

**BOWEN JAMES
LORENZO**

SCOUTING DAVE

James Bowen
Scouting Dave

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Bowen J.

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Scouting Dave The Trail Hunter

CHAPTER I. DAVID BARRING

The scene opens in the Far West. In the forest the evening's gloom already was settling, though here and there, through some narrow vista, a rich ray of sunlight poured its golden flood far into the shadowy depths. The place was lonely and drear, yet wild and grand. Approaching civilization had driven out the red-man, while his place had not, as yet, been filled by the spreading white. Deep silence reigned, disturbed only by the myriad sounds of animal and insect life, called forth by the rare beauties of the evening. The sights and sounds of civilization were not there; and yet, we should, perhaps, make a single exception.

Stealing cautiously along, with a tread as light as that of a shade, was one of that famed and daring class, met nowhere save on the advance of American settlements – the border scouts, who, born to danger and inured to hardship, become, as a race, the very embodiment of bravery, endurance, strategy and recklessness. These are the ruling characteristics of the class, though as varied in individuals as are the personalities of “citizens of the world.”

The person to whom we have referred was a worthy specimen of his class. Tall, erect and graceful in every motion, with eyes and ears from which not the slightest sign or sound could escape, David Barring, or “Davy the Scout,” as he was often called, was fitted, both by nature and education, for the rough life which he was called upon to lead. Though taller than the average of men, his compact frame and symmetrical proportions served, in a great measure, to disguise his real height.

His dress was in keeping with his life and habits. Bearskin cap, deerskin leggins, and Indian moccasins, in addition to the ordinary hunting suit, tended to enhance the wild character of his person.

There was little necessity for the extreme caution which David still continued to exercise. It sprung more from habit and long practice than from any present danger. That the scout was deeply agitated, might readily be gathered from the manner in which he mused, half aloud, as he proceeded:

“Four years, since I’ve travelled through this place. But it’s bad news I bring ’em this time, so it is. Wouldn’t blame ’em if they didn’t believe me, not a bit; but ’twould be bad times for ’em if they shouldn’t. Them as knows Davy Barring won’t doubt his word in Injin matters, not by a long shot. Wonder, though, how the settlers will like the idee o’ runnin’ away from these four tribes of heathens, with old Black Hawk and all his crew yellin’ round their ears? Blame me if I don’t wish there were a hundred or two men jis’ like myself, to rally here and give ’em a warmin’! Wouldn’t there be a skittish time, though? But there isn’t; so we may as well take things as they come. Maybe, arter all, the reds will strike another way, and give these folks a chance to take the back track. But it does come hard to give up all a man’s done for six or ten years, and leave it to such ornery villains. It’s a consolation there isn’t as many o’ the redskins as there would have been if Davy Barring hadn’t been born; and it’s sure there’ll be less yet, if nothin’ happens to Mister Davy, and his old rifle don’t miss fire.”

The scout spoke with an air which showed his sincerity and determination. Indeed, the mission upon which he was engaged was one of no ordinary moment. Scouting upon the western shore of the Mississippi, then unsettled by white men, he had learned the intent of the savages, who, under Black Hawk, their renowned chief, had determined to repossess themselves on the soil from which they had been driven. Justly concerned for the fate of his friends, David at once had set out to warn them.

“I wonder how the Hinton family will receive this news?” he mused, as he stole along. “It may be they have moved away, though I presume not. However, it’s not more’n five miles further to their

cabin, and then I can satisfy myself. Pretty Emily Hinton! A sweeter girl than she never crossed the path of a mortal man. If I ever hoped to wed, there's no other woman I ever saw that would take my fancy like her. But that can't be. I never could give up this kind o' life, and it's no life for a woman to share. I always hoped that Charles Markley and Emily would come together. But that is none of my business."

The scout paused and looked around. The sun had been for some time below the horizon, and darkness had spread itself over the forest depths. David had travelled a long way. He was hungry and weary. For some moments he stood irresolute.

"It will be three hours before the moon rises," he said, at length, "and I can do no better than to wait for it. Perhaps I could find the cabin in the dark; but more likely I'd miss it, seein' I haven't been over the ground in so long. Leastwise, I'll reach it sooner to wait till the old maid overhead gets up a little, and I shall have to use all my strength in time to come. So I'll couch here, and may be get an hour or two of sleep."

The scout felt no sense of danger, believing that his foes had not yet left the Mississippi's banks. Wearied by the severe exertions of the past few days, he was soon unconscious in profound sleep.

How long he had slept, David could not have determined. He was suddenly awakened by that ever-present instinct which warns the trained forester of danger.

It was not the moon which had lifted the weight from his eyelids. Something of life and motion had been the means of arousing him. Instead of starting quickly up, he remained perfectly silent. The moon was not yet sufficiently above the horizon to lighten the forest to any considerable degree. Still, the acute vision of the scout at once enabled him to define his disturber.

Bending over him, and peering intently down upon the spot where he lay, was the dusky form and burning eyes of a savage! David could see more than this. Grasped in the right hand of the Indian, ready for instant use, was a heavy tomahawk, clearly defined against the pale sky above him.

The savage form bending above him, and the careless tramp of many feet around him, revealed but too plainly to the startled scout that the invaders were upon him – even between himself and the friends he would have warned.

The warrior, in carelessly passing the sleeping scout, had struck his foot against the prostrate form, and, being sensible that something unusual was in his path, grasped his weapon, and peered cautiously down upon the object beneath him. Observing the slight start of Barring, the unsuspecting Indian bent still closer, bringing his head within a foot of the scout's face. That was the moment for action.

With a motion like lightning, and a grasp like steel, the scout clutched the savage by the throat, and, before the astonished barbarian could collect himself, he was thrown violently to the earth. The quickness of the motion hurled the tomahawk many yards away, while the supple white threw himself full upon his gasping victim. Exerting all his fearful strength, David compressed his grasp, until it seemed the very fingers would meet through the neck of the writhing savage.

The utmost efforts of the strangling Indian proved insufficient to warn his fellows, and thus summon assistance. Finding it impossible to effect this, he adopted another method. Ceasing to struggle, he lay gasping and immovable. But the wary scout was not thrown from his guard. Tightening his hold with the left hand, he cautiously moved his right to where the haft of his knife protruded from his belt. In another moment the blade had done its work. There was one convulsive effort of the tawny frame, then a deep, long shudder, and the scout rose from the still form of his dead adversary.

A moment's close observation gave Barring a clear perception of his surroundings. Fortunately, he was not in the direct path of the savage horde, who were sweeping past him to the northward and eastward. He perceived that it was a large party – perhaps, indeed, the main body of the warriors.

The savages were marching in the direct line toward the cabin of the Hinton family; hence it was a matter of doubt if the scout could reach the place before it was too late. But he was not the man to hesitate, and he set forth at once.

The distance to the cabin was nearly passed, yet the anxious man had not succeeded in outstripping his foes. The cautious and circuitous route he had of necessity pursued, and neutralized his superior speed and skill. Suddenly the horde paused, and, dividing into separate parties, moved rapidly to the right and left. Too well the scout knew the meaning of this movement, and the clenched hand and compressed lips showed the stern thoughts which moved him.

“I’ve been a fool!” was his earnest mental ejaculation, as he worked himself free from the presence of his enemies; “and jest by my own laziness, is not comin’ on when I might have given the alarm, now I shall have to stand by and see all my friends murdered! There was time enough; but, fool I was, I must take it for sleep. But it’s done, and now I’ll stand by and see if I ken render any sarvice; may be some lucky chance will happen. After all, it’s a wondrous pity that Davy Barring has been outwitted and outtramped by a lot o’ these confounded human tigers.”

A few rods more brought the party into the little clearing surrounding the cabin of the Hintons. If David had before felt a hope that the invaders would pass the cabin, it was doomed now to an utter extinguishment. Favoured by the darkness, the hostile warriors glided into the clearing, and in a moment the devoted habitation was surrounded by hundreds of the red fiends, eager for the blood of innocence.

The pain and anxiety of the scout can be well imagined.

For some minutes David awaited, with anxiety, the expected onset. Still, all was silent. Filled with vague apprehensions, he crawled nearer, to gain a more extensive view. Finding himself unopposed, he worked his way into the clearing, and scanned the prospect before him. Between the dwelling and its present position, several smaller cabins had been erected, shutting the former from his view. He could perceive a large number of savages about the buildings. To gain a point from which to make another observation, he must move some thirty rods to the eastward, and, as the quickest mode of reaching the place, he returned at once to the wood. Here he met no restraint, and had nearly reached the coveted position, when he espied a crouching figure directly in his path.

The first thought of the scout was to spring to cover; but, before he had time to execute it, the query which broke from the savage, in his authoritative tones, changed the purpose.

“My brave! Where goest thou?” was the demand of the Indian, in the dialect of the Winnebagoes.

The question revealed to David two important facts! The person before him was a chief, unaware of the character of the scout. They were within two yards of each other at the moment, and David cared not to waste time. With a peculiar motion, he glided a pace nearer the waiting chief, and, with a movement like the rapid sweep of thought, whirled his rifle through the air, bringing its heavy breech full upon the painted scalp of the Indian. Without a sound, he fell to the earth, his skull cloven in twain.

“One imp the less, to gloat over the poor women and children they will murder. I hate to spill blood, but that’s what *they’re* here for, and they must reap what they sow. But it’s uncommon curious what keeps them so still.”

Glancing around, to make sure he was not running into an ambushade, a few rapid steps carried him forward to the point selected for his reconnaissance. Here it was soon apparent what had kept the savages so silent. Large piles of rubbish had been gathered about the principal cabin, to which fire had been applied in many places. The scout gazed silently upon the spectacle, while his clenched hands and fierce expression showed how terrible was the rage within that bosom.

“Oh, my poor friends!” he mused. “I am to blame for all this – I who might have saved you. But, burn on! There shall be a fearful recompense.”

At this moment the few savages who had remained standing, threw themselves prone upon the earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE HINTON FAMILY AND THEIR FATE

Eight years before the opening of our story, Elisha Hinton, removing from his New England home, with his wife and three children, had located in the western land of promise. Being frugal and industrious, a few years found the happy family comfortably settled, surrounded by all the abundant blessings conferred by the productive soil and the ancient forest.

But to them, as all others, bitter was mixed with the sweet. The pet of the family – little Ella – the youngest daughter, sickened. All the medical skill of the region round about was resorted to, but in vain. Day by day she wasted away, becoming paler and thinner, until it was fully apparent to the sorrowing friends that she could not long survive. And, while they hung grief-stricken about her couch, she clasped those little transparent hands, murmured fondly of the bright home above, and passed away.

Shortly after this bereavement, the settlement in which Elisha resided became involved in factious quarrels and divisions. Nothing was further from the character of the man, and, as the last alternative, he resolved to remove to the very verge of civilization. Here, far from all disturbing causes, Mr. Hinton had passed five years, devoting his time to the instruction of his remaining children, George and Emily. The latter, especially, was it the delight of her parents to instruct and prepare for the life before her. Emily proved an apt scholar – far exceeding educational acquirements others of her position.

One year, before this tale opens, the wife and mother had suddenly sickened and died. With breaking hearts they made her a grave beneath the wide-spreading branches of an old oak, and here consigned her to that unbroken rest where there should be no more of sorrow or pain.

The afternoon which initiates this story had been the first mournful anniversary of the day when she was laid to rest. As the sun sunk from sight, the family group gathered about the cabin door. Elisha Hinton, as was his wont, took from its rest the worn family Bible, and read from its pages the words of hope and consolation: “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet, a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye shall see me; because I live, ye shall live also.” With moving pathos the words fell from the lips of the father, and, as the last sound floated upon the calm evening air, he closed the book, and bowed his head upon his hands.

“My children,” he said, after a slight pause, “this is to me a solemn day. One year since your dear mother passed away, leaving us weary pilgrims to follow, and meet her in the fullness of time in a happier land. I know not why it should be so, but, it has seemed to me to-day that her spirit was near, whispering me to hasten and meet her in that blissful land, where partings are unknown. *There* sin and suffering never come, and turmoil and dissensions are never known!”

The simple worshippers sat thus, conversing of topics most closely connected with their present, till darkness settled about them; then, with a cheerful good-night, they separated, each seeking their quiet cots.

Little did they dream of the impending fate so soon to burst upon them. The father and daughter were ere long wrapped in quiet slumber, but George remained awake. He could not sleep. He listened to the chirping cricket, the quiet breathing of his father, and the gentle sighing of the winds without. Gradually he lost that keen consciousness, and from a state of indistinctness and confusion, sunk into a pleasant sleep.

Soon wild fancies obtruded into his brain, and after rolling from side to side under their influence for some time, he suddenly awoke, as fully as at noonday. For a moment he wondered *what* had awakened him. He listened. Surely there could be no mistaking that sound! The sharp crackling of a fire fell upon his ear.

Directly above his couch was a narrow aperture, which had been constructed for a loop-hole, but which had thus far been used only for the purpose of ventilation. He rose quickly, and applied his eye to the opening, but a fierce current of heat and smoke caused him to recoil instantly. Leaping from his couch he found that the room was filled with smoke. The mystery was then solved. The house was on fire!

Springing quickly to the cot of his father, the startled young man aroused him, and briefly communicating his discovery, hastened to awake his sister. Then he turned to a window and endeavoured to gaze out. Vain effort! The smoke whirled past it in dark masses, while alternate jets of flame mingled with the dusky clouds. By this time both Emily and her father had thrown on their garments, and before George could unbar the door they were at his back, white with alarm and anxiety. The father had seized his rifle, but the young man did not pause for weapons. He threw open the door, and the entire party stepped quickly forth.

For a moment they were blinded by the whirling smoke, but, passing beyond it, they turned to view the extent of the conflagration. Simultaneously, the yells of a hundred savage throats burst upon their horrified ears – the rapid reports of a score of rifles followed – and father and son sunk to the earth, pierced by many bullets. Although Emily felt the garments she wore cut and torn by the whistling shots, she was uninjured by the deadly shower. She saw her father and brother fall, knew that they were killed, and, with a terrible heart-sickness of horror, she sunk upon the ground, almost unconscious of the dread scene around her.

Emily was barely conscious that a yelling warrior rushed upon her – that a gleaming hatchet was raised above her head. She hoped and expected that her last moment had come, but it was not to be so. A rough voice interposed, and the blow was stayed. Then all became blank unconsciousness.

Despite her terrible surroundings, it was but a brief time that Emily remained insensible. The faint light of the moon, in concert with the glare of flames, rendered objects quite distinct, and the poor girl at once saw that she was a close prisoner.

She looked up at her captors. Nothing could she gather from those grim, exultant guards. To her entreaties they gave not even the slightest heed, scarce removing their gaze from the wild scene of the burning cabin. A dull pain at her ankles caused her to look down. A deeper pang went to her sensitive heart as she saw that her limbs were securely bound with thongs of dried deerskin. This, indeed, seemed to unloose the fountain of her tears, and, bowing her head upon her hands, she gave way to violent and heart-breaking sobs.

Now that her sorrow was unloosed, she wept long and violently, utterly oblivious of all around her. She did not heed the guttural “Ugh” with which one of her dusky guards directed the attention of his comrades to some interesting movement. A nondescript figure emerged from the throng and came toward the group, leading a horse, saddled and equipped for a lady rider. Though dressed in the costume, and affecting the manners of the savages, and flowing black hair, beard of the same hue, and general contour of the features, proclaimed him unmistakably a white.

CHAPTER III. THE RENEGADE

William Ashbey or “Wild Bill,” as he was usually called, was a reckless, dissipated fellow, who had fully followed out the likes and dislikes of his lawless disposition. Even while a mere youth, wild stories were related concerning his character, as caused all law-loving citizens to shun and despise him. Thus debarred from honourable society, he more readily sought that congenial to his nature. Gamblers, horse-thieves, and blacklegs – with which the settlements were always cursed – became his associates and confidants, and he became at once an object of hatred and fear among the more quiet settlers.

The man who offended Ashbey was sure, sooner or later, to suffer from some despicable revenge.

Chance frequently threw hardened characters in the way of the Hinton family, and the young reprobate soon discovered that he loved the fair Emily. So far as his nature admitted, Ashbey was no doubt sincere in his attachment. But his *love* was a base, selfish passion, totally unworthy the name.

Acting with his usual impulse, young Ashbey lost no time in declaring his suit, and pressing it with all his power of persuasion, not only to the father but daughter also. Finding himself totally unsuccessful, and every overture mildly but firmly rejected, the suitor broke into a burst of passion which finally ended in his expulsion from the house of Mr. Hinton. Vowing a fearful revenge, he left them.

Time passed away, and Wild Bill was nearly forgotten. True, there were reports that he had become dissatisfied with civilized life, and had joined the Indians in their forest haunts; but as peace prevailed, little was thought of the rumour. Men inured to danger pay but little heed to rumours, and if Wild Bill was really removed from their vicinity, the settlers were quite willing to let him rest, among savages or elsewhere.

Such was the person who now strode carelessly into the midst of the grim band. Quickly placing the rein of the horse he led in the hand of a brave, he then approached the maiden, with a look of infernal exultation lighting up his features.

The sound of the approaching party had aroused Emily, and she looked up at his advance. By the dim light she could discern the features of the person, and inspired by the thought a white man was near, she lifted her hands toward him, exclaiming:

“Oh, sir, you will save me! You – ”

“Yis, my leddy, I’ll save ye,” he sneered, with brutal exultation. “I crossed the big drink to save ye – tuk ye from the Winnebago what was goin’ ter lift yer hair – got yer hoss, with yer own trappin’s onter him, an’ I jist kalkelate I’ll save ye, so no baby-face’ll git ye away from Wild Bill, arter all. I’d like ter save yer old dad, an’ little Georgy, but the boys got thar’ idees up, an’ I couldn’t do it.”

What wonder that the maid recoiled as from a loathsome serpent?

Wild Bill folded his arms upon his broad chest, and regarded the maiden for some time in silence. Then he bent nearer, and broke forth:

“So, my purty, it seems yer not satisfied kase I saved yer life, an’ took all these ’ere pains for your sake. I like to see gratitude once in a while, I does; but, no matter. Maybe you’ve forgot the time when I cum an’ begged for yer hand, an’ told ye how I loved ye; an’ how I was kicked from the house for it – yis, kicked from the house!” he repeated, in savage tones. “Ye kinder liked little spooney-faced Charley Markley, but now I hope ye’ve had his company long enough, so ye can change hands a bit.”

“Oh, monster, monster! why do you come in this fearful manner to drag me from my home, and murder my father and brother? Do you not know that vengeance will overtake you, and your wretched life pay the forfeit?”

“Ha, my lady! Now we begin to talk o’ vengeance! Well, that’s rich! Jest look around ye, my fine bird. Winnybagies, Sacs and Foxes, Pottywattimies – all led by old Black Hawk, and all the chiefs o’ the tribes. Maybe ye think we come over here jist for yer purty carkiss; but I’ll tell ye, Illinoy belongs to these here Injins, an’ they’ll hev’ it, too, afore two moons, as sure as I’ll hev’ you.”

“Oh, spare me, spare me this, and my eternal gratitude shall be yours.”

“Sorry I couldn’t do it, my rosy. But these ’ere sufferin’ Injins would tommyhawk ye in less’n no time. Seems to me ye’re mighty ungrateful, seein’ as I saved yer from ’em jest a bit agone.”

“Let me go now, and if I must fall a prey to their ferocity, so be it. Anything is preferable – even death itself.”

“Couldn’t possibly listen to any such thing, not even to ’commodate my sweetheart. My heart’s tender, an’ I couldn’t bear to see your purty head chopped in two pieces by the red-men. All I cum over for was to find ye, an’ take ye home with me. Maybe I’ll make it in my way to wipe out that baby-face what’s been enjoyin’ the smiles I coveted all this time. I’d be really happy to oblige ye, but the fact is, ye’re a little down in the mouth to-day, and will fell better when ye come to think it all over; when ye find Charley don’t mourn for the absence of his mistress.”

“Oh, you cannot – you will not harm Charles Markley,” the suffering girl pleaded. “He has never done anything to harm you.”

“I tell you, gal,” broke in the renegade, fiercely, “he has done enough. If nothin’ more, he’s stood in my way – he’s enjoyed the smiles I was a-dyin’ for – he couldn’t walk on the ground where my shadder had passed, because I’s a little wild; but he’s played with a whirlwind, an’ he must take the shock of it.”

The dark man turned partly away as he ceased speaking, and stood for some moments regarding the fiery scene before him. Dreadful had been the first misery of the maiden, now it seemed a thousand times enhanced. Father, brother, self – all were swallowed up in anxiety for the fate of another – one even dearer than life itself. Oh, that she could fly to him, and warn him of the danger that would soon burst upon his devoted head. Reason seemed giving away beneath the dread accumulation of misery. Soon she was aroused by the rough voice of her persecutor.

“I don’t suppose ye’ll feel like trampin’ far to-night, if ye have yer own hoss to ride on. I may as well tell ye, ye’re goin’ back to my snug little home across the great river; when ye get there ye’ll have all that heart can crave, an’ a good, lovin’ husband besides. You’re not goin’ to be forced along as fast as the red legs o’ these braves can carry ’em. Ye’ll be took along easy, an’ used like a queen, if ye mind how to talk. To-night ye’ll go out a mile or two, an’ camp. In the mornin’ ye can move ahead slowly. You see I hev’ arranged everything for yer comfort. Probably they’re anxious to be off; so, if ye’ll mount, I’ll help ye!”

He stooped and unbound the thong, and, raising her in his arms as if a mere child, placed her upon the saddle. Emily did not resist. She knew it would be in vain, and only subject her to fresh indignities.

“Now, my fine Emily,” he said, as the dusky guard gathered about her, “I must bid you good-bye for a few days. I’m goin’ with old Black Hawk to settle up a few scores what have stood out too long already, an’ then I’m back to yer side again.”

Addressing a few words in their own tongue to the Winnebagoes, which she did not understand, Wild Bill moved away, and was soon mixed with the savages, who were now gathering for fresh scenes of violence.

No eye, save that above – saw the dark, tall figure which glided within a yard of some of the savages, and plunged rapidly into the forest. Could Wild Bill have seen that figure he might have felt less at ease. As the renegade disappeared, the party acting under his command moved cautiously from the spot, carrying the suffering Emily to a fate ten thousand times worse than death.

CHAPTER IV. MARKLEY

Another scene opens, upon the same afternoon, in the wide-spread forest, some miles from the cabin of the Hinton family. Around the rude but strong cabin of a settler, several acres of the primitive forest had been felled, allowing the full sunlight to kiss the dark-brown cheek of the sleeping earth. Wild fields were there, into which the seed already had been placed, to germinate and fructify during the coming season.

Upon the borders of this clearing stood a young man, busily engaged in felling one of the forest monarchs. Although not above the medium height, his broad chest and muscular development proclaimed him a true son of the border. The heavy axe he wielded rose and fell with regular strokes, sending showers of chips flying merrily through the air. Already the work was half done, and, resting his axe upon the ground, Charles Markley threw his bearskin cap beside it; then, drawing a worn handkerchief from his pocket, he wiped the beaded sweat which stood in great drops upon his brow. Throwing the handkerchief upon the cap, the youth changed his position, and opened another shower of blows, which rung merrily through the old wood.

At length the giant trembled beneath the steady strokes; then wavered and toppled for a moment, as if in uncertainty. Once, twice, thrice the axe was planted heavily, and, with a steady sweep, like that of a rushing cloud, the old oak thundered to the ground.

The young man regarded his work for a moment in a satisfied manner, then glanced at the sinking sun – picked up the neglected cap, and seated himself upon the large trunk. For some moments he remained in a reverie.

“I’d like to see Emily,” he mused, “but I think I’d better not go over to-night. ’Tis just a year to-day since her poor mother died, and it must be a sad recurrence to them. Poor Emily; it was a terribly hard blow to her, and the sorrow it caused is not all effaced yet. But she will soon be my wife; then, I feel sure she will forget those old sorrows in her new joys.”

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