

PUFFIN MODERN CLASSICS

My SIDE of the MOUNTAIN

A NEWBERY HONOR BOOK

JEAN CRAIGHEAD
GEORGE



IN WHICH
I Hole Up in a Snowstorm

I am on my mountain in a tree home that people have passed without ever knowing that I am here. The house is a hemlock tree six feet in diameter, and must be as old as the mountain itself. I came upon it last summer and dug and burned it out until I made a snug cave in the tree that I now call home.

“My bed is on the right as you enter, and is made of ash slats and covered with deerskin. On the left is a small fireplace about knee high. It is of clay and stones. It has a chimney that leads the smoke out through a knothole. I chipped out three other knotholes to let fresh air in. The air coming in is bitter cold. It must be below zero outside, and yet I can sit here inside my tree and write with bare hands. The fire is small, too. It doesn't take much fire to warm this tree room.

“It is the fourth of December, I think. It may be the fifth. I am not sure because I have not recently counted the notches in the aspen pole that is my calendar. I have been just too busy gathering nuts and berries, smoking

venison, fish, and small game to keep up with the exact date.

“The lamp I am writing by is deer fat poured into a turtle shell with a strip of my old city trousers for a wick.

“It snowed all day yesterday and today. I have not been outside since the storm began, and I am bored for the first time since I ran away from home eight months ago to live on the land.

“I am well and healthy. The food is good. Sometimes I eat turtle soup, and I know how to make acorn pancakes. I keep my supplies in the wall of the tree in wooden pockets that I chopped myself.

“Every time I have looked at those pockets during the last two days, I have felt just like a squirrel, which reminds me: I didn’t see a squirrel one whole day before that storm began. I guess they are holed up and eating their stored nuts, too.

“I wonder if The Baron, that’s the wild weasel who lives behind the big boulder to the north of my tree, is also dened up. Well, anyway, I think the storm is dying down because the tree is not crying so much. When the wind really blows, the whole tree moans right down to the roots, which is where I am.

“Tomorrow I hope The Baron and I can tunnel out into the sunlight. I wonder if I should dig the snow. But that would mean I would have to put it somewhere, and the only place to put it is in my nice snug tree.

Maybe I can pack it with my hands as I go. I've always dug into the snow from the top, never up from under.

"The Baron must dig up from under the snow. I wonder where he puts what he digs? Well, I guess I'll know in the morning."

When I wrote that last winter, I was scared and thought maybe I'd never get out of my tree. I had been scared for two days—ever since the first blizzard hit the Catskill Mountains. When I came up to the sunlight, which I did by simply poking my head into the soft snow and standing up, I laughed at my dark fears.

Everything was white, clean, shining, and beautiful. The sky was blue, blue, blue. The hemlock grove was laced with snow, the meadow was smooth and white, and the gorge was sparkling with ice. It was so beautiful and peaceful that I laughed out loud. I guess I laughed because my first snowstorm was over and it had not been so terrible after all.

Then I shouted, "I did it!" My voice never got very far. It was hushed by the tons of snow.

I looked for signs from The Baron Weasel. His footsteps were all over the boulder, also slides where he had played. He must have been up for hours, enjoying the new snow.

Inspired by his fun, I poked my head into my tree and whistled. Frightful, my trained falcon, flew to my fist, and we jumped and slid down the mountain, making big

“AN EXTRAORDINARY BOOK . . .
IT WILL BE READ YEAR AFTER YEAR.”

—*THE HORN BOOK*

Sam Gibley is terribly unhappy living in his family's crowded New York City apartment. So, armed with just the bare necessities—a penknife, a ball of cord, some flint and steel, and the clothes on his back—he runs away to the mountains. There, Sam must rely on his own ingenuity and the resources of the great outdoors to survive—and he discovers a side of himself he never knew existed.

A NEWBERY HONOR BOOK
AN ALA NOTABLE BOOK

Cover design by Jim Hoover

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