

## The Decision

The Dickensons lived on the eastern coast of the United States and the three boys, Simon, Jud, and little Ben loved the water. The two oldest boys were usually busy helping their dad on his farm or taking care of their spoiled little brother. That was their least favorite thing to do. Just because their Mom died giving birth to Ben, their Dad thought he was the most special and treated him that way. It made them both mad. They would do little mean things to Ben just to get revenge on his being treated special and then threaten Ben with torture if he told on them. That was kind of fun.

Finally one Saturday the two oldest got the whole day off to go adventure. They both had one thing in mind. There was an island off shore in the distance and they had wondered what was on it.

Just when they were about to leave, their father said, “Boys, I have to go to town and I need you to take care of Ben for me. You can take him with you exploring but just be careful!” He said those last words slowly so the older boys wouldn’t miss it.

“What a bummer!” they pouted when their dad was gone. They were going to have some fun and now had to take the spoiled brat with them. Oh well, they didn’t have any choice so off they went with Ben tagging along behind.

When the three arrived at the shore, they couldn’t believe their stroke of luck! An old abandoned rowboat was hidden in the grass and it had one and a half oars. OK, the half oar wouldn’t do them any good since it was the top half, but the other one would get them out to the island to explore.

Being the oldest, Jud paddled with the oar, first on one side, then on the other so they would go in kind of a straight line. When he got tired, then Simon took a turn. Of course, Ben was too young to take a turn, plus he’d probably complain that they asked him to help.

As they paddled, they started to notice their feet getting wet. “This thing leaks,” Simon said, pointing to a trickle of water coming in the front.

“Don’t worry about it,” Jud answered. “It’s not that much, and when we get there, we can empty it to get back.”

As the boys neared the shore of the island they suddenly struck a rock hidden just under the water. It enlarged the hole, sending twice as much water pouring in. They were glad to be safely on shore!

“How are we going to get back?” Simon wondered. “That boat will fill up and sink with the weight of all three of us.”

“I got that all figured out,” Jud answered tapping his head with his finger. “You row Ben across, then come back for me. That way we only have two of us in

the boat at a time. If you move fast, it won't sink with only two in the boat." Simon thought Jud was a genius with that idea.

The boys started to explore the island. It was very flat with a few scrawny trees. They had a lot of moss or seaweed stuck in the branches. That seemed strange. Then Simon said, "Look at this. It's the skeleton of a fish in the tree. It must have been a pretty good jumper!"

Jud laughed. "I guess so. Or maybe someone hid it there to eat later and then forgot." They both liked his idea better.

In a couple of hours they had gone all around the island and then through the middle. But when they headed for their boat, they got the shock of their life! The shore was gone and their boat was bumping against some trees. The tide was coming in! The island was disappearing! Suddenly the two oldest realized why the fish was in the tree! It swam there! Since their boat was crippled, they had to quickly decide what to do and get at it!

If you were Jud or Simon, what would you do?

- 1) Leave Ben there because the two of you could paddle fastest to get help.
- 2) Get some sticks and try to rub them together to make a fire to signal for help.
- 3) Leave Ben there as a revenge toward your dad for spoiling him.
- 4) Volunteer to stay even though you know you could drown before help arrived.
- 5) Draw straws to see which of you would have to stay.
- 6) All try to get back in the broken boat even though all three of you would probably drown.
- 7) Try to build a raft with the scrawny trees and branches on the island.
- 8) Let the others go in the boat and you try to swim back, even though it was a long way and you were a lousy swimmer.
- 9) Dial 9-1-1 even though you don't have a phone.
- 10) All climb the scrawny trees in hopes of staying alive until the tide went down again.
- 11) Start screaming!
- 12) Your own plan:

## Conclusion

The boys took a rock and tried to wedge it into the hole in the boat but they immediately saw they could make the hole worse because of the old, rotting wood. Jud thought a minute. "OK. Here's what we're going to do. Simon, you take Ben

and paddle as fast as you can for home. Then run for the house, and, if Dad isn't home, call Mr. Crowder and see if he can come to rescue me."

"Are you sure?"

"Just go," Jud interrupted. "I know how much Dad loves Ben. If something happened to him, he'd die of grief. I can climb a tree or something which will give me maybe another hour. But. . . if I don't make it. . . ." His words trailed off and the brothers hugged. Then they turned the boat around, helped Ben get in and Jud pushed them as hard as he could toward home.

A half hour passed and only the top of a hill was above water now. The sun was setting; darkness was overtaking Jud. He selected the strongest and tallest tree to climb and was about to ascend to the first branch when he heard a motor noise. He gazed toward home and could see a lantern flashing in the distance, then voices calling. In a few minutes, their dad jumped out of his motorboat and, standing in the shallow water, hugged his son. "Oh, wonderful. We're in time."

"Wonderful is right!" Jud said. "You're the most wonderful sight in the whole world!"

On the way back, his dad explained, "When I got home from town, I wasn't surprised you weren't nearby. But after a while I become concerned and started looking for you. I tracked you through the grass to this shore. I had a feeling you might need help so I went back for the motorboat. I had just returned when Simon and Ben pulled up. The rest is history."

"I guess we were stupid but we just wanted to find out what was on that island. We found out all right. Half the day it's water!"

"But Son, what you did in risking your life for your brother was wonderful. You demonstrated what it means to truly love someone."

"To tell the truth, Dad, it wasn't so much a love for Ben, but a love for you. I couldn't have lived with myself if I broke your heart by losing Ben through something stupid I did."

Things changed in their home after that. The older boys were kinder to Ben, and their Dad tried harder not to spoil him. It was a day they never forgot.