

# JO AND NAT

BY  
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THIS STORY BEGAN LAST WEEK.

## Synopsis of Preceding Part

Jo Morris, the village carpenter's apprentice, one day caught a boy stealing laths, and compelled him to give them up. The next day, when Jo was going along the side of a garden wall with a box of tools, he was attacked, in revenge, by five boys, and would have been badly pummeled had not William Dodge, the uncle of Nat Davis, the "toughest boy in New-ton," who led the attack, suddenly appeared in search of his nephew, evidently very angry about something.

At sight of him Nat and three other boys leaped over the wall, but the fourth boy of the attacking party concealed himself in a tree-box nearby.

While Jo was collecting his scattered tools he found on the pavement a wallet containing a dollar bill and a few old coins, but no clue to its owner. He put it in his pocket and went on his way to work. The boy in the tree-box saw Jo pick up the wallet.

Soon afterward, when the other boys clambered back over the garden wall, and Nat in great alarm, declared he had lost a pocket-book, the tree-box boy told him Jo Morris had it. They then started for the river, but at the end of the wall, Nat's uncle jumped out from hiding and grabbed him, and the other boys ran off.

Mr. Dodge shook Nat well, demanding the stolen pocket-book, but Nat denied having it, although it was he who had stolen it, and he had abstracted from it most of the money. He said Jo Morris stole it, and if his uncle would go to the carpenter shop, it would be found in Jo's possession. The uncle started, but insisted on Nat's going along, too. This did not suit Nat; he went a short distance, then dashed off into the woods, his uncle chasing him. He kept on until he came to the dead trunk of an old oak tree, up which he climbed, and at the top dropped over into the large hole in its centre, where he hung suspended by his hands. His uncle kept on further into the woods, because, on account of intervening bushes, the man could not see the boy climb.

When the boy tried to get out of the hollow tree he slipped and fell down inside it to the bottom, where he was compelled to stay several hours before any one passed near enough to hear his cries. Then Jo Morris came along, early in the evening, and, after seeing it was necessary to cut the old tree down in order to release Nat, went to the carpenter shop for a saw and an ax. He did not come back, and at eleven o'clock that night Nat was weeping and raving, and shaking inside that old tree trunk, believing that Jo had purposely left him to his fate.

He did not know that at that very moment, firstly through his own false accusation and next through an endeavor to aid him, Jo was a prisoner in the village jail, charged by William Dodge with stealing money, and by Mr. Walpole, the carpenter, with burglary for breaking into the shop and the tool chest.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A HEROIC IMPULSE.

**A**BOUT one o'clock, from sheer exhaustion, Nat Davis fell asleep. It was a fitful, phantom-haunted slumber. About two o'clock he awoke, fevered, cramped and confused.

Voices in the near vicinity had awakened him.

Ah, Jo Morris had repented! He had not come to Nat's rescue himself, but he had sent others.

With heart of hope and expectancy, Nat placed his eye to the single loophole of observation the tree afforded.

It was pitch dark—a cloudy, gloomy morning—but a sharp circle of light showed five feet away from the tree, and it fell upon a strange-looking carpet-bag that held tools.

Nat caught the outline of two rough, bearded men bending over the tools. They had come purposely to rescue him. Oh, there could be no doubt of it.

A rope, fine as silk in its well-knit strands, lay in a small, compact roll on the ground.

After his terrible experience, Nat would be willing even to attempt escape by its means, if strong hands served to pull him through the crooked bend in the tree.

He was about to call out in joyful tones, but he paused.

Peering closer, he saw that the light proceeded from a masked lantern.

He discerned a peculiarity in the tools that would have puzzled even a mechanic.

The chisels were curiously shaped, and the saws and files did not resemble those found in the outfit of an ordinary artisan.

The men also seemed to be utterly unaware of his proximity, and were engrossed in examining and sorting out their tools.

"They're all right, Barlow," fell on Nat's strained hearing.

"Yes," replied the other man. "I guess they will do the job on Squire Lane's strong locks."

Squire Lane was a familiar name in all the district about the village. His was the brick-walled domain where Nat and the four other boys had attacked Jo Morris. The squire was the wealthiest resident of the county.

"Ah," thought Nat, "these men are traveling tinkers or locksmiths, and Squire Lane has sent for them to do some work. So much the better; they are strangers."

"There's only one bad thing," spoke the first voice again.

"Well, what's that, Roger?"

"If we had a boy to show us the details of the place. It ain't known to us, except by hearsay."

A boy! Here was an opportunity for imprisoned Nat to win liberty, and pay for it in work.

"I'll do it, mister! I'll be glad to do it!" shouted excited Nat.

A singular scene followed his announcement. It had startled the two men terribly. One of them drew a revolver and sprang quickly to his feet. The other, swift as magic, slid the dark slide over the lantern and abruptly shut out the light.

"Roger, what was that?" asked an apprehensive voice.

"It's me!" cried Nat, now bound to be

heard. "Don't get scared; don't shoot, mister; don't run away. It's a poor, unfortunate boy that has fallen into a tree and can't get out. I've been here nigh forty hours."

"Take care, Barlow; it may be a trap," said Roger, warningly.

"It ain't no trap! It's me, a harmless boy!" cried Nat, frantically. "Oh, please don't leave me! I'll starve to death and die if you do. Say, mister, I know every inch of ground around Squire Lane's, and I'll show you free, and tell the squire all about you, if you'll help me out."

There was the low murmur of quick, suspicious voices. Suddenly the light flared again. Roger advanced with it toward the tree.

"Now, where are you?" he asked.

"Here!" called out Nat, in a sepulchral tone. "I've got a little breathing-hole in the tree. Can't you see me out?"

"No; keep quiet, or I'll leave you here. Shall we help him, Barlow?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He went in at the top. He'll have to come out that way."

"We'll tell you when we get there. Now show us the best way of getting near it without being seen by any one."

"All right."

The men put the tools and the lantern in the carpet-bag, and followed Nat as he fairly skipped along, overjoyed at regaining his freedom.

"That's the place," he said, finally, as they came in sight of the high brick wall surrounding the Lane mansion. "It's just a step around to the gate."

"Hold on!" ordered Barlow. "We don't want to go in at the gate."

"No?" replied Nat, surprisedly.

"No."

"How then?"

"Over the wall. We want to have a look at the house from the rear."

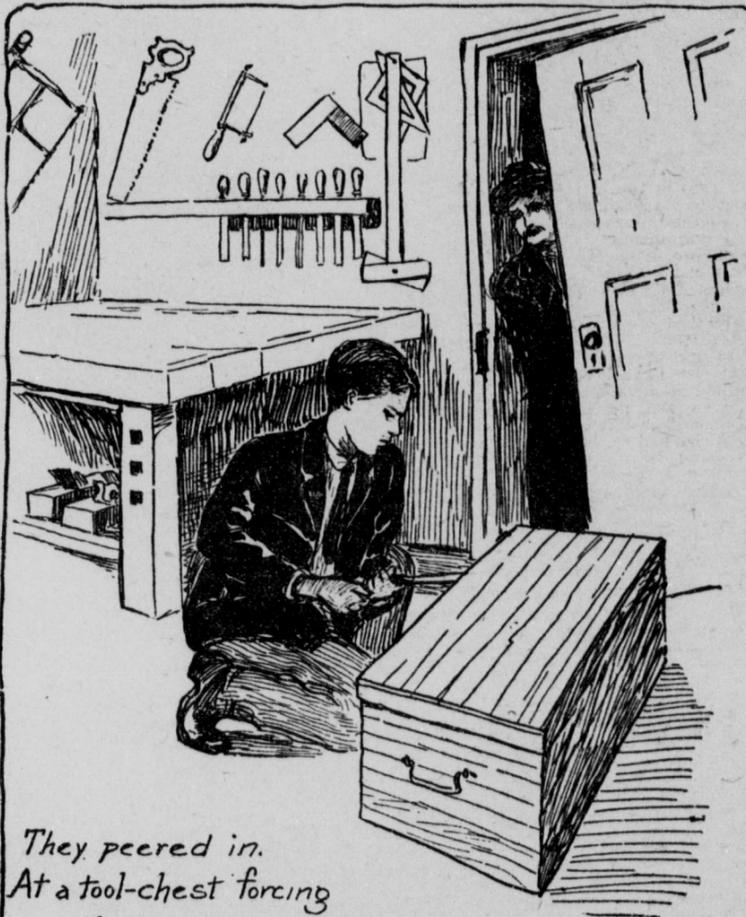
"Then all you've got to do is to climb over the wall."

"Exactly. You go first."

The three scaled the wall, and stood in the garden a minute later.

"Go on, Roger," spoke Barlow, in a low tone of voice.

"Alone?"



*They peered in.  
At a tool-chest forcing  
the lock, was Jo Morris*

"All right. Give me the rope. That's it." Delighted Nat heard Roger climb up the outside of the tree.

A minute later something struck his head. He clasped it—a rope.

"Got it?" called down the man.

"Yes."

"Then climb up it. I'll hold it steady."

Nat drew himself up a foot or two.

"I can't go any farther!" he shouted.

"Why not?"

"I'm wedged in. It's too narrow."

"Wait. I'll pull you through."

It was a tight squeeze. Every bone in Nat's body seemed to crack at the close contact, but he finally reached the top of the tree, clambered over it and dropped to the ground with a yell of relief and thankfulness.

"Shut up!" ordered Barlow, gruffly, glancing around keenly.

"Yes, sir, I will. Oh, ain't I glad!"

"Let's have a look at you."

Barlow cast the direct rays of the lantern full in Nat's face, and stared at him fixedly.

Nat stood the inspection coolly.

"I think he'll do, Roger," said Barlow.

Roger had also descended to the ground. He took Nat in hand.

"Do you live here?" he asked.

"I won't long!" responded Nat, smartly, getting saucy and reckless, now he was out of his trouble.

"Why not?"

"Don't get treated well, and I hooked a little money yesterday," replied Nat, barefaced and candid.

"I should say he would do, Barlow!" ejaculated Roger. "See here, lad, we can make your fortune if you do as we say."

"I'm agreeable," replied Nat, pertly, "if it ain't hard work."

"No work at all. You say you are acquainted with Squire Lane's house?"

"I should say so. Been in it a hundred times."

"Then come with us."

"What to do?"

"Yes; reconnoitre and report. And you," to Nat, "stay right here and keep quiet."

Nat started at the ominous action and tones of the two men, but he obeyed Barlow.

In a few minutes, Roger returned.

"Well?" asked Barlow, quickly.

"Everything right."

"How's the doors?"

"There's a back kitchen door barred, but a side window."

"Could the boy—"

"Exactly. You post him."

Barlow grabbed Nat's arm so quickly and fiercely that the boy uttered a slight cry of alarm.

"See here, lad," whispered Barlow, menacingly, "you are to go with us to the house, climb through a window, and unlock a door to let us in. Do you understand?"

"Why, you're burglars!"

"Shut up, you idiot! Another word like that, and I'll silence you in a way you won't like."

"I don't want to—"

"March on! You make one treacherous movement, or refuse, and I'll settle you!"

Barlow had drawn a revolver, and held Nat firmly.

The boy was terrified. The truth had just flashed across his mind.

He was aiding two desperate men in a crime that had bold, deliberate robbery for its motive, and possible murder as its result.

To "hook" a few dollars from a relative, rob an orchard, or carry away melons was no particular crime in the estimation of Nat Davis, but the present bold procedure appalled him.

He had read of burglars and their terrible deeds. To this his wayward steps had led.

At that moment the true enormity of crime flashed over the misguided mind of Nat Davis, and he never forgot the lesson.

What should he do? He dared not disobey the fierce-visaged man who dragged him toward the house.

"There's the window," said Barlow, in a low, threatening voice. "Loosen it, Roger;

now, then, you climb in and unlock the door. I'll watch you, and shoot if you flinch."

Nat obeyed. He was trembling with terror; he felt like calling out and warning the squire's family.

He was sick at heart at the fears of plunder and murder that his vivid imagination aroused.

But he feared the leveled weapon, too. He unbarred the door.

"Plucky lad!" commended Roger. "We'll give you a fifty for tonight's work. Can we trust you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Nat, faintly. "Hold this bag, then, with the tools we don't need. Watch the garden, and if any one comes, whistle three times."

"Yes, sir."

Nat took the carpet-bag. The two men disappeared inside the kitchen, and Nat heard them working at the lock of the door beyond.

What could he do? By a strange anomaly of nature he as much desired to prevent crime now as had he the day before himself revealed in it on a smaller scale.

A heroic impulse nerved him to prevent the success of the plans of the burglars.

He slung the bag over one arm, arose to his feet, glanced excitedly around him, and acted on a rash suggestion of audacity.

There was a large bell on the wing of the mansion. It had been placed there some years previously by Squire Lane, when he operated a factory on the street in the rear, and was rung morning, noon and night.

When he abandoned the factory, the bell went into disuse. The rope was gone. It could only be reached from the roof.

"I'll do it!"

Without a second's hesitation, he sprang to a barrel, thence to the sloping roof of the kitchen, thence to that of the wing of the house.

Clang—clang—clang—clang—clang! Awakening the silent echoes, a fierce, rude summons, the metallic tones bore their warning of peril upon the wings of the breeze, arousing all the sleeping village to vigilance and alarm.

## CHAPTER V.

### ARRESTED.

**W**HEN Jo Morris returned to the village from the clearing near the tree in which Nat Davis was, he never dreamed of the strange and startling adventures into which his acquaintance with William Dodge's nephew was fated to involve him.

Jo had no knowledge of Nat's story about his connection with the stealing of Mr. Dodge's pocket-book.

When he that day went to dinner at the home of the carpenter, Mr. Walpole, for whom he worked, he placed the pocket-book he had found in his little box of clothing for safe-keeping, and, thinking no more of it, hurried away to the shop.

When Mr. Dodge came to the shop late that afternoon, and inquired for Mr. Walpole, he glanced sharply and suspiciously at Jo.

The boy did not notice this, however, and supposed that Dodge had called to settle for the work done at his office that day.

In reality, William Dodge was on the trail of the stolen pocket-book, and although he firmly believed his nephew had taken it, he decided that there might be something in Nat's story, and he determined to learn if Jo had been an accomplice in the theft.

William Dodge knew very little of Jo. The boy was known in the village only as a new arrival, who was handy with tools, and who had, a month previous, secured work from Walpole.

Nat Davis' uncle went at once to the carpenter's home, after leaving the shop, which was just shutting up, and Jo, wishing to cut some branches in the woods before dark, decided to take a cold supper later, and did not go home.

William Dodge found Mr. Walpole packing a valise. The carpenter had received orders to figure on a large contract in another town, and was hurrying to catch the seven o'clock train.

Dodge told the man the object of his visit. A pocket-book containing twenty-five dollars was missing from his office desk. Jo Morris had worked there that day; his nephew Nat accused Jo of stealing it.

The carpenter laughed in Dodge's face at the bare thought of the implication of his favorite apprentice in the theft.

"Why, Dodge, Jo is the most honest boy in town—an ambitious, trustworthy lad. I'd trust him with thousands."

"Would you?" remarked Dodge, drily.

"Well, you think more of boys than I do, if you would."

"I'm sure your suspicions are unfounded."

"Maybe they are. All the same, I demand an investigation."

"What do you mean?"

"Has the boy a room here?"

"Yes."

"Search it, then—and the boy himself."

"Well, Dodge, I won't do it."

Mr. Walpole was indignant.

William Dodge's eyes flashed angrily.

"You won't eh?" he replied, with rising color.

"No, I won't!"

"You mean to shield him, then?" muttered Dodge, in an angry tone.

"I mean to protect him from insult. He's no thief!"

"Then he won't object to the search. See here, Cyrus Walpole, I've cashed your notes, and accommodated you in the past. I'll have my way in this affair, or you and I do no more business."

Mr. Walpole frowned annoyedly.

CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE