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

**Chapter 16 Summary**

**Into the Woods**

Walking back pat the gatehouse, Mr. Maxwell forced himself to give the ranger a smile and a thumbs-up. But that wasn’t how he felt. Mark wasn’t how he felt. Mark wasn’t in the truck. So the first thing Mr. Maxwell had to do was to go to Mark’s cabin and see if maybe he was there.

Fifteen minutes later Mr. Maxwell had looked everywhere and he couldn’t find Mark. He told the ranger that he hadn’t find the boy. They started wondering if he might have left the park. If he had, that would be a big problem. They were worried that Mark could have gone to the high way because he could be in serious danger. Maybe somebody, a stranger, could have picked him up. Mr. Maxwell was scared. He asked Jim to give him twenty minutes to find him, or Jim would have to start calling the authorities. Jim gave him 15 minutes to find Mark. Mr. Maxwell went out looking for him. He asked everyone if they had seen a boy with a bright yellow backpack walking towards the parking lots.

Then, in the Pine Cove cabin he talked to Mrs. Leghorn. She told him that she had seen Mark walking towards the woods with his backpack. Mr. Maxwell asked her several times if she was sure he wasn’t walking toward the road, and Mrs. Leghorn told him every single time that he wasn’t. Mr. Maxwell knew Gray’s Notch State Park very well, and he knew that if Mrs. Leghorn and Mark had crossed paths where she said they had, and if Mark hadn’t been heading for the road, there was only one other place he could have been going.

He asked Elsa (Mrs. Leghorn) to walk to the gatehouse to tell the ranger that he had found Mark, that he had walked up the Barker Falls Trail, that he was going to find him, and that they’ll be back soon. Then he started walking towards Barker Falls Trail.

Mark slowed down and sat on a rock. He had been walking fast for more than an hour. He drank some water and took a bite of an energy bar. It didn’t take him long to catch his breath. He stretched and picked up his pack. He looked back at the rocky ravine he had just climbed, and then ahead into the pines and the leafless groves on both sides of the trail. He felt small. It wasn’t like feeling small compared to another kid, or in the crowd during a basketball game. This was different, a new kind of small.

Mark wasn’t sure of anything at that moment. He didn’t know if somebody was going to find him, or if they were already looking for him, or how far had he walked since the last trail marker. He looked at his watch and he realized it was two minutes after four, and if anyone was coming after him, he didn’t have time to be standing around, so he started walking.

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“*I’ll get in less trouble than you would*”. That’s what Mark has whispered to Jason when he got caught with the multitool in the cabin. And, at that moment, Mark felt sure it was true. He told himself that *this whole thing was stupid; after all, it wasn’t as if he had been waving the knife around or trying to kill somebody. He didn’t even know it had a blade! And that if Mr. Maxwell had found Jason with it, he would probably react in a different way. He was sure this was all about him and Mr. Maxwell. He though that he wasn’t really in trouble, and that that wasn’t even his school or his town. He thought he might be suspended for a week, or for what was left of the year, but he didn’t care*.

Then, as he was walking to the parking lot, he didn’t feel so confident. He started thinking about *the way his parents were going to react and what could happen if Mr. Maxwell or the principal called Runyon Academy. What would happen then*? And now he had to miss all the week in the woods. He felt self-pity and almost sobbed. It wasn’t fair!

Then a thought stopped him in his tracks. *I’ve got to go and wait in Mr. Maxwell’s truck? That’s because he’s going to drive me home himself! He wants to! He wants to rub it in and watch me squirm, all the way home!*  Then Mark saw that no one was there, and he saw the big brown display board in that he had seen during the scavenger hunt. That was the starting point of a ten-mile trail that went to a waterfall. He started walking towards it. He passed the display board and saw the first red trail marker, he looked at it and said to himself, *If Mr. Maxwell wants to get rid of me so bad, then he’s gonna have to find me first!*

Mr. Maxwell, Mark

Jim (the ranger), Mrs. Leghorn (Elsa)

Mr. Maxwell can’t find Mark, who decided to run away and follow a ten-mile trail that went to a waterfall because he got scared and angry at the repercussions that all this situation could bring to his life. He also felt angry at Mr. Maxwell being so unfair with him.