

Lobster Lake

The Lobster Lake Bandits

Tommy Carbone

Mystery at Moosehead

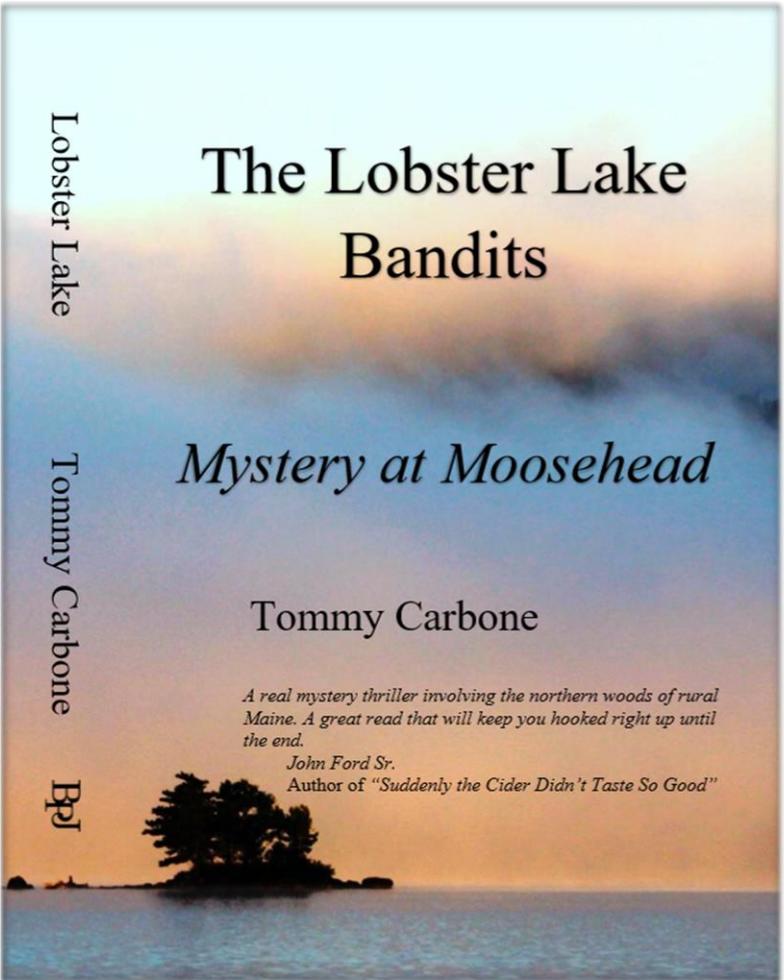
Tommy Carbone

A real mystery thriller involving the northern woods of rural Maine. A great read that will keep you hooked right up until the end.

John Ford Sr.

Author of "Suddenly the Cider Didn't Taste So Good"

B&J



THE
LOBSTER LAKE
BANDITS

MYSTERY AT MOOSEHEAD

The first novel in the Moosehead Mystery series.

By

Tommy Carbone

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Sample – Lobster Lake Bandits – Mystery at Moosehead

End of the Season

Lobster Lake – October 1988

Another Maine camp season in the north woods had come to an end. The last of the oak, maple, and aspen autumn foliage had fallen to the ground, already turned an indistinguishable color of plain brown. A red squirrel, Joe had named Spencer after the mountain that rose to the south of the camp, ran through the crunchy leaves, collecting pinecone seeds to bury for the winter. Standing on the slanted camp porch, Joe looked towards the stream, and took a deep breath of the air that smelled of evergreen. He was going to miss the sound of the water bubbling over and around the rocks. Unfortunately, the crispness in the late October breeze hinted that a freeze was soon on the way, and he had to be gone before it arrived. As he pulled his coat a little tighter, he realized he had been ending camp seasons, at this same family camp, for fifty years. Of course, his earliest memories were based on family stories and a sparse number of faded black and white photos tacked on the wall behind the worn lime-green sofa.

Fall at camp was Joe's favorite season. The bugs were mostly gone, the days were warm, and the fishing was good. He always had a sad feeling when he finally had to close the camp and head home. The sadness dug a bit deeper over the past three years. Years he had been at camp alone, other than a visiting friend or passing hikers. Camp just hadn't been the same without his dad. Although, he wasn't totally alone, he had his

dog R.C., who at the moment was meandering along the trees, saying his own goodbyes.

Spencer scrambled up to the porch, begging for one last handout. Joe reached in the pocket of his wool coat and pitched the last of the Planters peanuts to the ground. The squirrel took off with his cheeks full of treasure to hide away. Keeping an eye on R.C., Joe ran through his own winter preparation checklist one more time.

The birch bark canoe was stored away in the shed. Just last weekend he had smeared a mixture of spruce gum, charcoal, and a little bit of roofing tar on the boat's seams. The canoe would now be ready for the spring fishing season. The fishing gear, poles, nets, and buckets that were in the boat all summer, were cleaned and hung on hooks.

Next to the shed, the aluminum row boat was covered to keep out the pine needles and falling leaves. He followed the same steps his dad would have. First, he tied the brown tarp tightly around the boat and under the trailer. Then he added the blue top, an extra layer against the snow and spring rains. Finally, a few large rocks and odd-sized pine logs were added to hold it down against the winter winds.

The rickety wood boat dock had been pulled out of the pond and tipped up on the shore. All food items that might freeze, or be of interest to critters, were packed in boxes and stowed in the truck to take home. Joe took note of the sagging moss-covered roof on the shed. That would be a project he'd have to tackle in the spring. He couldn't think of anything else that needed to be done, except for getting around to writing down the shut-down list so he didn't have to worry about

remembering it every October. He decided to confirm he had taken care of the most critical item one more time. Joe knelt on the ground next to the camp, and reached under the framing for the valves used to drain the pipes. Having a camp with running water was a camp improvement everyone enjoyed and it worked great, as long as the pipes were emptied before Maine's winter freeze.

To get water to the camp, a small gas-powered pump pulled water from Parker Pond to a holding tank set on high ground. From there, through the employment of gravity, water was delivered through copper pipes to the camp for bathing and washing dishes. The drinking water came from a well dug by Grandpa George, who carefully crafted a wall, stone by stone, which circled the inside of the deep pit.

The pipe draining was a yearly routine the Parkers had forgotten only once – the fall Joe's dad, Stan, and his Grandpa George had closed the camp in a rush. Stan wanted to get home to listen to the speech from President Kennedy. Joe would never forget the date – October 22, 1962. Grandpa George, on the other hand, was apprehensive about leaving camp. He told Stan if there were to be a missile launch from Cuba, he would rather take his chances at camp than at home. At least out here in the woods he reasoned they could hunt and fish for food. Stan, however, wanted to get back to Bangor. First off, that's where Joe, who was working for the local paper, was. Since his wife Louise, Joe's mom, had passed away several years prior, Stan felt it was important to be close to his son. And second, it was also where the rest of their relatives were. If the Russians and Castro were to start trouble, Stan wanted to be close to

family. So, he won that argument with Grandpa George, and home they went.

The following spring when they returned, Stan hooked up the pump and pulled the starter rope. The gas engine choked to life. Seconds later, Grandpa and Joe came running from the camp.

“Stan, shut it. Shut the pump!” yelled Grandpa.

By the time Dad heard them over the pump’s engine and realized what was happening, mini sprinklers from the cracked pipes had soaked the kitchen and bathroom. They had lost the Parker Camp Cold War. Instead of fishing, the three of them spent the next five days repairing pipes that had burst during the winter freeze. Ever since then, Stan, and now Joe, had been extra careful about draining the water.

Once Joe was sure all the pipes were empty, he looked over the firewood he had stacked on the porch. Stacking the wood was another of the required fall camp routines he had repeated since he was old enough to carry a log. Having a good supply of wood was necessary for the winter trip to the cabin, even if he hadn’t continued the annual tradition for ice fishing and back country hiking the past few years. He hadn’t had the desire to make the trip without Dad. But he might come back this winter, so he stacked the wood. Better to learn from Spencer the squirrel and be prepared.

Joe whistled. He whistled again. Then he noticed that R.C. was already on the front seat of the pickup truck.

“Good boy. Already said your goodbyes? All right then. Let’s head home.” Driving down the private unmarked lane, he watched in the rear-view mirror as the camp faded away.

He'd be driving on the bumpy, rutted, dirt logging road for more than an hour before reaching pavement. While sightings of deer or fox were frequent along the roadside, he would likely not see another car or person the entire time. The summer residents and campers had been gone for more than a month. The loggers had Sunday off, an area tradition that Joe was glad had not ended, making Sunday the safest day to travel on these roads. It would be another month or so before hunters might turn up, most not venturing as far as his family's camp. Even if they did, the odds of taking the correct turns on barely noticeable roads, which looked more like deer trails, meant that unknown visitors to their cabin location were rare. When someone unknown did turn up in their dooryard, it usually meant they were lost and needed help.

Joe absentmindedly turned on the truck's radio. It was all static. He laughed to himself. He knew better than to think there would be a signal during this part of the drive. There would be no radio until he reached the small town of Greenville, and after that it would be spotty as he drove over the mountains. He looked at his watch. He was hoping to make the two-and-a-half-hour drive home in time to catch game four of the playoffs between Oakland and Boston. As he drove with just the hum of the engine, he thought about his beloved Red Sox team.

If the Sox didn't pull out a win tonight it would be the end of their hopes for yet another season. They hadn't won a World Series since winning game six on September 11, 1918. That was the year his dad was born, and Babe Ruth pitched, hit, and played outfield for the Red Sox. That was also the year the baseball season was shortened by several weeks due to World

War I and pressure from the war department. Without the short season, fans always wondered if the Sox would have prevailed even that year.

The yellowing newspaper clipping, exclaiming that historic series win, still hung in a birch twig picture frame on the camp's living room wall. A relic his Grandfather had saved. The family, and just about every guest to the cabin, talked about the prospects of a Sox win every year since. Entire evenings around the campfire were often filled with Red Sox stories and second-guessing manager decisions.

Until recently, there were only two ways to keep up with the two most important pieces of information – baseball news and the weather forecast – while staying at camp. The first was on trips to town for church, supplies, and the Sunday paper. Grandpa had stored Red Sox articles from the sports section in those papers away in the camp cabinet. From time to time, Joe would read the old clippings, fantasizing about what it would have been like to be at Fenway back in the 1930s and 40s.

The second way Grandpa kept up with the Red Sox was word of mouth. Stan would say, "If your grandpa would happen upon people out fishing, after saying 'Hello,' his first question was, 'How are the Red Sox doing?'" I think he sometimes would go out hiking looking for someone who might know the teams' standings.

It was different now. Joe had listened to most of the baseball season on the radio, something his grandfather never could have imagined. Back then, no signal would have reached their part of the woods; and it wouldn't have mattered if it did, Grandpa had no way to power a radio. Power at camp didn't

happen until 1976, the year Stan purchased a small gas generator that provided enough electricity for the new water pump, a few lights, and what Joe thought he'd never see at camp – a radio. The AM radio was housed in a heavy dark walnut wooden case. It had a built-in speaker and heavy-duty dials to adjust the volume and the tuning needle. That summer, he helped his dad rig up a rooftop antenna. If the antenna had been sitting on the ground, it would have been taller than the camp. They were able to get two or three stations, depending on the weather and time of the day, one of which was from Canada and all in French, which neither of them could understand. The signal was always spotty and had a way of giving up to static at the worst times. That old radio was appreciated, and at the same time scorned, two baseball seasons ago during the playoffs. With miles of dirt road in front of him, Joe thought back on that memory.



Joe had stayed at camp that fall to enjoy the fishing. While listening to the playoff games, he worked on his sketches for his job at the Bangor News. For game number six it was a frosty October night. Through the camp's thin walls, he heard the shrill sounds of a howling pack of coyotes from in the direction of Rum Ridge. The howls even had R.C., who was half asleep on the rug next to the crackling stove, on alert. Joe saw R.C. raise one ear to listen before he let out a low rumble growl, and then went back to snoring.

Tommy Carbone

The sports announcer said with excitement, “Boston is now three outs away from winning their first World Series in seventy years.”

Joe warmed a mug of milk on the wood stove and sat on the edge of his seat, the drink doing little to calm his nerves. He yelled at the radio, “Come on boys. Get ‘em out!”

R.C. let out a groan and rolled over.

No longer able to sit still in his re-stuffed lumpy chair, Joe stood and paced. From the front wall to the back wall, the cabin was only twenty feet long. Eight paces each way with his long stride.

The woodstove flared, the thin-paned windows rattled, and the radio crackled and then went silent. Joe strode over and fiddled with the antenna wire. He banged on the top of the case. Nothing. It was dead. He couldn’t believe his bad luck. Of all times for this to happen. Disappointed, Joe hit the generator off switch and went to bed.

Not able to sleep, he went to the shelf in the living room and brought back a camp journal he hadn’t read in years. He opened to the pages he wrote when he was a teenager. It was the year of strange events in the woods near the cabin. He fell asleep reading his story about the beautiful nameless girl with the wavy hair, and the mysterious man in the odd green cap.

Sunday morning, on his walk back from the outhouse he tripped on a wire. Looking up he saw the rusty antenna tower tilting sideways. After his coffee, he climbed up on the roof and spliced the wire back together.

Back inside he turned the dial, past the morning devotions, and past the French station from Canada, until he found the news.

“And in baseball last night, the Red Sox lost to the Mets on an error by Bill Buckner in the bottom of the tenth. The World Series is now tied at three games apiece.”

To Joe’s, and all of Boston’s continued disappointment, the Mets won the ‘86 World Series in the seventh game, and the Curse of the Bambino continued to vex the Red Sox.



This year, he was taking no chances with the radio. He had purposely finished the camp’s winter preparations early and was headed home to not miss any of the playoff games. With no radio signal while traveling on the washboard camp roads, the only sounds were the roughness of the old truck’s engine along with the squeaks and rattles of the doors and shocks.

Reaching Abbot, Joe stopped at the bakery. Bobby, the local baker, was behind the counter.

“Afternoon, Uncle Joe,” Bobby said.

Joe reached over and shook Bobby’s hand.

“How are you, Bobby?”

“I’m doing okay, it’s been a lot less busy around here the past couple of weeks.”

While Bobby wasn’t really Joe’s nephew, he took his role model responsibility seriously. A Parker family friend, the late Henry Ford, a local game warden, was Bobby’s uncle. Over the

years Joe had made it a point of being involved in Bobby's life, just as Henry had been for Joe.

Before even being asked, Bobby handed Joe a styrofoam cup of black coffee. "I read the write-up in the Telegram. That reporter wrote a great article about the fly-in. I was a bit of a celebrity around here since she mentioned your name. What was her name again?"

"Sarah – Sarah Molloy."

"I saved a copy of the paper, it's somewhere under here." With his head rummaging around under the counter, Bobby continued, "Is it true you saved Sarah's life when you were kids, Uncle Joe?" He popped up with a copy of the paper.

"I wouldn't go that far. She was a bit turned around in the woods and I helped her out. In fact, it was your Uncle Henry that drove her back to town that day in his cruiser." Joe looked down at the article. He had already read it article a hundred times. He was so proud of the story he had hung a copy on the camp wall, right next to the Red Sox 1918 framed article.

"No kidding? Mom never told me that story about Uncle Henry."

"Your Uncle helped people every week of the year. I'm sure your mom couldn't have kept track of all her brother's game warden activity."

"Are you kidding? The old store log included not only the daily sales, but every bit of gossip she came across."

Joe laughed. "That sounds about right for Bonnie."

"I liked your sketches included with the article. That was cool to see. The story said you and Sarah were going to be

working together writing about the Moosehead area. Is that true?”

“Could be a possibility. We’ll see. Right now, I’m just planning on getting home to catch the game this afternoon,” Joe replied, although he was really hoping to see more of Sarah.

Sunday Telegram	September 18, 1988
Moosehead Lake’s 15th Annual Seaplane Fly-in By Sarah Molloy	
<p>The last time I visited the Moosehead Lake area I was only sixteen, and I became lost in the woods. If it wasn’t for Joe Parker finding me on the trail, I might not be here to write this story. Thirty-two years later, I would have never guessed that it would again be Joe who would guide me around this beautiful area and make my first fly-in experience something to remember. <i>(For the full story and illustrations see page A5).</i></p>	
Illustrations by Joe Parker, Lobster Lake, Maine	
	
	

“I’ll be closing the store early for the same reason,” replied Bobby, who was wearing his Red Sox shirt and cap. He already had the radio on the shelf tuned to the pre-game show.

“What else can I get you for the road?”

“I’ll have one of your skidder donuts, please.” A skidder wasn’t the actual size of a logging skidder tire, but it was big.

Bobby handed Joe a brown paper bag. “Drive safe. Will you be coming back up for ice fishing season?”

“Haven’t thought that far ahead Bobby. I’ll let you know.” He paid Bobby and tipped his cap on the way out the door.

Joe pulled out of the parking lot, skidder donut crumbling down his jacket as he took a bite. He flipped on the radio and sang along with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, “You and me going fishin’ in the dark. Lying on our backs and counting the stars. Mmm mmm mmm.”

The song had him thinking about this past September all over again. He hummed along until the music faded out, and then tuned the radio to the pre-game show. As he drove, he didn’t hear a word of what the sportscaster said. His mind was filled with thoughts of Sarah.

Seeing her also stirred up the memories of what happened that fall at camp with the bandits, and the men that stalked the woods. He wondered why Sarah and his paths had crossed again, after so many years, and if there was a connection to the mystery that had gone unsolved for so long.

END OF SAMPLE

Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed this sample of the *Lobster Lake Bandits – Mystery at Moosehead* by Tommy Carbone.

The book can be purchased on [Amazon](#) and at select bookstores.

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