



Chapter 17

Pushing the last couple of bites of his chocolate dessert around on his plate, Ben appeared quiet. Uncle Paul noticed. "Ben, you look like something is wrong. Didn't you like the buffalo burger after all?"

"It was good" he answered, "it's just that..."

"Just what?"

"Well," Ben hesitated

"Spit it out, boy."

"Can people blow up Mt. Rushmore?"

"Ah, that might be kind of hard to do. Why?"

Still not answering the question, Ben asked, "What else can people blow up around here?"

"Well, nothing, legally. Some people still think there is gold in the old mines, but I haven't heard of anyone trying to blow up one lately," his uncle assured him.

"Do you plan to do something drastic while you are here?" Everyone broke out laughing except Ben.

"No, but somebody else might be."

His uncle got serious at that remark.

"What makes you think that?" His uncle leaned toward him, listening carefully. If someone was up to no good, he needed to know it and report it.

"Well, when I went back to get the binoculars in the theater, I heard two men talking about blowing up something with dynamite during the fireworks."



Dad and Uncle Paul gave each other a startled look. Their eyebrows jumped halfway up their foreheads. Ben may have heard the plot to something very dangerous.

"What else did you hear?" asked his uncle.

"Nothing, they asked me if I had lost something and then I left."

"Did you see them again?" asked Dad.

"Yeah, at the hardware store."

"You did?" asked Mom, sounding startled. "Do you think they were following us?" She did not want her family to be involved in a crime. Their experience at Michigan's Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Park was enough for a lifetime. Dad was the opposite. Being a newspaper reporter, he always was asking who, what, when, where, how and why. He was glad Ben and Bekka seemed to have a "nose for the news", and kept him informed of what they knew.

"Were they following us?" he asked when Ben didn't answer quickly enough. "What did they look like?"

"I don't think they were following us. One of the guys was buying stuff."

"Stuff? Like what?" asked Uncle Paul.

"Well," Ben thought back to what he saw on the checkout counter at the store. "Matches, wire, and some rope."

"Hm, wire, matches, and rope. It sounds suspicious, but then it doesn't sound suspicious. You probably have



wire, matches and rope in your camper.”

“Yes, we do,” answered Mom. Still alarmed, she asked Ben, “Did he say anything to you at the store?”

“No, but I think he knew I saw him.”

“Did you see them drive away?” asked Dad.

“Yes.”

“What did their car look like?”

“It wasn’t a car, it was a brown truck. And they drove out of the parking lot, really fast. Remember? It was the one Mom said looked like they had robbed a bank.”

“You’re kidding!” his father replied. “You should have said something.”

Uncle Paul looked quite concerned. “These men must know how we do the fireworks. Like I said before, the fireworks at Mt. Rushmore are set off tomorrow, July third, while the ones here at Keystone go off on the Fourth of July. Therefore, if someone mentions setting off dynamite during the fireworks, which is it, on the third of July at Mt. Rushmore or the Fourth of July here in town?”

“Wow,” was all Bekka could say. What had her brother stumbled into this time?

“Do you think we should inform the police or a park ranger?” asked Mom.

“I don’t know,” replied Uncle Paul. “We don’t have much to go on, and if we make a report, we don’t have much to tell them. No one knows where they live, or who they are, or what it is they plan to dynamite.”



Turning to Ben and Bekka, their father said, “I think we should just keep our eyes and ears open. If you see either man or the brown truck again, tell us. That way, we’ll report it at once.”

“I only know what one of the men looks like,” Ben said. “I looked at him in the theater and he was the one in the store. The other guy must have been in the truck.”

“Okay, well, at least you could identify one of them,” Uncle Paul added. “Thousands of people visit Mt. Rushmore each day, and it would be easy to miss them in a crowd. There will be a lot of people here tomorrow night as well as in Keystone on the Fourth, so if they are going to blow up something, we definitely have to stop them.”

Looking at his watch, Dad jumped. “Look what time it is. We have to get over to the campground and get the camper settled before dark. Want to join us for a s’more later this evening, Paul?”

“Sounds good to me,” he replied. “I haven’t had one since I was a Boy Scout. A quiet evening around a campfire will be the perfect ending to a busy day.”