



T H E M O N E Y I S F O U N D

THE CROWD WAS LEADING A NICE-LOOKING OLD GENTLEMAN AND A nice-looking younger gentleman, whose arm was wrapped in a white cloth and appeared to be broken. The people in the crowd were shouting and laughing, but this did not seem like a joke to me. I knew that the duke and the king would see nothing to joke about either. I expected them to turn pale and look frightened, but they didn't. The king simply looked in a sorrowful manner at the two strangers as though it pained his heart to see such awful liars. Several men stood next to the king to let him know that they believed he was the true brother.

The older of the two strangers spoke like this to the crowd: "I wasn't expecting to find two men here who claim to be brothers to Peter Wilks. I'm not in a good position to prove that we're the real brothers, for our traveling bags with our belongings in them were mistakenly taken off the boat in a town further up the river. But I'm Peter Wilks's brother, Harvey, and this is his brother, William. He can't hear or speak and can't make signs with his hands since one arm is broken. We are who we say we are, and in a day or two, when we get our bags, we can prove it. But until that time, I'll say nothing more; we'll go to our hotel

and wait.”

The king laughed and said, “Broke his arm—not likely. But how convenient. Now he has a good excuse for not expressing himself through signs, which, of course, he has never learned. Lost their bags! Another convenient excuse.”

The king laughed again, and so did most of the men in the crowd, except for three or four, or maybe half a dozen. One of those who did not laugh was the doctor; another was a sharp-looking gentleman who had just come off the boat and was talking to the doctor in a low voice. They would glance toward the king and nod their heads. This was Levi Bell, the lawyer who had been visiting in Louisville.

Another stranger, who was not laughing, now spoke to the king: “If you are Harvey Wilks, when did you arrive in this town?”

“The day before the funeral, friend,” said the king.

“At what time of day?”

“In the evening—about an hour or two before sunset.”

“How did you travel?”

“We came on the big passenger boat from Cincinnati.”

“Well, how did it happen that I saw you in a canoe that very morning near where I live?”

“I was not in a canoe that morning.”

“That is a lie!”

Several men jumped up and attempted to quiet him. They said that he should not talk that way to an old man.

“He’s a liar. I saw him that morning in a canoe with Tim Collins and another boy.”

“Would you recognize the boy if you were to see him again?”

“I’m not certain, but perhaps I would. I see him standing there now. I recognize him perfectly.”

It was me that he pointed to.

The doctor spoke next: “Neighbors, I don’t know whether the two new men are the true Wilks brothers or not, but these two here surely are not. I think that it is our duty to keep them in this town until we can prove which men are speaking the truth. Come, all of you.

We'll take these two fellows and the boy to the hotel and question them along with the other two."

The crowd started toward the hotel. It was nearly sundown by now. The doctor led me along by the hand. He was kind to me but he never let go of my hand.

When we reached the hotel, the doctor asked the two men to meet with us to discuss the problem. He said, "I don't wish to cause problems, but I would feel better if we had the bag of gold that Peter Wilks left. I would not want friends of these two men to attempt to leave town with the gold while we're talking here."

Everyone agreed that it was a good idea. I wondered how the king would deal with this new problem. But he simply looked sorrowful and said, "Gentlemen, I wish that the money was here, for I would like to help you in every way that I can. But I can't produce the money."

"Where is it, then?"

"When my niece gave me the bag of money to keep for her, I hid it in my bed. I thought that would be a safe place, but one of the black slaves stole it. When I sold the slaves, I had not yet realized that the money was stolen, so I didn't question them about it. They've taken the money down to New Orleans with them. My servant here can tell you about it."

I could see that the doctor and several of the others did not believe him. One man asked me if I saw one of the slaves steal the money, and I said no, but I did see them leaving the room quickly, and they seemed to be acting in a guilty manner.

Then the doctor turned to me and said, "Are you English, too?"

I said yes, and he and some others laughed and I knew that they didn't believe me.

They began seriously questioning the king and the other gentleman who also claimed that he was Harvey Wilks. They questioned them for hour after hour, and no one thought about supper or how late it was. They asked the king to repeat his story again, and then they asked the other Harvey Wilks to repeat what he had said earlier. The longer that I listened to the two men, the more I was certain that most of the men

knew that the king was telling a lie while the other man was telling the truth. Finally, they asked me to tell what I knew. The king gave me a long, meaningful look, and I knew that I must tell a good story. I began to tell about the town of Sheffield and about the Wilks family there, but I had not said much when the doctor began to laugh.

Levi Bell, the lawyer, said, "Sit down, boy. You can stop talking. You're not accustomed to lying and don't do it well. You need to have more practice if you're going to be a good liar."

The king and Levi Bell then talked quietly for a few minutes. The lawyer asked the king to write a few words on a sheet of paper. Then he spoke to the duke—who looked quite sick—and asked him to write a few sentences, too. Last, he turned to the other two men who claimed to be the Wilks brothers and asked them to write a few lines and sign their names. The old man wrote, but nobody could read his writing.

The lawyer looked at what all three men had written and acted surprised. Then he took several old letters out of his pocket and examined them. Then he examined the old man's writing again.

Finally, he said, "These letters were written by Harvey Wilks. If you compare the handwriting in these letters to the lines these men have written, you'll see that they are not alike. Not any of these men wrote these letters. (The king and the duke looked foolish when they realized how the lawyer had tricked them.)

The old gentleman said, "Please, let me explain. Nobody can read my handwriting but my brother William here. When I write a letter, he copies it for me and we mail his copy. You have *his* letters, in your hand, not mine."

"Well," said the lawyer, "I have some letters here signed by William, also, so if you'll ask him to write a few lines, we can compare the handwriting.

"He can't write with his left hand," said the old gentleman. "If he could use his right hand, which you see is broken, you would know that he wrote his own and my letters, too. Look at both letters. Compare the handwriting. You'll see that the writing is the same."

The lawyer compared the letters and said, "I believe that's true.

The handwriting in the letters signed Harvey is very similar to the handwriting in the letters signed William. I hadn't noticed that before. This still doesn't absolutely prove that you're the true brothers, but one thing is proved—neither of these other two are Wilkses”—and he nodded his head toward the king and the duke.

The old gentleman who claimed to be Harvey Wilks suddenly spoke, "I've thought of something. Is there anyone here who saw my brother's body after he died?"

"Yes," answered a man. "Ab Turner and I did. We're both here."

Then the old gentleman turned to the king and said, "Perhaps this man can tell me what was **tattooed** on his chest."

I wondered how the king would answer this. There was no way he could know what was tattooed on that man's chest. His face turned white; he couldn't control that. It was very quiet in the room; everyone moved a little closer and stared at the king. I knew that the king would now have to admit that he was lying. That was the only thing that he could do. Or was it? I could hardly believe what I was hearing. The king smiled and began to speak very slowly. "That is a difficult question. Yes, I can tell you what is tattooed on Peter Wilks's chest—simply a small, thin, blue **arrow**. The tattoo is faint, and you must look very closely to see it."

The old gentleman turned to Ab Turner and his friend and said, "You heard what this man said. Was there a tattoo like the one described on Peter's chest?"

Both of them answered, "We didn't see such a tattoo."

"Good!" said the old gentleman. "The tattoo on his chest were the letters P, B, and W—the first letters of his name. They're not very clear, but, if you looked closely, you should have been able to see them. I'm certain that's the tattoo that you saw."

The crowd was getting excited now. Several men shouted, "All of them are lying. Let's force them all to leave this town."

Suddenly, the lawyer jumped onto the table and shouted, "Gentlemen, gentlemen! Listen to me. Please! We can still prove if these men are liars. We have to go to the graveyard and dig up the body of Peter

Wilks and look at his chest.”

“Hooray!” they all shouted and started to leave the hotel.

“Wait!” shouted the doctor. “Seize these four men and the boy, too. Don’t let them run away. Bring them to the graveyard.”

I was very frightened, but I couldn’t escape. Several men grasped each of us and made us walk with them to the graveyard. To make the situation worse, I noticed that the night sky was very black and lightning was beginning to flash. This was the most frightening situation that I had ever been in. I wished that Mary Jane were at home and could save me. What would happen when they did not find the blue arrow tattoo mark? I didn’t want to think about that, yet somehow I could think of nothing else. The night was getting darker as the storm approached. It would have been a good time to escape except that a huge man held tightly to my arm. He nearly dragged me along by the arm; he was so excited to get to the graveyard. Many men had brought tools for digging. They soon located Peter Wilks’s grave and began the job of digging up the body. No one had brought a light, so they worked in darkness. The rain started and a strong wind began to blow. Suddenly, the lightning flashed more frequently, followed by loud thunder. The crowd moved in close, with everyone pushing to get a better view.

Suddenly, a huge flash of lightning made the dark night as bright as day. The coffin lid was lifted, and someone shouted, “Look! Here’s the bag of gold!”

Everyone in the crowd was surprised by this unexpected event. The man who held my arm suddenly threw up his hands in surprise, and I was free. It was my chance to escape, and I began to run as fast as I could. I was the only person on the road and I was running so fast that I felt like I was flying. As I ran past the Wilks’s house, I could see the lighted candle in Mary Jane’s window and I felt happy. She was the best girl that I had ever known.

As soon as I reached the river above the town, I looked for a canoe to borrow. The first time the lightning showed me one that was not tied to a tree, I jumped in and began to row toward the raft. As soon as I saw the raft, I shouted to Jim, “Hurry. Untie the raft. We can escape without

the king and the duke.”

Jim was so happy to see me that he cried for joy. He held me in his arms and was ready to have a good, long cry, but I said that we had no time for that. “Cut the rope and let’s start down the river.”

In two seconds, the rope was cut and we were moving with the river current. It was good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river. No one would trouble us now. Suddenly, I heard a sound that was very familiar to me—the sound of someone rowing a boat.

When the next flash of lightning burst across the sky, I saw a small boat hurrying toward us. In it were the king and the duke.

I fell down onto the deck of the raft. I wanted to stop living and simply cry.