**A Week in the Woods by Andrew Clement**

**Chapter 13 Summary**

**“Readiness”**

After the morning announcements on Monday, the principal, Mrs. Gibson, reminded students that next Monday they would all be on their way to Gray’s Notch State Park and that the buses would be leaving at 7:30 a.m., so everybody should be there at 7 a.m. She also reminded them not to pack too many things and to follow the packing list.

That week Mark was surprised to find out that everything was about the big trip. Every teacher in every subject talked about it and about the place where they were camping. Mrs. Bender, of Language Arts told them they would have to keep a journal of the trip. Mrs. Farr, the Social Studies teacher taught them about some Native Americans that lived in the mountains they were visiting. She gave them some folders and worksheets they had to take to the trip. Mrs. Leghorn, the math teacher, wasn’t very excited about the trip, but that week all of the problems were about rate and distance. Mr. Harris, the P.E. teacher, turned half of the general room into an obstacle course that involved a lot ducking under things, a lot of climbing over things and careful walking across the low balance beam without falling into the fake water. Even the music teacher put preparations for the Spring concert on hold and taught them some campfire songs. The entire fifth grade was moving toward the same goal, and of course, Mrs. Maxwell was leading the charge.

When science class began on Monday afternoon, Mr. Maxwell reminded students that that time next week they would all be seventy-five miles away from school breathing in a cool mountain air. Then he started talking about air. He asked: “*What is air made up of?*” A girl named Chelsea raised her hand and said “*Oxygen? And nitrogen?*” Mr. Maxwell nodded and asked his students if it was made up by anything else. No one raised his or her hand, except for Mark, who knew something about air because he had done a project about that back in third grade. It was the only hand raised, but Mr. Maxwell kept asking if somebody knew the answer, ignoring Mark. He continued the class. Mark brought his hand down, and he felt his face started to feel warm. He knew what was going on with Mr. Maxwell and he knew he deserved it because he had been unpleasant and rude the first two weeks. But now Mark wanted to be a part of the class and he thought he had been sending the right signals to Mr. Maxwell for quite a while. However, that day Mark felt hurt, but he didn’t get angry. He knew he was being punished. He continued to pay attention because he really wanted to learn about the woods, the mountains, the air and the weather, and he had to admit that Mr. Maxwell was an expert.

When Mark got home from school on Tuesday, he found four large cardboard boxes from REI. Leon helped him unpack everything. Then Mark organized his new gear in his new framepack and Leon helped him to move and adjust the shoulder straps. Standing there Mark imagined himself at summer camp, all set for a ten-day hike. It made him feel strong and independent. Anya called them and asked Mark to change his clothes.

Later, Mark took his new compass out into the woods. He read the instruction and did some of the recommended exercises. Then he tried it out. He walked on a big triangle around his house, just keeping his eyes in the red and black needled. Thirty minutes later, he ended up within fifty feet from where he started.

After dinner, Mark took all his new equipment up to his room. Then he found the packing list and started packing. There was a section about what not to bring and he saw it said “No knives of any kind”. He took out his new knife. The list also said “No matches or lighters”, but it didn’t say no magnesium striker blocks, so Mark left that in his backpack pocket.

Mark finished packing and then he put his backpack on. He slipped the shoulder bands into place, fastened the chest strap, settled the waist belt onto his hips, then pulled it tight, and snapped the buckle. He tested the weight and thought it was doable. And again Mark had that feeling of strength and independence. Then he thought that when Mr. Maxwell saw him show up with all his gear, maybe the guy would know he was dealing with a kid who knew a thing or two about being outdoors. He hoped the man would ease up and showed him some respect. Mark knew he deserved it.

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**Chapter 14 Summary**

**“Zero Tolerance”**

When Mark arrived to school on Monday morning at seven o´clock, he wished he had gotten up earlier that day or that Leon had driven faster because tons of fifth graders were already there. He saw Mr. Maxwell talking to Mrs. Gibson, the principal.

Leon pulled the car over and said: “*Out you go now. You have a good time, Mark*.” Mark jumped out of the car, grabbed his pack and went straight to line up, waiting for Mr. Maxwell to check him in. He looked at the other kids in the line and he felt embarrassed about all the new things he brought, like if he was showing off or something.

When it was his turn, Mr. Maxwell glanced at him, then ran a quick eye over his gear, and said, “Toss that into the fourth pickup and then get into the first bus.” That was it. No greeting, no comment, no smile.

On the bus, Mark was glad to see Jason Frazier siting near the back. He waved at Mark who seated across the aisle from him. They talked about Mr. Maxwell’s new look (Old Man of the Mountain Maxwell). Jason was glad they didn’t have school and that his older brother had told him that the food was good.

When the bus was almost full, Mrs. Stearns and Mrs. Leghorn got on. Mrs. Stearns called all the names of the list and when she finished they all sat down and drove away. A Week in the Woods has officially begun.

When they arrived at Gray’s Notch State Park, the boys on the first bus were divided up into three different groups. Mark, Jason and eight other boys were assigned to a one-room cabin called the Raven´s Nest. A man named Mr. Frost (Jessica Frost’s father) was their cabin chaperone. He looked nice enough to Mark, but he wasn’t an outdoors type. .He helped the boys find all their luggage, and led them to their cabin. Mark instantly liked the place. It reminded him of a cabin at his summer camp. Jason and Mark were sleeping in a bunk. Jason called top and Mark bottom. They settled in. Mr. Frost asked everybody to be organized. He also established some rules that he shared with the boys.

Once everyone settled in, Mr. Frost decided to organize a firewood brigade because the night was going to be chilly. The ten boys followed him to the parking lot where Mr. Maxwell had arranged to have two cords of split stove wood dumped there. The boys lined up and Mr. Frost began to load wood onto their arms. Both, Mark and Jason told Mr. Frost they could carry more wood, so they got a bigger load. They raced back to the cabin. They collided and their loads fell off. They were laughing until Mr. Maxwell appeared. He told them to clean up the mess and to go back to their cabin, and they did. Once there, they began a pillow fight. When Mr. Frost got there, he added another rule: “*No pillow fights*”.

After the big meeting in the lodge, everyone ate lunch, had a restroom break, and then gathered outside in the council clearing at one o’clock. They all sat in logs. Once everyone was settled, Mr. Maxwell told them that they were going to start their week in the woods with the annual Nature Study Scavenger Hunt. He explained that they would be split into teams of 20 (one boys cabin and one girl’s cabin). Every group would receive the same list of 75 things to search for. He also told them how to search and how to collect the samples because the idea was to return every collected item to the same place they found it, when the scavenger’s hunt was over. He told them they had 1 hour to find as many things as they could. Then, he told them that the group who found more objects would receive an extra dessert. On the other hand, the children on the loosing team would have to help serve and clear the tables at dinner that night. Then the activity began.

When the big bell at the council clearing rang at 2:15, all the teams gathered for the judging. That part of the event was almost as noisy as the collecting had been. Mark watched carefully as the three judges went over his team’s collection. All together, they had found 62 things from the list. They didn’t win. Another tem had found 67. But they didn’t lose either, so they wouldn’t have to clear the tables.

Then they headed back to their cabin for their half an hour break, before their next activity. Mark sat down on his bed to look for his Jack London book. Jason sat down at the other end of Mark’s mattress and started rooting around in his suitcase. Suddenly he whispered: “*Hey, Mark, check this out*”. Looking around carefully, he reached toward Mark with something in his hand. Mark put out his hand, and as he took it, Jason whispered, “*Turn toward me s no one sees it*.” Mark held the thing close to his body and took a quick look down. It was a brown leather case. Jason told him to open it. Mark took out a multitool. Mark thought it was cool. He started folding it around and turned it into a needle-nose pliers.

Suddenly, Mr. Maxwell open the cabin door. Mark looked at him and quickly put the multitool under his leg. He talked to the whole cabin, but his eyes kept coming back to Mark. He was checking every cabin. When he was leaving, he put his hand on the doorknob, and then hesitated. Turning back around, he walked over to Mark. He pointed down at the bunk and said, “*Unless I’m mistaken, you’re hiding something under your leg there. Am I mistaken?*.” Mark gulped. Then he shook his head. “*No, you’re right. It’s a tool*.” And he reached under his leg, picked it up, and held it out. Mr. Maxwell took it from him. He looked at it and said: “*I’m sorry I found this. You shouldn’t have this here*”. Then he asked Mark to grab his backpack and get everything in it. Mark was confused and asked him why. Then Mr. Maxwell turned the multitool in a 4 inch blade and said, “*This is a knife. And the instructions of a Week in the Woods said no student was to bring a knife of any kind. But its more than that. Because this is a school-sponsored event. So this is really school, just like a fieldtrip or an assembly. And our district has a zero-tolerance rule about bringing weapons to school. So this, this knife means you are going to be suspended from school*.” Then he put the multitool back into his pocket and told Mark again to pack all his stuff and to wait for him in his pickup truck. Mark nodded. As soon as Mr. Maxwell left Jason stood up and told Mark that he should tell that it was his tool and not Marks. But Mark shook his head and said, “*No, I’m the one who got caught. I´ll get in less trouble than you would. Really. It’s okay*.”

Mark packed really quickly. As he was leaving the cabin he turned around. He saw a lot of pale faces. Forcing a smile to his lips Mark said, “*See you, guys … sorry*”. Then he left.