

THE PAUL STREET BOYS SCOUTING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDEN



S3 T5
L2



This is the fifth part of a story.
Read it and then... recreate it!

Scouting in the Botanical Garden

A few more creaks were heard, then a dull thud. Boka found himself in the very middle of

a vegetable patch. Nemeček was next to climb across, followed by Csónakos. But Csónakos first climbed up the acacia tree; being a country lad, he did this most skilfully. The other two, standing below, kept asking him: „Do you see anything?”

In a muffled tone he answered from the top of the tree:

„Not much. It's too dark.”

„Do you see the island?”

„Yes.”

„Anybody on it?”

Alertly, Csónakos swayed right and left among branches, trying to discover signs of life in the vicinity of the lagoon: „I can't see a thing on the island because of the tree and bushes... but on the bridge...” Here he grew silent.

Climbing another branch higher, he continued: „I see things pretty clearly now. There are two figures on the bridge.”

Boka quietly remarked: „That's where they are. Those are sentries on the bridge.”

Then the branches crackled again; Csónakos had climbed down the tree. The three of them stood speechless for a while, pondering the next step.

Presently they squatted down behind a bush, so as to be out of sight, and held an earnest whispered discussion.

„I think it would be best,” said Boka, „if we tried to reach those old ruins by stealing along these bushes here. I suppose you all know that old dilapidated fortress that's built into the hill on our right.” The other two nodded affirmatively. „We can make it if we are cautious, crouching from bush to bush all the way. Once there, one of us will climb to the top of the hill to get an idea of how the land lies. If there is no one about, we'll simply crawl down on our stomachs. That side of the hill leads directly to the lagoon. There we can hide among the bulrushes; after that, we can decide what to do next.”

Two flashing pairs of eyes were levelled at Boka. Csónakos and Nemeček held each word of his to be as sacred as the Gospel.

Boka asked: „Does that suit you?”

„Fine!” nodded the other two.

„Well, then, let's be going. Forward! Just follow close behind me. I know the way here.”



Take notes of the most important
informations from the text!

Your notes might be Mindmap, Table
Drawing, etc.

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And Boka began to creep on his hands and knees among the low clumps of bushes. Scarcely had his escort followed suit, when the sound of a shrill whistle was heard in the distance.

„We're discovered!” said Nemeček and sprang to his feet.

„Get down! Get down! On your stomach!” commanded Boka, and all three of them lay down flat on their stomachs in the grass.

With bated breath they awaited developments. Had they really been discovered?

But no one came. The wind howled through the trees.

Boka whispered: „It's nothing.”

But just then, another piercing whistle rent the air. Again they waited, but no one appeared. Nemeček, trembling at the foot of a bush, spoke up:

„We ought to have a lookout on the tree.”

„You're right. Csónakos, you'd better get up there again!”

Like a cat, Csónakos swiftly clambered to the top of the acacia tree.

„What do you see?”

„Moving figures on the bridge... now there are four of them... now two are going back to the island.”

„All is well, then,” said Boka at ease. „Come down. Those whistles meant that the guards were being relieved.”

Csónakos came off the tree and the three of them continued, on all-fours, toward the hill.

Silence envelops the vast and mystical Botanical Garden at time of the night. All visitors depart at the sound of a bell; only those bent on evil remain; or those on the warpath, as were these three youngsters who, now stooped into the shape of balls, stole from bush to bush. So important seemed their mission that they did not speak to each other. As a matter of plain truth, a dose of fear gripped them, too. It required great courage to attempt the invasion of the Redshirts' well-equipped fortress, which was on an island in the middle of a lagoon, especially since the wooden bridge, their only medium of access, was known to be heavily guarded.

Chapter three (page 43–46)

„These opera glasses belong to Csele's sister” he said, and looked through them. But it was easy enough to sight the little island with the naked eye. Around it was the shimmering lagoon, in which were cultivated all manner of aquatic plants, and the banks of which were dense with sedge and reed. Deep among the trees on the island, a tiny dot of light was discernible, at the discovery of which the boys grew serious.

„There they are” said Csónakos in a hoarse whisper.

Nemeček seemed fascinated by the light, for he said: „They have a lantern, too!”

The glistening dot waggled all over the island, vanishing and reappearing behind bushes and trees. Someone was shifting the lantern hither and thither.

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„I have the idea,“; said Boka, who did not for a moment take his eye from the telescope, „that they’re getting ready for something. It is either their evening drill... or...”

He suddenly became silent.

„Well?” insisted the other two anxiously.

„Good Lord” said Boka, still gazing through his glasses, „that boy who is carrying the lantern... why, that’s...”

„Go on! Who is it?”

„Someone very familiar... only I don’t...”

He stepped higher to get a better glimpse, but just then the lantern light disappeared behind a bush. Boka removed the telescope.

„Vanished” he quietly said.

„But who was it?”

„I can’t tell you. I didn’t get a good look and just as I was about to see him more clearly, he got out of sight. I don’t want to cast suspicion on anybody until I am quite sure...”

„Surely it wasn’t one of our boys?”

There was sadness in the president’s reply: „I believe it was.”

“Why, that’s treason!” cried Csónakos, forgetting for the moment the need for discretion.

“Be quiet! When we get there we’ll know everything. Until then you’ll have to be patient.”

Of course, they were now impelled by curiosity too. Boka refused to say whom the lanterned figure had resembled. They tried to guess, but Boka forbade this, cautioning them against suspecting anyone.

In great excitement they hurried down the hill, then continued their way on all-fours through the grass. They no longer paid heed to the thorns, nettles and pebbles which scratched their hands. They hurried, silently creeping closer and closer to the mysterious banks of the lagoon.

Finally they arrived. Now they were able to stand up, for the bushes and bulrushes were

so tall that their diminutive figures were concealed. Boka was quite cool as he issued his

orders.

„There must be a skiff somewhere near here. Nemecsek and I will scout around to the

right, while you, Csónakos, will look for the boat along the left bank. The one who finds it

will wait there for the others.”

Off they went in silence. But they had hardly gone a few paces when Boka came upon the skiff among some sedge.

“Let’s wait here” he whispered. They waited for Csónakos to circle the entire lagoon to get back to them. Meanwhile they sat down on the embankment, gazing at the stars; then they listened keenly for possible sounds of conversation from the island.

Nemecsek was determined to do something clever. „I say” he said, „suppose I put my ear to the ground?”

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„Never mind your ear” said Boka. „Not much good it would do you here on this embankment. But we might get an earful by listening close to the surface of the water. I’ve seen fishermen along the Danube gabbling clear across the river by bending over the water. It carries the voice particularly well at night.”

And they bent over the water, but could make out nothing quite intelligible. Meanwhile, Csónakos arrived, sadly reporting: „There’s not a skiff anywhere.”

„Don’t you worry, laddie” spoke up Nemecek consolingly, „we’ve found one.”

So they made down the incline for the boat.

„Are we going to get in?”

„Not here” said Boka. „First we’ll drag the boat over to the bank directly across from the bridge, so as to be far away from the bridge in case they see us. We’ll row across at a point farthest away from the bridge. That will give us a good head start if they should want to chase after us.”

This astuteness appealed strongly to the other two. It filled them with courage to know that their chief was such a nimble-witted fellow.

Now the chief spoke up again: „Who’s got a piece of cord?”

Csónakos had it. His pockets were literally filled. No bazaar was better supplied with all sorts of things than the pockets of Csónakos. There you could have your choice of jack-knife, twine, agates, nails, keys, brass doorknobs, rags, notebooks, corkscrews, and heaven knows what not.

Csónakos drew forth a piece of string, which Boka fastened to the iron ring in the nose of the boat. With the aid of this they began to cautiously tow the skiff toward the opposite side of the island, keeping a sharp lookout at the same time for signs of life on the island. Upon arriving at the spot where they intended to enter the rickety contraption, the sound of the whistle they had heard before struck their ears. But it did not frighten them this time. They knew it merely meant that the guards changed on the bridge. Their timidity had diminished all the more, as they felt themselves to be involved in battle. This holds equally true of real soldiers in real combat. Before meeting the foe, they usually shrink back from the slightest sound. But after the first shot has passed over their heads, they pluck up courage and often actually become drunk with it, forgetting that they are rushing headlong toward death.

The boys got into the boat. Boka entered first, followed by Csónakos.

Nemecek

timorously paced up and down the muddy embankment.

„Come on in, laddie” said Csónakos encouragingly.

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„I'm coming” said Nemecek and, in his excitement, lost his balance. Aghast, he clutched at a slender reed stalk and, without another sound, fell into the water. He was sunken to the neck, but dared not utter a sound. He quickly stood up in the shallow lagoon, cutting a sorry little figure with the water dripping from his clothes and the absurdly thin reed stalk convulsively held in his hand.

Csónakos could not restrain his mirth; he blurted out: „Did you have a drink, laddie?”

„I did not” retorted the blond little fellow, his face betraying fright. He was wringing, wet and muddy as he slid into the boat –and pale with alarm.

„I had no idea I'd get a bath today” he quietly marked.

But there was no time to be lost. Boka and Csónakos gripped the oars and pushed the skiff away from the bank. It was a heavy craft and yielded only lazily, ruffling the quiet lagoon in the attempt.

Chapter three (page 50–54)