

BABY RAINSTORM

By GLEN ROUNDS *Illustrated by the Author*

Copyright 1940, copyright not renewed

In the public domain

ONE spring, a good many years back, Paul Bunyan had a logging camp on the headwaters of the River That Ran Sidewise. He'd had a profitable winter and the landings were jammed full of logs decked up and waiting for the spring floods to float them down to the mills.

Finally, the weather turned warm and the snow started to melt. A few more days and the big drive would be under way. Then one morning the men woke up to find it raining! Now rain is not so unusual at that time of year, but this was no ordinary rain. No siree, bob. For where the ordinary rain comes down, this came up. All over the camp, and as far as anyone could see, streams of big raindrops were squirting up out of the ground, sailing straight up in the air and disappearing into the clouds overhead!

And with it came trouble. For, as anyone knows, almost all the rain in this country comes down, so of course we build our houses to take care of that kind of rain, seldom giving the other kind a thought. And that was the case in Ol' Paul's camp. The buildings all had tight roofs that water wouldn't come through, but the floors, on the other hand, were made with wide cracks so that water and mud tracked in by the lumber-jacks would run through to the ground below.

But now, with the rain coming up, the floors leaked like sieves and the water gathered on the ceilings and couldn't leak out. By the time the men woke up there was four feet of water on the underside of the ceiling of every bunkhouse in camp, and it was getting deeper every minute. The men as they got up had to duck their heads to keep from bumping into the water.

One of the loggers hotfooted it over to Paul's office to tell him about it.

"Paul!" he hollered when he could get his breath. "The rain is a-comin' straight up this morning!"

"Yuh mean it's a-clabberin' up to rain, don't yuh?" Paul asked, as he hunted under his bunk for his socks. "Why the Sam Hill don't yuh learn to say what yuh mean?"

"Nossirl!" the lumberjack insisted. "I mean jest what I said, that the rain is a-comin' straight up outta the ground and yuh kin take a look fer yerself!"

Ol' Paul finally discovered that he already had his socks on because he'd never taken them off when he went to bed, so he put on his boots and stomped over to the

window to see what was what. At first he couldn't believe his eyes, so he put the window up to get a better look, and still he didn't believe what he saw. He tried looking out of first one eye and then the other; then he got out his specs; which he most usually didn't wear except when there was no one around, and clamped them on his nose and went outside to have a good close look. But any way he looked at it, the rain was sure enough coming straight up.

So Ol' Paul and the lumberjack sat down to think about it.

After a while the lumberjack spoke up. "Paul," says he, "a feller is kinda prepared fer ordinary rain, fer all his clothes are made to take care of it, if yuh ever noticed."

"How do yuh figger that?" Paul wanted to know, not too enthusiastically.

"Why a feller's hat sticks out so the rain won't run down his collar, much. And his coat overlaps his britches, and his britches overlaps his boots. It's sorta like he was shingled, if yuh see what I mean.

"Yeah," said Paul. "So where does that leave us?"

"Well, when the rain comes up, instead of down, it falls straight up his britches legs, straight up under his coat, and straight up his sleeves! It's mighty, mighty uncomfortable. Wonder, now, if it wouldn't be possible to sorta shingle a feller backwards, like."

And then they sat and thought some more, since the big bear skin in the middle of Paul's floor kept the rain from hitting them as it came up.

Meanwhile, the lumberjacks over in the bunkhouses, and the stable bucks and the bull cooks and the mess hall flunkeys were all in a very bad humor. The cooks were in a bad humor, too, but camp cooks are almost always that way so nobody noticed any particular difference.

After a while a delegation came to Ol' Paul and told him that he'd better do something about this business pretty soon or they'd all quit and go to work for Sow-belly Burke, his rival.

Ol' Paul assured them that he'd get to the bottom of the mystery as soon as possible, but pointed out to them that it would take time, since nothing like it had ever happened before. That being the case, there was of course nothing written in the books about how to deal with it. So he'd have to figure it all out by himself.

Besides, he told them, think of the stories you can tell in the towns this summer, about how you got your drive out in spite of the rain that fell straight up!

But they were still mad and going to quit, so he saw he'd have to take measures pretty quick.

After quite a spell of unusually heavy thinking, he called for Johnnie Inkslinger to quick make out an order to his favorite mail-order house for enough bumbershoots to make two apiece for all the men in camp.

“Bumbershoots?” Johnnie asked. “What’s bumbershoots?”

“Why the things folks hold up over their heads when it’s raining,” says Paul. “I’ve seen pitchers of them in the catalog many’s the time.”

“What you mean is Umbrellas,” says Johnnie, who comes from up Boston way and always talks sort of special. “And besides,” says he, “they will do no good in this emergency, because they are made for rain that falls down and this rain is indubitably coming straight up instead.”

“You go on and do like I say,” says Paul. “I cal’cate to figger out a way to use ’em by the time I get ’em. Tell ’em this is a hustle up order.”

A couple days later the bumbershoots came, two for every man in camp, and you should have heard the lumberjacks roar. No self-respecting lumberjack had ever been known to carry one of the sissy things. They might be all right for city dudes, but not for regular he-lumberjacks! No, sir! They’d quit first.

Ol’ Paul went on helping Ole open the boxes and told the lumberjacks just to keep their shirts on a minute till they saw what he had in mind.

As fast as the bumbershoots were unpacked, the Little Chore boy opened them up an’ Ol’ Paul took his jackknife and cut the handles off short inside and fastened on a couple of snowshoe loops, instead. When he had them all fixed up he had Johnnie call the roll. As each logger came up Paul handed him a couple of the remodeled



bumbershoots and told him to slip his feet into the loops. The first men were a mite shy about the business, but after they had put them on and straddled off, as if they were wearing snowshoes, they found that the bumbershoots did keep the rain from

coming up their pants legs. And from then on the men pushed and hollered for the line ahead to hurry up so they could get theirs.

“See there,” says Ol’ Paul, “I guess I knowed what I was doing. I don’t reckon there is anything sissy about wearing bumbershoots on your feet. And, anyways, we’ll call ’em bumbershoots from now on, just to be sure!”

The men all cheered again, and decided not to quit camp after all.

The next morning a friendly Indian, Chief Rinktumdiddy by name, came tearing in to camp wanting to see Paul. He told Ol’ Paul that he and another Indian were out hunting the day before and they camped by the mouth of a cave out on the prairie a way. After they’d eaten their supper they decided to explore this cave, so they took along some pine knots for torches and started out. They went back through the narrow, twisting passages for about a half a mile, as near as they could judge, when all of a sudden they heard the awfulest noise. They didn’t stop to argue, but tore out of there as fast as they could. They figured that by going in there they had made the Great Spirit mad, and that he it was they heard hollering. So now this Indian wanted Paul to see if he could talk the Great Spirit out of his mad. Ol’ Paul was plumb curious, but from what the Chief told him, he knew the cave was too small for him to get into, and he hadn’t Babe along to burrow for him, so he sat still and thought for a spell. Finally, he allowed as how maybe two men listening together could listen far enough back to hear the noise from the mouth of the cave. That sounded like a good idea, but the Indian was plumb scared to go back, so Paul called Chris Crosshaul to go along instead.

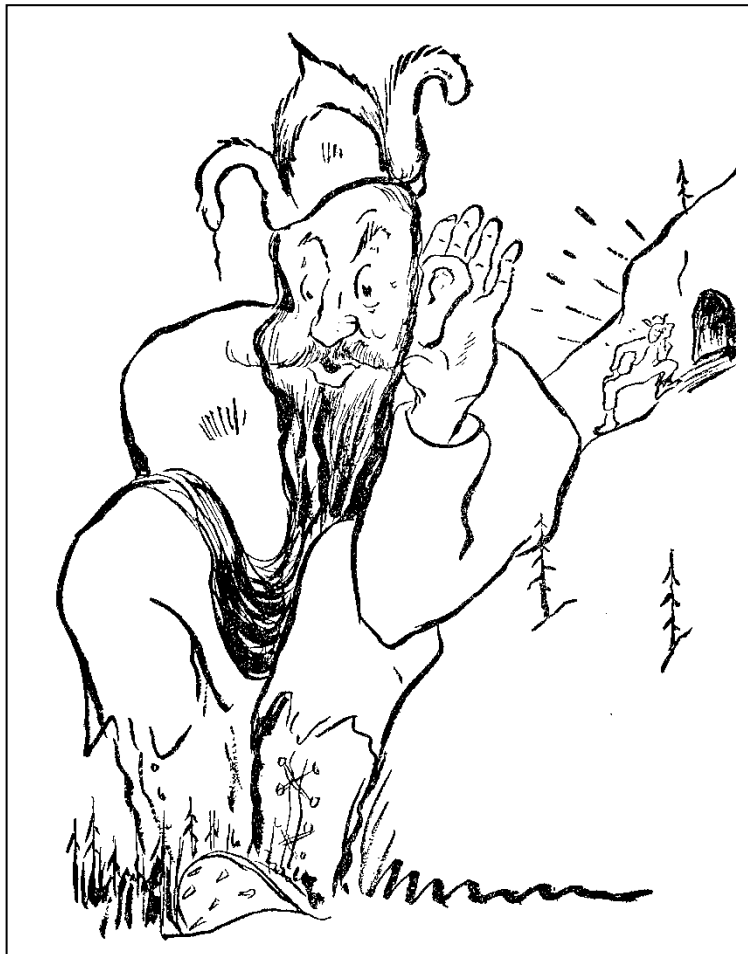
The cave wasn’t hard to find, and when they got there they both listened as hard as they could and, sure enough, they just about heard the noise. But when they tried listening separately they couldn’t hear a sound. (It’s a well known fact that two men listening together can hear twice as far as one man listening alone.)

For a while Paul listened to the rumpus he could hear going on back in the cave, and a very curious sound it was, too. It was sort of mixed up with whimpering and whining like a lost puppy, and dribbling, splashing sounds, and a sort of pattering; and, now and again, a hollow booming such as lightning might make if shut up in a cellar.

After a spell of especially hard listening that left them both red in the face and out of breath, Paul turned to Chris and said, “Chris, that’s nuthing in the wide world but a baby rainstorm that’s got himself lost back in this here cave, and now he’s bellering fer his Maw!”

“Yuh don’t say,” says Chris, doubtful like.

“Yessir!” says Paul, “and by looking at my pocket compass I’ve discovered that the noise is a-coming from right under our lumber camp! The way I figger it, thet little



feller got separated from the rest of the herd and got in here by mistake a while back. Now, he's lost and scared. You jest heerd him whimpering and thundering his heart out back in there. Chances are he's got all upset in the dark there and is raining straight up instead of down and don't know it. We gotta get him outta there."

"Yeah?" says Chris Crosshaul. "It sounds reasonable, but how the Sam Hill we gonna git him outs"

"Well, the way I see it," says Ol' Paul, when they had their pipes going good, "the only way to get that critter outta there is to call him out. It's a cinch we can't drag him out because there is no way to catch hold of a critter like that. And nobody ever had any luck trying to chase a rainstorm that I ever heard tell about."

"Reckon you're right thet fur, Paul," says Chris, "but I never hear tell of anyone that can call a rainstorm, neither."

"That's the beauty of the whole thing," says Paul. "We'll be the first ones to ever do such a thing."

"Jest how do yuh figger to go about it?" Chris wants to know. "Yuh don't mean yuh kin holler like rainstorms, do yuh?"

“Not right now, I can’t,” says Paul. “But I figger I kin soon learn how. Yuh see, I know a feller in Kansas City thet will rent yuh all kinds of disguises. I’ll git him to disguise me up to look like a rainstorm, then I’ll go out and live with a tribe of ’em and learn their language. Should be simple enough, shouldn’t it?”

And that’s just what he did. He got himself all dressed up in a rainstorm suit till you wouldn’t have known him. Then he went out into Iowa where most of the rainstorms summered. He fell in with a big tribe of them, and his disguise was so perfect that they just figured that he was a strange rainstorm, maybe blown up from Texas way, and they invited him to stay with them as long as he liked.

He had a mighty fine time all summer, helping the rainstorms to soak open-air political meetings, and the like, although probably he took an unfair advantage at times. He always managed to get the rainstorms to rain on people he didn’t want elected, and kept them away from the rallies of people he liked.

But, anyway, late in the summer he came back, and just to show off he was always throwing rainstorm words into his talk, till the lumberjacks scarcely knew what he was talking about. Then one day he went over to the mouth of the cave where the rainstorm was. Getting down on his hands and knees, he put his face up close to the entrance to the cave and imitated the cry a mother rainstorm makes when she is calling her young ones.

As soon as he did that, the noise and thundering and blubbering inside the cave stopped at once. There wasn’t a sound to be heard, and the rain, for the first time all summer;’ stopped coming up around camp.

“See thet,” says Paul, with a big grin. And then he hollered the rainstorm holler again, and that little rainstorm came tearing out of the cave as if he’d been sent for and couldn’t come. He was just a little fellow compared to what some rainstorms are, and a mite puny-looking from being shut in the dark for so long. He jumped into Ol’ Paul’s arms and licked his face and rained all over him like an excited puppy dog.

Ol’ Paul petted him and talked to him soothingly, till he quieted down, then sent him off down to Iowa where the rest of the rainstorms are. The last we saw of him he was just a little cloud over in the next county, and plumb decked out with rainbows, he was so tickled.