



The
**BOY SCOUTS
VICTORY**

THE BOY SCOUTS' VICTORY

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They sent the message quickly, accurately.

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CHAPTER I

THE CALL OF HOME

Reveille was over at the military school, and the three boys on the end of the line nearest the mess hall walked slowly toward the broad steps of the big brick building ahead. They differed greatly in type, but of this they were unconscious, for all were deep in thought.

"I am going home," said the tallest boy abruptly. "Had a letter from my sister last night. My word, they are having some ripping times over there!"

"Your father won't let you," said the second lad. "How can *you* go to England when *I* can't get back to Mexico?"

"I can jolly well go," said the tall boy. "I've been planning for this. Mid-term is over, and I haven't told you chaps, but I've been hoarding every cent of my allowance all winter. I have enough and to spare for second cabin."

"But your father wants you here out of harm's way," urged the Mexican.

"He *thinks* he does," said Nickell-Wheelerson smiling, his blue eyes flashing. "He *thinks* he does, but I know he is just trying me out. Here's the way it is. Dad's in the field and my second brother; you know my oldest brother was shot in the trenches in France two months ago. I'm nineteen. There are two little chaps to carry on the name and take care of the title, if the rest of us go. I've just *got* to get over there! Don't you see how it is?"

“Of course!” said the Mexican, his dark eyes glowing gloomily. “Of course you feel you’ve got to go! And here I must stay. I want to go home too.”

“It’s different with you,” said Nickell-Wheelerson, patting his companion on the back. “You keep out of that mess! Mexico is going to need you worse later on.”

“How about you?” demanded Morales, the Mexican. “I should think England would need you when that mess, as you call it, is finished.”

“She needs me now, and I know it, and dad knows it,” Nick assured him. “I’m going *home*! You’d better be glad you are not mixed up in this thing,” he said, turning to the third boy. “You are safe awhile yet, you old Greece-spot, you!”

“There are some Greeks fighting; a few on the European border of the Dardanelles,” said the boy addressed.

“Oh, of course you will get into it sooner or later,” said Nick, “but I’m banking on that queen of yours to stall things along as far as she can. She can’t put it off forever, though. You will be in it.”

“As sure as my name is Zaidos,” said the young Greek, “you are quite right! We will have to fight sooner or later.”

“Well, don’t cross bridges,” said Nick. “Sit tight, and I’ll go over there and help clean up things.”

Light-heartedly they raced up the steep hill leading from the parade ground to the mess hall.

A slim young orderly came out of the Adjutant’s office onto the terrace and looked about. Seeing the three boys, he called in a high,

clear voice, "Oh, you Nosey!" and as the Greek approached added formally, "Corporal Zaidos is wanted by the Adjutant."

"What's he going to get ragged for now, I wonder," mused Nickell-Wheelerson as he and Morales joined the crowd and went into the mess hall.

Zaidos did not come back. Nick watched the door anxiously. They were room-mates, and Nick was well aware of Nosey's tendencies in the way of breaking minor rules. As soon as he could get out of the mess, he hurried down past the Adjutant's office, and hastily framing an errand, went in. The room was empty.

Nick hurried over to the barracks to their room. Sitting on the side of his narrow bunk, his hands clenched, his face white, was Zaidos.

"What's the row, old top?" Nick sang out cheerfully as he made a great pretense of picking up his books and stuffing a couple of pencils in the top of his pigskin puttee.

The young Greek shook his head, and Nick realized that it was something indeed very serious with him.

"What *is* the row, old man?" he said again, coming over and sitting beside his friend. "What has the Adjutant got in for you this time?"

"Nothing," said Zaidos. "He had a cablegram from home. It is pretty bad, Nick...." He paused. "My father is sick; fact is, he is dying; and I've got to leave to-night."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Nick. "That's too bad! I'm more than sorry!"

"Yes, it's bad," said Zaidos. "And the queer thing is that I don't seem to feel as sorry about my father dying as I do to think that I don't *know* him any better. Think of it, Nick, I came over here to

school when I was not quite seven. My mother died when I was six, and since that I have seen my father twice; once when he came over here, and the year I went home. And it is not as though there was not plenty of money. I suppose my father is the richest man, or one of the richest men, in Greece. He's just—Oh, I don't know! He never seemed to be like a lot of fathers I have seen. I never could get *next* to him. And I've been pretty lonely most all my life. I have always planned to go back as soon as I finished school, and get acquainted with my father. I thought if I tried, I could make him like me. I suppose he does well enough, but I wanted to be chummy with him. I thought I could if I tried."

"You bet you could, Nosey!" said Nick, an arm over the bowed shoulder beside him. "You could warm up a wooden Indian, you old live-wire, you! I jolly well know you! You would get under the crust if anyone could! Perhaps it isn't as bad as they think. You go home, and perhaps your father will get better, and you will get to be the best chums in the world. Cheer up, old chap! It will come out all right. Do you really go to-night?"

"Yes, I go to-night. They have got my tickets, and now they are telephoning for my passage."

Nickell-Wheelerson sat thinking hard. Then he rose and bolted for the door.

"Wait!" called Zaidos. "I want you to help me pack, Nick."

But the big English boy had disappeared. In half an hour he returned, looking triumphant. He flung his trim military jacket on the bunk.

“That’s done for!” he cried. He jerked a trunk into the middle of the floor and, opening it, commenced to turn out its cluttered contents.

“Come on, Nosey!” he cried. “As our American brothers put it, ‘get a move on!’ We have about half a day to get packed.”

“Are you crazy?” demanded the Greek, staring at him.

“Not crazy, Nosey, dear chappie! Not crazy; merely going home!”

“Home?” repeated Zaidos feebly. “*Home?*”

“Home!” said Nick jubilantly. “With you! At least on the same steamer. So if they blow us up on the way over, we can soar hand in hand, old chum!”

“Well, when you get through raving, I wish you would tell how you did it.”

“I simply reminded the Adjutant that the arrangement was that I was remaining here at my own discretion, as per Pater’s written agreement. I said I had decided to go with you, although I had been thinking for a week that I might leave at any time. They mentioned money, and I showed my little roll. There is plenty. So I am going to-night with you. They have telephoned about a stateroom. That’s all! I’m going to give all my stuff away: I won’t come back.”

Nickell-Wheelerson never did come back. But that is another story.

There were a lot of poor marks made that afternoon. With the two most popular fellows in the school going off, there couldn’t be much studying. Everybody tried to help, and everybody got in the way and had to be stepped over or pushed over. But time passed, and good-byes were said, and the night on the swift train passed,

too; and when they looked back, the following day in New York was a hurried whirl. And then they smelt the unchanging smell of the docks; sea salt and paint and tar.

They watched the last person down the gangplank, a weeping woman it was. Then they shouted farewell to the kindly shores, and the steadfast Lady of Liberty on Governor's Island. She seemed to salute the passing ship with her uplifted torch, and the boys felt that peace and safety and prosperity lay behind them.

Then some nights and days went swiftly by, and one morning the boys clasped hands and gruffly spoke their farewells. Nickell-Wheelerson went home to find that his older brother slept in a lowly grave somewhere in France. His father, dead of his wounds, lay in the castle hall, and the boy Nick answered wearily when sorrowing footmen called him "My Lord."

But that is really the beginning of the other story.

Zaidos hurried on his way alone, and one bright morning, after many adventures, stood once more in Saloniki.

A porter came up to him, and at the same moment a man in the livery of his father's house approached and saluted him. "Your father urges you to hasten, Excellency," he said.

"Is my father very ill?" asked Zaidos.

"Very ill indeed, sir," said the man.

They started through the station and as they left the building a man approached. He spoke to Zaidos, but the boy, having spent years of his life in America, failed to catch the rapidly spoken words.

He turned to the house-servant, who stood with bulging eyes.

“What does he say?” he asked.

The man was speaking violently, then beseechingly, to the stranger, who was in uniform.

“What is it?” again demanded Zaidos. He began to get the run of the conversation, but as he made it out, it was too preposterous to consider. The officer laid a hand on his shoulder and shook his head.

“You will *have* to come,” he said. “YOU ARE WANTED FOR THE ARMY.”

“But my father?” said Zaidos, alarmed.

The man shrugged his shoulders. “He will die the same whether you come or not. Come!”

A grim look came into the boy’s face. It alarmed the servant.

“Go, go, master,” he begged. “You do not know. They take everyone. What is to be must be. Go, I entreat you, without violence. I do not want to go and tell your father that I have seen you slain before my eyes. I will tell him you are here, and that you will come later.” He drew back and bowed to the officer, who kept a hand on Zaidos’ shoulder.

“Yes, tell him I will come soon,” said Zaidos. “Go to him quickly.”

The man turned and hurried away.

“Give up all thought of going,” said the officer. “It is a pity—one owes a great duty to one’s father; but we need you now. And the need of country comes first.”

“But Greece is not in the war!” said Zaidos as they hurried along the street.

“No, not yet; but there are places enough to guard, so we need more men than we dreamed. But I talk too much. Here is the headquarters. Let me advise you not to bother the Colonel with demands to visit your home.”

They entered the big, dingy room of the police station which had been transformed into a sort of recruiting station. The officer in charge was an overbearing First Lieutenant who was overworked, tired and irritable. He had come from a distant part of Greece, and the name of Zaidos carried no weight with him. He shook his head when Zaidos made his request. He even smiled a little. “Too thin, too thin!” he said. “I should say that all the mothers and fathers, and most of the uncles and aunts and cousins in the world are ill,” he sneered. “No, you can’t go. Get back there in line and wait for your squad to be outfitted.”

Zaidos shrugged his shoulders and obeyed, well knowing that, once in uniform, even that display of feeling would be absolutely out of order. He had been too long in a military school to misunderstand military procedure, and he knew that whatever queer chance had placed him in his present position, the thing was done now. He was to see real fighting.

Zaidos had a lion’s heart and was absolutely ignorant of fear, but he worried when he thought of the possible effect on his father. He, poor man, would feel that his natural wish to behold his only son once more had placed the boy in a position of the gravest danger; indeed, in the path of almost certain death. What the effect of this knowledge would be on his health, Zaidos trembled to consider.

But he was powerless to avoid the shock to his father, and once more shrugging his shoulders he stepped into line.

After a tedious delay, during which the men and boys who were unaccustomed to any sort of drill shifted uneasily from foot to foot, shuffled, twisted, and fretted generally, while Zaidos alone stood easily at attention, the order was given for the squad to go into another room.

Here they were registered, examined physically, and equipped with uniforms. Then they were finally taken to the mess hall and provided with a wholesome, plain meal which they proceeded to enjoy to the utmost. Zaidos could not eat. He toyed with the food, his quick brain ever planning some way by which he could get to his father. The more he thought of it the more it seemed to be his duty to do so at *any* cost. But he seemed surrounded by barriers. He could not see a way clear. So he resigned himself for the present, and marched to the dormitory where his squad was quartered. It had been a trying and exhausting day for everyone and his peasant companions, accustomed to bed-time at sunset, soon threw themselves down and slept.

The sleeping quarters were on the ground floor. Zaidos found his pallet behind a great door opening on the street. It was open a trifle, but a heavy chain secured it from opening any further. Zaidos stuck his head out. There was enough space for that. It was the blackest night he had ever seen, if one could be said to *see* anything as dark.

A sentry padded up and down in the blackness. Zaidos smiled. The man could certainly not see five feet ahead of him. All the city

lights were out for safety's sake. As he approached, Zaidos drew back, and lay staring at the ceiling.

A stifled sob startled him. He turned. On the next pallet a young fellow lay face downward, and muffled his weeping in the coarse blanket. For an hour Zaidos listened. The shaken breathing and occasional sobs continued. Zaidos could stand it no longer. He reached over and let a friendly clasp fall on the heaving shoulder.

"What is it?" he whispered in his best Greek.

The young fellow turned to him eagerly, glad of sympathy. In a rush of words that made it hard for Zaidos to understand, he whispered his story. There was a wife and a little, little baby, "Oh, *so* little!" far up on the mountain-side; they would starve; surely, *surely* they would starve! They did not know what had become of him. Zaidos tried in vain to calm the man. He could not do so and finally dropped into a restless sleep with the man's stifled sobs ringing in his ears.

Zaidos had to concede that the man's fate was a hard one. He was only nineteen years of age. The girl-wife was seventeen. As Zaidos dropped asleep he was reflecting that no doubt nine-tenths of the men sleeping in that room carried burdens as well as the young mountaineer and himself.

He was wakened awhile later by a touch on the shoulder nearest the door. A voice addressed him. For a moment Zaidos was unable to locate it. Then he discovered that it was coming from the partly open door. It was the young husband who had sobbed in the dark.

“Waken, friend!” said the low whisper. “Waken! Farewell! I go! There is a small packet under my pallet. I forgot it. Will you hand it quickly before the sentry turns?”

“Don’t do a fool stunt like that,” said Zaidos in English.

The deserter repeated, “Quickly, quickly!” and as Zaidos handed him the packet he disappeared, the night swallowing him in its blackness. Zaidos crawled to the door and, flat on the floor, put his head out the opening into the street. All was quiet. The sentry marched up and down the long block with the dragging slowness of a weary man. The mountaineer had escaped!

Somewhere a clock struck eleven booming strokes. Zaidos could not believe that it was so early, but immediately another faint chime verified the first. Here and there in the room heavy snoring or muttered words sounded. There were no guards in the room as the door was locked.

Eleven o’clock! Five hours before daylight. A daring thought flashed into Zaidos’ head. He knelt and once more leaned through the opening of the door. He thanked his schoolboy leanness. There *was* enough space! He waited until the sentry’s heavy footfall dragged to the end of the block; then with a struggle he twisted through the door and stood in the open, deserted street.

In the years of his absence he had forgotten the city, but he remembered the general directions, and only yesterday he had seen in the distance the gleaming white marble walls of his home standing on the beautiful headland overlooking the blue waters of the bay. He heard the sentry approaching and, trusting to instinct, turned into the nearest street and hurried away.

It seemed to Zaidos that the journey was endless, yet he went like the wind. He found himself searching the east for dawn. His instinct did for him what sight and reason would have failed to do. In daylight he would have been lost, but in that black darkness he kept his course, and finally the great white building where his fathers for generations had lived loomed mysteriously before him. He hurried up the broad stairs and besieged the massive doors with heavy blows. A startled footman opened it, and with a curt word Zaidos entered and demanded his father. The man bowed and led him up to a closed door. Here he knocked softly and a stout old woman answered. She looked hard at the young man in uniform, then with a little cry clasped him in a warm embrace. It was his old nurse.

“Ah,” she cried, “God has answered my prayers! You are in time!”

A chill of apprehension swept over the boy. “Is he so ill?” he asked.

“He has waited for you,” she answered. “I told him you would come. I knew it. He has been dying for many days, but he would not go until he saw you.”

“Let me come,” said Zaidos. He dashed past the old woman, the nurses and the doctors, and was clasped in his father’s arms.

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