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Donald

Chapter 1

PETER DENT leaned on the railing and watched the water foaming away from the bow of the "Chinook." It was hard to believe that he was really here, feeling the cool dampness of the spray laden breeze against his face, traveling in a boat that was taking him northward to the green-firred islands of the Pacific coast.

Everything had happened so quickly — meeting Donald Harris at camp at The Firs, sharing the same cabin, making friends with him and then being invited back to Donald's home in Vancouver for a visit. Best of all, the visit included a two weeks' cruise up the island-dotted straits between Vancouver Island and the coast of British Columbia.

Donald came to join him at the rail and pointed to a settlement to their left.

"That's Campbell River, and Dad will have to go there on business tomorrow," he said. "Right now we're heading through the passage into Gowl-land Harbor."

They were close to the shore. Reaching over the rail, Peter could almost touch the rocks that dropped steeply into the water at each side of the passage. A few minutes later they had entered a large enclosed harbor, and the water was as calm

as a lake. Most of the shoreline was thickly wooded, with here and there a small clearing and a house.

The "Chinook" eased in beside an old wooden dock and Donald sprang lightly ashore. Peter threw him the rope to make the ship fast and then joined Donald on the dock.

"I'm going up to that house and see if the Henderson boys are home," Donald said, pointing to a big white house at the end of the wharf. "They're usually around. Want to come?"

Peter shook his head. "No, I'll just sit here in the sun and wait for you." He watched Donald set off at a dogtrot over the weather-bleached planking, then turned to look into the cool, clear-green of the water below. Donald's father and the skipper were talking, probably making their plans for the next day, but Peter couldn't hear what they were saying. He knew the trip included a visit to some of the camps of the Northwest Logging Company of which Mr. Harris was president, but that was all. Donald had said something about picking up the payroll at the bank in Campbell River before they went farther north, and he presumed they had come into Gowlland Harbor because it was a good place to spend the night.

Peter looked up at the thud-thud-thud of rubber-soled shoes against the planks of the dock.

"They're across the bay at the Homewood Bible Camp," Donald said, "but Mrs. Henderson suggested we take Bill's dinghy and row over. Like to?"

"Sounds like fun!"

"Okay. I'll tell Dad we're going."

They set out across the quiet waters of the harbor, past tiny tree-covered islands toward sloping yellow fields and a long narrow floating dock. As they neared the shore Peter could see log cabins among the trees above the fields.

"Have you ever been here before?" he asked.

"No, but kids from the coast come here to camp. They have a good time, according to the Henderson boys."

They tied up the boat and ran up the dock to the trail.

"It seems awfully quiet. I don't see any boys," Peter said.

Donald glanced at his watch. "The only time camp is really quiet is meal time. They must be eating. Let's find the dining room."

A hum of voices was coming from behind the largest cabin. They walked around and stopped short. Tables were set out on the grass under the towering firs and, as Donald had guessed, the boys were eating. They stopped to stare at the newcomers and Peter and Donald grinned. Suddenly one of the boys stood up.

"Donald Harris! Where did you come from? I didn't recognize you for a minute!"

"Hi, Don!" Another boy smiled and waved.

"Hello, Bob and Bill Henderson!" Donald said easily. "All you other kids too! As you heard, I'm Donald Harris from Vancouver. We just came in on the 'Chinook,' tied up at Henderson's wharf. This is my friend from the States, Peter Dent."

As Peter nodded and smiled a tall young man was making his way toward them.

"Hello there!" he said holding out his hand to Donald. "You're the son of the owner of the 'Chinook'? Glad to have you visit us. I'm John Baird, camp director." He turned to greet Peter. "Good to meet you Peter. Can you boys visit for a while? We'd like to have you at our fireside meeting tonight."

The boys agreed to stay, and at Mr. Baird's invitation were happy to join the other boys at supper. They had a wonderful time that evening, hearing about Homewood Camp and telling of some of their experiences at the camp they had attended at Bellingham. In fact they almost forgot they weren't campers until they heard the "Chinook's" whistle sounding out across the bay.

"That's Dad! We'd better get moving!" Donald said.

They rowed across the harbor quickly. "I wish we could stay there for a couple of days," Peter said, as he watched the little dock fade into the distance. "It looks as if it would be as much fun as The Firs, even if they don't have water skiing and things like that."

"Yes, it would be fun. Maybe if Dad has to stay at Campbell River for a few days we could spend the time at camp. We'll ask him."

That night they told Donald's father all about the camp and the wonderful time the Henderson boys were having there, at the same time making it clear that they wouldn't mind spending a few days there.

Mr. Harris laughed. "Haven't you boys had enough of camp for one year?" he said. "I have

to spend the day at Campbell River tomorrow but will be back by night. The next day we'll leave for Rock Bay, Kelsey Bay and then on to Gilford Island with the payroll for the logging camp. But I don't imagine we'll get away before the middle of the morning. As long as you can be ready for me to pick you up day after tomorrow, you can stay at camp."

"Thanks Dad."

"Be sure to check if it's all right with the director, Donald. They may not let you come for a short time like that."

"I don't think he'll mind," Peter said. "The camp isn't overcrowded."

"Be sure to take enough money with you."

"Yes, we will."

"Well then, if you don't come back tomorrow evening I'll know you're staying overnight at camp."

"Right!" Donald said. "We'll be leaving early tomorrow morning to get over there in time for breakfast."

Bidding Mr. Harris good night, they went off to their bunks.