

BEHIND THE HIGH BOARD FENCE

Chapter 2 – Cal and Joe sell newspapers

WINSTON, N.C., 1909— Early the next morning Cal crept quietly into the girls' room and gently nudged Helen. "Get dressed, and meet me in the kitchen," he whispered.

When she came downstairs, she found him alone in the kitchen, cutting thick slices of bread. He had set out the butter and a jar of blackberry jam. Missing from the table this morning was the dishpan of soapy water that Mother used to wash the hands, faces and ears of the children before they left for school. Saturday was different, and they could skip the regular routine.

Helen got the milk from the icebox, poured some in two glasses and finished spreading the bread with butter and jam while Cal went to get a newspaper bag. When he returned, Cal hurried to explain their plan while he and Helen ate. Then they slipped out of the house before the others woke up.

At the corner, Joe was waiting with a stack of local newspapers beside him and more in his newspaper bag. He and Cal loaded the ones on the ground into Cal's bag. Together the three of them turned east toward the train station and the morning sun.

"Why is Helen with you?" Joe asked as they made a single line along the edge of the street.

"She's going with us but just to the station. Mother

told me to take her, and I had to promise that we wouldn't go off and leave her." Cal looked at her as she tagged along at the back of their line. Turning to Joe, he continued, "Besides, you know she won't be any trouble because she doesn't want to be left behind."

Helen knew he was right. She'd do almost anything to get him to include her in his adventures.

As they neared the square, the red streaks of sunrise began to vanish, leaving the clouds white and the sky a hazy blue. Horses and wagons seemed to be everywhere as farmers drove into town for market day.

The children made their way across the granite pavers of Main Street and headed down the hill to the station. They dodged the horses and carriages bringing passengers and those coming to meet the train. They went inside to the waiting room where a few people were at the window purchasing tickets but hurried out onto the long wooden platform.

There Helen felt the excitement as everything seemed to focus on the incoming train. The mail and baggage carts rattled by as the porters rolled them across the boards of the platform, and the station door slammed as the last passengers joined those already there.

The shrill whistle called from down the tracks and alerted the crowd. Men

reached for members of their families, guarding them from the blast of the locomotive. Though they held back, all in the crowd turned to see the arriving train.

Over the noise of the engine and the brakes, Cal yelled to Helen, "Stay right here and wait for us! The train won't be here long, and we have to hurry." The boys left her standing on the platform alone. She saw them get on the first coach as soon as the conductor set down the step to take on new passengers.

As the steam disappeared and the soot settled, Helen moved closer to the train. Behind the engine and the coal car were five coaches and a dining car. Helen supposed that beyond those were the Pullman cars with sleeping compartments where travelers from places like New York would be getting up to start a new day on the train. Some would be having breakfast, and maybe they would be buying a newspaper from Cal or Joe.

Little time passed before she saw Cal squeeze by a family that was getting off the train. Helen could see that he was avoiding the conductor. "Let's go!" he said as he came near her. He headed for the station.

Cal and Helen ran as quickly as they could. Joe was not far behind as they made their way through the station again and back into



Train station

town. They were at the square before they stopped to talk.

Joe was panting. "The conductor saw that I wasn't the regular newsman and ran me off the train. I do have permission to sell the papers on the street corner but not on the train. The train's not my area. I was thinking that we wouldn't get caught, but we did. Besides, all I really wanted was to see the train."

"You know," he added,

"the one who will be madder than the conductor is the newsman who is supposed to sell there."

"And Papa!" Cal cried. "He will be furious with me if he hears that we tried to cheat a man out of the money he should have earned. He will never let me forget it. I probably won't forget it anyway."

On the way home Helen practiced telling her mother about the train without any

mention of the boys going on board. She would let Cal decide what to say about that.

next chapter—Helen steps out

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ACTIVITY: What does this chapter tell you about Helen and Cal and their relationship? What do you learn about their Papa? Cite evidence from text.

Read a comic strip or other news story or column that involves a family and explain what you learn about the family members and their relationships.

HISTORY: Winston-Salem's major daily is over 100 years old. What local newspaper serves your area? When did it begin publication? Today, does your newspaper deliver news on several platforms—in print, on the Web and/or in replica or e-editions?