

# The Bobbsey Twins at the Seashore/Chapter 19

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## CHAPTER XIX

### LIFE-SAVERS

"MOTHER, mother!" called Nellie, "look down at the beach. The life-guards are burning the red signal lights! They have found a wreck!"

It was almost morning, but the black storm clouds held the daylight back. Mrs. McLaughlin and her little daughter strained their eyes to see, if possible, what might be going on down at the beach. While there was no noise to give the alarm, it seemed, almost everybody in that house felt the presence of the wreck, for in a very few minutes, Bert was at his window, Dorothy and Nan were looking out of theirs, while the older members of the household were dressing hastily, to see if they might be of any help in case of accident at the beach.

"Can I go with you, Uncle?" called Bert, who had heard his uncle getting ready to run down to the water's edge.

"Yes, come along," answered Mr. Minturn, and as day began to peep through the heavy clouds, the two hurried down to the spot where the life-guards were burning their red light to tell the sailors their signal had been seen.

"There's the vessel!" exclaimed Bert, as a rocket flew up from the water.

"Yes, that's the distress signal," replied the uncle. "It is lucky that daylight is almost here."

Numbers of other cottagers were hurrying to the scene now, Mr. Bingham and Hal being among the first to reach the spot.

"It's a schooner," said Mr. Bingham to Mr. Minturn, "and she has a very heavy cargo."

The sea was so wild it was impossible to send out the life-savers' boats, so the guards were making ready the breeches buoy.

"They are going to shoot the line out now," explained Hal to Bert, as the two-wheel car with the mortar or cannon was dragged down to the ocean's edge.

Instantly there shot out to sea a ball of thin cord. To this cord was fastened a heavy rope or cable.

"They've got it on the schooner," exclaimed a man, for the thin cord was now pulling the cable line out, over the water.

"What's that board for?" asked Bert, as he saw a board following the cable.

"That's the directions," said Hal.

"They are printed in a number of languages, and they tell the crew to carry the end of the cable high up the mast and fasten it strongly there."

"Oh, I see," said Bert, "the line will stretch then, and the breeches buoy will go out on a pulley."

"That's it," replied Hal. "See, there goes the buoy," and then the queer-looking life-preserver made of cork, and shaped like breeches, swung out over the waves.

It was clear day now, and much of the wicked storm had passed. Its effect upon the sea was, however, more furious every hour, for while the storm had left the land, it was raging somewhere else, and the sensitive sea felt every throb of the excited elements.

With the daylight came girls and women to the beach.

Mrs. Bobbsey, Mrs. Minturn, Nellie and her mother, besides Dorothy and Nan, were all there; Flossie and Freddie being obliged to stay home with Dinah and Susan.

Of course the girls asked all sorts of questions and Bert and Hal tried to answer them as best they could.

It seemed a long time before any movement of the cable showed that the buoy was returning.

"Here she comes! Here she comes!" called the crowd presently, as the black speck far out, and the strain on the cord, showed the buoy was coming back.

Up and down in the waves it bobbed, sometimes seeming to go all the way under. Nearer and nearer it came, until now a man's head could be seen.

"There's a man in it!" exclaimed the boys, all excitement, while the life-guards pulled the cord steadily, dragging in their human freight.

The girls and women were too frightened to talk, and Nellie clung close to her mother.



"THERE'S A MAN IN IT!" EXCLAIMED THE BOYS.

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A big roller dashing in finished the work for the life-guards, and a man in the cork belt bounded upon shore.

He was quite breathless when the guards reached him, but insisted on walking up instead of being carried. Soon he recovered himself and the rubber protector was pulled off his face.

Everybody gathered around, and Nellie with a strange face, and a stranger hope, broke through the crowd to see the rescued man.

"Oh—it is—*my—father!*" she screamed, falling right into the arms of the drenched man.

"Be careful," called Mr. Minturn, fearing the child might be mistaken, or Mrs. McLaughlin might receive too severe a shock from the surprise.

But the half-drowned man rubbed his eyes as if he could not believe them, then the next minute he pressed his little daughter to his heart, unable to speak a word.

What a wonderful scene it was!

The child almost unconscious in her father's arms, he almost dead from exhaustion, and the wife and mother too overcome to trust herself to believe it could be true.

Even the guards, who were busy again at the ropes, having left the man to willing hands on the beach, could not hide their surprise over the fact that it was mother, father, and daughter there unite'd under such strange conditions.

"My darling, my darling!" exclaimed the sailor to Nellie, as he raised himself and then he saw his wife.

Mrs. Bobbsey had been holding Mrs. McLaughlin back, but now the sailor was quite recovered, so they allowed her to speak to him.

Mr. Bingham and Hal had been watching it all, anxiously.

"Are you McLaughlin?" suddenly asked Mr. Bingham.

"I am," replied the sailor.

"And is George Bingham out there?" anxiously asked the brother.

"Safe and well," came the welcome answer. "Just waiting for his turn to come in."

"Oh!" screamed Dorothy, "Hal's uncle is saved too. I guess our prayers were heard last night."

"Here comes another man!" exclaimed the people, as this time a big man dashed on the sands.

"All right!" exclaimed the man, as he landed, for he had had a good safe swing in, and was in no way exhausted.

"Hello there!" called Mr. Bingham. "Well, if this isn't luck. George Bingham!"

Sure enough it was Hal's Uncle George, and Hal was hugging the big wet man, while the man was jolly, and laughing as if the whole thing were a good joke instead of the life-and-death matter it had been.

"I only came in to tell you," began George Bingham, "that we are all right, and the boat is lifting off the sand bar we stuck on. But I'm glad I came in to—the reception," he said, laughing. "So you've found friends, McLaughlin," he added, seeing the little family united. "Why, how do you do, Mrs. McLaughlin?" he went

on, offering her his hand. "And little Nellie! Well, I declare, we did land on a friendly shore."

Just as Mr. Bingham said, the life-saving work turned out to be a social affair, for there was a great time greeting Nellie's father and Hal's uncle.

"Wasn't it perfectly splendid that Nellie and her mother were here!" declared Dorothy.

"And Hal and his father, too," put in Nan. "It is just like a story in a book."

"But we don't have to look for the pictures," chimed in Bert, who was greatly interested in the sailors, as well as in the work of the life-saving corps.

As Mr. Bingham told the guards it would not be necessary to haul any more men in, and as the sea was calm enough now to launch a life-boat, both Nellie's father and Hal's uncle insisted on going back to the vessel to the other men.

Nellie was dreadfully afraid to have her father go out on the ocean again, but he only laughed at her fears, and said he would soon be in to port, to go home with her, and never go on the big, wild ocean again.

Two boats were launched, a strong guard going in each, with Mr. McLaughlin in one and Mr. Bingham in the other, and now they pulled out steadily over the waves, back to the vessel that was freeing itself from the sand bar.

What a morning that was at Sunset Beach!

The happiness of two families seemed to spread all through the little colony, and while the men were thinking of the more serious work of helping the sailors with their vessel, the girls and women were planning a great welcome for the men who had been saved from the waves.

"I'm so glad we prayed," said little Flossie to Freddie, when she heard the good news.

"It was Uncle William prayed the loudest," insisted Freddie, believing, firmly, that to reach heaven a long and loud prayer is always best.

"But we all helped," declared his twin sister, while surely the angels had listened to even the sleepy whisper of the little ones, who had asked help for the poor sailors in their night of peril.

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