

CHAPTER 8: Respect Is Earned

HIGH WATER RESCUE

The story so far: Mr. Henry's house looked dark but Nick and Uncle Jerry knew he was still there when they heard Duke barking. They found Mr. Henry lying on the porch with a broken leg. He couldn't walk and Uncle Jerry couldn't carry him so Nick was sent back to the car to get the johnboat. The storm was bad now and Nick almost got lost in the darkness and rising water.

Nick led the way back toward the house. Aunt Jan had given him another flashlight, but he still could only see the trees and water right in front of him. Nick knew that if he missed the house, they could end up in the swollen creek behind it. It was a scary thought. Then he had an idea.

"Duke . . . good doggie, hey Duke!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. Aunt Jan caught on right away and joined in. Together they yelled Duke's name into the darkness.

Duke heard their cries and began barking in reply. Nick corrected his course a little to the left and kept walking. Every time Duke stopped barking Nick would call out his name. Before long, they were on the front porch hugging and petting their own furry foghorn.

Uncle Jerry was very relieved to see them. Mr. Henry was in a lot of pain. They needed to get him to a hospital as quickly as possible.

All three helped carry Mr. Henry on a blanket to the front porch. Getting him into the boat was tricky. Nick felt sick every time Mr. Henry gave a small cry of pain. They finally got him as comfortable as possible. Then Uncle Jerry lifted Duke into the boat. It was time to head for the road again. Uncle Jerry gave Nick the lead.

This time Nick knew what to do, and he charged ahead with confidence. His legs were beginning to feel like lead, but he pushed himself to move. After wading for a while, Nick felt the water level begin to drop, and he knew they were close to the road. Finally, he spotted the trailer and the truck.

After everyone loaded in, the bedraggled caravan started out again. The going was really slow. Rain came down in sheets. The wind rocked the car. Nick was beginning to wonder if they

were going to need rescuing themselves.

But they finally made it to the mainland, and Uncle Jerry sped straight to the hospital emergency room. Mr. Henry was taken away by the doctors. A security guard in the lobby offered to keep an eye on Duke. Nick and his aunt and uncle were taken into an interior room where they would be safest from the storm. Nick couldn't eat the food he was offered. He was anxious about Mr. Henry, and his mind was still racing over the ordeal back on the island. He slumped back on the couch next to his aunt and waited.

The next thing he knew, Aunt Jan was gently shaking his shoulder. "Wake up, Nick. It's time to go now."

Nick sat up, trying to remember where he was. Then the memories of the night before came flooding back like a bad dream.

"Mr. Henry—how is he?" he asked his aunt.

"Thanks in large part to you, the doctors say he's going to be fine," answered Uncle Jerry. "We're all very proud of what you did last night, Nick."

Nick beamed from his uncle's praise. Then he asked, "Is it over?"

Both his aunt and uncle knew he meant the hurricane. Aunt Jan filled him in. "Yes, Nick, it's over. Believe it or not, you were wading around in tropical storm force winds last night. Some gusts even reached hurricane strength of over 74 miles per hour."

"Hurricane Edwin was classified as a strong Category 2 hurricane with top winds around 110 miles per hour," his uncle added. "The worst damage was to the south of us. Luckily, the winds were weaker in the outermost part of the storm that touched Sullivan's Island."

Since Mr. Henry was resting comfortably, Nick and his aunt and uncle decided to head home and check on things there. They were concerned about damage to the house. But as they pulled into the driveway, they all let out a sigh of relief. The yard was a mess, but the house looked fine.

Nick took Duke for a walk on

the beach. The waves were still huge, but the sun was actually beginning to peek through the clouds.

"Bet you don't even know you have to boil your water now."

Nick grinned as he heard the familiar, taunting voice. Ashley grinned right back. She had made her way down to the water and was standing beside him. Neither one of them had thought they would ever be so glad to see each other again.

"Heard you had a rough night last night," Ashley said in a casual way.

For once, Nick didn't feel like bragging. "Yeah, but Mr. Henry's going to be all right," he assured her.

Ashley cocked her head and looked at Nick. Then she gave him the ultimate compliment.

"Y'know Nick, maybe you're not such a bad tourist after all. In fact, I don't even think I'd mind if you became a regular here on Sullivan's Island."

Nick smiled. He had finally beaten Ashley to the punch. His parents had already rewarded him for his bravery last night. His Christmas vacation to Sullivan's Island was already booked!

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The Post and Courier has published a summer reading journal and activity guide for elementary and middle school students to complete in connection with "High Water Rescue." Parents may pick up free copies at area Piggly Wiggly stores beginning July 14 (while supplies last). Multiple copies are available for summer educational programs. Children may also participate at most branches of the Charleston County Public Library.

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