of nervous tension when he finally gained Bobo's attention and motioned upward.

The pressure seemed stronger than when they had first submerged. It was taking every ounce of strength to stay on an even keel. Perhaps he imagined it, but again and again it seemed as though some under-

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" 'If its money, I'll pay you more than a hundred fishing parties'," p. 59.

water giant were holding him fast and slowly but surely pulling him out to sea!

Benjy thought of his mother. He knew she would die if anything happened to her son. He wished he were safely home with her right now. He thought of Old Jake. Maybe his friend was right after all. Maybe there was an evil spirit at High Island that dragged ships and men to their doom!

Benjy looked over at Bobo swimming beside him. Bobo seemed calm and matter-of-fact. He grinned at Benjy and winked his eye. Bobo's quite evident lack of fear partially calmed Benjy's fright, but still

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it wasn't until their two heads bobbed above the surface of the water that Benjy regained full possession of stunned mind and nerves.

When the two boys grasped the boarding ladder on the *Black Panther* they looked upward where Kent Swope was waiting with all the intentness of an Aladdin expecting his Genie to appear and make his wishes come true. After removing the awkward foot fins Benjy followed Bobo up the ladder.

"Well boys, did you find anything down there?" Swope eagerly asked.

Benjy removed his mask so he could breath normally once more and flung himself across the engine box in complete exhaustion.

It was Bobo who answered Swope. "We saw a lot of things but we didn't find the *Tekakwitha.* Maybe we'd better move the *Black Panther* to the other side of the Point before we tackle it again. We'll rest first. I'm slightly beat too!

"I don't know whether I'll ever go down again!" Benjy said, rolling over on his side.

"Aw, you just had a bad case of the screamin' meamies! In hunting they call it Buck Fever when a hunter *freezes* and pumps all his shells out without firing a shot! In the theater they call it Stage Fright when an actor *freezes* and can't say his lines! My skin-diving teacher warned the class about panic in deep water. It happens to everybody sooner or later, I guess. You're one up on me, Benjy! I haven't had mine yet!"

Benjy grinned sheepishly. "So that's what happened to me! I thought I was dying or something!"

Kent Swope was disappointed and he showed it.

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"I thought you'd find the *Tekakwitha* right away," he said in annoyance. "It must be close by, unless the currents have pulled it into deeper water. Let's try the other side of the Point."

Bobo checked the pressure gages on the air cylinders. "Well, we have a good half-hour's air supply left in our tanks. Want to move the *Black Panther* Benj?" Bobo asked Benjy, who was still sprawled full-length on the engine box.

"I'll move the boat, but I'm not so sure about going down again. I think I've *had* it for today!"

But Swope quickly said, "They always send a flyer up immediately after an airplane accident. I'm not sure, but I think you should go down again right away. You may lose your nerve forever if you don't!" The expression on his face plainly showed that he was more concerned for his submerged treasure than for Benjy's welfare.

"Right now I don't much care. But let's move the boat. I'll see then how I feel about it! Maybe I'll get nerve enough to look for that awful *thing* I saw swimming around down below!"

"Aw, you didn't really see anything!" Bobo said, slapping Benjy on the shoulder.

"That's what you think! You wait! I'll show you!" Benjy answered, his jaw set in a stubborn line as he turned the ignition switch and stepped on the starter.

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10

MAROONED!

When Benjy revved up the engine on the *Black Panther,* Bobo heckled him by rolling his eyes and tapping his temples with tight knuckles. "Aw, you just flipped your bonnet down there, that's all! There couldn't be *anything* as big as you say — not in the Great Lakes!"

"Oh, is that so!" Benjy snorted. "That does it! Man, we're going downstairs again and right now! I'll show you whether I'm crazy or not!" He switched off the racing motor as quickly as he had started it and brought the *Black Panther* to a full stop.

Listening to the quarrel of the two lads, Kent Swope looked annoyed. "Now, you two kids don't start anything you can't finish. Remember you're both working for me. I'm the one who bought the gasoline for the boat."

"Well, it won't take any extra gas to take this know-it-all down below and show him a thing or two! I'll bet he won't be so cocky when he sees what I've seen!" Benjy glared at Bobo who was already accepting the

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dare by adjusting his face mask and fastening the web straps on his air cylinder harness.

"It's a deal! Last man in is a Sputnik!" Bobo loved to argue and he was delighted whenever he got a good argument started.

In a split second the two boys were over the transom of the *Black Panther,* slipping down the anchor line once more into the icy depths of the Big Lake. Distance and direction were so confusing twenty feet under water that Benjy was puzzled about how to find the spot where he had first glimpsed the unknown *Something.* The only direction he was really sure of was the upgrade which indicated the way to the stony beach of the island above them. He turned downward in the opposite direction where the rocks were bigger and blacker, and he motioned to Bobo to follow.

Both boys treaded water, flutter-kicking their feet lazily and straining their eyes for a hint of the sea monster that had given Benjy such a fright. Now that they were deep beneath the surface swells, Benjy began to be sorry he had allowed Bobo to needle him into a search for the hideous monstrosity. He was sure he wasn't a victim of his own imagination as Bobo thought. *He had seen something! He knew he had!*

As Benjy and Bobo swam deeper and deeper into the vast underwater pit of the Davy Jones's locker that Old Jake was always talking about, Benjy suddenly saw the Thing again! His hair stood up stiff and straight inside his watertight rubber headgear. This time he wasn't paralyzed with terror, but he was scared. He turned backward and motioned to

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Bobo, who quickly turned in the direction of Benjy's pointing forefinger.

Bobo's jaw dropped and for a split second he forgot to keep his teeth clamped on the plastic mouthpiece of his breathing apparatus as he looked wide-eyed at the black monster ahead. It appeared to be swimming steadily in the constant motion of the water, but it wasn't until they stood as though they had turned to stone that Benjy realized the monster wasn't making any headway — the creature seemed to be chained or perhaps caught in some kind of a trap.

Gingerly the two boys took a couple of cautious strokes with their foot-fins in the direction of the black Thing. Reason told them it couldn't be as dangerous as it looked, but both boys had lost all enthusiasm for detective work. Neither of them, however, wanted to let the other know of his panic, and scared as they were, the monster still seemed to have a strong and terrible fascination for both of them. As they crept slowly nearer and nearer, Benjy noticed first that the Thing seemed to have neither a head or a tail: both ends were as blunt as a whale's snout! And it had no feelers or fins or tentacles!

Benjy was ahead, and he swam up to the crest of a huge rock, where he stood immobile, watching, watching, watching to see if the strange creature would make a hostile move in their direction. He signaled Bobo to join him on the rock. Neither boy could ever remember how long they stayed there, tense with excitement and silent as the rocks about them, watching with steady gaze and bated breath for the creature to do something — anything! But the creature didn't swim away from them in the same quick fright of the

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trout or lake bass when they finally gained the courage to make threatening motions with their hands. Neither did it charge toward them in anger at being disturbed by two young boys.

Benjy and Bobo only remembered that they stood for a long, long time, taking shallow drafts of air from their air supply as they waited, waited for something to happen. While they stood, tense and strained, suddenly they both burst into hilarious laughter! Bobo slapped Benjy's shoulder with a delight that nearly lost them their balance on the slimy rock. At that moment, a slanting shaft of shifting light from the sinking sun above them showed them that the fearsome monster was nothing more than a huge black steam boiler that had wrenched loose and drifted from some shipwreck of the past!

Quickly they swam over to the boiler and slapped its sides with glee as they grinned at each other. Then together they swam, with sure and powerful strokes, back toward the boarding ladder on the *Black Panther*.

When they neared the place where they had left the boat anchored, they looked at each other bewildered. *They couldn't see the boarding ladder anywhere!* They swam around in a circle, just below the surface of the water, wondering what to do next, when Benjy's air valve flipped to emergency air supply. That meant that not more than five minutes of life-sustaining air was left in his cylinder, so he motioned to Bobo to follow, and they began swimming toward the beach.

In a few minutes the boys found themselves in shallow water. They stood up and turned seaward where

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they had left the *Black Panther* riding at anchor. But there was nothing to be seen but the emptiness of rolling swells against the distant horizon. *The Black Panther had vanished as completely as though it never existed!*

"What! Why!" Benjy stammered as the two boys stood knee-deep in the violent surf that threatened to knock them off their feet.

"Looks like that Swope stinker has run off with your boat, Benjy!" Bobo said grimly.

"But what for? He can't find the strongbox by himself. Or can he?"

Bobo shook his head slowly. "I don't know! I just don't know! But there's no use our standing here. Let's go up on the beach and get this heavy gear off. Maybe we'll think of something. Right now I can't think of *anything!*" Bobo answered. He was as bewildered as Benjy at the turn of events.

Ten minutes later the two boys were sitting on a sandy spot on the beach, their diving gear piled beside them, looking as disconsolate as a pair of castaways on a desert isle.

"I can't figure what the guy had to gain by taking my boat! But Mr. Jake never did like Swope. He warned me I'd have trouble with him, and he sure was right," Benjy said with great disappointment in his voice.

"I sure hope somebody comes out to rescue us. I'm hungry! I suppose that Swope pirate is eating up our left-over sandwiches too," Bobo complained in a tone of misery.

Benjy looked worried. "I don't know who will rescue us unless your father does. You know Mr. Jake

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will never come near this island. He said so enough times!"

"My Dad's in Chicago on business. My mother won't know I'm missing until dinner time. It will be too late then to find us before dark."

Benjy picked up a piece of driftwood and threw it forlornly at the water. "If we only had some flares! But our distress signals are with our sandwiches on the *Black Panther*. We might as well scout around, Bobo. We may find some kind of shelter for the night," Benjy said as he stood and pointed up the bank.

"Wait a second, Benj! I see a boat coming around the Point out there!"

Benjy turned quickly. "Why, it's the *Black Panther!*" he shouted. "How about that! Old Swope is coming back for us after all. Just wait! I'll give him a piece of my mind! He's got his nerve — running off with my boat!" Benjy spoke in a breathless rush of anger, relief, and joy.

"You bet!" Bobo quickly agreed. "Just wait till we get our hands on that guy! Who does he think he is, anyway?"

And the two lads splashed into the rough surf as though to meet the *Black Panther* half way.

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11

BLACK PANTHER SIGNS ON A NEW HAND

The *Black Panther,* with Kent Swope at the wheel, crossed the channel bank and met the two boys in waist-deep water offshore.

"Shut off that engine! Don't come in any closer!" Benjy shouted above the noise of the engine and the roaring surf. "You'll wreck the propeller on the stones!"

"Ahoy, boys!" Swope grinned at Benjy who was scowling furiously at him and his careless handling of his beloved *Black Panther.*

Recognizing Benjy's anger, Swope changed his tone. "Didn't expect you so soon; thought you'd still be slaying dragons down below!"

"What's the big idea — running off with the boat?" Benjy shouted as he and Bobo tossed their diving gear on the transom seat and climbed aboard.

"Why, boys," he said soothingly, "I didn't run off with it. I brought it back, didn't I? I only wanted to see what was on the other side of the Point. There

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was some stuff sticking up out of the water and I'll bet the *Tekakwitha* is somewhere in the mess."

"We'll have to get our air cylinders recharged before we can go down again," Bobo said, glancing at his wrist watch. "Besides, it's getting late. We'll be lucky to get home before dark. Let's get a move on before Benjy's mother sends the Coast Guard plus the Army and Navy to look for us," he finished with a grin. Swope's face darkened, but he couldn't talk the boys out of returning home.

Late that evening at home Benjy told his mother about the events of the day. "It's a funny thing that Mr. Swope never told us he knew how to run a boat. He sure is a goony-acting guy. I think I'll ask Suzy to come along next time and keep an eye on him while Bobo and I are diving. We might need her, too, to give us a hand if we find the strongbox. From what Mr. Swope says, it's loaded, so it's probably heavy."

"Suzanne would love that, Benjy. She has been green-eyed with envy since she found out you were searching for that box on the old *Tekakwitha*. Sue is pretty levelheaded," his mother said with a smile. "I'll feel easier in my mind, knowing that she's along."

But Kent Swope wasn't happy with the new arrangement. "What do you want *her* along for?" he growled in a low voice to Benjy as Suzanne approached the *Black Panther's* dock the following morning.

"She's a very good swimmer, that's why. Once she even helped to save a boy from drowning. Any-

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way, we need her when we find the strongbox," Benjy answered.

What Benjy didn't say was that he no longer trusted Swope with the *Black Panther,* and he wanted Suzanne on board to keep a spare ignition key hidden in her pocket in case the man gave them further trouble.

"Well, all right, if you really need her. But I'm not giving you kids any more money. The ten percent will have to be split *three* ways instead of two — just remember that!"

Benjy said nothing as he stepped on the starter, revved up the engine, and began to move away from the dock. Minutes later the *Black Panther* was making her way through the channel, headed toward High Island and the day's activities.

Kent Swope and Suzanne soon joined the two boys up forward as Benjy wheeled his boat through the white-crowned chops in the bay.

"Doesn't look like a very good day for diving with the wind churning up the lake," Swope said in a tone of annoyance.

"The wind is in the right direction to rough up the water here, but there are no storm-warning flags hung out at the Coast Guard Station. I looked for 'em on the way out. It'll be okay," Bobo answered as Benjy concentrated on the chore of quartering the *Black Panther* through the short tricky swells.

By noon Benjy and Bobo were once more ready for diving at Rock Point. They fastened a long line of rope to the ship's bell for use in emergency. Bobo had thought of doing this, for he had learned from his skin-diving instructor that it was always a good

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idea to be prepared for unforeseen developments under water. Old wrecks had been known to shift at the slightest touch and to pin a diver down until he either died or was rescued. Besides, the lifeline gave them an added excuse for having Suzanne aboard. They still didn't want Swope to know how suspicious they had grown of him since the day he had taken the boat while they were down below.

"Now, don't forget, Suzy. If we get into trouble, we'll tug the rope hard. That'll ring the bell. When it rings, you come down — we'll need help," Benjy said with serious face as he prepared to go over the side from the afterdeck.

"Don't worry, Benjy. I'm anxious to get down there and see all that old junk. One tinkle and I'll be down in nothing flat!"

"No, Suzy. You wait for a good hard ring. We need you topside unless we're in real trouble below," Benjy answered quickly, afraid Suzanne would take any excuse to follow them down.

Seconds later, Benjy and Bobo were treading their way cautiously around water-bleached beams and slimy plankings of long-submerged wrecks at the bottom of the Big Lake.

The two boys soon uncoiled the full length of their improvised emergency lifeline, and Benjy fastened the loose end to an ancient rib of an old hull. Even from a distance of fifteen feet they could see the white rope shimmering in the translucent water and they both felt a little safer because it was there.

Benjy and Bobo now found themselves in a strange new world that *no living person had ever seen before!* Benjy shivered in nervous chill as he glanced around

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him into the endless maze of moving water, silent as a graveyard at midnight. In the mysterious depths the scattered wreckage took on grotesque forms. A short distance ahead a piece of twisted wood looked like a hunch-backed gnome who seemed to eye him with malice. He shivered again with a nameless uneasiness as he murmured darkly to himself, *"Mr. Jake's famous jinx must be in here!"*

The two boys kept on, feeling their way slowly around and over huge rocks, searching for an old schooner hull which held the strongbox Kent Swope was so eager to get his hands on. For many minutes they hunted, pushing aside patches of waving lake fronds, but they found nothing but stray pieces of wreckage, dozens of lake bass and, occasionally, big whitefish which paid no attention to them. Once they were startled by a long silvery lake trout burdened with ugly, slithering eels that had attached themselves to either side of the trout.

Later, in a clear spot, Benjy stopped as his foot fin caught and held fast in something half buried by the shifting sands. He dug frantically to release his imprisoned foot and found he had hooked an ancient ship's lantern, which he quickly held aloft for Bobo to see.

At the same moment the two boys realized they had used up most of the air in their cylinders because the automatic valves switched to emergency air supply. There was nothing to do now but surface slowly and swim back to the *Black Panther*.

Minutes later they were struggling back up the boarding ladder while Suzanne and Swope watched them with questioning eyes. Benjy tossed the cor-

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roded lantern aboard and flopped on the deck beside Bobo, who was fast removing his diving gear.

"I don't know where the *Tekakwitha* is, but I don't believe she's anywhere near Rock Point," Benjy said as soon as he got his breath.

"Not there? It's got to be there! My own father told me High Island was the place where she went down in the Big Blow of '67!" Kent Swope said in a shrill voice.

"Maybe the High Island wrecks aren't all at Rock Point. Maybe we'd better take a look on the other side of the island tomorrow!"

Kent Swope looked disturbed, even angry. "You're wasting a lot of time. I'm in a hurry!" He pointed to the lantern. "How about leaving the souvenirs alone and concentrate on the job you're getting paid for?"

Benjy and Bobo eyed Kent Swope with distaste. "You don't know what it's like down there with fifty feet of water pressing down on your head! Everything looks and feels different than it does on the surface! For a bent nickel, I'd forget the whole deal and go back to fishing! Maybe I'll forget it *without* the bent nickel!" Benjy said with tight lips.

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Minutes later the Black Panther . . . *headed toward*

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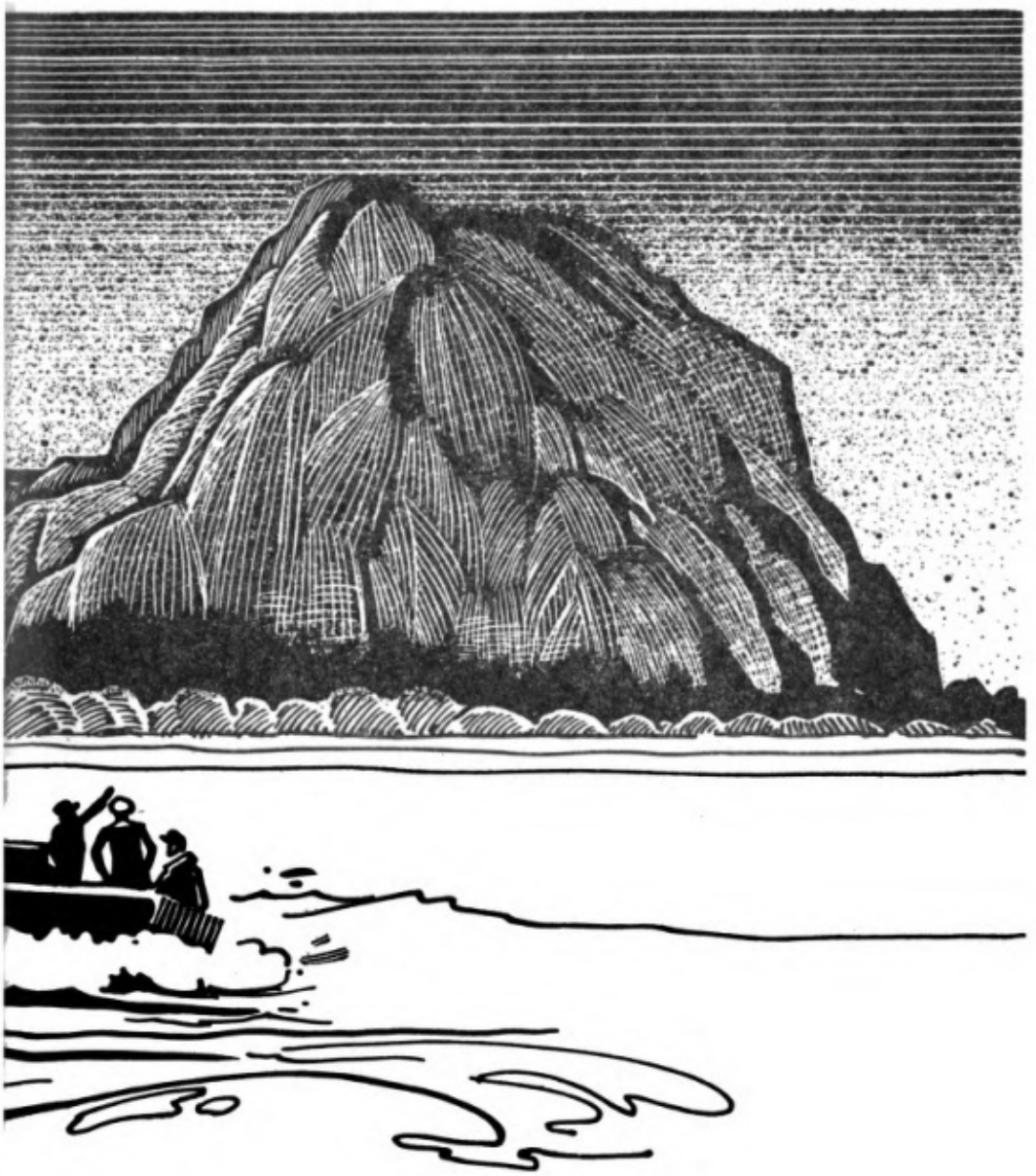

High Island and the day's activities," p. 80.

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12

SUNKEN TREASURE!

Benjy was angry and Swope knew it. In an effort to smooth ruffled feathers he said, "I'm sorry, kid. I guess I'm overly anxious." His apology helped. And the everlasting lure of buried treasure to those with young and adventurous spirits soon brightened Benjy's mood, so the following morning he was on hand to try once more to find the wreck of the old *Tekakwitha.*

This time Benjy anchored the *Black Panther* on the opposite side of High Island. Then he and Bobo prepared to take off for a search in still another unexplored expanse. Here the lake bottom was free of underwater debris and as sandy as a beach. But there was no trace of either modern or ancient ships.

For two days the two boys set up pieces of floating wood blocks and weighed them down to keep them from drifting. These markers were shifted over the surface to mark sections of the corresponding lake bottom already searched. In this manner they covered wide areas in water depths of ten to fifty feet, but

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still they found no evidence that the *Tekakwitha* had ever come to final rest there.

Kent Swope was doing his utmost to restrain his growing impatience. "Try Rock Point once more!" he begged after weeks of daily search. "It's got to be there! You boys aren't trying!"

"We are trying!" Benjy answered with a snort, his face wrinkled in a scowl.

The following day, Benjy anchored the *Black Panther* near the Rock Point spot he had tried in the beginning. "We'll examine the rocks once more. Let's take a reading on the lead line, Bobo. We'll see how it compares with our depth gage! I want to be sure of what I'm doing." Then Benjy threw the line overboard.

Bobo nodded his head in agreement, although it was plain that both boys were losing interest in a treasure as elusive as the strongbox on the *Tekakwitha.*

"We'll give it just this one more try. If we don't connect this time, Mr. Swope better get a professional skin-diver to finish the job for him. For my money, I don't believe the old tub is anywhere near High Island," Bobo said, disgusted that he had wasted his time.

Kent Swope answered Bobo with forced cheerfulness. "Maybe you should take Suzanne down with you. Six eyes are better than four."

But the two boys refused to agree to his suggestion. They felt safer having her topside, although it was questionable what she could do there.

The two boys had decided *this* was to be the last day of their search, and they had brought along extra cyl-

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inders of compressed air to give them additional time to comb the vast underwater graveyard of ships at Rock Point. Both Benjy and Bobo were serious as they went over the side of the *Black Panther* and followed the anchor line downward. There were no high-spirited jokes today. Even the atmosphere seemed charged with the spirit of do-or-die which showed so plainly on the two boys' faces.

Once under water, they tied their emergency signal line as they had been doing since Suzanne joined their working staff. They had never used it, but they felt that today they might need it. As a last resort, in their search for the ancient treasure ship, *they were going down deeper than they had ever gone before!*

The big rocks and the floating boiler that had once given them such a scare, seemed commonplace as the school tennis court now. They swam idly past the metal monster, slapping its sides to bolster their confidence as they drifted deep, deep into the underwater wilderness of gigantic rocks. The light grew dimmer as they left the bottom lands of white sand, and each gave an involuntary shiver when they penetrated the growing gloom.

The underwater world was quiet with the silence of death, despite occasional glimpses of distant fishes swimming about. Once submerged, the two boys sensed the strange, mysterious barrier between the world below and the busy world of things above. They were strangers in a watery land forever foreign to humans, but the very fact that they knew themselves to be strangers here gave them a strong sense of power. They knew that they were among the select few to have successfully invaded this new world.

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The boys made their way across the bleak rocks, separating only to check opposite sides of some black expanse ending in a dark abyss. It was on the brink of such an underwater canyon that Benjy nudged Bobo and pointed downward. He could see something cradled between vertical walls of sheer granite, but from where they stood, suspended in watery space, it was impossible to tell what it was.

Benjy signaled to Bobo that he was going down. Bobo made a grimace but followed him into the dark pit where the only light was the distant slanting rays of the sun high above them. Soon they felt their feet hit something solid beneath them, but it wasn't until their eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom that they made out the dim outlines of an old-fashioned forecastle and were sure they had reached the prow of some old ship of the past. Benjy tried to open an upright hatch which he hoped might lead to officers' quarters and the long-sought strongbox. But the door stood fast as though reluctant to expose the secrets of the years.

Bobo added his strength to Benjy's when he saw him struggling with the water-swollen hatch. Together they tugged with all their might. Nothing happened until the rusty latch gave way in their determined grasp, leaving the hatchway wide open for the first time in nearly a hundred years.

Cautiously the two boys felt their way by the rays of their watertight torch beams, recoiling in horror as they touched an empty officer's uniform that dissolved in their outstretched hand. They looked among the meager furnishings for a likely hiding place for a strongbox, but it wasn't until they had

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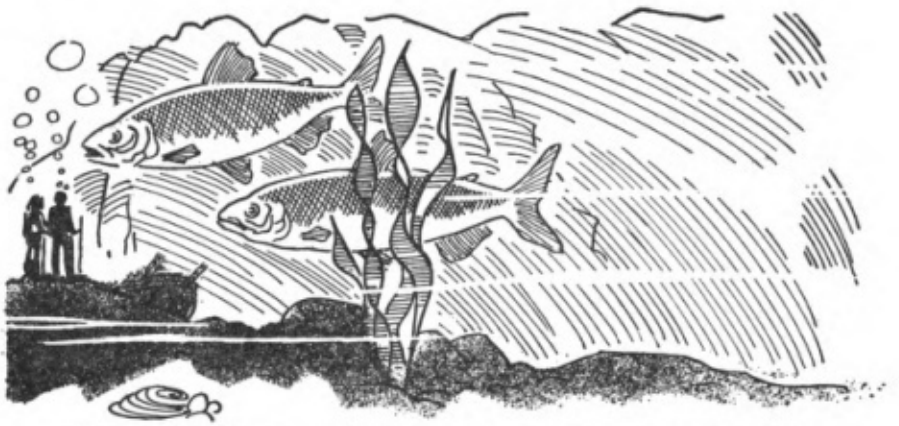
searched several compartments that they spied a squat sea chest in a corner of the cabin.

At a signal from Benjy, Bobo followed him to the carved wooden chest. Together they lifted the lid, only to find it filled with water-soaked rags which had once been clothing for some officer aboard the old schooner. But beneath the layers of rotted cloth their fingers struck solid substance — a box! After looking it over, they knew they had found the treasure at last! Hurriedly they pulled it up from the old chest and made their way to the open hatchway and out into the dismal depths.

Seconds later they allowed themselves to rise slowly from the granite canyon, and after releasing the end of their rope lifeline from the old ship's rib, they began the slow climb back to their familiar world where the *Black Panther* lay at anchor.

Kent Swope leaned far over the side of the boat to grasp the strongbox with greedy fingers. His hand shook with nervous tremors and his eyes held an un-



". . . they had reached the prow of some old ship of the past," p. 89.

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holy glitter. For a long moment he held the box to his quaking body as the two boys sank exhausted on the deck. Then, face distorted with frenzy, he struggled wildly with the rusted lock on the treasure box while Suzanne looked on in frightened amazement.

"I need a rock to open this thing!" he shouted in shrill tones. "I'll have to smash it!" He turned to the two boys. "Come, get a move on, get your gear off! We'll have to take the boat closer to shore!"

Benjy went forward and started the engine while Bobo and Suzanne lifted the anchor line. Swope was no help. He sat dazed in the middle of the *Black Panther,* clasping the treasure box with tight arms.

As Benjy nosed the boat shoreward, Swope spoke harshly. He pointed a shaking finger at Suzanne. "You! You get me a stone, quick!"

But Benjy, alarmed at the man's tone and behavior, quickly volunteered to get the stone. "You stay here, Suzy. It won't take me a minute," and he jumped overboard and reached down to pick up a sharp stone from the bottom of the lake.

Seconds later the strongbox lay open and its contents spilled over the top of the engine box. They all looked curiously at the old frayed documents and the coins — some gold, some silver.

Kent Swope picked up a silver dollar and examined the date. "Eighteen hundred and four!" he shouted gleefully as he turned wide-eyed toward the astonished, staring youngsters. "Know what that one's worth? Over three thousand dollars, that's what! And there's dozens — hundreds of 'em!"

Kent Swope's mood changed with his words. He began to look mean and dangerous. "Now you three

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kids, clear out of here! Git!" Seizing the rock with which he had opened the strongbox, he held it aloft in a threatening gesture. "I'm taking my treasure to a safe place where nobody, *nobody*, will ever see it but me!"

"But, how about our pay?" Benjy tried to speak firmly, although his knees were shaking in fright at the man's strange behavior.

At Benjy's question, Swope went berserk. He lashed out at the three as though to smash them flat with one swift stroke. In sudden horror, Benjy jumped overboard and motioned to Bobo and Suzanne to follow.

Alone in the boat, Swope vaulted to the pilot's wheel, and with a spurt from the throttle the *Black Panther* reversed into deep water and swung out in a wide curve toward the distant horizon, leaving the three youngsters waist-deep in the surf, looking after her in frightened, bewildered disbelief.

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13

THE JINX DISSOLVES

Benjy never could remember how long he stood with Bobo and Suzanne in the foaming breakers off High Island, watching his beloved *Black Panther* grow smaller and smaller until it was only a black speck which was soon swallowed up by the undulating swells. With heartbreak in his voice he turned to his companions. "Well, that's the end of *that!*"

"Getting stranded here is getting to be a habit," Bobo answered in dismal tones. "What'll we do now?"

"I suppose we'll have to go ashore and try to find some kind of shelter. Nobody will ever find us with the boat gone! They'll all be looking for the *Black Panther* and nobody will know we're not on board until they find her. Come on, let's go!" Benjy said grimly as he started for the beach.

"I can't figure what happened to Swope. He was queer, but I never thought he was plain loco," Suzanne said in a puzzled tone as she followed Benjy and Bobo shoreward.

"If he doesn't drown himself in his crazy hurry,

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he'll probably get picked up by the police somewhere, acting loony as he did," Bobo said with a grin of satisfaction.

"I don't care what happens as long as I get the *Black Panther* back!" Benjy said in a mournful voice. "I'll probably never see her again! And all our diving gear is on board too! I wish I'd never listened to that guy's treasure talk!"

Minutes later the three youngsters were climbing the steep bank that led to dry land and whatever comfort and safety the island had to offer. Their clothes were soaking wet and the stiff breeze which had been blowing all day promised a cold night. Their spirits were dragging as they struggled to the summit of the stony bank and looked about them in a wide clearing that had once known cultivation.

The sight of waist-high grass and neglected weeds discouraged them but they took heart as they saw a long-abandoned log shanty across the field and a little way into the surrounding woods. With the exuberance of youth they rushed across the open field, scratching their bare legs in the tangle of wild berry bushes that blocked their progress. By the time they made the shelter of the cabin they were a sad-looking trio.

Entering the cabin they first noticed gaping holes in the rotting roof. The caulking had long since washed away from the heavy timbers that formed the walls. Bobo, accustomed to deep-piled carpeting, immediately disliked the dirt floor and the furnishings which consisted of two broken chairs, a wabbly table, and a cast-iron cook stove whose ventilating smoke-exhaust pipe had crumpled with age. "From the

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looks of this joint, whoever lived here didn't do much living!" he said in a feeble attempt at cheerfulness.

"We'll be warmer here than out in the open after the sun goes down," Benjy answered, glancing at Suzanne who looked sad enough to cry. "Come on, cheer up, Suzy. Somebody will find us by morning — I know they will!" Benjy added with an optimism he was far from feeling.

"Let's pick some of those wild berries before dark. I'm hungry enough to eat raw fish!" Suzanne answered quickly, knowing the boys were as downhearted as she was, and hoping by quick action to keep herself from useless tears.

"Hungry!" Bobo snorted, "*starved* is more like it! But maybe the berries will help some. Come on, what can we lose?" Bobo said, as he reached for a nearby bush.

As darkness settled over the world and the wind whistled across the bleak island with the fury of sudden mid-summer winds in Michigan's Northland, the trio huddled together for warmth in one of the less exposed portions of the ancient cabin. Their teeth chattered as they talked about happy days in school or out in the warm sun, trying to keep their courage from deserting them completely. They struggled to keep awake, fearful of unknown dangers should they fall asleep. But they were desperately tired and it wasn't long after the interior of the cabin darkened with moonless blackness, that they slept.

It might have been midnight when Benjy first heard a long "Haaallooow!" He stiffened in fright, and nudged Suzanne and Bobo until they opened sleep-heavy eyes.

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"What's up?" Bobo asked quickly in answer to Benjy's *"Hush!"*

"Listen!" Benjy said in a whisper.

The trio listened, senses sharpened by fear. From some distant place the sound reached through the thick walls once more: "Haaallooow!"

"What is it?" Suzanne gasped.

"I don't know! Let's be quiet! Maybe it will go away!" Benjy said in low tones.

But the sound seemed to be coming closer and closer as though the tall trees might be picking up ethereal sound waves and repeating the tones in mockery. As the three sat with bated breath, they could see distant lights flashing through the woods, although there was no rumble of summer thunder. The lights came closer. They began to flash in a waving arc, thrusting rays of gold through the wide cracks and cutting the gloom in the cabin with jagged stabs of bright yellow!

"Haaallooow! Haaallooow!" The sounds were close now and the three could hear the snap of twigs and the rustle of leaves as a heavy footfall told them *something* was stalking the midnight forest.

Suddenly Benjy remembered Mr. Jake's High Island jinx. He covered his ears with open palms to shut out the uncanny, mysterious sound as he quivered with inward fear, hoping at the same time that his companions wouldn't sense his fright. *He felt trapped!* It seemed to him that he couldn't bear to hear the banshee voice one more time.

Then it came again! A long "Haaallooow," but this time the howling voice added one word: "Benjy!"

With one accord the frightened trio stood up

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straight in happy surprise as they recognized the voice of Old Jake calling outside the cabin. They tumbled through the rickety doorway in relief, shouting wildly as Old Jake played the beam of a giant flashlight in their direction.

Rushing toward Old Jake Benjy was first to notice his mother's slim figure beside the old man's stocky frame. He shouted a glad "Oh Mom!" as she hugged him close.

"Mom! Mom! Mr. Jake!" he cried, face beaming with joy.

"You're safe! Oh, thank God, you're safe!" Benjy's mother said with happy tears as she hugged Suzanne and Bobo, too. "But what happened?"

"No time for that now, mam," Old Jake said, bruskly. "We'd better get these kids aboard my boat and get some warm blankets on 'em. They can tell us what happened on the way home. Let's get off this fool island! Never did cotton to this place!"

On the long trip home the three youngsters chattered like a flock of magpies. They told about the last search for the *Tekakwitha's* treasure and how Swope had driven them from the *Black Panther* as soon as he got his hands on the old strongbox.

At long last even Bobo seemed impressed with Old Jake's wisdom. "You were right about Swope, Mr. Jake. In fact, you've been right about a lot of things. You're the *greatest!*" Bobo said with enthusiasm.

"I sure wish Mr. Jake could figure out some way to get the *Black Panther* back again. I don't know what I'll do without that boat," Benjy said in a morose voice as he sat huddled in a warm blanket up forward out of the wind, while Biffer snuggled beside him.

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"You'll get her back. That is if Swope don't sink her. The Coast Guard Air Patrol will search for her come daylight. They sent their rescue boat out with us and circled the island while we were looking for you and your boat," Old Jake said in explanation. "When we didn't find a trace of either, they went back."

"How come you came ashore?" Bobo said in curiosity.

"I dunno why, but I figured you must be on the island and we'd find you. And we did, by gum!" Old Jake said with satisfaction as he pulled out the throttle to the last notch and made the old work boat bound through the waves toward home.

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14

LURE OF SILENT-WORLD ADVENTURE!

Benjy, Bobo and Suzanne slept late the morning following their experience on High Island. It was early afternoon before they met again in Old Jake's workshop. Old Jake was chipper as a chipmunk and he moved about, pretending he hadn't ever been an *old softee,* and had worried about his favorite trio of young admirers. He whistled an ancient sea chantey and shouted a lot of zestful *Yo-ho's* as he went about his work.

Benjy was the first to arrive. He looked as downhearted as he felt when he glanced at the empty mooring place where the *Black Panther* had been berthed since the day she was launched and christened. As he entered the workshop, Old Jake spoke cheerily.

"Well, well, my boy, and how be ya this fine morning? Kinda late to be showin' up for work, ain't it?"

"Haven't got anything to work *with,* now that the *Black Panther's* gone," Benjy answered in a mournful tone.

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"Feelin' pretty bad, eh? Well, I got news for ya — the Coast Guard found your boat this morning!"

Benjy's eyes widened. "Where, Mr. Jake? Was it wrecked or anything?" His words tumbled out in a breathless rush.

"The way I heerd it, everything's okay! They found the boat beached on the sand thar on Traverse Bay, right in front of one of them ritzy summer places. The police figured Swope maybe walked to the airport — it's only a mile or so. And sure 'nuff, they found out that's exactly what he did. The ticket man remembered selling a one-way ticket to Chicago to a crazy-acting guy, and the police picked him up when

"' . . . there's a lot of wrecks in the Great Lakes. Lots of valuable cargo going to waste down below. With the Black Panther *back for another summer, well — we'll see!'" p.* 103.

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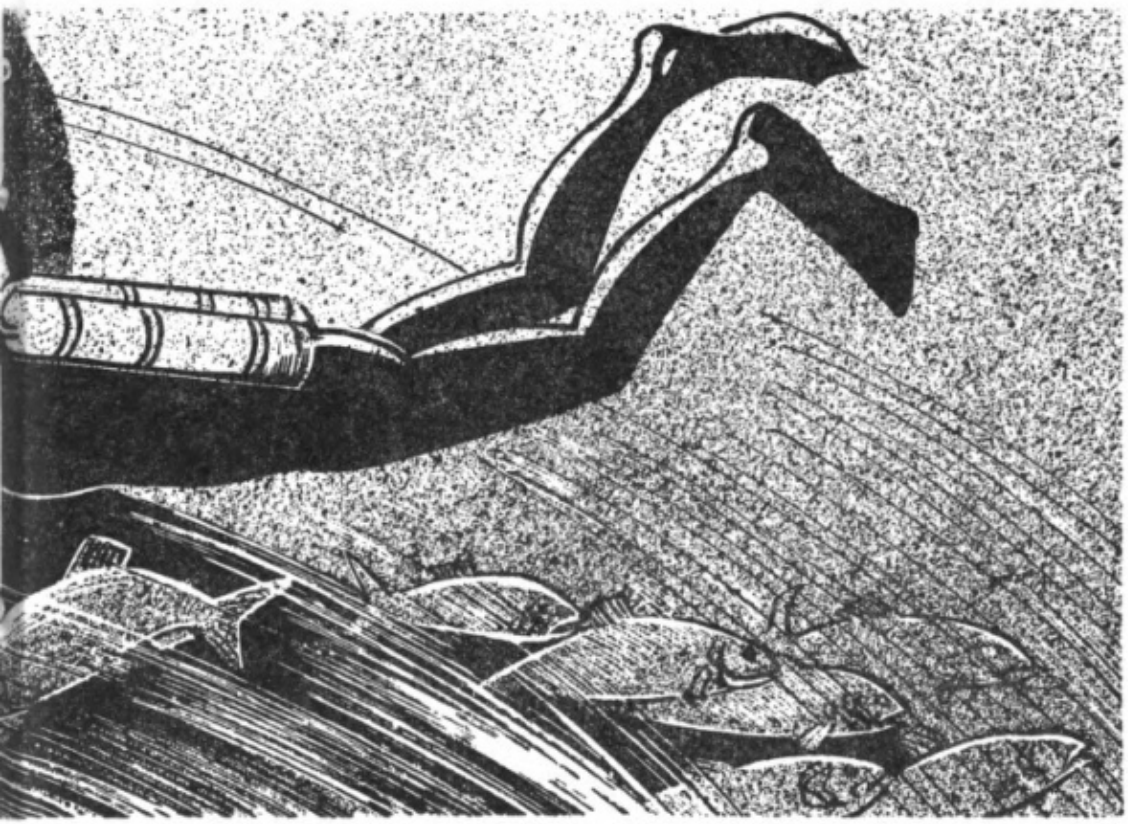
the plane landed. He's being held in jail there till they brings him back. After all, he stole a boat and beat you kids out of your pay, even though the treasure is legally his'n."

"Im glad they caught up with him, but I don't care about the pay as long as I get my boat back. The *Black Panther* is all that matters!"

"I'm glad to hear ya say that, Benjy. Maybe ya learned your lesson about trusting *everybody*. A feller has to learn that there's some folks ya just can't trust. Swope was one of that breed!" Old Jake said with an I-told-you-so air.

"I knew you were right quite a while before Swope



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blew up and took off," Benjy said. "I can understand his tricking us, but what I can't understand is the way he kinda went crazy at the last!"

"Well, I reckon it's like this: money ya ain't earned never does ya much good! Kent Swope was a weak-kneed feller from the first. When he got the treasure it was more'n he could handle. That money'll never do no good, you'll see! And let that be a lesson to ya. Earn your own way! Don't be lookin' for a soft touch no place."

"I guess you're right, Mr. Jake. But, say, how come Biffer was on the boat last night?" Benjy asked as he stooped to pet the big cat winding its sinuous body around his legs, coaxing for attention.

"I don't rightly know, Benjy. Only thing I know is, your Ma comes down here 'bout nine o'clock cryin' and wringin' her hands and sayin' ya ain't home yet and she can't get aholt a Bobo's folks, an' Suzy's Pa is outa town too! I can't stand seein' women cry so I says I'd go out and find ya! She jumps in the boat like she never was ascairt of the lakes and that fool cat jumps right in behind her. Seems like he knew there was somethin' up and he wanted to be in on it! Never knew him to do it afore! Beats me! Maybe he thinks a heap of ya too! That's my guess anyway."

"Well, I never was so glad to see anybody in my whole life as I was to see you and Mom and Biffer. But weren't you afraid of the High Island jinx?"

"*Sure* I was! But somebody had to find you kids and I knew right well we'd find ya on High Island! I knew right along I'd have to go to High Island some day! Ya always gotta tackle whatever you're ascairt of, sooner or later! Life's like that! Might as well make it

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sooner, Benjy!" Old Jake finished with a twinkle in his eye.

"Now we know there really isn't any jinx anywhere — just bad people! If that old King Strang hadn't been bad and sent all those people who didn't do just what he said to High Island to die, High Island wouldn't have gotten such a bad name in the first place. All those wrecks were caused by storms and rocks at Rock Point, but I suppose it looked like a jinx to a lot of folks."

"Yup, I guess you're right, Benjy. But now I hope you've had your fill of the place, and ya won't go traipsin' over there agin, skin-diving and such!" Old Jake spoke heatedly. It was plain he still had no respect for skin-diving

"Well, I don't know about that," Benjy answered, just as Suzanne and Bobo came in the workshop door. "I learned a lot this summer. I don't think I'll ever take another job diving for somebody. Still, there's a lot of wrecks in the Great Lakes. Lots of valuable cargo going to waste down below. With the *Black Panther* back for another summer, well — we'll see!"

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