

**SCOOP DOOGAN
MYSTERIES — SET 1**

The Runaway

DON KEOWN

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Glossary

deadline, reporter, intern, noise, clicks, clacks,
hide/hiding, arrest, pool hall, 'em, alley,
teen/teenager, lie, trash

CHAPTER 1

A Mother Asks for Help

The news room of the Big Bend Times was busy. The deadline was near. The Times reporters were working hard on their stories.

Jake Malone came in late that day. He had stayed at the college to talk to a teacher. He could see that the reporters needed help.

“Where’s Jake?” a reporter yelled.

“I’m here. I’m here,” Jake called out. He hurried over to the reporter’s desk.

The reporter said, “Read this story. Check

everything in red.”

Jake said, “Will do, Sara. Do you need anything else?”

Jake was an intern. He was learning to be a reporter. Most of the time he worked with Scoop Doogan, the star reporter at the Times. But when the news room was busy, he helped everyone.

A woman walked into the news room. She saw that everyone was busy. She turned to leave. Jake looked up and saw her.

“Can I help you?” Jake asked.

“I would like to talk to a reporter,” the woman answered.

Jake saw that Ann Milardo, the editor of the Times, was talking to Flash Wells about some of

his pictures. He saw that Scoop had finished his story.

Jake told the woman, “You should talk to Scoop Doogan. I’ll take you over to him.”

Jake and the woman walked over to Scoop’s desk.

“Scoop, this lady wants to talk to a reporter,” said Jake.

The woman said, “I sure do. My name is Rosa Gold. I hope you have some time. I have a story that I think you’ll want to hear.”

“Sit down. Tell us this story,” said Scoop to Mrs. Gold.

She said, “My son is missing. He’s just 15. His name is Tom.”

Scoop and Jake looked at the woman. Why would they want to hear this story? What made it news?

“Go on, tell us more about Tom,” said Scoop.

“How long has he been missing?” asked Jake.

Scoop did not mind Jake’s questions. Jake helped Scoop on many of his big stories. And Jake was almost finished with school. He was almost ready to be a real reporter.

Mrs. Gold said, “Tom’s been gone from home for a month. We live in Rock Falls.”

“Why are you looking for him here?” asked Scoop.

“I’ll start from the beginning,” said Mrs. Gold.

She told Scoop and Jake that she had two sons. Al was her older son. He was 19. Tom was her younger son. Both sons live at home with her in Rock Falls.

Mrs. Gold told them that Mr. Gold had died five years ago.

“Tom works part time in a shoe store. A month ago, he got into a fight with another worker. He hit the other worker hard. He knocked him down.” Mrs. Gold said.

“Does Tom get mad often?” Scoop asked.

“No, not really. But the other worker kept picking on him. Finally Tom couldn’t take it any

more. He got fighting mad,” said Mrs. Gold.

“So then what happened? What does this fight have to do with Tom being a missing



person? And how is this story a news story?"

Scoop asked.

"Tom was afraid he had hurt the other worker. He thought the police would be looking for him. So he packed a bag quickly. He left home that night," she said.

"How do you know he came to Big Bend?" asked Jake.

Mrs. Gold answered, "We didn't know where he was for three weeks. We looked everywhere in Rock Falls. All his friends helped us look for him. Then we got a letter from Tom. He said that he was in Big Bend. He was homesick. He wanted to come back to Rock Falls. But he wanted to make sure that the police weren't looking for him."

“Then what happened?” asked Jake.

“He said in the letter that he would phone us. We would tell him if it was OK to come home,” said Mrs. Gold.

“Did he phone?” said Scoop.

“No. That’s why I’m in Big Bend. I know he’s here somewhere,” said Mrs. Gold.

“How long have you been here? And what have you been doing?” said Scoop.

“I’ve been here four days. First, I went to the police. Then I started going to places myself. I show people a picture of Tom. I ask if they have seen him. Then I give them my cell phone number. I ask them to call me if they see him,” said Mrs. Gold.

“What do people say?” asked Scoop.

“Some say they haven’t seen him. Others have seen him around town. But they don’t know where he is now,” said Mrs. Gold.

“Do you have a picture of Tom with you?” Scoop asked.

Mrs. Gold showed Scoop and Jake a picture of Tom. He was a good looking boy. He had dark eyes and dark brown hair. His smile was wide and friendly. He looked younger than 15.

“He looks like a nice kid, Mrs. Gold,” said Jake.

“Yes, he is. He’s too young to be on his own for this long. Please help me find him before something bad happens,” said Mrs. Gold.

Scoop said, “Leave the picture with me. We’ll run it in the Times. We’ll ask anyone who has seen him to call us here. That should help.”

“I was hoping you would do that. Thank you,” said Mrs. Gold.

Mrs. Gold told them that she would go back to Rock Falls. She would wait there in case Tom came home. Scoop and Jake would try to learn more in Big Bend.

Mrs. Gold left the news room. Jake asked Scoop, “Do you think we’ll find Tom?”

“I hope so. Big Bend isn’t such a big city. But Tom is too young to be on his own here or anywhere. Bad things happen in small cities too,” said Scoop.

Scoop sat in front of his computer. He wanted to write a few lines about Tom. But he did not know much about the young man. He just knew that Tom needed to be found.

Scoop hummed in a low voice. He did this when he was thinking. He did this when he really cared about a story.

Jake watched Scoop. He knew that Scoop's story would be good. Scoop's stories were always good. Jake wanted to be a reporter like Scoop some day.

CHAPTER 2

Scoop Gets a Phone Call

Scoop's story ran the next day. Under the picture of Tom Gold was the line: "Have you seen this boy?"

The story told about Mrs. Gold's hunt for her missing son. Scoop asked anyone who knew anything about Tom to call him at the Times. He said that the Rock Falls police weren't after Tom. He said that Tom's family missed him. They wanted him back with them.

Scoop's phone began to ring. People had

read his story. They wanted to help find Tom.

Jake answered some of the calls. Jake helped Scoop with his big stories. A missing boy was a big story for Big Bend.

Some callers just wanted to talk about the story. Others had ideas about where Tom might be. Some had seen Tom. But no one knew where Tom was now.

“We aren’t getting anywhere,” said Scoop.

The phone rang again.

“I’ll get it,” said Jake.

“This is the Big Bend Times. Scoop Doogan’s desk,” Jake answered.

At first Jake could not hear what the caller was saying. The caller was calling from a

noisy place.

Jake heard loud clicks and clacks. He heard music too.

“I can’t hear you. Talk louder,” Jake shouted into the phone.

The caller said in a loud voice, “I want to talk to Scoop Doogan.”

“Who’s calling?” asked Jake.

“Tom Gold,” the voice said.

Scoop had left the news room. He went out to get a cup of coffee. He needed a break. The morning had been very busy.

“Scoop isn’t here right now. I’m his intern. You can talk to me,” said Jake.

Tom told Jake, “Tell Scoop this. He can’t

fool me. I know that the Rock Falls police are looking for me. I know that the boy I hit was hurt bad. I thought I could go home. But I can't. I have to keep on hiding.”

“What makes you think the Rock Falls police are looking for you?” asked Jake.

“I called them, just to be sure. And the Big Bend police are asking questions about me too,” said Tom.

“The police are trying to help your mother. They don't want to arrest you,” said Jake.

Tom laughed, “Why should I believe you? You're trying to fool me too. You want to help the police arrest me.”

Tom hung up. Jake was not happy. Tom had

called from a cell phone. Jake couldn't tell where he was. But he knew Tom had called from a noisy place. Those clicks and clacks were a clue. So was the loud music. And during the call someone had yelled, "Crack 'em up."

Jake talked to Scoop about what he had heard. He told him about what Tom had said. He told him about the noises. And he told him about hearing, "Crack 'em up."

Scoop thought for a minute. "I know where that call came from. It came from Red Grogan's pool hall."

Jake said, "Of course! I should have known. The music is loud there. The clicks and clacks were the pool balls hitting each other."

“Right, Jake. And the voice said, “Rack ’em up’ not, ‘Crack ’em up,’” said Scoop.

Scoop went on, “Red’s pool hall is a bad place for Tom to be. It’s a hangout. And Red uses teenagers to do his dirty work. Tom will get into trouble if he stays there for long.”

“What should we do?” asked Jake.

“First we’ll go to the pool hall. We’ll see if he’s there,” Scoop said.

Scoop told Ann Milardo, his editor, where he and Jake were going. They left the news room. They got into Scoop’s black sports car. Scoop loved his old car. And Jake loved riding in it with him.

They drove across town to the pool hall.

Scoop parked in front.

“So, what’s the plan?” asked Jake.

Scoop answered, “You go in first and look



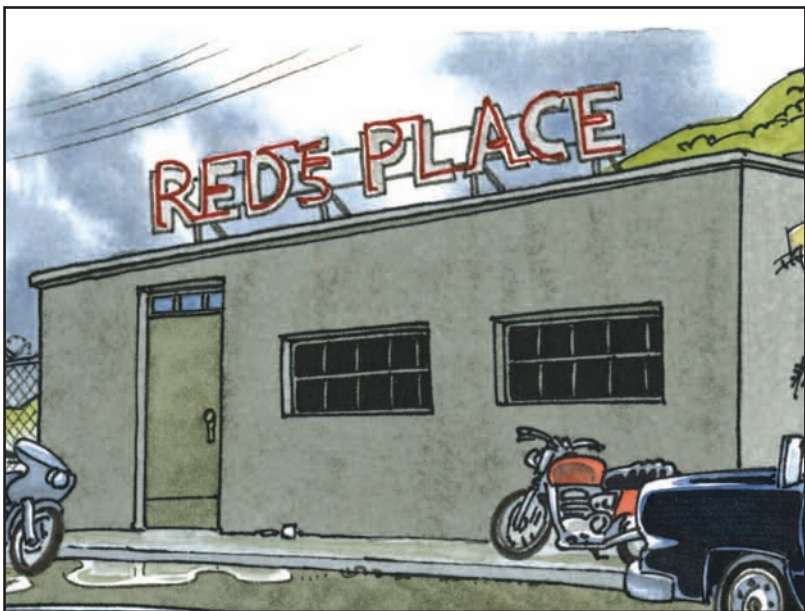
around. Red knows me too well. He’ll know something is wrong right away. You might be able to learn something from the teenagers there.

They may talk to a younger person. They won’t

talk to an old guy like me. I'll come in later.”

“Sounds good, Scoop,” said Jake.

“Take Tom’s picture. You may see him there.



But if not, try to show the picture to the pool players. But don't let Red catch you,” said Scoop.

“OK, Scoop,” said Jake.

“And be careful. If you need me, just yell.

I'll be right here," Scoop said.

Jake got out of the car. He walked toward the pool hall. He liked to play pool. But he had never been to Red's Place.

"I hope I can find out something. I don't want to let Scoop down," Jake thought to himself.

Scoop was counting on Jake. They were close to finding Tom. But they could scare him away. Jake thought about Tom's mother. He didn't want to let her down either.