

Excerpt No. 1

from AFOOT, THE GREAT
DAKOTA TURKEY DRIVE

"ROBBED AT THE END OF THE LINE"

"Wanna see 'em dry-dock a riverboat?"

Suddenly a big kid was standing beside me, grinning like a monkey. He wore a ragged shirt and frayed work pants held up by one suspender. Right behind him was another fellow in better clothes, but I remember the soles of his shoes flapped when he walked and he had no socks.

"C'mon! It's really amazing how they can pull a big boat up on dry ground with only one little donkey." He started moving away.

I just shook my head. *No thanks.*

"He's right, you know," the other guy piped up. He was about a foot taller than me, probably three or four years older, too.

"You'll probly never get to see that operation again."

By now I knew I should have run for it. I really didn't intend to ask, but I wanted to know. "Why would they haul a steamboat out of the water?"

"Got to fix the leaks. Those ol' boats hit snags and sandbars all the time. When they come into port, they have to fix 'em".

"Let's go. They must be halfway done by now."

I couldn't see any sign of a steamboat being pulled out of the river. They noticed I was looking around and the one named Butch explained, "It's on the other side of that warehouse."

They could see how suspicious I was. "It's okay, it's okay. Lots of people around. You'll see," the other one, Mike, said impatiently.

So we started walking toward the warehouse. They were hurrying me along, I thought because they were eager to see the dry-docking. As we got nearer the warehouse, it seemed quieter. Unlike the other warehouses where workmen and wagons were coming and going at a frantic pace, there was no one here. But just then, I didn't realize what that meant.

A moment later, we walked briskly around the end of the building. Suddenly, Butch and Mike each took hold of my arms up high and dragged me inside. Swiftly, they jerked off my heavy wool coat and went through the coat pockets before I could protest.

Almost as quickly, Butch wrapped an arm around my neck and started choking me. Mike stepped toward me and I kicked him as hard as I could in one knee. He yelped with pain, grabbing it for a moment.

But in no time, he recovered and went through my pants pockets, emptying them.

My eleven dollars! Gone!”

**End of Excerpt No. 2,
“Robbed at the End of the Trail.**

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