

THE SIGN OF
the
ANCHOR

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EVELYN C. NEVIN



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

Foreword

This story takes place approximately sixty-five years after the birth of Christ. The historical background is authentic. The meeting of the Christians in the catacombs, the raiding of these secret meeting places by the Roman soldiers, the Christians' use of symbols to identify one another, their persecution by Nero, and the emperor's freeing the Corinthian people because of their enthusiastic reception of his performances in the theater, are all matters of historical record. —E.C.N.



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I



On the Hill

Lykon had risen early to take the goats up a trail through the tall pine trees in back of his hut. Ahead of him the flock moved slowly through thick, bright patches of sunlight across a winding path.

At his heels was a dog. It was as if all of them—the goats, the dog, and the boy—could move no faster through the beauty of an early spring morning, a morning filled with the odor of the cool, damp earth, the tangy smell of pine needles, and the song of an oriole and a thrush.

The dog stopped and raised his head high, his nostrils twitching.

“Come, Beppa,” the slender, dark-haired boy called. “No time for squirrels.”

The dog’s nose gave another quiver, but the scent was gone. He followed the boy.

At the top of the hill, Lykon stopped and looked down

across the sloping plains to the distant city of Corinth and beyond that to the blue sea.

Someday he would make a trip to the city. He had never been away from the slopes and quiet valleys in back of the ancient port. Here lay the scattered baked clay huts of the country people, sturdy men and women who earned their living peacefully tending their vineyards, their olive trees, their herds of goats, and their grainfields. Among them lived a few weavers of goat's hair cloth, men who had not found work on the modern looms in the city, but who used the looms handed down to them by their fathers.

Deplovius, Lykon's father, was one of these weavers. The night before, he had gone to the city to sell his cloth on the busy wharves that edged the blue water, and he had promised Lykon a surprise when he returned.

The boy turned his gaze to the dark shape of a baked clay hut at the far edge of the meadow below him. Lifting two fingers to his mouth, he sent three sharp notes into the valley. In a few seconds, an answering whistle came from the hut in the meadow. At once Lykon rushed down the mountainside. The goats, anxious to reach the lush grass of the meadow, raced ahead of him.

Coming across the meadow was a thin line of goats, and, behind them, a boy and a dog. Lykon stopped for a moment to wave his arms and to halloo. As soon as they were in speaking distance he asked, "Do you have them, Midias?"

"Yes, here." The stubby fingers of the short, fat Midias fumbled with the pouch which hung from his belt. The

pouch was narrow and deep and full of many things. There was a wooden whistle, a string, a piece of rope, and several pickled olives. But at last he found what he was looking for. In his hand lay five small knucklebones that he had saved from lambs his father had recently slaughtered to sell in the markets of Corinth.

Midias handed them to Lykon, who tossed each one separately to test their difference in weight.

Midias watched him anxiously, for some of his joy in having the new set of bones would be lessened if Lykon did not think they were nearly perfect. He could keep silent no longer. "What do you think of them, Lykon?"

"I have never seen a better set," Lykon answered appreciatively as he handed them back. "It is good that they are so evenly matched."

The anxious expression left Midias' round, ruddy face, and a wide grin took its place. "I'll play you a game," he said.

Lykon drew an old, soiled set of bones from his pocket.

The game of knucklebones is very simple. Any number of bones can be used, but the number must be decided upon before the game starts. The bones are placed on the back of the hands and tossed into the air. The player tries to catch as many as possible. Each boy has three turns, and at the end of that time the one who has caught the most wins.

Lykon placed the five bones on the back of his hand and, with a quick flip, sent them into the air. He caught three of the five.

When it was Midias' turn, he caught all five of his bones.

Each took his three turns, and at the end of that time Lykon was the winner, with a score of eight bones against the seven caught by Midias.

One game led to another. The boys were so evenly matched in skill that first one would win and then the other.

The dogs returned from a hunt, their noses covered with dirt and their paws grimed with the damp, dark soil of squirrel holes. They lay in the shade, dozing and snapping at flies.

“It’s noon,” said Lykon. “Let’s eat.”

As the boys sat on the grass and took from their tunics black bread and cheese wrapped in clean white cloth, a nanny goat wound her way in and out of the herd and came to stand in front of Lykon. He scratched her behind the ears, and Beppa, running to her, gave her face a quick lick with his tongue.

“Aren’t you going to give Gink a bite of your bread and cheese?” Midias asked Lykon.

“When she asks for it,” the boy answered.

The goat lowered her head and nuzzled the boy on the neck.

“Give her a bite,” said Midias. “Why do you tease her?”

“She likes to be teased,” answered Lykon. “Watch.”

Gink waited a second and then lowered her head. This time she gave Lykon a nip on the neck with her sharp teeth. The boy howled with pretended pain, Midias laughed, and the dogs stood a few feet away, barking. Then Lykon broke off pieces of the cheese and bread and gave them to the goats and the dogs.

The boys spent the afternoon on the hillside, throwing sticks for the dogs to chase. They climbed trees and swung from the branches, and picked berries and munched them until their teeth were stained from the purple juice.

All afternoon Lykon watched the sun as it moved farther and farther toward the west, his mind not always on what he was doing. Several times Midias had to speak to him twice. Finally Lykon said, "It is time to separate the goats and start for home."

"It's early yet," Midias protested. "Don't go!" But he saw that Lykon's mind was not to be changed easily. "If you stay," he bribed, "I'll let you have my new knucklebones to take home with you." He filled his mouth with a handful of wild berries.

"No," Lykon answered. "I'm anxious to reach home. My father went to Corinth last night to sell the goat's hair cloth and promised that he would bring me a surprise. By the time I reach home, he should be there."

Midias' mouth was so full of berries that for a moment he couldn't speak, and he almost choked when he tried to speak and to swallow all the berries at once. His face grew red as he sputtered and gasped. "It's a discus, Lykon! You're going to get the discus your father promised you."

"I think so, too," answered Lykon.

Midias grew breathless with excitement. "Be sure to bring the discus with you tomorrow. Don't forget it." He drew his arm back and made the motions of throwing a disk. "We'll be the best discus throwers in the country!" he exulted. "We'll throw it clear to the other end of the meadow."

In Midias' mind the discus was already purchased and was now bouncing over the rough roads from Corinth in the cart of Lykon's father. "Come," he shouted to Lykon, bribery forgotten. "Let's separate the goats. It's time to go home!"

ESCAPE TO
FREEDOM



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

RUTH FOSDICK JONES



Mrs. Bintz's yard was filled with a frenzy of honking.

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Chapter I

“He is a fugitive from the law...”

The cherry tree in the backyard was so old and gnarled that Timothy’s father called it Buffalo’s First Settler. Its crown, now a mist of white blossoms that touched the gable end of the shed on one side of the yard, spread in a gentle arc to overhang the high board fence on the other. For a cherry tree, it was also unusually tall so that a boy sitting as Timothy was, in a crotch of the upper branches, could look across other yards and see far off beyond the budding trees a tiny glint of silver that was the Niagara River. Beyond that, he knew, stretched the low line of the shore of Canada.

Timothy had, after school was out, climbed the First Settler to read, but the book—a new one published only the year before—with its title *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* enticingly uppermost, lay unopened on his knees. He had something else on his mind. Through the screen of blossoms, he was watching his mother in the yard below him. He had been watching her for quite a few minutes.

He had heard her open the back door, for the squeaky hinge, as usual, had uttered its shriek of protest. He had peered down to

see if she was looking for him, for his conscience told him quite clearly that he should have split his kindling before he went off to read. His sister Dora, released from her nap, was trotting toward her sand pile beside the steps, and his mother was standing in the doorway with a wood basket in her hand, the teasing May wind blowing the white skirts of her blue dress and wrestling with soft hair on her forehead. With sudden decision she set down the basket and went back into the house. What she did then was the start of Timothy's perplexity, for she began energetically to rub grease into the squeaky door hinge. How many times his father had threatened to grease the hinge, Timothy could not remember, but his mother had always laughed and said, "No, no, John! Leave it as it is. I can tell by the number of times that door squeaks how many fried cakes Tim has taken from the crock and when I'll have to make more. I don't need to look!" And now, on a sudden whim, she was taking the cherished squeak out of the door.

But what happened next was stranger still. After she had tested the door to be sure that it opened quietly, Mary Blaine picked up the wood basket and started across the yard to the shed to get chips for the fire. As she passed under the First Settler, Timothy saw the basket, which should have been empty, held something covered with a red-and-white napkin. So far as Timothy knew, the only thing one ever carried in a basket covered by a napkin was food. He had carried plenty of baskets like that himself—to neighbors who were ill or to those with whom his mother wanted to share a particularly good batch of baking. But why was she carrying food to the shed in the yard?

The shed door shut quietly behind her. Timothy waited five minutes. Ten. Then his mother opened the door and, with her basket now full of chips, walked briskly back to the house, pausing at the steps to admire Dora's pie-making in the sand pile. But what, Timothy wondered, had become of the food?

He closed his eyes and cataloged in his mind the contents of the shed. It did not take him long, for there was very little in it. Downstairs, there was the horse stall which housed Nellie, the little bay



Why was she carrying food to the shed? Timothy wondered.

mare and, nearby, a large wooden box of chips, some odds and ends of lumber, and a few tools. There was room, also, for the two-seater wagon, which was the Blaine family's only means of conveyance other than their own feet. Then there was a rough ladder leading to the loft under the eaves. And up in the loft, there was nothing at all except Nellie's supply of hay, which half blocked out the light from the little four-paned window that looks out into the branches of the First Settler. There was absolutely no reason that Timothy could think of to leave any food in the shed.

He could find out quickly enough, though, by going and looking. He slipped the book into his jacket pocket and climbed expertly down from the tree. As his feet touched the ground, he heard his name called and saw Jake Dunning, one dangling leg already over the yard gate.

"Where have you been, Tim?" he asked. "Aren't you coming out?"

Usually Jake, who lived in the parsonage four doors down the street, and Timothy were inseparable, in school and out; and ordinarily, too, Timothy would have shared immediately with Jake the mystery of the shed, but today something held him back.

He shook his head. "No, I guess I can't, Jake," he answered. "Haven't split my kindling yet."

Jake, who understood the obligation represented by the woodpile, departed; and Timothy, after waiting until his friend was out of sight, strolled casually in the direction of the shed. He had his hand on the door latch when he heard his mother's voice.

"Tim!" she called from the back door. "Have you done your chores? The wood box is almost empty."

"I'm coming right away, Mother," answered Tim guiltily, and he changed his course to take him to the chopping block at the corner of the house. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he had been prying into something that was no business of his and the equally uncomfortable feeling that his mother, with an air of complete innocence, was going to keep him from doing it.

As he worked away with ax and wood, he worried the problem

as a dog worries a stick. What his mother had done that afternoon was not the only unusual thing that had happened lately.

There were those scratchings on the windowpane after dark, almost like a twig scraping the glass in the wind. When it happened, Mr. Blaine would lay down his book, say irritably, "Drat that cat!" and go to the kitchen door to let her in. She always came in, but Timothy suspected that it might be because she always came in when the door was opened anyway. Presently she would appear in the parlor doorway—a small, dainty tiger cat—and stalk with tail erect to Timothy's chair, rubbing his legs, inviting him to lean over and scratch behind her ears.

But the odd part of it was that when the cat came in, his father went out, and his mother would look up from her mending and say, "Come, Tim. Time for bed." He would go obediently upstairs to his small comfortable room with the sloping ceiling. Sometimes, after he had settled himself in bed, he would hear the shriek of the door hinge as John Blaine came in and would wonder why his father liked to stay out at night, especially if it was cold or rainy. But his father had always liked to be outdoors. He had been brought up in the country, and he used to say that he liked to get the feel of the weather. So, there was not much out of the way in that.

But there were also those vague, half-heard sounds of someone astir in the house at night. Timothy slept upstairs, and his mother and father and three-year-old Dora slept downstairs in the room between the parlor and the kitchen. But it was a small house, and there was a board in the hall outside the door of his parents' room that creaked.

There was nothing, really, that he could put his finger on, yet he was sure that something was happening that he knew nothing about. But what did it all amount to—a scratching noise on a windowpane, a creaky board, a newly oiled hinge, a basket of food unaccountably left in the shed? It reminded him of one of those problems in arithmetic which began, *Tom bought six apples ...* "And I can't find the answer," said Timothy to himself, "because I don't know how much each apple costs."

He finished his chopping, stacked the wood on his arm, and started for the house, no wiser than before.

When he let himself into the kitchen, his mother was mixing biscuits in the pantry; and his father, not yet finished with his day's work as Latin teacher at the Academy, was seated in his armchair, writing desk on his lap, patiently correcting a little pile of Latin exercises. And that was new, too, thought Timothy. He remembered that his father always used to correct papers in the evenings. Now he rarely did anymore.

Mr. Blaine looked up from his papers. He was a stocky man with tremendously broad shoulders. His black-bearded face, with its strong nose and flashing black eyes, was stern enough to keep the most unruly scholar in order, but when he smiled, his whole face lit up with kindness. He smiled at Timothy now. "Hello, Son," he said briefly.

"Hello, Father," responded Timothy automatically and deposited his wood more quietly than usual in the box beside the fireplace. Outside, the spring sunshine beckoned to him, but he didn't want to go out. He wandered over to the wooden sink and poured some water into the basin to wash his hands, thinking that he might start on tomorrow's lessons. But by the time he had dried his hands on the coarse towel hanging by the sink, he knew he didn't want to do that either. He stared at himself in the mirror, the mirror with the curlicue frame with one gilt star at the top whose greenish wavy glass reflected slightly askew his round boyish face with its deep-set hazel eyes and the curly hair above it. He felt too unsettled to concentrate on English grammar. Or arithmetic either. He felt too unsettled to do anything—except maybe read.

With a sigh of relief at having decided this much, he flopped down in the high-backed rocker, pulled the book out of his pocket, and found his place. At first, he was conscious of the faint scratching of his father's pen, of the bumping noise made by the wheels of Dora's homemade cart on the uneven ground outside, and of the sound of a spoon scraping a bowl in the pantry. Then the book absorbed him, and he was far away from the brick house on Pearl



Timothy picked up the heavy sacks.

... ❖ ❖ ❖ ...

ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

... ❖ ❖ ❖ ...

What were all those strange noises Timothy Blaine kept hearing in the middle of the night—the creaking boards and scratching on the window panes?

One night he discovers the answer: his parents are hiding runaway slaves! Timothy is proud when they ask him and his friend Jake to join in the thrilling work of running a station on the Underground Railroad. The boys soon learn that their families and other courageous men and women are risking everything to help the fugitives reach Canada.

Ruth Fosdick Jones is unusually qualified to write this dramatic story, for she has based the book's events on the true adventures of her own grandparents who, before the Civil War, helped many slaves escape to freedom.

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ROCKET

GENIUS



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

CHARLES SPAIN VERRAL

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Chapter 1

False Alarm

“Hello, police? This is an emergency! There’s been an explosion. It shook all the window panes in my house . . .”

The woman’s voice was shrill with excitement as it came over the telephone at police headquarters in Worcester, Massachusetts.

It was a few minutes past two o’clock on the afternoon of July 17, 1929. The police sergeant on duty had been dozing in the heat. But now he was wide awake.

“An explosion?” he asked sharply. “Where?”

“Out near Auburn,” the woman said. “On the old Ward farm. There was an airplane . . . it was on fire in the sky. Then it crashed, and there was a terrible explosion. Send help! Hurry!”

The sergeant did just that. Within minutes, two

police cars and two ambulances were speeding away from the city of Worcester toward Auburn, three miles to the south. Following closely behind were more cars, filled with reporters from the Worcester newspapers.

The procession of cars raced over backcountry roads. When they reached the Ward farm, the cars turned into the lane. Ahead of them, trails of smoke could be seen rising in the sky. The cars sped past the farmhouse, the barnyard, and the barns. They kept on going along a narrow rutted road that dipped downhill through pastures to a ravine far below.

The police inspector was the first one out when the cars came to a stop in the ravine. He saw five men and a woman standing there, calmly talking. Near them, a large patch of grass had been burned away, and a film of smoke hung in the air. But there was no sign of a crashed airplane.

“Where’s the plane?” the police inspector yelled.

The five men and the woman stared at him in surprise. Then one of them, a tall, balding man, stepped forward.

“Plane?” he said, frowning. “What plane?”

“We had a report that an airplane crashed in flames out here,” the police officer said.

The tall man’s puzzled look vanished. “Oh,” he said. “Someone must have mistaken my rocket for an airplane. I guess it did make about as much noise as a plane.”

“But this plane was on fire,” the inspector said.

The tall man nodded. “Well, I suppose it might seem like that, with flames shooting out of the rocket’s exhaust. I can see how someone might easily have thought my rocket was an airplane on fire.”

By now the rest of the policemen and the reporters were crowding around.

“Your *rocket*?” one of the reporters said. He stared closely at the tall man’s face. Then he snapped his fingers. “Of course! You’re Professor Goddard of Clark University—the rocket man!”

“Yes,” the tall man said. “I’m Dr. Goddard.”

“You’re the guy who once claimed you could shoot a rocket to the moon,” the reporter went on excitedly. “So that’s what happened! You shot off your moon rocket, and it exploded!”

“Nothing of the sort,” Dr. Goddard replied. “This was simply a small experimental rocket. It went up about a hundred feet and then flew parallel to the ground for a short distance. When it came down, it smashed itself to bits, as I expected. This started a grass fire, which my assistants and I put out. That’s all there was to it.”

“Come on, Prof,” the reporter said. “Don’t try to kid us. We know it was your moon rocket.”

Dr. Goddard shook his head. “I tell you there was no attempt to reach the moon or anything like that. True enough, I did say back in 1920 that it *might* be

possible to send a rocket to the moon someday. But such a thing won't happen for many years to come."

Dr. Goddard might as well have been talking to himself. The reporters were not listening. They were heading back to their cars on the run.

The tall professor turned to his young blond wife. "Well, Esther," he said, gloomily, "I'm afraid we're in for another dose of wild stories like those I got back in 1920."

Dr. Goddard was right. When he and his wife drove back into Worcester two hours later, newsboys were on the street shouting, "Extra! Extra! Moon rocket blows up! Read all about it. Extra here!"

The exaggerated stories were printed not only in Worcester. The wire services picked up the news and spread it across the country. Headlines in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* read: **ROCKET STARTS FOR THE MOON BUT BLOWS UP ON WAY**. There were even wilder accounts published abroad.

The commotion finally stirred up an official state investigation of Dr. Goddard's rocket tests. It was ruled that the Clark University professor would no longer be allowed to shoot off rockets anywhere in the state of Massachusetts because of the danger of starting brush or forest fires.

"Then we will go elsewhere," Dr. Goddard said firmly to his wife, Esther.

The idea of never sending up another rocket was

unthinkable to Dr. Goddard. He had been building and testing rockets for years. This had been his fourth successful launching. Others would follow, even if he had to go to the North Pole. He still had many questions he wanted answered about space. And he intended to find those answers with the help of his rockets.

ROCKET GENIUS

On March 16, 1926, history was made, for this was the day that Dr. Robert Goddard successfully tested the world's first liquid-fuel rocket. Now Dr. Goddard is well known as the father of the space age; his work paved the way for all space exploration that came after. But before this remarkable achievement, he was just a boy with an impossible dream.

Young Bob was raised by loving parents who supported his many interests, but he was not taken seriously by the scientific community or the newspapers that mocked his wild ideas. However, Bob refused to give up because he knew he was on the verge of an important discovery, one that would allow humankind to venture out into the vast universe beyond our earth.



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