

***HORATIO JR.  
ALGER***



***JOE THE HOTEL  
BOY; OR,  
WINNING OUT  
BY PLUCK***

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**Horatio Jr. Alger**

# **Joe the Hotel Boy; Or, Winning out by Pluck**

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# **PREFACE.**

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A number of years ago the author of this story set out to depict life among the boys of a great city, and especially among those who had to make their own way in the world. Among those already described are the ways of newsboys, match boys, peddlers, street musicians, and many others.

In the present tale are related the adventures of a country lad who, after living for some time with a strange hermit, goes forth into the world and finds work, first in a summer hotel and then in a large hotel in the city. Joe finds his road no easy one to travel, and he has to face not a few hardships, but in the end all turns out well.

It may be added here that many of the happenings told of in this story, odd as they may seem, are taken from life. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction, and life itself is full of romance from start to finish.

If there is a moral to be drawn from this story, it is a twofold one, namely, that honesty is always the best policy, and that if one wishes to succeed in life he must stick at his work steadily and watch every opportunity for advancement.

# **JOE THE HOTEL BOY.**

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# CHAPTER I.

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OUT IN A STORM.

“What do you think of this storm, Joe?”

“I think it is going to be a heavy one, Ned. I wish we were back home,” replied Joe Bodley, as he looked at the heavy clouds which overhung Lake Tandy.

“Do you think we'll catch much rain before we get back?” And Ned, who was the son of a rich man and well dressed, looked at the new suit of clothes that he wore.

“I'm afraid we shall, Ned. Those black clouds back of Mount Sam mean something.” “If this new suit gets soaked it will be ruined,” grumbled Ned, and gave a sigh.

“I am sorry for the suit, Ned; but I didn't think it was going to rain when we started.”

“Oh, I am not blaming you, Joe. It looked clear enough this morning. Can't we get to some sort of shelter before the rain reaches us?”

“We can try.”

“Which is the nearest shelter?”

Joe Bodley mused for a moment.

“The nearest that I know of is over at yonder point, Ned. It's an old hunting lodge that used to belong to the Cameron family. It has been deserted for several years.”

“Then let us row for that place, and be quick about it,” said Ned Talmadge. “I am not going to get wet if I can help it.”

As he spoke he took up a pair of oars lying in the big rowboat he and Joe Bodley occupied. Joe was already rowing



and the rich boy joined in, and the craft was headed for the spot Joe had pointed out.

The lake was one located in the central part of the State of Pennsylvania. It was perhaps a mile wide and more than that long, and surrounded by mountains and long ranges of hills. At the lower end of the lake was a small settlement of scant importance and at the upper end, where there was a stream of no mean size, was the town of Riverside. At Riverside were situated several summer hotels and boarding houses, and also the elegant mansion in which Ned Talmadge resided, with his parents and his four sisters.

Joe Bodley was as poor as Ned Talmadge was rich, yet the two lads were quite friendly. Joe knew a good deal about hunting and fishing, and also knew all about handling boats. They frequently went out together, and Ned insisted upon paying the poorer boy for all extra services.

Joe's home was located on the side of the mountain which was just now wrapped in such dark and ominous looking clouds. He lived with Hiram Bodley, an old man who was a hermit. The home consisted of a cabin of two rooms, scantily furnished. Hiram Bodley had been a hunter and guide, but of late years rheumatism had kept him from doing work and Joe was largely the support of the pair,—taking out pleasure parties for pay whenever he could, and fishing and hunting in the between times, and using or selling what was gained thereby.

There was a good deal of a mystery surrounding Joe's parentage. It was claimed that he was a nephew of Hiram Bodley, and that, after the death of his mother and sisters,

his father had drifted out to California and then to Australia. What the real truth concerning him was we shall learn later.

Joe was a boy of twelve, but constant life in the open air had made him tall and strong and he looked to be several years older.

He had dark eyes and hair, and was much tanned by the sun. The rowboat had been out a good distance on the lake and a minute before the shore was gained the large drops of rain began to fall.

“We are going to get wet after all!” cried Ned, chagrined.

“Pull for all you are worth and we'll soon be under the trees,” answered Joe.

They bent to the oars, and a dozen more strokes sent the rowboat under a clump of pines growing close to the edge of the lake. Just as the boat struck the bank and Ned leaped out there came a great downpour which made the surface of Lake Tandy fairly sizzle.

“Run to the lodge, Ned; I'll look after the boat!” shouted Joe.

“But you'll get wet.”

“Never mind; run, I tell you!”

Thus admonished, Ned ran for the old hunting lodge, which was situated about two hundred feet away. Joe remained behind long enough to secure the rowboat and the oars and then he followed his friend.

Just as one porch of the old lodge was reached there came a flash of lightning, followed by a clap of thunder that made Ned jump. Then followed more thunder and lightning, and the rain came down steadily.

“Ugh! I must say I don't like this at all,” remarked Ned, as he crouched in a corner of the shelter. “I hope the lightning doesn't strike this place.”

“We can be thankful that we were not caught out in the middle of the lake, Ned.”

“I agree on that, Joe,—but it doesn't help matters much. Oh, dear me!” And Ned shrank down, as another blinding flash of lightning lit up the scene.

It was not a comfortable situation and Joe did not like it any more than did his friend. But the hermit's boy was accustomed to being out in the elements, and therefore was not so impressed by what was taking place.

“The rain will fill the boat,” said Ned, presently.

“Never mind, we can easily bail her out or turn her over.”

“When do you think this storm will stop?”

“In an hour or two, most likely. Such storms never last very long. What time is it, Ned?”

“Half-past two,” answered Ned, after consulting the handsome watch he carried.

“Then, if it clears in two hours, we'll have plenty of time to get home before dark.”

“I don't care to stay here two hours,” grumbled Ned. “It's not a very inviting place.”

“It's better than being out under the trees,” answered Joe, cheerfully. The hermit's boy was always ready to look on the brighter side of things.

“Oh, of course.”

“And we have a fine string of fish, don't forget that, Ned. We were lucky to get so many before the storm came up.”

“Do you want the fish, or are you going to let me take them?”

“I'd like to have one fish. You may take the others.”

“Not unless you let me pay for them, Joe.”

“Oh, you needn't mind about paying me.”

“But I insist,” came from Ned. “I won't touch them otherwise.”

“All right, you can pay me for what I caught.”

“No, I want to pay for all of them. Your time is worth something, and I know you have to support your—the old hermit now.”

“All right, Ned, have your own way. Yes, I admit, I need all the money I get.”

“Is the old hermit very sick?”

“Not so sick, but his rheumatism keeps him from going out hunting or fishing, so all that work falls to me.”

“It's a good deal on your shoulders, Joe.”

“I make the best of it, for there is nothing else to do.”

“By the way, Joe, you once spoke to me about—well, about yourself,” went on Ned, after some hesitation. “Did you ever learn anything more? You need not tell me if you don't care to.”

At these words Joe's face clouded for an instant.

“No, I haven't learned a thing more, Ned.”

“Then you don't really know if you are the hermit's nephew or not?”

“Oh, I think I am, but I don't know whatever became of my father.”

“Does the hermit think he is alive?”

“He doesn't know, and he hasn't any means of finding out.”

“Well, if I were you, I'd find out, some way or other.”

“I'm going to find out—some day,” replied Joe. “But, to tell the truth, I don't know how to go at it. Uncle Hiram doesn't like to talk about it. He thinks my father did wrong to go away. I imagine they had a quarrel over it.”

“Has he ever heard from your father since?”

“Not a word.”

“Did he write?”

“He didn't know where to write to.”

“Humph! It is certainly a mystery, Joe.”

“You are right, Ned; and as I said before, I am going to solve it some time, even if it takes years of work to do it,” replied the hermit's boy.

# CHAPTER II.

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### A MYSTERIOUS CONVERSATION.

The old hunting lodge where the two boys had sought shelter was a rambling affair, consisting of a square building built of logs, and half a dozen wings, running to the rear and to one side. There were also two piazzas, and a shed, where wood had been kept for winter use.

“In another year or two this old lodge will fall down,” remarked Ned, as he gazed around him.

“It must have been a nice place in its day,” returned Joe. “What a pity to let it run down in this fashion.”

“The rain is coming around on this side now, Joe; let us shift to the other.”

The hermit's boy was willing, and watching their chance, between the downpours, they ran around to another portion of the old lodge.

“It certainly is a little better here,” observed Joe, as he dashed the water from his cap.

A minute later the rumbling of the thunder ceased for the time being, and they heard a murmur of voices coming from one of the rooms of the lodge.

“Why, somebody must be here!” ejaculated Ned. “Who can it be?”

“Two men, by their voices,” answered the hermit's boy. “Wait till I take a look at them?”

“Why not go in?” questioned the rich youth, carelessly.

“They may not be persons that we would care to meet, Ned. You know there are some undesirable characters about

the lake.”

“That's true.”

Not far off was a narrow window, the panes of glass of which had long since been broken out. Moving toward this, Joe peered into the apartment beyond.

Close to an old fireplace, in which a few sticks of half-green timber were burning, sat two men. Both were well dressed, and Joe rightfully surmised that they were from the city. Each wore a hunting outfit and had a gun, but neither had any game.

“We came on a wild-goose chase,” grumbled one, as he stirred the fire. “Got nothing but a soaking for our pains.”

“Never mind, Malone,” returned the other, who was evidently the better educated of the two. “As we had to make ourselves scarce in the city this was as good a place to come to as any.”

“Don't you think they'll look for us here?”

“Why should they? We were sharp enough not to leave any trail behind—at least, I was.”

“Reckon I was just as sharp, Caven.”

“You had to be—otherwise you would have been nabbed.” Gaff Caven chuckled to himself. “We outwitted them nicely, I must say. We deserve credit.”

“I've spent more than half of what I got out of the deal,” went on Pat Malone, for such was the full name of one of the speakers.

“I've spent more than that. But never mind, my boy, fortune will favor us again in the near future.”

A crash of thunder drowned out the conversation following, and Joe hurried back to where he had left Ned.

“Well, have you found out who they are?” demanded the rich youth, impatiently.

“No, Ned, but I am sure of one thing.”

“What is that?”

“They are two bad men.”

“What makes you think that?”

“They said something about having to get out of the city, and one spoke about being nabbed. Evidently they went away to avoid arrest.”

At this announcement Ned Talmadge whistled softly to himself.

“Phew! What shall we do about it?” he asked, with a look of concern on his usually passive face.

Joe shrugged his shoulders.

“I don't know what to do.”

“Let us listen to what they have to say. Maybe we'll strike some clew to what they have been doing.”

“Would that be fair—to play the eaves-dropper?”

“Certainly—if they are evildoers. Anybody who has done wrong ought to be locked up for it,” went on Ned boldly.

With caution the two boys made their way to the narrow window, and Ned looked in as Joe had done. The backs of the two men were still towards the opening, so the lads were not discovered.

“What is this new game?” they heard the man called Malone ask, after a peal of thunder had rolled away among the mountains.

“It's the old game of a sick miner with some valuable stocks to sell,” answered Gaff Caven.

“Have you got the stocks?”



“To be sure—one thousand shares of the Blue Bell Mine, of Montana, said to be worth exactly fifty thousand dollars.”

“Phew! You're flying high, Gaff!” laughed Pat Malone.

“And why not, so long as I sell the stocks?”

“What did they cost you?”

“Well, they didn't cost me fifty thousand dollars,” and Gaff Caven closed one eye suggestively.

“You bet they didn't! More than likely they didn't cost you fifty dollars.”

“What, such elegantly engraved stocks as those?”

“Pooh! I can buy a bushel-basket full of worthless stocks for a dollar,” came from Pat Malone. “But that isn't here nor there. I go into the deal if you give me my fair share of the earnings.”

“I'll give you one-third, Pat, and that's a fair share, I think.”

“Why not make it half?”

“Because I'll do the most of the work. It's no easy matter to find a victim.” And Gaff Caven laughed broadly. He had a good-appearing face, but his eyes were small and not to be trusted.

“All right, I'll go in for a third then. But how soon is the excitement to begin?”

“Oh, in a week or so. I've got the advertisements in the papers already.”

“Not in New York?”

“No, it's Philadelphia this time. Perhaps I'll land one of our Quaker friends.”

“Don't be so sure. The Quakers may be slow but they generally know what they are doing.”

More thunder interrupted the conversation at this point, and when it was resumed the two men talked in such low tones that only an occasional word could be caught by the two boys.

“They surely must be rascals,” remarked Ned, in a whisper. “I'm half of a mind to have them locked up.”

“That's easier said than done,” answered Joe. “Besides, we haven't any positive proofs against them.”

The wind was now rising, and it soon blew so furiously that the two boys were forced to seek the shelter of the woodshed, since they did not deem it wise to enter the lodge so long as the two men were inside. They waited in the shed for fully half an hour, when, as suddenly as it had begun, the storm let up and the sun began to peep forth from between the scattering clouds.

“Now we can go home if we wish,” said Joe. “But for my part, I'd like to stay and see what those men do, and where they go to.”

“Yes, let us stay by all means,” answered the rich youth.

They waited a few minutes longer and then Ned suggested that they look into the window of the lodge once more. The hermit's boy was willing, and they approached the larger building with caution.

Much to their astonishment the two strangers had disappeared.

“Hullo! what do you make of that?” cried Ned, in amazement.

“Perhaps they are in one of the other rooms,” suggested Joe.

At the risk of being caught, they entered the lodge and looked into one room after another. Every apartment was vacant, and they now saw that the fire in the fireplace had been stamped out.

"They must have left while we were in the woodshed," said Ned.

"Maybe they are out on the lake," answered the hermit's boy, and he ran down to the water's edge, followed by his companion. But though they looked in every direction, not a craft of any kind was to be seen.

"Joe, they didn't take to the water, consequently they must have left by one of the mountain paths."

"That is true, and if they did they'll have no nice time in getting through. All the bushes are sopping wet, and the mud is very slippery in places."

They walked to the rear of the lodge and soon found the footprints of the two strangers. They led through the bushes and were lost at a small brook that ran into the lake.

"There is no use of our trying to follow this any further," said Joe. "You'll get your clothing covered with water and mud."

"I don't intend to follow," answered Ned. "Just the same, I should like to know more about those fellows."

"I wish I had seen their faces."

"Yes, it's a pity we didn't get a better look at them. But I'd know their voices."

By the time they gave up the hunt the sun was shining brightly. Both walked to where the boat had been left, and Joe turned the craft over so that the water might run out. Then he mopped off the seats as best he could.

Ned wanted to go directly home, and he and Joe rowed the craft in the direction of Riverside. As they passed along the lake shore the hermit's boy noted that several trees had been struck by lightning.

"I'm glad the lightning didn't strike the lodge while we were there," said he.

"It was certainly a severe storm while it lasted, Joe. By the way, shall I say anything about those two men?"

"Perhaps it won't do any harm to tell your father, Ned."

"Very well, I'll do it."

Soon Riverside was reached, and having paid for the fish and the outing, Ned Talmadge walked in the direction of his residence. Joe shoved off from the tiny dock and struck out for his home. He did not dream of the calamity that awaited him there.