



The Cave and the Floating House

I WANTED TO EXPLORE THE MIDDLE OF THE ISLAND WHERE I HAD SEEN a high hill. Jim and I had a difficult time climbing to the top of the hill because it was covered with bushes growing close together. Near the top, we found a **cave** in the rocks. It was as big as two or three rooms, and Jim could stand up straight in it. Jim suggested that we hide the canoe and carry the supplies up to this cave. If anyone were to come to the island to search for him, they would never find him in the cave. Also, when it rained, our supplies would stay dry.

After we moved our supplies to the cave and built a fire, we cooked supper. Then the sky got dark, and it began to thunder and lightning. The rain poured, and I never saw the wind blow so hard. It got very dark and looked blue-black outside. It rained so hard that we could barely see the trees. The wind bent the trees until they nearly touched the ground. And when the night was at its darkest—fst!—it was as bright as day. The lightning gave us a quick view of the treetops bending in the storm. Suddenly, it was dark again, and we heard the thunder crash, and then roll across the sky.

“Jim, this is nice,” I said. “I don’t want to be anywhere but here in this cave with you.”

The big storm caused the river to rise. The next day, we saw that the low places on the island were flooded. As we looked across the river to the far shore, we saw that parts of the land there were flooded, too.

We watched many trees and logs float down the river. And one lucky night we caught a section of a log raft—a very nice raft 12 feet wide and 16 feet long, with a solid, level floor.

Another night, just before sunrise, we saw a complete house float down the river. We rowed out to the house and climbed in through the window. We could see a bed, a table, and two old chairs, and clothes hanging against the wall. There was something lying on the floor in the far corner that looked like a man.

Jim called, “Hello!” But the man didn’t move.

“He can’t be asleep. He must be dead!”

Jim went to check. “You’re right. He’s dead. He’s been shot in the back. He’s been dead two or three days. Don’t look at his face, Huck. It’s awful.”

I didn’t look at him, but I threw some old clothes to Jim to use to cover the body. Then I looked around the room. There were two dirty dresses and a woman’s hat and some men’s clothing, too. We took everything of value we could find—candles, a cup, a blanket, an ax, some nails, and a few other supplies, but most of the things were torn and quite dirty.

When we left the floating house, it was already daylight. I made Jim lie down in the canoe and cover himself with the blanket. If he were to sit up in the canoe, someone might notice that he was black and come to get him. However, I rowed all the way back to the island without seeing anyone at all.