

NEVER GIVE UP

HONCH WILSON ADVENTURE #2

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CHAPTER 1

Henry Wilson balanced on the thick limb and stretched toward the mangled parachute fluttering above him. The camouflaged nylon was skewered by several branches, and the lines were hopelessly tangled. He took a long look down at the dense jungle waiting to devour him and considered his options. Reaching age fourteen was top on his list. He had to climb higher to free the parachute.

As he considered his plight, his earpiece crackled.

“Recon One, what’s your status?”

Chuck Knight, Henry’s large and faithful friend, was not known for his patience.

“I’m stuck in the tree, Chuck. Same as last time you asked.”

“What do you see?”

“I see a green box hanging from the chute. I can’t get it, and the chute is too far above me.”

“Maybe you should come down?”

“Wait. I have an idea. Let me try one more thing.”

Henry pulled the climbing rope from his shoulder and uncoiled several feet. A spherical weight attached to the end made it easy to swing over the limb above him. He played out the rope as the weight dropped.

“OK, Chuck, I’m dropping the rope to you. Let me know when you have it.”

The weight disappeared into the dense canopy.

“Got it. Now what?”

Henry tied the rope around his waist using a bowline knot, which would not slip tighter if he ended up hanging from the rope, and that possibility seemed likely.

“Pull me up so I can grab the next limb. I need about three feet of lift before I can help you.”

“Get ready.”

“Ready.”

Henry felt the rope grow taut. His weight would not be an issue for the big guy.

“Slow down, Chuck. Almost there.”

Henry clutched the limb, pulled up, and wrapped his legs around it.

“Give me some slack, but don’t let go of the rope.”

Henry rotated to a sitting position. If I slip, I hope Chuck can stop my fall.

“Henry, can you get the chute now?”

“I’m going out on the limb to cut the lines. Gravity will do the rest.”

Henry was not comfortable with heights, but the prize dangling over the green abyss was strong incentive to ignore his precarious position. He scooted along the limb, unsheathed his hunting knife, and grasped the closest line. The sharp blade swished through, and he reached for the next.

“Just a few more to cut.”

A single strand now secured the twisting green metal box to the parachute, but that cord was beyond Henry’s reach.

“One more, and the box will fall.”

Henry’s Dad had warned him to think before acting, but as a thirteen-year-old in discovery mode Henry learned from doing. The parachute was tangled in the tree. The severed cords were secured to the parachute. If I use those for support I should be able to lean far enough to cut that last line.

He grabbed the ten cords closest to him and leaned into space.

“Chuck, get ready.”

“Henry, don’t conk me on the head with that thing, man.”

Henry sawed the line as the payload swung back and forth.

“No problem, just a few more whacks and—”

The rude sound of ripping fabric followed by slackness in the lines

supporting Henry added up to big trouble.

“Uh oh!”

The parachute was on the move, no longer attached to the tree. The heavy box swinging from the single cord plummeted earthward dragging the tattered chute behind. Henry released the cords but not before the falling treasure pulled him from the limb.

“Chuck, I’m falling!”

As the slack in his climbing rope disappeared, Henry’s skinny body rocketed toward the tree. The collision knocked the wind from his asthmatic lungs, and Henry slipped down the rough bark attempting to become a full-fledged tree-hugger.

The rope jerked taught, and the slide stopped. Chuck had anchored the other end, and Henry knew he was going to return safely to Earth.

“Henry, are you OK?”

Henry enjoyed a couple of deep breaths before answering.

“Just...hanging around.”

“OK, wise guy. We’ll lower you when you’re ready.”

“That would be great. Go ahead.”

Henry descended through the undergrowth where Sam Shepherd had joined Chuck on the rope. Life is good when a man can count on his friends.

“Did you see where the box fell?”

Henry was untying the rope as soon as his feet touched down. Sam blocked the path.

“Hold it, Tarzan. You’re bleeding.”

Sam opened his first aid kit. By the time he had Henry's skinned arms bandaged, Chuck was back with the prize.

"This thing is heavy."

One corner was dented from the fall, but the contents remained a mystery.

"Any markings on it, Chuck?"

"Nope. Same for the parachute."

Chuck handed the shredded nylon to Henry. The box offered no clues as to its owner and no indication of how it traveled to the tall poplar tree in the Wilson Game Lands. Sam flipped the box over and shook it a few times.

"Must be some type of puzzle box. I can't hear anything rattling inside. What do you want to do with it, Henry?"

Henry tapped the box with his boot.

"Well—"

"We should hide it and pick it up on the way back tonight," Chuck said. "I don't want to tote that thing all day."

Henry nodded.

"Yep, and I'll ask Mom to drive me into town so I can leave it with Sheriff Jones."

Henry pushed the box into the undergrowth while Sam stacked a pile of rocks to serve as a marker.