

Chapter 2

TROUBLEMAKERS



She cut down a tree in less than an hour...

Jonathan walked for several hours without a glimpse of any sign of life. Suddenly, something moved in the thicket and a small animal with a yellow-striped tail flashed down a barely visible track.

— A cat, — thought Jonathan. — Maybe it will lead me to some people?

He dived through the thick foliage.

Just as he lost sight of the beach and was deep in the jungle, he heard a sharp scream. He stopped, cocked his head, and tried to locate the source of the sound. Directly ahead, he heard another shrill cry for help. Pushing up an incline and through a mass of branches and vines, he clawed his way forward and stumbled onto a wider path.

As he rounded a sharp bend in the trail, Jonathan ran full tilt into the side of a burly man. “Out of my way, chump!” bellowed the man, brushing him aside like a gnat. Dazed, Jonathan looked up and saw two men dragging a young woman, kicking and yelling, down the trail. By the time he caught his breath, the trio had disappeared.

Certain that he couldn’t free the woman alone, Jonathan ran back up the trail looking for help.

A clearing opened and he saw a group of people gathered around a big tree – beating it with sticks. Jonathan ran up and grabbed the arm of a man who was obviously the supervisor.

— Please sir, help! — gasped Jonathan. — Two men have captured a woman and she needs help!

— Don't be alarmed, — the man said gruffly. — She's under arrest. Forget her and move along, we've got work to do.

— Arrest? — said Jonathan, still huffing. — She didn't look like, uh, like a criminal.

Jonathan wondered, if she was guilty, why did she cry so desperately for help?

— Pardon me, sir, but what was her crime?

— Huh? — snorted the man with irritation. — Well, if you must know, she threatened the jobs of everyone working here.

— She threatened people's jobs? How did she do that? — asked Jonathan.

Glaring down at his ignorant questioner, the supervisor motioned for Jonathan to come over to a tree where workers busily pounded away at the trunk. Proudly, he said, — We are tree workers. We knock down trees for wood by beating them with these sticks. Sometimes a hundred people, working round-the-clock, can knock down a good-sized tree in less than a month. — The man pursed his lips and carefully brushed a speck of dirt from the sleeve of his handsomely cut coat. He continued, — That Drawbaugh* woman came to work this morning with a sharp piece of metal attached to the end of her stick. She cut down a tree in less than an hour – all by herself! Think of it! Such an outrageous threat to our traditional employment had to be stopped.

Jonathan's eyes widened, aghast to hear that this woman was punished for her creativity. Back home, everyone used axes and saws for cutting trees. That's how he got the wood for his own boat.

— But her invention, — exclaimed Jonathan, — allows people of all sizes and strengths to cut down trees. Won't that make it faster and cheaper to get wood and make things?

— What do you mean? — the man said angrily. — How could anyone

*Daniel Drawbaugh, the developer of many intriguing devices from a coin sorter to a clock with a magnetically controlled pendulum, claimed to be the inventor of the first telephone ten years before Alexander Graham Bell. Some say the patent fees were too expensive for his meagre income. Bell, however, patented a telephone device and was thereby able to block Drawbaugh and 600 others from using similar devices because of patent infringement lawsuits. Whether or not Bell was the sole and original inventor of the telephone, he was an authentic scientist, unlike George Selden who appears in a later chapter of this book.

encourage an idea like that? This noble work can't be done by any weakling who comes along with some new idea.

— But sir, — said Jonathan, trying not to offend, — these good tree workers have talented hands and brains. They could use the time saved from knocking down trees to do other things. They could make tables, cabinets, boats, or even houses!

— Listen, you, — the man said with a menacing look, — the purpose of work is to have full and secure employment – not new products. The tone of his voice turned ugly. — You sound like some kind of troublemaker. Anyone who supports that infernal woman is trouble. Where are you from?

Jonathan replied anxiously, — I don't even know Miss Drawbaugh and I don't mean any trouble, sir. I'm sure you're right. Well, I must be going.

With that, Jonathan turned back the way he came, hurrying down the path. His first encounter with the people of the island left him feeling very nervous.



Chapter 3

A COMMONS TRAGEDY



The trail widened a bit as it cut through the dense jungle. The midday sun burned hot overhead when Jonathan found a small lake. As he scooped up some water to refresh himself, Jonathan heard someone's voice warning, "I wouldn't drink the water if I were you."

Jonathan looked around and saw an old man kneeling at the shore, cleaning a few tiny fish on a plank. Beside him was a basket, a reel, and three poles propped up in the mud, each dangling a line in the water. — Is the fishing good? — inquired Jonathan politely.

Without bothering to look up, the man replied, somewhat crossly, — Nope. These little critters were all I got today.

He proceeded to fillet the fish and to drop them into a hot skillet that was set over a smouldering fire. The fish sizzling in the pan smelled delicious.

Jonathan spotted the rough yellow-striped cat that he had followed, already picking at scraps of fish. His mouth watered.

Jonathan, who considered himself an accomplished fisherman, asked, — What did you use for bait?

The man looked up at Jonathan thoughtfully. — There's nothing wrong with my bait, sonny. I've caught the best of what's left in this lake.

Sensing a solitary mood in this fisherman, Jonathan thought he might learn more by just remaining silent awhile. Eventually, the old fisher-

man beckoned him to sit beside the fire to share some fish and a little bread. Jonathan devoured his meal hungrily, though he felt guilty about taking a portion of this man's meagre lunch. After they finished, Jonathan kept quiet and, sure enough, the old man began to talk.

— Years ago there were some really big fish to catch here, — the man said wistfully. — But they've all been caught. Now the little ones are all that's left.

— But the little ones will grow, won't they? — asked Jonathan. He stared at the lush grasses growing in the shallow waters along the shore where many fish might lurk.

— No. People take all the fish, even the little ones. Not only that, people dump rubbish into the far end of the lake. See that thick scum along the far side?

Jonathan looked perplexed. — Why do others take your fish and dump rubbish in your lake?

— Oh, no, — said the fisherman. — this isn't my lake. It belongs to everyone — just like the forests and the streams.

— These fish belong to everyone ... — Jonathan paused, — including me?

He began to feel a little less guilty about sharing a meal that he had no part in making.

— Not exactly, — the man replied. — What belongs to everyone really belongs to no one — that is, until a fish bites my hook. Then it's mine.

— I don't get it, — said Jonathan, frowning in confusion. Half speaking to himself, he repeated, — The fish belong to everyone, which means that they really belong to no one, until one bites your hook. Then, the fish is yours? But do you do anything to take care of the fish or to help them grow?

— Of course not! — the man said with a snort of derision. — Why should I care for the fish just so someone else can come over here at any time and catch them? If someone else gets the fish or pollutes the lake with rubbish, then there goes all my effort!

With a mournful glance at the water, the old fisherman added sadly, — I wish I really did own the lake. Then I'd make sure that the fish were well tended. I'd care for the lake just like the cattleman who manages the ranch over in the next valley. I'd breed the strongest, fattest fish and you can bet that no fish rustlers or garbage dumpers would get past me. I'd make sure of that.



This isn't my lake. It belongs to everyone – just like the forests and the streams.

Chapter 14

ESCALATING CRIMES

— Who manages the lake now? — interrupted Jonathan.

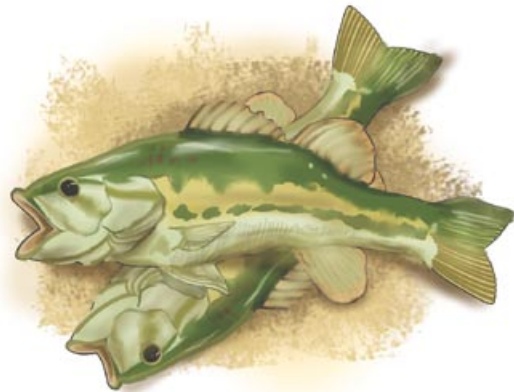
The weathered face of the fisherman grew hard.

— The lake is run by the Council of Lords. Every four years, the Lords are elected to the Council. Then the Council appoints a manager and pays him from my taxes. The fish manager is supposed to watch out for too much fishing and dumping. The funny thing is, friends of the Lords get to fish and dump as they please.

The two sat and watched the wind stir a pattern of ripples across the silver lake. Jonathan noticed the yellow cat sitting erect, sniffing and staring at a fish head on his plate. He tossed the head and the cat caught it neatly with one hooked paw. This feline looked tough, with one ear torn from some old battle.

Mulling over the old fisherman's tale, Jonathan asked, — Is the lake well-managed?

— See for yourself, — the old fisherman grumbled. — Look at the size of my puny catch. It seems that the fish get smaller as the manager's salary gets bigger.



Happy to find a new friend, Jonathan wandered off in a daze. Then, with a start, he realized that he had better pay closer attention to his surroundings or he would not find his way back the next day. He happened to come across a policeman not much older than himself, who was sitting on a bench reading a newspaper. Jonathan tensed at the sight of the crisp black uniform and shiny gun. But the youthful, open expression on the policeman's face made Jonathan relax. The policeman was totally engrossed in a newspaper and Jonathan glanced over at the headlines: "LORDS APPROVE DEATH PENALTY FOR OUTLAW BARBERS!" — The death penalty for barbers? — exclaimed Jonathan in surprise. The policeman glanced up at Jonathan. — Excuse me, — said Jonathan. — I didn't mean to bother you, but I couldn't help seeing the headline. Is that a misprint about the punishment? — Well, let's see. — The officer read aloud, — "The Council of Lords has just authorized the death penalty for anyone found to be cutting hair without a licence." Hmm, no misprint. What's so unusual about that? — Isn't that quite severe for such a minor offence? — asked Jonathan cautiously. — Hardly, — replied the policeman. — The death penalty is the ultimate threat behind all laws – no matter how minor the offence.



No matter how minor the offence.

Jonathan's eyes widened.

— Surely you wouldn't put someone to death for cutting hair without a licence?

— Of course we would, — said the policeman, patting his gun for emphasis. — Though it seldom comes to that.

— Why?

— Well, every crime escalates in severity. That means the penalties increase the more one resists. For example, if someone wishes to cut hair without a licence, then a fine will be levied. If he or she refuses to pay the fine or continues to cut hair, then the outlaw barber will be arrested and put behind bars. And, — said the man in a sober tone, — resisting arrest subjects a criminal to severe penalties.

His face darkened with a frown. — The outlaw may even be shot. The greater the resistance, the greater the force used against him.

Such a grim discussion depressed Jonathan. — So the ultimate threat behind every law really is death. Surely the authorities would reserve the death penalty for only the most brutal, criminal acts – violent acts like murder and rape?

— No, — said the police officer. — The law regulates the whole range of personal and commercial life. Hundreds of occupational guilds protect their members with licences like these. Tree workers, carpenters, doctors, plumbers, accountants, bricklayers, and lawyers – you name it, they all hate interlopers.

— How do licences protect them? — asked Jonathan.

— The number of licences is restricted to the few who pass the rituals of guild membership. This eliminates the unfair competition of intruders with peculiar new ideas, overzealous enthusiasm, backbreaking efficiency, or cutthroat prices. Such unscrupulous anti-competitive competition threatens the traditions of our most esteemed professions.

Jonathan still didn't understand.

— Does licensing protect customers?

— Oh, yes. It says so right here.

The policeman turned back to the newspaper reading, — "Licences give monopolies to guilds so that they can protect customers from unwise decisions and too many choices." — Tapping his chest proudly, the policeman added, — And I enforce the monopolies.

— Monopolies are good? — probed Jonathan.

The policeman frowned, lowering his newspaper.

— I don't know, really. I just follow orders. Sometimes I enforce monopolies and sometimes I'm told to break monopolies.

— So which is right?

The policeman shrugged. — That's not for me to figure out. The Council of Lords decides and tells me where to point my gun.

Seeing Jonathan's look of alarm, the policeman tried to reassure him.

— Don't worry. We seldom carry out the death penalty itself. Few dare to resist since we are diligent at teaching obedience to the Council. It's so rarely mentioned that my chief, Officer Stuart, calls it 'The Invisible Gun*'.
— Have you ever used yours? — said Jonathan, eyeing the pistol nervously.

— Against an outlaw? — asked the policeman. With a practised motion, he pulled the revolver smoothly from its leather holster and stroked the cold-steel muzzle. — Only once.

He opened the chamber, looked down the barrel, snapped it shut, and admired the gun.

— This is some of the very best technology on the island here. The Council spares no effort to give us the finest tools for our noble mission. Yes, this gun and I are sworn to protect the life, liberty, and property of everyone on the island.

— When did you use it? — asked Jonathan.

— Strange you should ask, — he said, suddenly downcast. — A whole year on duty and I never had to use it until just this morning. Some old woman went crazy and started threatening a demolition crew with a stick. Said something about taking back her 'own' house. Ha! What a selfish notion.

Jonathan's heart skipped a beat. He remembered the elegant white house and the dignified woman who claimed ownership. The policeman continued,

— I tried to persuade her to give up. The paperwork was all in order — the house had been condemned to make way for the Lady Tweed People's Park.

Jonathan could barely speak. — What happened?

*"Invisible Gun" refers to the threat of physical force, to be used against those who refuse to comply with every law that the government enforces. Since people seldom resist the law to the very end, very few individuals realise that the final punishment for every enforced law is imprisonment or death. That is why the "gun" behind the law is "invisible".

— I tried to reason with her. Told her she could probably get off with a light sentence if she came along with me peacefully. But then she threatened me, told me to get off her property! Well, it was a clear case of resisting arrest. Imagine the nerve of that woman!

— Yes, — sighed Jonathan. — What nerve.

The conversation died. The policeman read quietly while Jonathan stood silent, nudging a stone with his foot. Summoning his nerve, Jonathan asked, — Can anyone buy a gun like yours?

Turning a page of the newspaper, the policeman replied, — Not on your life. Someone might get hurt.



Chapter 33
DOCTRINAIRE



Of course we're hurting someone. How else can we cure them?

Jonathan followed George's entourage out of the Palace of Lords in search of medical help. Across from the Palace, a long white building occupied most of the block. The group entered the nearest door. Suddenly screams of agony came from an open window halfway down the block. Dashing along the pavement, Jonathan reached the window just as the shutters were closing. He grabbed one of the shutters, holding it open.

— Get away, — shouted a large matronly woman from inside. Her angry red face contrasted sharply with the white uniform that covered her from head to toe.

— What's going on in there? — insisted Jonathan. — What's the screaming about?

— That's none of your affair. Now let go!

In desperation, Jonathan tightened his grip. — Not until you let me know what you're doing! You're hurting someone!

— Of course we're hurting someone, — said the woman. — How else can we cure them? Trust me, I'm a doctor.

Sure enough, Jonathan saw the woman's name and title embroidered on her uniform – Dr. Abigail Flexner. Jonathan gasped, — You hurt people to cure them? Why don't you just let them alone?

— We must kill the demons. Sometimes, we can't help it if the patient is hurt as well, — declared the doctor matter-of-factly. Frustrated with Jonathan's stubbornness, she looked around for help in dealing