

S.O.S. Rocky Hill - Leseprobe

One week and a lot of hard work later, the raft was ready to go. Jed and the others had spent almost the whole last day finishing it. After that, they had a quick swim and talked about their plans to raft down the river the next day. They could hardly wait.

Before they returned home, they decided it would be a good idea to christen the raft. They took a long piece of the rope that was left over from making the raft and tied an empty bottle to one end of it. Then they tied the other end to the branch of a tree above the raft. Jed held the bottle and got ready to throw it.

'Wait a minute,' said Joline. 'We've forgotten the most important thing!'

'What's that?' Carlos wanted to know.

'The name. When you christen a ship you need a name. What are we going to call our raft?'

'How about 'S.S. CJCJ'?' said Chester.

'What's that?' Jed asked.

'It stands for Chester and Joline, Carlos and Jed.'

'Or Carlos and Jed, Chester and Joline,' Carlos said.

'Yeah. I like that better, too,' said Jed.

'What does 'S.S.' mean?' Carlos asked.

'Sailing Ship,' Chester said. 'It's what they always call ships, like the S.S. Queen Mary.'

'I've got a better idea for a name,' said Jed. 'How about "S.S. Secret"? Because it's a secret raft. No one knows about it except us.'

'And Slo-Mo and his gang!' Carlos added quickly.

'Right. I forgot about them. What about 'S.S. Almost Secret'?' Jed laughed.

'Listen. We'll just call it "S.S. Rocky Hill", okay?' Joline looked around at the others. They all nodded.

'Ready, Jed?' Chester said. 'Take good aim! The bottle has to break, you know. It's bad luck if it doesn't.'

Jed hesitated. He looked unhappy.

'Hello, earth to Jed Crane! Are you there? It's time for you to throw the bottle,' Joline said with a smile.

'I - I don't know. I don't think it's such a good idea after all.'

'Huh? What's wrong with you, man?' Carlos said.

'If I throw the bottle it'll break into pieces and they'll all end up in the river.' There was a sad look in Jed's eyes.

'Hey, we'll pick up the pieces afterwards, if it'll make you feel any better,' Carlos said. He looked at Joline and Chester and rolled his eyes.

'Well - okay - but all the pieces,' Jed said slowly.

'Every one of them. Don't worry,' Carlos said, winking at the others.

'You've got a deal!' Jed said and laughed. Immediately, he raised the bottle high and said in a loud voice, 'I christen you S.S. Rocky Hill!' Then he threw it. It hit the side of the raft with a loud bang and broke. 'Hooray!' shouted the others and exchanged noisy high fives. As they continued to laugh and fool around, Jed stood there, watching them quietly.

After a while, Carlos noticed the way Jed was looking at them. 'Oh oh, let's get those pieces of glass out of the river before Jed here has a heart attack!' he said.

Late that evening, long after they had gone home, an old car came driving down the river road. It stopped near the raft. Four people got out, each of them carrying a flashlight. The driver made a sign to the others to be quiet.

For several moments, they stood there and looked up and down the river. Then they moved slowly down the riverbank to the edge of the water. There, before them in the light of their flashlights, lay the raft.

Laughing softly, the driver of the car turned to the others and said, 'Okay, guys, you know what to do. Let's get started!'

For the next hour the four of them worked quietly. No one said a word. When they were finished, the driver of the car went from one end of the raft to the other, checking what they had done. 'Good work,' he said finally and smiled at them. 'Let's get out of here!' He turned and started slowly up the riverbank, the others close behind him.