

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

by Dr. Roy Smith



THE CAMPFIRE GANG



BOOK #7



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THE CAMPFIRE GANG  BOOK #1



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*Dedicated to those who have great value
and God-given potential. (This means you!)
As you enjoy this series, may you discover
your greatness.*



*I am honored to be part of the journey of the following
young men. May you grow strong, have courage,
act wisely and change the world.*

*Silas, Jorah, Alexander, Nathan, Mason, William,
Lucas, Cody, Elijah, Kent, Colt, Ian, AJ, CJ, JJ, Gavin,
Ryder, Braxton, Domenic, Francis, Jules, Tristen*

*It is my privilege to be part of the lives of the following
amazingly gifted and powerful young women.*

May you make a difference in the world.

Remi, Reese, Alycea, Joy



CHAPTER 1

BANG!

The old man's voice echoed into the night. The deep wrinkles on his face flickered in the light of the campfire. A red toothpick hung out of his bearded mouth. It bobbed up and down as he read out loud from a thick, heavy book.

The boys leaned in closer as he talked. Sweat dripped down their faces. Their hearts beat faster and faster. The hero was in trouble... he might not make it! The old man turned the page. Suddenly—

“BANG!”

A loud explosion rang out from the woods behind them.

The boys jumped up in a panic. Pete dropped his s'mores on the ground. Kerry tumbled over backward from the log he was sitting on.

The old man stopped reading and waited.

“What was *that*?” BB cried.

Out of the darkness stumbled a slightly round boy. His face turned bright red as he grinned.

“Toby!” said Pete.

“Are you okay?” BB added. “You smell like burnt popcorn.”

“Yeah, I’m fine. They’re just fireworks I got from my brother. I wanted to scare you guys a little—that’s all.”

“Well, you did!” Spencer said.

Pete added, “I don’t think that was your best move, Toby. You could’ve blown yourself up!”

“Come on, guys!” Kerry complained.

“We’re just getting to the good part of the story.”



The boys spent most nights dreaming up adventures and trips to faraway places. Sometimes they'd play a game they invented. But the nights when the old man came were the best by far.

Pops, as they called him, always read stories that were jam-packed with heroes, battles and frightening worlds full of terrifying creatures. Tonight was no different.

Toby sat down beside his friends and leaned in. "Keep going, Pops."

Pops waited patiently for the boys to settle down first. Then he cleared his throat and continued.

"Roger stared straight into the eyes of the pirate. His leg was bruised, his knuckles were cut, but his will to survive was still alive..."

He paused. "Before I keep going, does anyone know what lesson we can learn here?"

The boys stared at each other. Pops always asked about the lesson behind the story, and each boy would give an answer.

“I think the lesson is that you have to be brave and face your enemies,” said Spencer. “That’s why he’s not backing down.”

“I think the lesson is that pirates are always bad guys, no matter how nice they seem,” said Pete.

Pops nodded his head in agreement but said nothing. He seemed to be happy just because the boys tried to find a meaning in the story. He never really cared if their answers were right or wrong.

Then Pops did what he always did after reading to them. He closed his book, got up from his log and quietly said, “See you later.”

His red toothpick seemed to glow as he stood up and walked away. The boys watched him fade into the distance.

“That was a good one,” Kerry said.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

“I didn’t think Roger was going to make it this time,” said Sammy. “He should’ve listened to Daniel when he said it was too dangerous to go out to sea.”

Cliff nodded. “Roger was really lucky Daniel came out to help him.”

“Of course he came to help him!” said Pete. “That’s what friends do. They stick together no matter what.”

“Roger was just trying to do what he thought was right,” Spencer added.

“Maybe that’s the lesson,” said Kerry. “Sometimes bad things can happen if you don’t listen to someone’s advice.”

“Or maybe the lesson is that not all ideas are good ideas,” BB suggested.

“Like setting off fireworks!” Toby laughed. “That was probably a bad idea.”

Pete added, “If all the bad guys Pops tells us about just blew themselves up like you tried to do, no one would have to be afraid of them.”

“It *was* kind of funny,” said Cliff. “Remember when Kerry fell off the log?”

Everyone laughed.

“All right, all right.” Toby grinned. “It was definitely a bad idea! But at least I’m good at scaring everyone.”

“Except Pops,” Pete said. “He never seems to be scared of anything. He just sits there and waits.”

“Yeah,” BB agreed. “It was kind of weird that we all jumped when we heard the bang, but Pops didn’t react at all.”

Sammy, who tended to be the quiet one, said, “I saw that too. It seemed like he knew it was going to happen.”

“Right!” exclaimed BB. “He didn’t move a muscle.”

Sammy opened his mouth to say something else, but Kerry jumped in. “Wow! That’s pretty cool to think Pops might’ve known what Toby was going to do.”

Toby said, “Well, if that’s true, he knows more than me. I usually don’t know what I’m going to do until it’s over.”

They all laughed.

“We all have bad ideas sometimes,” said BB. “It can be hard to tell if an idea is good or bad—especially when you’re angry.”

“If it hurts someone, it’s probably a bad idea,” said Sammy.

“But what if you hurt someone who’s trying to hurt you?” asked Kerry. “Sometimes the kids in Pops’s stories have to kill a monster so they don’t get eaten.”

“I think I’d blow up the monster. I’m pretty good at that,” said Toby.

Everyone laughed again.

Just then, a strange noise came out of the darkness. It sort of sounded like a sick owl. The boys jumped up. Cupping their hands around their mouths, they hooted back into the darkness.

Then a boy's voice broke up the hooting party.

"Hey guys!" he said, walking toward the campfire.

"Where've you been, John?" asked Pete.

"I had to go to my sister's dance competition," John replied. "It was five hours away. We just got back."

"Dance stuff is the worst," said Spencer. "My sister, Jessica, does cheerleading. I always hide when it's time to go to her practices."

"I didn't want to go," John said. "But my parents said I had to be a good brother. She always comes to my baseball games, so I guess it's fair."

Kerry laughed. "Oh come on, John. You love her and you know it."

“Yeah, I guess I do,” John agreed. “I was really proud of her when she did her routine.”

“We’d all probably break our necks trying to dance like that,” said Pete.

John nodded. “Then we had to take family pictures. I hate that. But my sister thanked me for coming, and that made me feel better. Anyway, what did I miss?”

“Toby almost blew himself up!” said Cliff.

“I think I had what we’re calling a bad idea,” said Toby. “Take my advice—don’t set off a bunch of fireworks at the same time. The bang was so loud I couldn’t hear for a while. Now I smell like smoke. But at least I made it out alive!”

“Toby was just trying to scare us,” said Kerry. “And it worked! We all just about jumped out of our skin.”

John laughed. “I think I’m glad I missed that. How was Pops’s story?”

“Roger was almost killed by pirates,” BB explained. “But Daniel saved him at the last minute.”

“You know,” said Pete, “the guys in Pops’s stories have bad ideas just like us.”

“We do act a lot like them,” agreed Kerry.

“They stick together, and so do we,” said Spencer. “Even though we’re all really different, we always stand by each other.”

“Let’s never stop meeting at the campfire!” declared Cliff. “Even when we’re old like Pops, we’ll still come!”

The boys hooted and howled in agreement.

“I told my mom about Pops,” Pete added. “She said he used to read to her and her friends when they were kids. They loved his stories too.”

“I wonder how old he was then,” said Toby.

“I don’t know,” replied Pete. “But it sounded like he was just as old then as he is now. She said he had a deep, grumbly voice, a red toothpick and a wild beard.”

BB stood up and stretched. "It's getting late," he said. "Hey Sammy, you looked like you wanted to tell us something before. What was it?"

"Well," Sammy said, "I'm not sure what it means. But when I jumped up because of the bang, I saw over Pops's shoulder."

"What's the big deal about that?" Spencer asked.

Everyone looked at Sammy and waited.

"I saw the pages Pops was reading from. They were blank. There weren't any words on them at all!"

THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

LET'S THINK ABOUT IT

Good questions help us learn.

• • •

1. Do you have a group of friends like the campfire gang? What are their names?
2. The gang loves hearing Pops's stories. Does someone read stories to you? How much do you like hearing those stories?
3. In Chapter 2, BB has to do some chores before he can play with his friends. What chores are you expected to do at home?
4. One of the gang's goals is to catch the Monster. What's one goal you have for yourself? Have you ever caught a fish like the Monster?
5. The boys decide to jump the fence surrounding the quarry despite the sign that says, "Do not enter" (page 19). How easy or difficult is it for you to follow rules like this?
6. Some of the boys don't want to climb over the quarry fence, but they do anyway. Do you ever feel pressure from your friends to do what they want? What do you do if what they want is wrong?
7. Do you ride in a school bus like the one the gang finds in the quarry? If so, what do you do in the bus?
8. Are you tall like Kerry, small like Spencer or somewhere in the middle? Does your size ever affect what you can do?

9. In Chapter 3, the gang comes up with team rules that they all promise to follow. What rules do you and your friends have?
10. The gang decides that BB will be their leader. Who do you know that would make a good leader, and why?
11. How athletic are you? What sports do you like? Are you good at climbing like Spencer?
12. Toby's stepdad is a geologist and knows all about fossils. Have you ever seen or found a fossil? What did it look like?
13. What do you think about what the rock says?
14. What do you think a Clamp looks like? How fast are they?
15. Do you like to help others? What's one thing you've done to make someone's life better?
16. On page 80, we find out BB's real name is Silas. Does anyone call you by a name other than your first name?
17. Would you like to eat a black apple from the Clamps? What's your favorite food?
18. Diddy tells the gang that they can see how old a Clamp is because of the color of their skin (page 83). How can you tell how old someone is?
19. At the end of Chapter 7, the Strikers promise to return to defeat the gang. What do you think will happen when the Strikers come back with the rest of their army?
20. By the end of this book, we start to find out that Pops isn't just an old man who reads stories. Who do you think Pops really is?

21. In Chapter 8, Wind gives Sammy and the gang a choice. Which option would you choose? Would you challenge yourself and go through the other tunnel, or would you stay at the cabin to wait for help?
22. Wind is wise and quietly gives the gang good advice. Who or what is Wind like?
23. What do you think the rock means when it gives the gang the following advice from Matthew 10:31 (page 127)?

*“So don’t be afraid. You are worth more than
many sparrows.”*

24. What’s one verse the rock said that you want to remember? Write it down here:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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After becoming a grandfather, Dr. Roy Smith was inspired to write a book series for his grandsons and for boys and men of all ages—so he embarked on a journey to creatively teach character development. Being a psychologist and counselor for more than 35 years, Roy understands how important it is for young men to develop and use their

full potential. Roy's goal is to help young men become mentally strong, address their emotions and develop social skills so they can have a powerful impact on the world. They need to meet God and integrate who He is and His Word into their daily decision-making. To further contribute to the overarching goal of positively changing our culture, Roy developed LiveUp Resources (LiveUpResources.com), a ministry that produces books and DVD series for men, women and youth. Roy has written and cowritten several books in the area of men's issues (K21.men), including *Bull*, *Being God's Man*, *Basic Warrior Training*, *Manhood Journey* (Volumes 1-5), *Why Not Try to Hit the Real Target—Men* and *You're Not Dead Yet*. He has also consulted on and written several women's DVD series (RealWomen21.com).

IT ALL STARTED ONE NIGHT AT THE CAMPFIRE...

The campfire gang loves to listen to the old man's stories. But one night they realize something strange about him. After that, they find themselves in a world full of excitement, adventure, strange creatures and new friends.

Through it all, the boys learn lessons about life and about God. They never stop fighting for each other—and sometimes for their own lives!

*FIND ALL OF THE CAMPFIRE GANG ADVENTURES AT
www.TheCampfireGang.com*