

## A to Z Mysteries: Detective Camp

“Here y’are, kids,” the taxi driver told Dink, Josh, and Ruth Rose. “Get out and stretch your legs and I’ll fetch your luggage.”

The kids stepped out of the taxi in Bear Walk, Vermont. They were standing next to a gravel driveway in front of an old lodge built of timber. A banner over the wide porch said WELCOME TO DETECTIVE CAMP.

Behind the lodge stood a red barn with its doors open wide.

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Dink noticed a few picnic tables on the lawn between the lodge and the barn. Across from the driveway stood three log cabins surrounded by wild-

flowers, shrubs, and trees. Off to the side of the cabins stood a larger building. Dink noticed a sign that said WASH-HOUSE. White arrows pointed boys to one door and girls to another.

“Where are we supposed to sleep?” Josh asked. Like Dink, he wore cutoff jean shorts and a T-shirt.

“Didn’t you read the letter?” Dink asked, winking at Ruth Rose. “Josh Pinto sleeps in a bear cave.” Dink’s full name was Donald David Duncan, but his friends called him Dink.

Josh, didn’t say anything, but he made a goofy face at Dink.

“In those cabins, I guess,” said Ruth Rose, pointing. “I see some other kids over there.” Ruth Rose liked to dress all

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in one color. Today she wore pink from her headband to her sneakers.

“Tell me again why we’re in Bear Walk, Vermont,” Josh said, glancing around. “I’ll bet there are bears everywhere!”

“We came to Detective Camp because we love solving mysteries,” Ruth Rose said. “Besides, none of us has been to sleepaway camp before. It’ll be fun! We’ll learn all about—“

“Yo!” someone yelled. The kids looked toward the cabins. Three teenagers were walking toward them. They each wore a white T-shirt with DETECTIVE CAMP on the front and green shorts. Whistles hung from lanyards

around their necks.

“Are you the kids from Green Lawn, Connecticut?” a tall boy with a buzz cut asked.

“Yes,” Dink said. “I’m Dink, and these

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are my friends Josh and Ruth Rose.”

“I’m Buzzy Steele,” the boy said, smiling. “You two guys are in my cabin, the one with the moose over the door.”

“And I’m Angle Doe,” the girl said. She had red hair in pigtails. “Ruth Rose, you’re in Fox Cabin with me. You’ll have nine roommates!”

The other boy had broad shoulders and dark skin. “I’m Lucas Washington,” he said. “Call me Luke. I have Bear Cabin with eight more guys.”

“How many kids are here altogether?” Dink asked.

“Twenty-six,” Angle said, “Sixteen boys and ten girls.”

The taxi driver handed the kids’ packs and sleeping bags to them. “Have a good time,” he said, getting back into the taxi. Then he turned the cab around and pulled away.

“Let’s get you kids into your cabins,”

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Luke said, reaching for an armful of sleeping bags. “Everyone else got here this morning.”

They followed the three counselors onto the lawn. Stone paths led up to each of the three small porches.

“After you get unpacked, we’re all

meeting down by Shady Lake,” Angie told the kids. “About twenty minutes, okay? Just follow that path, and the lake will be right in front of you. Ready to meet your cabinmates, Ruth Rose?”

“Yes!” Ruth Rose said. “See you later, guys.” She followed Angie into a cabin with a wooden cutout of a fox over the door.

“Later,” Luke said. He loped next door.

Buzzy led Dink and Josh through a door with a moose cutout over it. Inside the cabin, six boys were reading and playing board games. A shelf in a one

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corner was overflowing with books and games.

Dink counted four sets of bunk beds. Near the door was a single bed. Dink assumed that was where Buzzy would sleep.

“Yo, guys, listen up!” Buzzy yelled.

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“Come and meet Dink and Josh from Connecticut.”

Six boys turned toward Dink and Josh. They smiled and, one by one, introduced themselves and shook hands.

Dink tried to remember the six new names and faces: A black-haired boy

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named Billy Wong. A thin kid with braces called Hunter. Ian and Brendan, twins with blond hair so light it appeared white. Duke, a tall boy. And

Campbell, a short blond kid with a big smile.

“If you need to wash up or use the bathroom, that’s all in the big building on the other side of Fox Cabin,” Buzzy told the boys.

“We have to go outside to the bathroom?” Josh asked.

Buzzy nodded. “Yep. The showers are there, too,” he said. “And don’t let the hot water run too long, or someone gets a cold shower! You all need to be down at Shady Lake in about ten minutes, okay?”

“Are we going swimming? Hunter asked. “Are there snakes in the water?”

“No and yes,” Buzzy said, grinning. “There are a few harmless water snakes,

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but we're not going swimming today.

We're just having a meeting with all the other campers.

Dink and Josh headed for the only set of bunks not piled up with the other kids' stuff.

"I guess this one is ours," Dink said.  
"Top or bottom?"

"Top," Josh said, tossing his sleeping bag up onto the mattress. "That way, if a bear comes in, he gets you first."

Dink grinned. "Bears can climb, Josh," he said.

"I'll still take the top bunk," Josh said. He grabbed his backpack and climbed the ladder.

Dink unrolled his sleeping bag and

fluffed up the pillow he found on his mattress. As he emptied his backpack, he glanced out the window just over his bed. He could see a wooden fence separating the lawn from deep woods.

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He arranged his clothes in a cubby that already had his name on it. He set his toothbrush and other toilet articles on the windowsill. He'd brought a couple of books, which he stood next to his toothpaste. The titles were *Wild Animals of Vermont* and *Danny Doon, Boy Detective*.

Josh was on top, wrestling with his sleeping bag.

"Are you ready?" Dink asked.

"Almost," Josh said. "My brothers

used this sleeping bag last, and they tied about a million knots in the string.”

“Okay, let’s hustle,” Buzzy called out. “Moose Cabin is never late! Now let’s go, little moosies!”

The other six boys stampeded out the cabin door and raced for the path that led to the lake. A minute later, Buzzy followed them.

Dink waited for Josh on the porch.

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Josh snuck up behind Dink and said, “Come back inside. I want to show you something.”

“What?” Dink said as he followed Josh. “Come on, we’re gonna be late on our first day!”

“Look,” Josh said. He was pointing

to a small wooden chest under Buzzy's bed. It had a hasp, and the padlock was in the locked position.

“Josh, what do I care if—“

“After the other kids left, I saw Buzzy hide something in there,” Josh said. “He was real careful, like he didn't want anyone to see what he was doing.”

“But Josh the snoop saw him, right?” Dink asked.

Josh nodded. “This is Detective Camp, right?” he said. “Well, I'm being a detective!”