

BATTLES FOUGHT, LESSONS LEARNED

by Dr. Roy Smith



THE CAMPFIRE GANG



BOOK #2



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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.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*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*

*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

WHAT'S NEXT?

BB rubbed his eyes and yawned. As his eyes adjusted to the golden, grass-covered landscape, he thought about the night before.

It's so nice here, he thought. He looked around at the cozy fire pit and the pond full of fish. *Why did we vote to leave such a great place?*

Pete rolled over beside him. “What a great place to sleep!” he said to BB as he sat up. “Why do we want to take a different tunnel again?”

“That’s what I was just thinking,” BB groaned. “But remember what Wind said...”

By now the rest of the gang was stirring. They each slowly sat up, stretched and started talking about the journey ahead of them.

“Maybe we made a mistake!” Pete said. “If we stay here we’ll have all the food we need. And eventually someone is likely to find us here and show us the way home.”

Spencer pointed to the creek that wrapped around them. “*And* we’re safe from the Strikers! Remember they can’t swim.”

“Yeah,” John agreed. “Maybe we should vote again.”

“Not so fast!” BB cried. “Remember what that little bird, Wind, told Sammy. We can stay here and wait, and eventually someone might come save us. Or we can go back and follow that other tunnel. Even though we don’t know where it goes and we could run into Strikers, Wind said we’ll learn important lessons.”

Sammy nodded. “And we’ll get stronger. It would be easy to just stay here where it feels safe. But don’t we want to face the challenges of learning and growing up into men?”

“Sammy’s right,” Toby agreed. “Playing it safe is boring. We have to take risks and try new things or else we’ll never find out what we’re good at.”

“We should stick with our decision to leave,” Cliff said.

“Okay, I give in,” John said. “Let’s go find that other tunnel!”

“Does anybody still want to change their mind?” BB asked. “Remember that Wind said once we take the other tunnel we can’t turn back.”

“Wind said some of us could stay here and some could go, but I don’t like that,” Sammy said. “I think we should stay together.”

“I think it’s risky, but I want us to stay together too,” Spencer said. “I’m with you guys!”

“I stick by my decision to go down the other tunnel,” Pete declared. “I’ll miss this place. But I know making this choice will help me become the man I dream about being.”

“Kerry?” BB said. “You’re really quiet today.”

Kerry looked down at the ground. Finally he said, “I’m sure we’ll look back on this moment and question our decision. But making hard decisions is part of growing up. We’re on our way to becoming young men.”

He looked up at the gang and grinned. “I’m ready to get started!”

“I think this is what Pops wants for us,” Sammy said. “I’m ready to learn more life lessons and toughen up!”

“I want to take the chance and leave too,” BB declared. “We’ll run into lots of challenges, but with Pops’ help, we can overcome them. I’m glad we’re all on the same page and can stick together!”

The boys packed up their things. With fear and excitement they crossed the creek and said goodbye to what felt very much like their home for one night.

When they got to the place where the tunnels split, Sammy called, “Hold on!”

He leaned down and set the rock he had been carrying on the ground. “The rock always gives us good advice. Maybe it’ll tell us what to expect in the other tunnel.”

“Good idea,” BB said as Sammy stepped on top of the rock.

The gang watched eagerly as a loud groan erupted from the rock. Then it began to vibrate. Finally a voice that seemed to be coming out of the rock said,

“We live by believing, not by seeing.”¹

“This thing is really confusing,” John said.

“Yeah,” Pete agreed. “I wish it would just tell us exactly what we need to do.”

“But then it would just be bossing us around,” Cliff pointed out. “I like trying to figure

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:7

out what it's trying to tell us. It's like a riddle.”

“It is mysterious and strange,” BB agreed. “It's almost like we have to put ourselves totally into feeling and thinking about its messages.”

“That's interesting,” Kerry reflected. “We have to be all in to make sense of it.”

Sammy looked to be deep in thought. “I think I get it,” he said slowly. “Sometimes we can't see what we believe in. Like I can't see God, but my dad and I believe He's real.”

“Right!” BB agreed. “There are a lot of Strikers out there who want us dead. And they have way more weapons than we do. We have to keep believing God will take care of us, even if it doesn't look so good for us.”

“I guess believing that could keep us from becoming discouraged and giving up,” Spencer said.

“Yeah,” BB agreed. “Knowing what we believe and using it to guide us can make things better.”

“Speaking of Strikers, let’s get out of here before we find some,” Kerry suggested.

Toby started leading them through the tunnel. Suddenly they heard a loud crash right behind them. The gang began to cough as a giant cloud of dust surrounded them.

“What was that?” Spencer cried.

As the dust settled, Kerry and BB ran back toward the tunnel entrance to see what had happened.

As they sprinted back toward the gang, Kerry yelled, “It was a cave-in! Boulders are piled up to the ceiling.”

“Wind was right!” Sammy exclaimed. “We can’t go back. Not after that crash!”

After the cave-in, the gang moved quickly and quietly down the tunnel. They walked through multiple cave rooms and continued to follow the tunnel. After a while, they found a small stream where they stopped for a drink. After crossing the

THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

“Check it out!” Kerry said as he rubbed mud all over his arms and legs. “Those Strikers won’t come near me now!”

BB stepped back and held his nose. “I won’t come near you now!”

Cliff spread mud on himself as well. “I know Kerry stinks, but he probably has a good idea. In this war, our safety is worth a little stink.”

They all started smearing the stinky mud on their arms and legs and even their faces.

The boys trudged farther down the tunnel and into more mud. No one even noticed the smell. They knew this was nothing compared to battling the Strikers. It was just a step they had to take to win the battle.

“Thaddeus, why are you at the front?” Toby asked. “If the Strikers attack us, you’ll be the first one they kill. Then the Angelicas won’t have a king.”

“I’m willing to die if that’s what God wants,” Thaddeus replied. “Part of His great plan is for me to be with Him one day. The Great Book says, ‘We would rather be away from our bodies and at home with the Lord.’”¹

Thaddeus smiled. “And if I die,” he continued, “I will have died protecting you.”

“You’re not just brave,” Sammy chimed in, “you’re really smart too.”

“That’s because God shows me what I need to do. When I was young I didn’t have much faith in Him. I felt like I needed to do everything my way. Now I know God’s plan is often different from what I want. So I relax and do what He says.”

“I don’t know what to believe about God,” Cliff said. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen Him. But Thomas said you also call God Pops.”

“That’s true.”

“We know a guy called Pops!” John said.

“Is he—”

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:8

Suddenly Thaddeus stopped. The boys crouched down in the mud. They could see the glow at the end of the tunnel where the Angelicas and archers were already fighting.

“Wait for the signal,” he whispered.

“What signal?” BB whispered back.

“The one from Pops.”

Seconds later, a loud clap of thunder rang out.

Thaddeus flew toward the opening of the tunnel. The boys followed.

“They’re on their way back from the Clamps’ tunnel,” Thaddeus called back to the gang. “We don’t have much time before their reinforcements arrive.”

Thaddeus and the gang made it to the cave room. At the same time more Angelicas poured out of the other tunnels. The Striker archers were running out of arrows, but they continued to fight back ferociously.

The boys put their new swords to work quickly. They hit Striker after Striker square on the neck. Soon all of the archers were dead. Five Angelicas were wounded and six Angelicas had died from well-aimed arrows.

Thaddeus and some of the Angelica warriors moved quickly to get their wounded and dead back to their home. The other Angelicas and the gang quickly gathered up all the weapons they could find on the ground near the dead Strikers.

“It looks like there were about 1,000 archers,” Thaddeus said. “That means thousands more Strikers are on their way. They must have joined up with another clan of Strikers.”

“That’s odd,” Thomas said as he joined the group. “Different Striker clans don’t usually fight together. They must have decided to try to wipe out all of us Angelicas once and for all!”

“Prepare for the worst,” Thaddeus instructed.

“Thaddeus?” Sammy said. He held out the rock. “Do we have time to see if our rock has any final advice?”

Thaddeus nodded. “It’s always wise to stop for a minute and listen to the rock. Don’t let anything get in the way of hearing what God wants you to do. You are never too busy to seek His opinion.”

Sammy stepped on top of the rock. It groaned, then vibrated and a voice said,

“But those who trust in the LORD will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak.”²

“What does that mean?” Kerry asked.

“I think it means God will help us fight hard,” Spencer said.

“That gives me an idea...” Thaddeus said.

He called over eight Angelicas. He gave

² Isaiah 40:31

them some instructions and they started flying toward their home.

The boys became more and more nervous as the sound of slithering Strikers got louder and louder. They could hear the Strikers chanting as they came closer, “Kill, kill, kill them all, kill.”

The group of Angelicas soon returned to the cave room. They each held out some kind of thin, white fabric.

“Try these on,” Thaddeus said as he gave one to each boy.

“They look like wings!” BB said.

Thaddeus nodded. “We make these for Angelicas who get hurt during our battles. But they might fit you too. Quick—try them on. Start practicing—maybe you’ll be able to fly just like we can.”

“Are you sure we can learn how to steer these things this quickly?” Kerry asked nervously.

“I think you’ll be safer trying to fly than

staying on the ground. You'll learn fast because God will help you.”

As soon as the words came out of his mouth, Strikers began pouring into the cave room.

The mud at the tunnel entrance slowed them down a little. The Strikers at the front rolled on the ground as soon as they touched the mud. They wanted to get the smell off of them. The others simply slithered over them, willingly crushing those on the ground.

A storm of spears rained down on the Strikers from the Angelicas flying above them. They flew just out of reach of the Strikers, quickly unloading their quivers filled with arrows into hundreds of Strikers around them.

As their arrows ran out, the Angelicas pulled out their swords and flew down toward the Strikers.

BB looked at the gang. “Okay, guys—let’s fight like this could be our last battle!”

The boys courageously strapped on their new wings. Together they turned to face the mob of attacking Strikers.

THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

Spencer stepped on the rock again. “We don’t have time to argue about this. We need an answer that we can understand.”

The rock groaned and began to shake. Then the voice said,

*“Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done so, they caught a large number of fish. There were so many that their nets began to break.”*¹

“I think the rock is telling us to go fishing,” Pete said. “Maybe we can catch what caught the other guys.”

“Yeah!” Sammy exclaimed. “We still have the chain and steel clamps from the bus. We could put a clamp through the chain and use it like a big hook.”

¹ Luke 5:5-6

“Good idea!” Spencer said. “But what about bait?”

“I still have some of the black apples the Clamps gave us,” John said. “Let’s see if whatever’s down there likes those.”

They hurried up the bank and threw the chain into the rougher water upstream. With the bait on it, it looked like an apple was just floating downstream toward the deeper water.

The gang gripped the chain tightly. They stared at the apple as it bobbed up and down in the water.

Suddenly, at the front of the chain, Pete’s arms jerked forward.

“I think we got something!” he called back to the rest of the gang.

“Hold on!” BB yelled as everyone gripped the chain with all their might.

They held their ground as the chain yanked harder and harder. After a tug of war, they pulled

their catch onto the bank. It flopped around and gasped for air.

“Wow, that thing is ugly!” Pete exclaimed. “And it looks like it’s twice the size of me!”

“What type of fish is *that*?” John asked.

“I don’t know. I’ve never caught one like this before,” Sammy said. “But I think it’s too small to swallow all three of our friends. I’m really worried about them.”

“We should keep fishing,” BB said. “There must be more of these in there.”

John hooked another apple onto the chain and tossed it upstream. As soon as it floated into the deep water, they pulled out another flopping creature. They reeled in creature after creature.

While he worked, BB was quietly praying for his friends.

“I’m sure glad these things aren’t that smart,” Spencer said. “We keep catching them.”



“No matter how hard they fight against our chain, they aren’t learning that the apple has a hook in it,” BB added.

Finally John threw an apple into the water and nothing grabbed on. He threw it again. Nothing.

John wiped the sweat off of his face and looked at the strange fish-like creatures. They had caught nine of them. They had two giant fins and thick scales on their stomach. But they also had small, claw-like hands attached to the front of their bodies.

Sammy knelt down and looked inside the mouth of one.

“No teeth!” he said.

BB pointed to its scales. “Look at this. Their scales look just like the stones the guys were jumping on.”

Suddenly one of the fish creatures growled, “We need water.”

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LET'S THINK ABOUT IT

Good questions help us learn.

• • •

1. What do you think Spiderites, Rockfish and Angelicas look like?
2. In Chapter 1, the campfire gang has to choose between staying safe and comfortable or taking a risk and growing stronger. Would you choose to take the easy road and be taken care of, even if it meant you wouldn't grow and become stronger? Or would you take a risk and choose the difficult road?
3. The Strikers want to harm the gang. Is there anyone or anything in your life that you're afraid of?
4. Describe a time when you went through a difficult experience, like when the gang has to crawl through the stinky mud (page 15).
5. In Chapter 2, the Angelicas help the gang. What would you like help with? Who acts like a helpful Angelica in your life?
6. What do you like about King Thaddeus?
7. What do you think the Great Book means when Thaddeus reads the following passage?

"I can do all this by the power of Christ. He gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

8. While battling against the Strikers, the gang gets a chance to fly (Chapter 4). If you were offered a pair of wings,

THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

IT'S TIME TO FIGHT—AND FIGHT HARD!

From battling the evil Strikers to discovering new friendships, the campfire gang won't give up on their quest to find their way home. Together they journey onward, make tough decisions and even save a world full of creatures.

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