

Farleys at Moose Lake

They paddled slowly along the island, savoring how easy it was to glide over the still water. As they neared the southern end of the island, they spied the eagles' nest. The mother and father eagles were perched in their guard tree, away from the nest.

"I wish I had my binoculars to see if the babies are still in the nest," said Gillian.

"The nest is still there," said Dad. "During the storm the parents would have stayed with the nest to protect the babies. They probably made it through just fine. And I don't think the worst of the storm hit this part of the lake."

As soon as they passed the south end of Belleflower Island they found themselves back in the waves, only now the wind had picked up considerably and the waves were bigger than before.

"Oh no," said Gillian, "it's even worse than the day we went to the marsh."

"Just keep paddling, Gillian," said Dad. "Millie, hang onto the sides of the canoe. If we end up in the water, I want both of you to grab the canoe and hold on as tight as you can."

"I don't want to end up in the water!" said Millie.

Just as Millie said those words, a big wave washed over the side of the canoe. Dad had seen it coming out of the corner of his eye, but there was nothing he could do to stop it from swamping the canoe.

"Millie!" Dad shouted. "We need you now! Grab the bailing can and start bailing!"

Millie filled the bailing can with water and dumped it over the side of the canoe. But the can filled with water was too heavy in her small hands and she didn't make much headway against the water that had flooded the bottom of the canoe.

The water in the canoe was so heavy that Dad could barely control it. He saw another wave, even bigger, heading toward them from the rear.

“Hang on, everybody!” he shouted.

The wave hit the canoe broadside and turned it over in an instant. Millie, Dad, Gillian, and Flearoy were swept overboard.

“Grab the canoe!” Dad shouted. “Don’t let go of the canoe!”

Dad and Gillian were right next to the canoe and were able to catch hold of it. Dad stretched out his hand to catch Millie’s lifejacket, but the next wave that came at them lifted Millie up high and pushed her away from the canoe. She disappeared in the frothy churning water.

“Millie!” Dad shouted. “I’m coming! You stay right there, Gillian!” Dad let go of the canoe and began swimming toward Millie. But Millie was so light that she was quickly carried out of Dad’s reach. Hampered by his bulky life jacket, he knew he would never be able to catch up with her. Something smacked Dad hard against the back of his head. It was the canoe. The waves had pushed the canoe toward him. He grabbed hold of the gunwale. He and Gillian were safe.

“Millie!” Dad and Gillian both cried at once. But there was nothing either of them could do to help little Millie. They listened to her screams as she was pushed farther and farther away from them.

As soon as he was dumped from the canoe, Flearoy knew what he had to do. Flearoy had watched over Millie since she was a newborn baby. He knew she was not as strong as the older children. Flearoy was not wearing his life jacket. It had been lost in the tornado. He was less

buoyant without it—he would have to stay afloat by swimming—but he could also swim faster without the bulky life jacket.

Flearoy plowed through the waves with determination. Wave after wave crashed over him, but he just kept on swimming. Millie was a small speck in the distance now and he could no longer hear her frantic calls for help over the sound of the wind and waves, but he didn't take his eyes off her for a second. He swam as hard as he could, spreading out his webbed feet like paddles. Water rushed into his mouth and he coughed it back out. He sank briefly beneath the surface as a large wave broke over him, but when he came up he could still see the small orange dot of Millie's life jacket.

Flearoy swam until he had almost spent the last of his energy. Finally he could see Millie clearly ahead of him.

“Flearoy!” she screamed. “Help me! I can't swim! The waves are too big!”

Flearoy reached Millie at last. He grabbed hold of a strap dangling from her life jacket. He lifted his head up high out of the water to get his bearings. The canoe was nowhere in sight. But toward the east he saw the outline of the shore. He began towing Millie toward land.

Flearoy was panting hard now as he fought to stay on top of the waves. Air puffed out the sides of his jowls as he held the strap of Millie's lifejacket clamped between his teeth. He reminded himself that he was a water dog, a dog trained to retrieve things from the water. But how far away was the shore?

It didn't matter. Flearoy would swim as far as he had to to take Millie to safety. Stopping never entered his mind, even when he felt his lungs burning from the effort, even when he swallowed gulp after gulp of water.