

A GHOST WARRIOR ADVENTURE
BOOK I

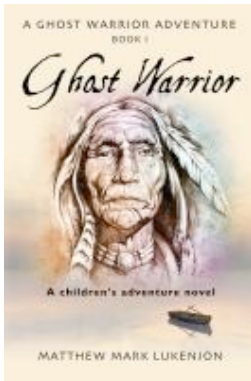
Ghost Warrior



A children's adventure novel



MATTHEW MARK LUKENJON



*The first book of the **Ghost Warrior Adventure Series!** This adventure leads three friends and Tippy the Wonder mutt on a mission of discovery, forging a deeper friendship after a terrible fight, finding out parents don't always say no, and, with the help of their friend, Indian George, the intrepid trio build the Ghost Warrior canoe that takes them on a river excursion filled with wonder, danger, and unexpected television fame.*

GHOST WARRIOR

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A Ghost Warrior Adventure - Book I

Matthew Mark Lukenjon

A children's adventure novel

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First Edition

CHAPTER FIVE FRIEND OR FOE

Now that we knew the secret of how to work on the log, we helped each other with chores and homework so we could spend our weekends camping and working on the canoe. Once school was out in June, we took turns working on the boat. Almost every day one of us would be there to start the coals and be sure they burned down into the log and not through the sides. Slowly but surely, the inside began to take shape. As the center burned down, we used our hatchets to shape the sides, chipping and shaving away the charred wood and smoothing the inner surface.

Steve's dad borrowed an eight foot cross-cut saw from his friend at the sawmill. It was the kind of saw with a handle on each end and long saw teeth to cut deep into the wood. We needed the saw to cut the ends of the log into a v-shape.

We had seen movies in school of men using these saws to cut logs in the forest. It looked easy enough when we were just watching. Well, looking and doing are two very different things. We looked like the Three Stooges trying to work that saw. We finally got a cut started, but would laugh so hard trying to pull that saw back and forth that we'd fall down giggling and gasping until our stomachs hurt. Then we would get serious and try again. Before long we were rolling around laughing ourselves silly. Steve was of the opinion that we looked like chimpanzees doing a circus act. That started us laughing again.

"Okay, okay you guys. C'mon, let's get serious," I panted, out of breath from laughing so hard. "Maybe Steves' dad can help us or show us what we're doing wrong."

We laid there for awhile longer then went in for a swim.

"I'll ask pa tomarra," Steve said. "He used one of those when he was cuttin' trees yonder in Virginia."

"Yeah, maybe if he can help us start each cut then we can move the saw better," Jim added.

"All I know is we'll laugh ourselves stupid if we keep trying like we are and get nothin' done." I said.

"Too late." Jim chided. "We already are stupid."

"Maybe you. NOT me!" Steve snapped.

"Ahh, you're so dumb you think spaghetti grows on trees," I taunted.

"Well, at least I think!" Steve shot back. "The last time you tried that your eyes stayed crossed for two days."

"Yeah, well even with my eyes crossed I can still read faster than you." I crossed my eyes and gave him a stupid grin.

"Big deal! All you read is comic books."

"Yeah! Daffy Duck and Baby Huey!!" Jim chimed in as he splashed me with water.

I absolutely HATE getting splashed with water. I fixed him with a sneering look and in my snottiest tone of voice said, "So who elected you Mr. Brains anyway Jim?"

"I don't know, but when God handed out brains you thought he said grains so you asked for a corny one."

I rolled my eyes in disbelief. "Oh that's brilliant."

"Thank you. I thought so too," Jim sneered.

I raised my voice a notch and fired back. "You must be the only one!!"

"So? At least somebody thinks about me. Nobody thinks about you short stuff."

Now Jim didn't know that I was adopted and spent a lot of time wondering about who my real parents were and why they didn't want me. He just didn't know that what he just said would hurt so much.

Jim stepped up close to me and taunted me with his stupid smile and his hands on his hips. I hated him when he acted like "Mr. Big."

"Oh stick it in your ear frog face!!!" I shouted.

"I'd have to cuz your sure not big enough to do it." Jim pushed me as he spoke.

I pushed him back and shouted. "Wanna find out how big I am yo-yo face!!!"

I'm not sure how we got from laughing to fighting. Maybe we were tired, or maybe we were too young and stupid to know you don't go around hurting your friends with words or anything else. Without warning, Jim tightened his fist and took a swing at me. When I ducked, his arm came down on the back of my neck. It stung like a fire running down my arm. I could feel my shoulder go numb. I tripped and fell back into the water. Jim lunged after me, grabbed me under my arms and pulled me into deeper water.

Jimmy is a lot taller than me and a much stronger swimmer. He and Steve loved the water. I didn't mind swimming, but I hated being pushed or pulled under water. I watched a man drown once who was trying to help his grandson who had fallen off the raft at the west end beach and

ever since then I would panic if anyone messed with me while I was swimming.

When he had me in deeper water, he fell backward and pulled me under. I struggled to get loose, but he kept holding me and pulling me down. I was scared and my lungs were beginning to burn from holding my breath. My eyes were squeezed shut.

I could feel the panic building in me. My muscles tightened and felt like rocks. I twisted around and pushed my fingers against his eyes. He let me go and I pushed up out of the water, sputtering and gasping for breath. Jim came up behind me rubbing his eyes. When I turned around my elbow hit him in the mouth. It cut his lip, making it bleed. He turned half around from the force of the blow and when he did, I jumped up and got my arm around his throat in a choke hold. The same kind of hold he showed me about last year. The kind of hold policemen use to stop bad guys.

I don't remember saying or hearing anything. Jim's face was turning red and he was coughing and gasping for breath. He kept trying to pull my arm away, but I held on tighter, pulling backward with all my strength. I squeezed my eyes shut. All I could see was red sparks floating in front of my eyes. Out of nowhere, something smashed me in the side exploding the breath from my lungs. I let go of Jim's neck and fell back, pressing my arm against my ribs. Steve wrapped his arms around me, pinning my arms to my side. I heard him yelling at me to stop.

"Stop it you guys! Are you crazy David? You were trying to kill him!!!" he gasped.

"Let me go!!" I screamed. I twisted trying to break his hold. I was angry and out of breath and trying not to cry.

"No! Not until you promise to stop fighting."

Steve let me go. I stood up panting, trying to catch my breath. I stumbled up to the beach and grabbed my clothes. My eyes were burning. I blinked away the tears. My heart was thudding against my chest. My throat was raw and it felt like my face was on fire. Anger and embarrassment boiled inside me.

"You guys think it's funny 'cause you're better swimmers than me, don't you?" My voice quivered with anger. My hands were squeezed into fists. "Don't ever, EVER do that to me again or next time I won't let go." I turned and started walking home.

"Awww, come on Dave, he wasn't trying to drown you for cryin' out loud," Steve protested.

I was stung by his words. "Yeah? Well it sure felt like it to me. Maybe I'll see you later. I don't know."

I turned away and kept walking so they wouldn't see the tears running down my face. I whistled for Tippy and began trotting down the path. I knew they were watching me, but I wasn't about to look back. Heck with them. My hands and legs began to shake. I could hardly breathe, but I kept on running down the path. I crossed the channel at the log bridge, cut across the park and followed the shore line. My mind was churning with a confusion of thoughts and images, replaying the words and hits and anger and fear. I stopped and threw rocks into the lake until my arm was sore, then started on home. My mind kept recycling that stupid fight like a bad movie. Nothing changed. It still hurt. It was still dumb. My heart was still thudding in my chest and my face was still wet.

When I reached home, I flopped down on the grass and lay on my back. Tippy curled down beside me and put his head on my stomach. His big brown eyes watched my face with interest. My eyes were still wet with tears of frustration and anger. The anger was at myself now, not at my friends. My stomach tied in knots when I thought about not having them as friends any more. I scratched Tippy's head and stared up at the clouds.

"That was so STUPID!" I raged at the sky. Tippys' ears went up when I spoke. "You'd think I could learn to keep my big mouth shut, but NOOO!! I always have to say something smart. Talk about acting like a baby. Tippy, I gotta stop being afraid of the water. How come I can't just laugh and have fun in the water like everyone else?" Tippy didn't answer. Neither did the sky. Neither did the clouds. Neither did the trees or the grass or the rocks.

I had a funny, sick feeling in my stomach. I felt really alone. I thought of all the things the three of us did together. It was my big mouth, my anger and fear. The phrase "Fraidy cat, fraidy cat, fraidy cat" kept running through my brain accusing me of being small and weak and afraid. Afraid of water for cryin' out loud. It wasn't Jim's fault I was afraid of being under water, that I hated being short and always had to be the best, and smartest and fastest to make myself think I was worth something. I felt Tippys' wet tongue on my face. I looked down and let him lick my nose and cheeks. It was like he could feel my hurt. I sure did love that scruffy little mutt. He didn't care at all that I had just made a big fool of myself with my friends. I laid there until my tears had dried. I knew what I wanted to do, but was kind of afraid to get started. I took a deep breath and scrambled up.

"C'mon Tippy, let's go see Jim." His tail was wagging as we started down the road. Apparently he wasn't worried a bit.

As I walked toward Jim's house I rehearsed about a hundred or so different ways to apologize for what I had done. The closer I got the more it seemed I didn't know what to say. My motor mouth and big fancy words failed me. When I started up the stairs to his front door, my throat was dry and my stomach felt like I had swallowed some Alka Seltzer tablets. Jim's Mom answered the door when I knocked.

"Hello David."

"Hi Mrs. Roth, is Jimmy home?"

"He's in his room. Would you like to come in?"

"Yes. Thank you." She didn't say anything else and I wasn't sure if she knew what had happened.

Jimmy was sitting on his bed when I went in. "Hi," I said, quietly. My stomach felt like the plop, plop, fizz, fizz part of the Alka Seltzer commercial. "How's your neck?" My hands were jammed in my pockets. It was easier to look at the floor than at his face.

"It's okay. Mom figures I'll live."

"Jim," my voice quivered, "I'm really sorry. Those things I said were stupid and wrong. I really acted like a baby."

"Well, I didn't act too bright either, taking you under the water like that."

Neither of us spoke for a minute. I shuffled my feet and looked up at the arrowhead collection on his wall. Jim jumped off his bed and stood facing me.

"I'll tell you one thing though," he offered.

"What's that?"

He smiled real big. "You sure are strong for a skinny midget!"

"Yeah, that's me," I laughed, "little midget, big mouth."

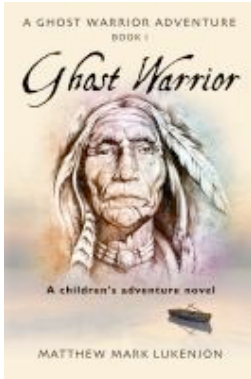
Jim reached out his hand. "Still friends?"

"Still friends," I said, shaking his hand, "and boat builders!" I added.

Poof, the Alka Seltzer lost its' fizz and my stomach felt fine. I was glad I had a friend like Jim. Since I couldn't see into the future I would never in a million years have guessed that 11 years later my friend Jim would save my life...

.....11 years later in a jungle in Viet Nam, Jim, now 6' 4" tall, with legs as long as a young giraffe, picked up my limp, 5'3" body and carried me on his

back for two miles. He waited with me until a helicopter picked us up. Our reconnaissance patrol had been attacked by a large enemy force. I was hit in the side and nearly unconscious from a concussion grenade. Jim had ripped up his shirt to make a bandage, lifted me carefully and told me not to worry. "It's easy to carry midgets," he said....



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