

Theban Patrol

by K. I. Bard

“You mean they all lost their money, all of them, even the Adult Leaders?”

“Yep, that's what it looks like. The whole bunch is broke.”

“Those darn fools. Sounds just like them. You'd think they could see a fleece job coming. They always talk so big and smart. Serves em right.”

“Yeah, I don't see why we have to suffer because of them. It's their funeral.”

“Well, we're in this together, boys. We came on the same bus, so it's *our* problem, too.”

“I say screw them anyway.”

“Now you're talking. I've had my eyes on a few of those guys and...”

“Sure, Mark, we know what you'd think. You're no surprise.”

“You're welcome to em, Mark. If you want one-way action, they'll give it to you and laugh at you after they've had their fun.”

“Let's stay on the subject, fellas.”

“Which one? Who to screw, Mark's sex drive, or what we do now that our brother Scouts got rolled and are broke?”

“You know which one. We can't get home without money.”

“Well, I think they're jerks. Let's let them sweat it for a while. Keep em wondering. Maybe they'll appreciate us more.”

“Yeah, let's give them a taste of what they give us.”

“Like I said, *screw* them. But this time no comments out of Mark.”

That's how it sounded when we got the word. I'm Brad, the Patrol Scribe, so it's my job to keep a record of the interesting stuff that happens. Most of the time there's nothing much to write down, but this time it's different. It sure is!

Our big Troop program for the summer was this trip to Canada – from Milwaukee; we're from Milwaukee. The Troop has a bus, and it was loaded with camping gear in the back and boys and Adult Leaders up front. Two fishing boats go on top of the bus. Behind the bus we hauled

a trailer with eight canoes. Inside the bus was like a rolling hurricane of bored boys and irritated Leaders.

It took us a whole weekend to get to Pakwash, which is way hell and gone past Kenora. But being penned up in the bus all that time was worth it. Pakwash was a great park! We had a super area for camping in a bunch of tall pines that smelled lazy when the afternoon sun warmed up the ground. We were practically on the lake, too, so it was easy to go swimming or take out a boat or canoe. Heck, even *I* caught a few fish, and I hardly even tried.

Well, the week was super, but then came what happened Wednesday night. Kind of a bummer.

This will all make more sense if I explain a little about our Troop. It's not exactly your typical Scout group. No, that's not true. Most of *them* are pretty typical. They get into the rah-rah Boy Scout stuff pretty heavy. The bugle blares and the flag goes up with ceremony every morning in their part of the camp. It's my Patrol, The Thebans, that's unusual. We're part of the Troop but we run a separate show.

There are four Patrols in the Troop. Three of them were camped close around the bus, where two of the Adult Leaders slept. That was the 'regular' part of the Troop. Must have been about twenty guys camped over there, but I'm not sure. I didn't keep that close a count on them. Didn't want to, either.

We Thebans had set up our camp outside the circle. We'd see them moving around under the trees, hear their Patrol Leaders shout and blow whistles, but we were just far enough away to not be part of it. They stayed out of our area, and we didn't have much reason to go over there. (Except for Mark, who kept trying to scare up fresh action.)

There are really seven guys in my Patrol, but only five came on this trip. Simm is our Leader, our Patrol Dad. He had a small tent for himself and, well, guests. We set up one big, old tent for us. It's the only big tent left in the Troop, and it's *ours*. We were all in our part of camp Wednesday night, and that's why we didn't know what was going on in the other part of camp.

(A note to myself. I'll have to get more of the history of the Patrol from Simm. He was in it as a boy so he knows the story. If it wasn't for him there likely wouldn't be a Theban Patrol.)

When it started to get dark Wednesday night Pauly and Jay were fixing our late-night snack. They were working on a peach cobbler in the Dutch oven and setting lots of water to boil for cocoa and doing the dishes later. I was sitting at the picnic table trying to read and swat

mosquitoes at the same time – they get pretty thick up here around dusk. The three of us had changed into long pants and shirts or jackets because of the bugs. Mark hadn't done that. He was 'posturing' in skin-tight tank trunks and a muscle shirt. Mark likes to pose and act sexy. Myself, I don't think watching someone slap mosquitoes is very sexy, so I tried to ignore him.

I don't know what Phil and Simm were wearing. They'd gone into Simm's tent maybe an hour before for a 'talk'. See, it's kind of a tradition for each new guy joining the Patrol to spend a fair amount of time with Simm. He makes sure that each new guy is 'right' for us and he clues them in on the rules, such as keeping your mouth shut about personal matters. Simm keeps us on the level. Phil is twelve, a year younger than me, so he needs a steady hand. I was a little over eleven when I joined, and Simm sure helped me adjust and settle down.

From Simm's tent Phil called out, "When's the cobbler going to be ready?"

Jay answered, "Maybe five, ten minutes. Better move it or lose it. You're supposed to help with clean-up, anyway."

I could hear Phil scrambling to get ready to come out. He's not the kind of guy to skip desert. As I remember, a 'talk' with Simm can get a guy's hunger going. It wasn't long before Phil came bursting out of the tent so he wouldn't miss his share. Simm wasn't far behind. Poor Simm. For him an hour 'talk' is just like saying hello, so he got cheated. He sure puts up with a lot from us.

Pauly and Jay were dishing up desert. Mark came back from our tent wearing long pants and a shirt, so the bugs wouldn't bother his eating. It was a pretty typical evening for the Theban Patrol. We talked, ate and drank cocoa. Cocoa is great at night up there because the air feels so cold. It warms you up, even if you do have to get up in the night to get rid of it.

We were just about done when we heard a vehicle start up and leave from the other part of our camp.

"What's that?" Simm asked, peering. "It looks like a pickup camper."

"Yeah," I told him, "I think it's been there a couple of hours."

"With our crowd?"

I nodded.

"Where the heck was I when it came in?"

"Getting firewood, maybe?"

"Well, I better go check."

Roy and Tom, the other adult leaders, had asked Simm to keep an eye

on their show while they visited the resort. But everything had been pretty quiet over there – and for a good reason, as we found out later.

Anyhow, Simm took his flashlight, wandered over, found everything blissfully calm, came back and informed us that there was something about the way the boys were acting that seemed a little fishy and he'd better stay there until the other Adult Leaders returned. “Phil, maybe you should sleep in the big tent tonight,” he added as he left.

We watched Simm's flashlight weave in and out of the trees like he was some huge lightning bug. Then we washed up and were ready for the sack. Of course, Mark hadn't shut the net right, so the tent was full of mosquitoes. While we hunted them down we decided on doing a Sneak.

I guess I should explain what a Sneak is. Each guy lays his sleeping bag out and then sits on top of it. When we're ready all flashlights are turned off. It's pitch black in that old canvas tent. You're supposed to be as quiet as you can while you undress. Then you Sneak. The idea is to crawl quietly and slowly until you find someone. Then you explore him, *all over*, and can't talk. It's a real panic with seven of us, and it's pretty good fun with five. Lots of times you can't tell who you're with so you got to try and figure it out. Mark is easy to tell 'cause he's so frantic. He goes at it like he wants to pull it off. At least that's how it feels. He's also big on heavy breathing.

It wasn't too long before I found someone in the dark. I was pretty sure it was either Pauly or Jay. I figured Mark would head toward Phil for all he was worth: Mark likes 'fresh meat'. It was going good, with me and my partner sort of teasing with our hands, when in another part of the tent I heard a voice that sounded like Phil go “Ouch!” and then Mark started his heavy breathing routine. That explained where *he* was.

After that I paid more attention to the guy I was with. He was so good at keeping me hanging that at times I lost track of what I was doing to him. He didn't seem to mind, though. By now I was pretty sure it was Pauly. Pauly really knows his stuff – once he starts he's absolutely dedicated.

We stayed at it for a couple of times, then we shared a bag and I was soon asleep. I didn't hear any noise from the other part of camp, and I didn't hear Simm return. Before dawn I had to grab a flashlight and go out and get rid of my cocoa. I did it quick because of the mosquitoes. They sure know when it's chow time, and a naked guy trying to take a leak is a feast.

Back inside, after slaughtering the mosquitoes that came in with me, I took a look to see who I'd been Sneaking and sleeping with. It was Pauly

all right. Mark had Phil and Jay on either side of him down at the other end of the tent in sort of a crowded tangle of exposed legs and arms and a couple of bags. I felt sorry for Jay 'cause he must have hardly stood a chance with Mark hogging all the action.

My light woke Jay: he sat up, saw it was me, dropped back down, smiled weakly, said "Hi, Brad," and was asleep again. I decided, then, to pair off with Jay the next night, to sort of help make it up for him.

I crawled in next to Pauly and put out my light. He didn't wake up. I thought of waking him but I let it pass. It could wait for morning. In a little while I was asleep again.

Even in that heavy old tent you can tell when the sun's about to get up. There's a kind of twilight or something that happens. It's a green twilight, though. Just before dawn the birds chirp and twitter like they've been saving it up all year, and then the tent gets that light inside.

Pauly was a little awake; he'd move around once in a while, anyway. After it got warmer I uncovered both of us. Then I laid there and watched him sleep. Sounds dumb, maybe. Well, there's all these neat shadows and bright areas on a body in that light. It's also different or something to watch someone asleep. My gut gets kind of hollow, and it's like my mind is talking to them and I'm saying things I'd never really say. I'm not romantic except at times like that. Then my head is full of all sorts of mushy stuff.

I wouldn't be honest if I didn't admit to watching one part of Pauly more than the others. Every once in a while there'd be a twitch, and it'd be up in an instant. Other times it would happen slow and then topple back to normal. When that happens it's like there's some little creature that sticks its head up to look around. First it looks one way, then it swings to look the other way, then it looks with its neck stretched out. That stuff keeps my mind busy, too. It's exciting. When Pauly did wake up he didn't have to be a mind-reader to know what I was thinking. He didn't mind, either. Might have had the same thoughts himself.

We had some time to ourselves, then we started dressing and woke the others up. Outside it was late enough so the mosquito rush-hour was over. We made breakfast, then slowly eased ourselves into what we thought would be a normal day at Pakwash.

And it was, until after lunch when a kid from one of the other Patrols ran over and asked Simm to high-tail it back to the Troop bus with him on the double. That's when the story started to come out.

"Roy and Tom had all the Troop money with them last night when they hiked to the resort," Simm told us when he returned. "Seems they

met two ladies, had a few beers – well, I don't have to tell you what happened from there. Just before lunch today Tom looked in his wallet and there was nothing in it but his driver's license and things. And then Roy did the same, and he was flat, too. So they ran back to the resort and, of course, the ladies had disappeared – *in their motor home!*”

“Wait a minute,” Mark said. “There was a motor home *here* yesterday evening.”

“Exactly. And when the kids started checking their wallets they found that nearly everyone of them was missing his cash.”

That, of course, started us diving in our pockets.

“I'm OK,” I said. “Me too,” said Pauly.

“I got all my money,” said Mark.

Jay and Phil were also unrobbed. Then Simm said, “That's good. I've still got mine, too. So it's just them that got hit.”

“What the hell happened, Simm? Tell us,” I said.

“Well, looks like the two ladies that shacked up with Roy and Tom sent their friends over in the camper to check out the boys. Checked em out pretty good, I'd say. Cleaned the whole bunch out.”

Simm wouldn't tell us much more, besides he had to put his head together at the bus with the other Adult Leaders. Meantime we got more and more curious. Not that we cared that much about Roy and Tom, but some of the guys in the other Patrols would be worth knowing about. It would be delicious to have something to use against them.

And that's where Mark came in. Mark likes to brag, so other guys brag back to him. Maybe those ripped-off Scouts had done something they could brag about. We sent Mark over to float around the other patrols and pick up tidbits for us. He was good at it. He does have his uses after all.

“I don't know if you guys are going to believe all of this,” he said when he returned, “but I think I got the story.”

“Jesus, Mark, cut the crap and tell us!”

“Don't get hostile. The long and short of it is that last night, in that camper, our fellow Scouts almost all got laid.”

“Laid?”

“Them?”

“Yep. The ranks of the virgins took a sharp dive yesterday between approximately eight and ten-thirty. Take a guess who was the first batter up, who led off the virgin parade? Bet you wouldn't suspect our star boy leader, Dave.”

“Dave!”

“You're kidding!”

“Come on, man: Dave?”

“He was the first. The Pride of the Troop led the way. He even told me that himself. First time he ever *talked* to me, like he was at least concerned with being honest.”

“So, how did it get started?”

“As soon as the women pulled up in their camper they asked for Dave by name and actually told the kids their Scoutmaster had sent them, which means Roy or Tom must have mentioned Dave somehow or talked about the Troop. Anyway, they knew who to ask for.

“So the camper gets parked and the women take Dave inside with them. One of them crawls up into the cab-over bunk while the other flatters hell out of Dave and starts taking off his shirt; moving on him real fast.”

“Just like Dave to stand there and not know what the hell to do.”

“The one who's undressing Dave says his Scoutmasters sent them and he's supposed to have this experience, see? What he told me, he was confused and didn't want to do anything, that is until she got to his belt and reached inside. At that point he figured 'Why not?' She undressed him and shoved him up to the other woman, the one in the cab-over bunk, who carried on a lot with moans and stuff, then told him how wonderful it had been and said to tell the other boys.”

“Just like that, huh?”

“You mean he actually fell for it, Mark?”

“Yes and no. While he was putting his clothes back on the women said he was good to be done so quick. She said real men were always fast. Dave claims the whole thing actually turned him off, he didn't even 'ejaculate' – that's the word he used. But he still thought Roy and Tom had planned this to happen and he was *supposed* to tell the other guys, like it was his duty or something.”

“No kidding!”

“So he clues in some of the bigger guys and they start hanging around. One by one they go in. The woman inside calls each boy 'honey' and gets him stripped to his shorts in no time, then the one in the bunk takes over and *wham-bang* it's time for the next one.”

“That's crazy, Mark. They're putting you on.”

“God you guys are skeptical. Just shut up and let me finish. Well, the word spreads fast: the ones who've had the treatment are talking up how great it was, how good they did – you know. Pretty soon all the guys have either been through or are waiting in line. They're so excited and

proud that they don't catch on.”

“To what?”

“The woman who does the undressing empties each wallet while the boy is up in the bunk. Those dummies were so stunned to finally get some action they didn't realize it was rotten action.”

“And nobody noticed!” Jay said full of wonder.

“So when did it dawn on them?”

“Not till this noon. Each kid had between \$10 and \$20 on him, so those broads picked up over \$200 for an hour and a half of acting. The other two got about \$400 from Roy and Tom, so the whole operation came to \$600-\$700 easy. Not bad wages for tricking a bunch of dumb kids.”

“Hey, that's good!”

“How come none of them let us in on the action, Mark?”

“That is a dumb question. Share *real* action with the Thebans? You gotta be kidding.”

“And the women are gone?”

“The guy who runs the resort told Roy and Tom he thought they were hookers from Winnipeg, wherever that is. The other Patrols know the whole story, pretty much, except they've been told to keep quiet about it. Some of the guys looked scared. Hell, when I was leaving to come back here Dave and that skinny Patrol leader, Pete, followed me half way and wanted to talk. They actually confided in me and trusted me. It's got em thinking.”

My Patrol really got off on the topic. We laughed like crazy at the jerks and were mad at them, too, for being such suckers, a bunch of hypocrites who looked down on us but weren't one bit better come the crunch. After what must have been a couple of hours we decided to pool our own cash and give it to the 'cause'. Even so, we only had about a third of what we'd need to get back home, if we wanted to buy gas and eat, too.

We told Simm what we learned. He didn't say much. His thing is not to talk *about* people if he can help it. He didn't care that we knew, but he didn't want us spreading it around.

“I hope this doesn't put an end to the Troop,” he told us that night. “A few of those kids might react badly once we get home. If they spill their guts out of guilt it'll be hard to keep the Troop and it will sure end Roy and Tom's role. But first we've got to get home. I don't know how we'll do that on our new budget.”

Simm and Phil turned in before the rest of us. Mark told us he had to

go over and meet with Dave for a while – Dave had a tent to himself. It surprised me to think that Mark had something going with Dave. Mark's fourteen and Dave's a year older, but in a way they're a lot alike. It's hard to explain. It's like both of them have two personalities. Maybe it's their age.

Three of us were left for the big tent. Jay said, "This is the night of the thirteens." Because he, Pauly and I were all thirteen. We ended up in a three-way, and I'm sure we hit thirteen before we were done. I had my wish of making things better for Jay. I got as good as I gave, too. We all did. I don't even remember falling asleep. Talk about being wiped out!

The next day we loaded up the old bus and limped out of Pakwash on a breakfast of cocoa and emergency rations. By evening we were in a campground in Minnesota that was so crowded with fishermen we had a hard time finding spots for our tents. Luckily, the Thebans ended up a long ways from the other Patrols, right next to a pickup camper. No, not *that* camper, another one with a lone guy in it.

Supper was awful. What the Troop had the most of was hot cereal and dry soup mix. And peanut butter but no bread. Eating peanut butter off a spoon isn't what I call desert.

Jay and I had clean-up that night. Pauly hung around and helped. Phil and Simm went for a walk. Mark took off to go talk with Dave. Well, it makes sense if you think about it.

One thing I have to tell you about Pauly is that he's a good looking kid. He's thin, but he didn't turn out spidery. His hair is sandy brown and his eyes are light brown. He's got the kind of face that's soft with enough hard angles to make it interesting. When he smiles at you the smile comes from inside. He's got charm, or something. I've seen him naked often enough to know that if he'd been around in ancient times the Greeks would have made lots of Pauly statues: the museums would be full of them.

Pauly knows he's attractive, not that it's gone to his head. He just cooperates with it. On him, the Scout uniform looks *good*. He knows how to wear it. Scout shorts come long, but he rolls them up just right. It looks sharp. He gets noticed.

And the lone guy with the camper was noticing. I wasn't paying attention, but Pauly was; this sort of grin came over his face. I learned then that Pauly's got guts. He up and walked over to the guy and said, "I'm available."

"What do you mean, kid?" said the fellow, who I guessed was about 35 and not too bad looking.

“Just that I'm available, like if you need some help or would like to show me your camper.”

“What makes you think I'm interested?”

“The way you were looking at me. That's OK. I'm not objecting. In fact, I need money. The Troop needs money. The cash we had to get home on got stolen. So... I'm available.”

I couldn't believe it. Pauly made a deal in no time. He picked up \$100 just like that. So then I found out, from Pauly, about his business. All last year he'd been showing up around conventions and stuff in Milwaukee. He says there's lots of men who will pay, so why not get paid?

You could say that Pauly and the guy in the camper hit it off: Pauly went over there to spend the night. In the morning he brought back another \$150. That gave the Troop enough cash to reach Milwaukee without anyone having to make a distress call home and risk the story getting out. Pauly solved the whole problem – and flaked out most of the day in the back of the bus on the bedrolls. Hell, we could even stop and pig-out on burgers along the road!

So, Pauly wasn't in the big tent when we hit the sack. Neither was Mark – he went over to Dave's. (Mark is acting more and more like a Scout. He's thinking of becoming Dave's assistant. Your guess is as good as mine.) That left Jay and me. We had the whole tent to ourselves.

I think we got to thirteen that night, too, but, man, was it a lot nicer! We just did things we'd both done before, but we did them like we meant them. Does that make sense? Well, we were by ourselves, and we got into it real good, and then fell asleep – I think Jay was actually on top of me at that point, both of us having just come down after number whatever-it-was.

And then in the morning there was the green twilight in which I could watch him as he slept, and see him stir and twitch and breathe and his whatchamacallit get hard and soft like those things always do if *you* watch them at that time. Then Jay gradually came awake, his eyes squinting open and after a moment he smiled and reached for me to hug me (we were still both stark, raving naked, of course) and start things going again. Would *you* believe we even kissed? 'Cause things were sort of changed now: Jay'd become something really special – my best friend and my best bunk buddy, too!

Well, that's pretty much it. So we got back to Milwaukee fine. The story never 'broke'. Dave and the other boy leaders kept a lid on it; Mark

had a part in that. The adults played it cool. It worked out better than I thought.

And Pauly got the address of the man in the camper. From what Pauly says he's a real decent guy and they're going to get together again and go back-packing and fishing. Like me, Pauly's happy. He says it's better if you like the person. Money isn't the main thing, but it's nice to have: we'd all agree on that.

Brad Williams, Scribe
Theban Patrol

On second thought, I guess maybe I'd better not put this report in the record book – it kind of got out of hand right from the start as I was writing it, telling the truth and all. I'll make up something 'decent' for the files.