

# Saving Hadley Hill Summer Camp

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# *Saving Hadley Hill Summer Camp*

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# Saving Hadley Hill Summer Camp

## *Summary*

*Hadley Hill Summer Camp is no longer the fun place it used to be. Something has to change and it's up to Alex, Pudge & Tony to find a way to make it happen!*

RL 4.0 & up

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## **Chapter 1**

### **THE ALLIGATOR**

“Wait! Here’s a good one!” Alex spread his arms about three feet apart and paused a moment before continuing with his story. “Did I tell you the one about the big ol’ snapping turtle that decided to make a home for itself...in the wading pool of all places!”

“WE’VE HEARD THAT ONE ALREADY!” The crowd of boys and mothers began to press closer.

“Umm,” Alex stammered, “how about when the raccoons broke into the kitchen? That was really something...”

“WE’VE HEARD THAT ONE TWICE!” The crowd was really closing in now.

“Uh, I need to check on something. I’ll be right back.” Alex took one step backward, then turned to make his escape.

Too late... Alex was surrounded. He stuck out both arms to hold back the advancing mob, then shut his eyes and searched his brain for another story; one more summer camp story to distract the angry crowd and buy him a little more time. But it was no use. Beads of sweat began to trickle down his face.

An hour ago everyone had been in great spirits, laughing and joking; all seemed right with the world. But things had gradually changed for the worse. Now each mother in the crowd was checking her watch, and slowly raising her eyes to give Alex “the look.”

“The look” is something we have all had the opportunity to experience at one time or another, but it can be a difficult thing to describe. It is best defined simply as a nonverbal form of communication possessed by all moms in all countries all around the world. Most children, grown men (and even pets if they could) would tell you that “the look” is something to be avoided whenever possible. It almost always means that somehow, in some way or another, you have screwed up.

What an amazing skill. Think about it! Without saying one single word, a mother’s unspoken message still manages to come through very loud and very clear. Poor Alex, with nowhere to hide, was getting a silent earful. If something didn’t happen, and soon, things were going to get ugly.

Pudge was no help at all. Head down, hands behind his back, pacing up and down the sidewalk in his red, high-topped sneakers, Pudge was being very careful to avoid eye contact with any of the mothers. His strategy was simple. He figured if he didn’t look he wouldn’t have to deal with their unspoken messages. It

was working for him, at least for now, but he knew his luck probably wouldn't hold very much longer.

Pudge stopped suddenly to stare down the street.

"Listen!" he shouted, raising one hand to quiet the crowd. Off in the distance came the sound of a muffled explosion. "This could be it!" Everyone turned in the direction of the sound and strained to listen. A few moments later it came again, louder this time.

KA-BOOM!

"No doubt about it!" Pudge announced with a smile, "here it comes!"

Like a big yellow ship firing its cannon as it slowly drifts into port, the bus crept toward the waiting crowd; black smoke billowing from the tailpipe with each loud backfire. KA-BOOM!

As the bus drifted closer, the screeching brakes drowned the sound of the cheering children. One last KA-BOOM officially announced its arrival, and the bus came to a stop in front of the Youth Center.

"Prepare to let go the anchor!" yelled Tony from the back window of the bus.

Alex pushed through the crowd and hurried into position beneath the window.

"Let go the anchor!" Tony shouted as he threw a length of clothesline to Alex waiting below. Alex caught the rope and tied his end to a nearby lamppost.

When the bus was safely “anchored” Pudge raised his arms and, like a preacher about to give a sermon, turned to face the crowd.

“It has arrived!” Pudge said with a smile. He paused for a moment and then added, “Only an hour and fifteen minutes late this time!” (Forgetting his own rule about avoiding eye contact, Pudge looked directly into the faces of the mothers as he spoke. One “look” was all that was needed. Pudge quickly understood that he shouldn’t make any more jokes about the bus.)

A whistle blew and Tony again appeared at the rear window. “Captain about to go ashore!” Tony shouted.

Alex and Pudge ran to the door of the bus and stood at attention. The children pressed forward as the door swung open.

“EVERYBODY BACK UP!” Mr. Whitehead bellowed from the driver’s seat.

Muttering something under his breath, Mr. Whitehead worked his way out of his seat, took hold of the handrails and began to make his way down the steps. A thick cloud of cigar smoke swirled around him. When he reached the bottom step, Mr. Whitehead stopped and peered back into the bus.

“ Tony! You, Alex and Pudge get things organized,” Mr. Whitehead barked. “ I’ll be back when you’ve gotten everybody loaded.”

“Aye aye sir!” Tony yelled.

Alex and Pudge, still standing at attention, saluted their boss as he stepped onto the sidewalk. Mr. Whitehead glared at them a moment, his bloodshot eyes looking like they might pop out of their sockets. Then he shook his head, smirked at the adults, and walked toward the Youth Center.

One of the mothers scampered ahead to block his path. "You just hold on there mister camp director. Where have you been and why are you so late?" she demanded.

Mr. Whitehead squinted down upon the lady; his face turning shades of several different colors on its way to a very bright red. He was just about to growl an answer when his eyes drifted back toward the crowd and he stopped himself before he could form the first word.

Not far away stood a small, well-dressed man. Realizing he had been spotted, the little man took off his glasses and pretended to clean them. He was very careful not to look at Mr. Whitehead, but at the same time his body leaned in Mr. Whitehead's direction as he strained to hear what was going to be said next.

Mr. Whitehead's eyes darted between the lady in front of him and then back to the little man. "Couldn't get the bus started," Mr. Whitehead finally mumbled. He then quickly circled around the lady and stomped off into the building.

The little man put on his glasses and watched Mr. Whitehead walk into the Youth Center. Then, spotting Alex in the crowd, he made his way over to him and stuck out his hand.

“Hello son, I’m Sam Elliot. I’m on the Board of Directors here at the Youth Center. Looks like you’re going to have a nice day today!”

Alex wiped his sweaty hands on his shorts and shook Mr. Elliot’s hand. “Nice to meet you sir, I’m Alex Jackson. Yup, looks like it’s going to be a hot one! I’ve just about soaked through this tee shirt already.”

Mr. Elliot laughed and looked over the crowd of boys and mothers. “I see the bus is a little late again... actually, I should say it’s ‘more’ than just a little late isn’t it?”

Alex tugged on the whistle hanging around his neck. “Umm, yup, it’s late... again,” Alex replied.

“Yes indeed, late again.” Mr. Elliot looked back at the door of the Youth Center that Mr. Whitehead had just entered. “How are things at camp this year, Alex?”

Alex pushed his hands deep into the pockets of his shorts and began to answer; then hesitated and cleared his throat.

Finally, Alex replied. “Umm...fine, sir. Things are fine.” Alex kept his hands in his pockets. His head was down; eyes focused on the sidewalk.

Mr. Elliot stared at Alex for a moment. Then he smiled, patted Alex on the back and said, “Okay son, it was nice to meet you. Have a good week.”

Alex raised his head and watched Mr. Elliot walk into the Youth Center.

Wrapped in his thoughts, Alex hadn't noticed the giggling children, or the fact that Pudge was slowly sneaking up behind him.

When Pudge had gotten himself into position behind Alex, he blew his whistle and in his best camp counselor/drill sergeant voice shouted, "Who's ready to go to camp??!!"

As if awakened from a sound sleep, Alex lurched forward, began running in place and, looking frantically in all directions, yelled "Me!... I am!... Let's get going!... What's holding everything up???!"

The giggles turned to uncontrolled laughter.

Pudge smiled at his more than slightly embarrassed, out of breath friend, winked at the kids, and got down to business.

Now, Pudge was great at getting kids excited about what they were doing. Even when what they were doing wasn't all that exciting, like taking roll call and loading a bus. Pudge pulled up his baggy shorts. "Let's see," Pudge said looking at his clipboard. "Is Meatball Muscles here?" There was no answer from the crowd. "Meatball Muscles, you can get on the bus!" Pudge shouted. The kids just stood with puzzled faces, looking around at each other and then back at Pudge.

"Wait a second," Tony said grabbing the clipboard and checking over the list of campers. "There's nobody here named Meatball Muscles! Pudge, put on your glasses!"

“Oh yeah... thanks Tony.” Pudge made a big show out of reaching into his shirt pocket to pull out his glasses as the kids and mothers groaned.

“Let’s see now,” Pudge said taking the clipboard back from Tony, “I need Meatball Muscles. No wait, my mistake, Michael, Michael Moses, is Michael Moses here?” Little Michael stepped forward with a big grin; his too-big shirt hanging down over his too-big pants.

Alex pulled the brim of Michael’s baseball cap down over his eyes, “Get on the bus ...Meatball!”

Pudge, Alex and Tony had been summer camp counselors for the last two years. The job didn’t pay much, the hours were long, and the Camp Director, Mr. Whitehead was getting harder and harder to work for. At the end of last week’s session things had gotten so bad that they had actually thought about trying to find different jobs to finish out the summer. But summer jobs weren’t easy to find in this small town. Besides, they liked working with kids, and with each other.

“And last but not least,” Pudge said as he came to the end of the list of campers, “is Jason Howard here?”

“That’s me!” said Jason.

“OK, hop on the bus, Jason!”

“Ummm...I can’t,” said Jason. “I’ve got a little problem.”

Pudge looked down at Jason. “Let’s see, ...let me guess what your problem is.” Pudge looked Jason over carefully. “I bet your socks don’t match!”

Jason lifted his pant legs to show his matching white socks.

“Nope, your socks are good, and your sneakers are on the right feet too.” Pudge walked around in back of Jason. “Hmmm, your pants aren’t on backwards. I give up Jason!” Pudge said. “What’s your problem?”

“I need some help with my sleeping bag.”

“Umm, Jason,” Pudge said, “I hate to break this to you, but you don’t have a sleeping bag!”

“Yes I do!” Jason pointed down the street. “It’s back there at the corner! Would you help me get it here?”

“Alex! Tony!” Pudge shouted, “would you help Jason with his stuff? It’s down at the corner!”

Alex and Tony were loading the last of the supplies on the bus. “Sure we’ll be right there Jason!” Alex answered.

Jason ran down to the corner to wait for the counselors. When they had finished with the supplies, Alex and Tony headed down the street to meet him. They had almost gotten to the corner when Alex suddenly stopped.

“Whoa!” Alex shouted, “Jason, let go of that alligator!”

“That’s no alligator,” Jason yelled back. “That’s my sleeping bag.”

“No way!” Tony and Alex said together as they circled in slow motion around the big green sleeping bag stretched out behind the little boy.

Tony looked at Alex and pointed. “That’s a big one Alex! We’ve gotta be careful! Stay away from those teeth!”

Jason stared at the counselors, trying to figure out if they really thought his sleeping bag was an alligator. “Those ain’t teeth!” Jason said. “That’s a zipper!”

Alex and Tony continued to circle around Jason and his sleeping bag.

Alex held out his hand motioning Tony to stop. “It may have just eaten,” he said, almost whispering. “See how lumpy it is?”

Jason laughed. “Those are my boots and extra clothes! I couldn’t find my backpack so I just threw everything in my sleeping bag. It was too hard to roll up with all that stuff in it, so I had to drag it here. Come on you guys! You know this ain’t an alligator! .... *Don’t you?*”

“Except for those lumps, it does look awfully flat for an alligator,” said Tony.

“I don’t know,” Alex said shaking his head. “It might have gotten run over by a truck or something. That would explain the flat spots. Let’s not take any chances. It could still be dangerous.”

Mr. Whitehead was now waiting by the bus, and the campers were hanging out the windows wondering

what was holding things up. "Come on you clowns," Mr. Whitehead yelled. "Stop fooling around. Let's get going."

"Ok," said Alex, "on the count of three, I'll grab the head, you two take the tail. Ready? One...Two.... THREE!" Jason and the two counselors grabbed up the sleeping bag and headed toward the bus, weaving their way through the pack of mothers as they ran. Mr. Whitehead had to jump out of the way as the boys rushed past.

"Watch out Mr. Whitehead!" yelled Tony. "Man eating alligator coming through!"

Mr. Whitehead shook his head, climbed onto the bus and folded himself into the driver's seat. When he was settled he turned to Pudge and asked, "Do we have everyone?"

Pudge looked at his clipboard. "Let's see, forty-six kids and one alligator. Yup, we're good to go!"

Mr. Whitehead reached for the handle to pull the bus door closed.

"Wait!" Tony yelled. "Stand by crew! Prepare to cast off!" Tony jumped back off the bus and untied the rope from around the lamppost.

"Cast off!" Tony bellowed.

Tony threw the rope to Alex who was waiting to pull it through the back window. Then Tony scampered back on board ignoring Mr. Whitehead's eye-popping, stomach turning, if looks could kill, glare. Running down the aisle, Tony yelled out more orders to his imaginary crew, "Let go the main sail and fore top, man the pumps,

batten down the hatches and clear for action men!” At the back of the bus, Tony stopped, stood with his hands behind his back and looked around the “ship.” Satisfied that all was ready he announced, “Ship manned and ready captain! Take her out of port!”

The kids cheered as Mr. Whitehead fired up the engine.

“Sit down idiot!” Mr. Whitehead shouted. Tony fell into his seat as the bus lurched ahead, backfired, and then slowly started down the street.

The mothers were pressed together on the sidewalk waving at the bus as it pulled away. Pudge waved back and yelled to them from his open window, “We’re off like a herd of turtles!”

“Hey Alex! Look!” Pudge shouted. “They liked that one!”

Alex looked back to see the ladies laughing and waving at Pudge. But Alex also noticed that Mr. Elliot was there too; standing apart from the crowd, watching the bus roll away. Mr. Elliot wasn’t laughing. He wasn’t smiling either.

Alex settled back into his seat...like a herd of turtles, they were finally on their way.

It's going to be a wild week at Hadley Hill Summer Camp! Download the rest of the story [HERE](#)