

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

by Dr. Roy Smith



THE CAMPFIRE GANG



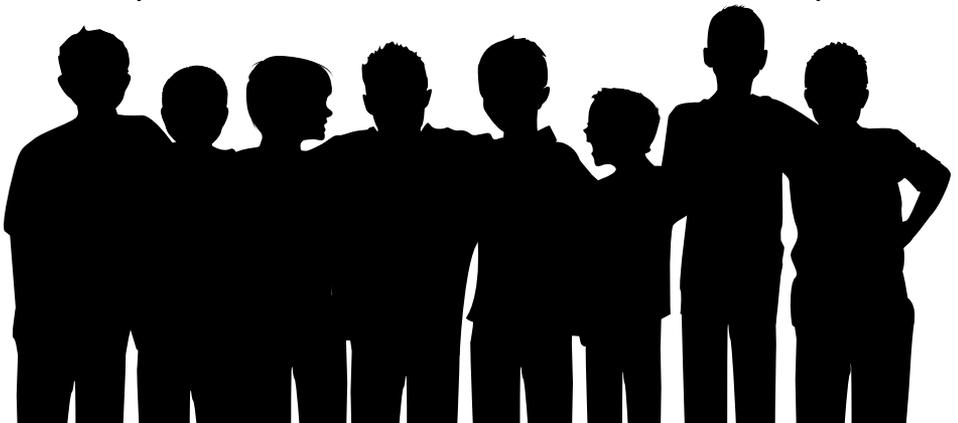
BOOK #1



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THE CAMPFIRE GANG  BOOK #7



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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 noise 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!”

“C’mon, guys!” said Kerry. “We’re just getting to the good part.” He hated when a good story got interrupted.

Most nights the boys spent their time 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.

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

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.

He waited patiently for the boys to settle down. 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 when the boys tried to find a meaning in the story and didn’t care 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 as he faded 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 told him it was too dangerous to go out to sea.”

Cliff nodded. “He 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.

“That makes sense,” Cliff agreed.

“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 just sat there quietly.”

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.

THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

BB laughed.

The Monster was a huge bass that lived in the campground pond down the road. Every once in a while one of the boys would hook him, but he always fought them off and escaped. Toby's stepdad caught him once, but he tossed him back in the water to live another day.

They reached the pond and found John and Pete already hooking bait on their lines. The boys set their gear down in the grass and started to prepare their lines.

“Whoa-whoa-whoaaa!”

They spun around just in time to see Toby fall flat on his face. His pole, net and tackle box flew everywhere.

They howled with laughter.

“I bet he tripped over that muskrat hole,” Pete said.

“Your front flip is almost as good as my sister's!” John chuckled.



THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

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!

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www.TheCampfireGang.com*