

Chapter 1 - Adventure Awaits

"Happy Birthday to you!"

It was the twins' birthday. Johny and Rose were turning twelve and the whole family was there to celebrate. The number of aunts and uncles there were when everyone came to the family gatherings was huge. Opening their presents, many shared, they found a flint and steel, a penknife each, *Swallowdale*, the sequel to *Swallows and Amazons*, an adventure story they liked, a sketchbook, and one last, bigger present.

"For Johny, Rose, Sam and Elsie," Rose read. "What is it?"

Sam and Elsie were Johny and Roses' younger brother and sister.

"Well then, are we going to open it?", Sam asked.

"If you'll stop being so impatient."

Inside was an empty notebook labled 'EXPEDITION LOG', a pair of binoculars, a long length of rope and a couple of heavy duty tarpaulins. No-one spoke for a moment. Elsie, aged six, was the first to break the silence.

"But what do we do with it?" she asked, clearly puzzled.

Their Mother answered, "We've been thinking of letting you go onto the land to camp on your own."

'The land' was a large, woodland area, belonging to the family, with a small clearing and stream somewhere in the middle. The idea that they'd be going there was rather surprising - it was miles wide and long and parts of it were miles from anywhere.

"Keep an eye out for the treasure," instructed Uncle Peter.

"What?" came the four puzzled voices of the children.

"It's a family myth," said Aunt Sue. "According to it, your great-great-great-grandparents buried their treasure somewhere at the land."

"Not that it is necarsarily true," remarked the children's mother.

Changing the topic, Rose said, "Well, whether there's treasure or not, one things certain. That we need to pack."

"Not the sticks, Elsie," said Johny. "There are plenty there."

In the next ten minutes, they made a list of what they would need:

SUPPLIES

- KETTLE
- SAUCEPAN
- FRYING PAN
- CUTLERY
- CORNED BEEF
- SOUP
- CAKE
- MATCHES
- CRACKERS
- CHEESE
- CHOCOLATE
- WATER
- FLINT AND STEEL
- PENKNIVES
- LOG
- BINOCULARS
- ROPE
- TARPAULINS

Chapter 2 - To the Land

Going to the land was a hard thing - not only was there the fact that there were many things to trip over and hurt yourself on, but also, as the land was covered in trees, there was no map that could show where you could go and so it was easy to get lost. However, by following the stream that led from the house, they managed to not get lose their way.

Soon later, Elsie screamed, "Help!"

She had tripped over and fell in a fairly deep ditch - but Johny and Sam had soon got her out. Rose was deep in thought.

"How about we use this ditch to make our den?" she asked, after a short silence.

So, they decided to make it into their den. Rose and Johny became very thankful of their penknives' saws, cutting through logs to make them the right size. Sam and Elsie went together and found a good deal of old logs, as well as a lot of litter, such as corrugated iron, incinerator lids and old bricks.

"Better used than left," as Sam said.

Making the den was difficult but progress was made fast. Logs were laid inside and above the ditch, beds were made inside, and a wigwam was made of sticks and covered in tarpaulins for a sitting room and kitchen. A space for the fire was put in the wigwam and an oven was made out of the bricks and corrugated iron. Before long anyone who did not know that they had just arrived and saw the scene would have thought that they had been there for years and years.

"We've even got an oven," Rose said.

"Well I just hope you know what you're doing with it," Sam teased, "and don't burn the place down by mistake."

"Hey!"

"Now, who wants to go exploring?" questioned Johny. Instantly two hands shot up. "Well then, Elsie and Sam, let's go!"

"So long as your back in half an hour!" Rose shouted after the others, who had already left.

Rose spent a happy half hour checking that the den was safe, before a loud crash stopped her. Outside the den were Elsie and Sam, almost on top of each other.

"I can tell you have something exiting to say," she remarked.

"There's two rivers!" the other three said.

"Or at least, one river flowing to the house and the other back," Johny continued. "We were silly not to think that the river had to come from somewhere before, and we can use them to send messages in boats and get messages back from the house!"

"If there's two rivers, we should get our water from the one leading to the house," Rose said. "Or at least, that's what mother would say."

"Building a dam will make sure that any messages don't end up too downriver," Sam thought aloud, "so that if we weren't there the message wouldn't get lost."

"That's a great idea!" exclaimed Johny.

Everyone else agreed, and so they spent the rest of the afternoon happily damming the river.

"We should make another dam for everyone else," said Sam, "so they don't miss a message either."

"Well, I vote we do it tommorow," said Johny, "if we do it today then we'll not have anything to do on any other days."

Rose looked into the trees. "Well, it looks like we've got visitors," she remarked.

Chapter 3 - The Visitors

Suddenly two people appeared through the trees.

"Mum! Dad!" shouted Elsie.

"How did you know where to find us?" puzzled Sam.

"Easily. We saw where you went. And soon we heard splashing - and more importantly - your voices," said their father.

"That's a nice dam - but where's the camp?" asked mother.

"This way."

Soon they were at the camp, and ate a meal of corned beef on crackers, followed by cake, in the wigwam, and showed the beds in the ditch.

"But there's more to it than this," said Johny.

"The stream goes from here to the house and back," said Rose.

"And we can send messages by boat!" said Elsie, unable to contain her excitement.

"And that's what the dam is for!" said their father.

"Yes," said Sam, "as well as to create a pool. It's great!"

"Yes, it is. Now, I'm afraid we'd better be going, or else everyone will be wondering where we are," said their father.

"Goodbye!" said mother and father together.

A chorus of goodbyes rose.

"Try and get back before this stick with a yellow leaf!" shouted Sam, dropping a stick in the water.

"Will they do it or not?" asked Elsie.

"They'll probably send a reply by boat," replied Sam.

Chapter 4 - First Night and the Horses

As many say, the first night camping is the hardest. No-one got to sleep that night. When they were at the house they could ignore the trickle of the stream. Now, no-one could. The camp was silent for a while, but then Rose said something.

"Someone ought to be on watch."

Everyone volunteered.

"Well, we could all be on watch," said Johnny.

So, everyone was awake, watching for the first part of the night. Elsie soon fell asleep.

"I wish I could fall asleep like that," said Johnny.

No one spoke for a while. It was so quiet that soon Rose thought the others, who were lying down, were asleep.

"Did you hear that," Rose asked, mostly to herself.

"What?" said Sam.

"Oh, I don't think it could have been anything really - it's likely just a rabbit," Rose yawned. "Anyway, I'm just too tired!"

Then she left and went to bed. A little later, Johnny and Sam did too. Soon, everyone was asleep.

The next morning, Rose and Johnny woke up to find Sam and Elsie gone.

"Oh where are they? Just one day and they've got lost," said Rose.

Suddenly, the others ran into the den. Rose gave them a stern telling off.

"But it was only five minutes!"

"Five minutes is a long time of worrying where you two have gone off too."

"But we found some horses!"

"Really?" asked Johnny.

"Yes! Just across the stream!" said Elsie, once again unable to contain her excitement.

"Was that what we heard last night?" wondered Rose. "Well, it can do no harm to go and see."

Across the river leading down to the house there was a fence. Behind the fence were some horses.

"I think I know who's horses they are," said Johnny. "Remember when father said that the people next door kept horses? Well, we've found where they're kept."

Soon the horses went away to the other side of the field.

"Look! There's someone there!"

And there was. In fact, there were two people. They came up and said hello. It turned out that they were called Max and Jessie, and that they lived in the house next door.

Rose had an idea.

"How about we eat lunch together?"

After a long discussion of who should take what, they finally split up again to prepare lunch, eat breakfast and do the morning jobs.

Chapter 5 - Messages and Marshmallow

"Oh, you're so lucky," said Jessica at lunch. "I wish we could come to camp with you."

"Well, you do have horses," pointed out Sam.

"Yes, but you can't go exploring in a horse."

"Well, we can eat lunch," said Rose.

They were all sitting down just next to the horse paddock. Suddenly, something snorted.

"Oh you cheeky Marshmallow," laughed Jessica at a horse, who had it's head through the bars in the fencing and was trying to lick Sam.

Everyone laughed.

"I've been thinking," said Johny. "Perhaps you could come with us."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, not so long ago, Mother and Father asked if we wanted to invite anyone else to come to the land, but no-one wanted to come with us."

"Let's hope they agree," said Sam.

"Ask them next time you can," said Max.

"I'll send a post," said Rosie.

Soon they had finished lunch, and Rose, Max, Jessica and Johny started talking about cooking techniques, which soon led to a debate over whether you should use the claw or the bridge. They only stopped when they noticed the time.

"You need to stop arguing now," said Elsie. "It's four o'clock already!"

"Yes, it really is!" said Rose. "We need to get back to camp!"

"Goodbye! Goodbye! Goodbye!" came the children's voices.

"Snort!" came the voice of Marshmallow the horse.

"You startled me!" said Rose.

Once again, everyone laughed.

When they got back, Sam found a small raft in the river. It was an extremely makeshift raft, made out of an old plastic drink bottle, but there was a message inside.

Each of them read it.

...

Sorry we were unable to write sooner - we had a lot to do when we got home, just when your stick did!

How are you after a night on the land?

Got to go - more to do,

Your Father and Mother

...

They drafted a reply.

...

Well done on getting back when the stick did!

It was hard last night, but the first night is always hardest.

We Met Max and Jessica from next door - could they come?

Goodbye,

Johny, Sam, Rose and Elsie

...

Chapter 6 - The Answer and a Bigger Den

Shouts of 'Yes!' could be heard through the camp.

"Oh, what are they playing at this time?" sighed Rose.

Johny shrugged.

"It's an answer!" shouted Elsie, running into the clearing.

She had clearly been the one shouting as her throat was getting hoarse. Sam ran into the clearing, panting.

"And it says yes!" said Sam.

"We'd better tell them," said Rose. "But how are they to know we want to speak to them?"

"First, check in the horse paddock. Otherwise, we'll have to hope an owl hoot will get their attention."

Jessie and Max were not in the horse paddock. However, an owl hoot was not nessarsary as they were in the garden.

"It's yes, if your parents let you," said Sam.

"Well then, we can go," said Jessie. "Our parents said as long as yours allowed."

"We'll be back in half an hour," said Max. "We need to pack,"

Half an hour later, Jessie and Max arrived, with seven or eight bags, all full.

"Our parents said we might as well take some food," Jessie explained.

"And a lot, at that," said Max, "Where's the camp?"

Rose led the way.

"We'll need to extend it a bit," she said, "but apart from that it's great!"

Throughout the rest of the morning, everyone was busy. Sam, Elsie and Max were extending the sleeping area to fill the full ditch, while Rose, John and Jessie were constructing another wigwam, but with two entrances, one of them to connect it to the other wigwam.

They finished just before lunch.

It was then that Sam suggested, "Shouldn't we have a lookout post in that tree?"

So, straight after lunch, everyone was back at work again, hauling branches up trees, making rope ladders and hammering together the lookout.

"It's a good job there's a bit of extra space where no-one's sleeping - we now have a way straight up into the lookout," said Max.

"We could put a some logs round the tree to create a passageway going up," suggested Jessie, "with a door in the side so we can get in and out without going into the den."

Everyone agreed to this idea and before long there was a small hut at the top of the large tree.

"So, who's going first?"

Elsie was the first to put up her hand, so she went up. It was only a minute before she said, "People coming from the horse paddock and others from the house."

Not long later, voices could be heard. They were the children's parents' voices.

"They're not living in a tree, are they?" said a voice, which turned out to be that of Max and Jessies' mother.

The other children's father replied, "Last I knew, they were living in a ditch,"

The parents arrived, and the children rushed out of the den.

"It's a great den!" shouted Max.

"What's the bit in the tree for?" asked the parents.

"Lookout," said Sam.

"Well, we only came to checkup on you," said Jessie and Max's father, "so we'll just have a look and then we'll go"

The adults all agreed that it was great, but that "any more children would make it take up too much space." They were just leaving with a chorus of goodbyes coming from them and their children, but Max and Jessie's mother remembered something.

"We'd better give you this," she said giving them another basket, full of food, which no-one had noticed before. "Goodbye!"

The children waved their hands, only stopping long after the adults had left. They ate dinner and went to bed. Everyone, even Max and Jessie, who had not slept in a den before, fell asleep quickly.

Chapter 7 - The Braying Horses

Dinner was a grand affair that night - it was more like a banquet than anything else. However, the children deserved it, having carried heavy loads and been building their den all day. They ate sausages, eggs and bacon by the dozen and only stopped when Sam reminded them that they shouldn't be going back home for food just the day after they had been given heaps of it. Once they had cleaned up, which was rather easy because as soon as something was done cooking it was eaten without being put on plates first, Jessie decided to organize the place. She even managed to find a tin of coffee beans which no-one had put in their bags but was in the den anyway, and promptly put it by the lookout.

"For keeping the lookout awake," she said to herself.

Pouring some water for himself, Johny said, "Tomorrow we should follow the river upstream."

Everyone agreed to this.

"We may find a spring!" said Sam.

"And we could come back on a raft!" said Max.

"Yes," said Jessie, "but not today. I'm too tired."

Everyone laughed, but they all went to bed. Everyone forgot about the lookout, but if they had they would have said that there was no need.

Elsie was woken by the sound of horses braying.

"It's nothing," she said to herself, trying to get back to sleep.

But just then, dappled torchlight shone through the den's covering of leaves. Then she heard voices. Someone was outside - Elsie was too scared to move. She waited for what seemed like hours, though it must have really been only a few minutes. Then she woke up the others. Within a minute everyone was up, although she and the others had to throw some water on Johny, who could be impossible to wake up at times. Once she had told them everything, they all started talking at once.

"Did you recognise the voice?"

"Why did they do it?"

"No, I didn't recognise the voice."

"Perhaps they wanted to cut down the trees!"

"Or steal the horses!"

"I'm remembering something..."

"Are we sure no-one did it for a trick?"

"Ah ha!" said Rose, "What about the treasure!"

"What?" said Max and Jessie.

"Oh yes! The treasure that's supposedly buried somewhere here! Could that be what they're after?"

"Better go to sleep," said Jessie, "so we're ready in the morning."

No-one got to sleep, in fact - but everyone wanted everyone else to think they were asleep. Max, thinking he was the only one awake, decided to go to the lookout, and was surprised when Jessie asked him where he was going! However, nothing happened for the rest of the night.

Chapter 8 - Journey Upriver

The children woke up to a glorious day. Every one of them had forgotten about what happened last night, and soon everyone was splashing in the pool the dam had created. Actually, Max wasn't in the pool, because it was his turn to make breakfast. After Max shouted to the others that they were ready to eat though, everyone promptly got changed and dry, almost as if they were never playing in the water. Despite breakfast being small, everyone felt full up and could not eat any more. Then they started to pack for the expedition upriver.

"I'll send a message to our parents," said Sam. "Do you think that **EXPLORING UPRIVER - BACK BY SUNSET** will do?"

Everyone said yes to that suggestion.

"Bring your swimming things for the way back," said Jessie to everyone.

"I'll make lunch," said Johnny.

"Remember the rope for the rafts," said Elsie.

It was a happy group of explorers who were following the river upstream a few minutes later in the cool shade of the trees. Elsie saw something.

"Look! It's someone else's footprints!"

"Probably from years gone by," said Max.

"No - these are new," said Sam, kneeling down to take a look.

"Be on the lookout!" said Rose in the loudest possible whisper.

"But that's back at camp," whispered Elsie.

"You know what I mean," answered Rose.

After quite a while, the woods became thicker so that you could only see about a metre in front of you. Rose, who was the only one still looking for anyone else, gave up trying to see through the trees.

"The river's lucky. It can go through this bit of forest much more easily than we can," said Sam, bumping into another tree.

Fortunately, it wasn't much later that they arrived at a long-forgotten part of the land - a large hill surrounded by the trees. The river continued upwards, before it became so small the children almost lost sight of it completely. Then they found a small spring.

"The source of the river!" shouted Elsie in happiness.

They ate the sandwiches silently, and then Johnny checked the time on his watch.

"How could it be half past 2 already?" he asked, jumping up. "Everyone, back down the mountain and build our raft - we need to get back on time!"

They started to walk back downriver. It wasn't long before they came in and then out of the thick part of the woods, to the point where there was enough water to actually go rafting. Everyone got a bit of the rope and began making the rafts.

"OK, so we tie this log to this log with a clove hitch, and then tie on this log with a whole hitch?" asked Elsie.

Everyone laughed.

"It's a double half hitch, not a whole hitch," laughed Rose, "but you're not the first one!"

"It means two of something called a half hitch," said Max. "However, I entirely agree with you that it's a silly name."

It wasn't long before they had finished their raft and were getting into their swimming clothes in case they fell in.

"But if we fall in, won't our bags - and what's inside - get wet?" asked Sam.

"Yes, but I've got some sealable plastic bags," said Jessie, handing the bags out.

Everyone put everything inside the small bags, which they then put inside their backpacks.

"Ready? Three, two, one, Push!" shouted Johnny, while they all heaved the heavy raft into the water and got on. Soon they were moving slowly along the river.

"Stop!" whispered Elsie, holding onto a tree and pulling the raft towards the bank where the current was weakest. "They're there!"

And sure enough, two people were talking in the same voices that Elsie had heard on the previous night.

"They definitely said something about treasure," whispered Rose. "Now, push off- we don't want to get caught!"

They were soon back at the den, stopping off to say hello to the horses and then continuing down to the house to have a quick chat.

"Tomorrow we really need to decide what to do about those people," said Johnny.

"And whether we'll look for the treasure," yawned Max.

"Oh, you've set everyone off yawning now!" said Rose, before yawning. "Well, everyone to bed."

Chapter 9 - The Map

"Everyone - what are we going to do? We can't just let them find the treasure," said Johnny.

It was morning and the meeting had begun. However, not everyone was there because Sam and Elsie were making breakfast, with Jessie to supervise, and Max was tidying up the kitchen and bedroom after all the tins had fallen onto the floor and rolled all over the place.

"Look!" shouted Max.

The others were in the bedrooms in a moment. They all puzzled round a sheet of paper.

"I found it under the bedding," said Max.

It was a mysterious piece of paper indeed. It had circles and lines, and had writing on it, though no-one could read it. Something attracted Rose's attention.

"Look in the bottom left! That's our great-great-great grandfather's signature!" she exclaimed. "I saw it once on a family tree once - where the family tree is now I don't know - but that's the same signature!"

Sam was looking at another thing.

"I think we're there," he said, pointing to the paper.

"What?" everyone said.

"Well, look at it - there's a squiggle there. We followed the river yesterday - The line almost exactly follows the course of the river. If so, this is a map. If you look to where the river starts, this semicircle is the hill. Then, look at the river - there are some boxes. One of these must be the horse paddock - the closest one most upstream. The one next to it must be your house, Max and Jessie - and the last box is our house. Therefore, we are here - but I cannot work out what this X is," he explained.

"I think I know - It's the treasure!" said Elsie, "Remember - X marks the spot."

"Really?" said John.

"I think it is," said Rose. "Remember - It was our great-great-great grandparents who buried the treasure. It would make sense if there was a map for it."

"So, we've decided," said Jessie. "We're going to find the treasure."

Chapter 10 - Where's the Treasure?

After eating breakfast, everyone returned to the map. They knew where the X was on the map - that was easy - but where was it in real life?

"So, It's near the clearing," said Jessie.

"And likely not in the ring of dense forest, as it's impossible to dig there," said Sam.

"So where is it?" said Max.

"I think," said Johny, "It's somewhere on the other side of the hill to the river"

"Yes," said Sam.

"Look!" said Jessie, "One thing is clear about where it is. The river goes this way." Here she pointed at the river on the map, "but draw a line across the map, following the line the river makes going down the hill. The X is on that line! Draw a line between your house and our house and continue it - it runs through the X!"

"So, we'll split into three parties," said Johny. "Me and Elsie, Rose and Sam, Jessie and Max."

"But why three?" asked Jessie.

"Two to follow the lines we've drawn and one to keep an eye on the enemy," said Johny. "Jessie, Max - you follow the river line. Rose and Sam - you follow the house line. Me and Elsie will find the intruders."

Everyone went to the houses to find any spades that may be of use. While there, they also got even more food from the parents, despite already having full cupboards, and made an extra copy of the map. Then the 3 groups split up and while Jessie Max, Rose and Sam were following the lines, Johny and Elsie were keeping an eye on the enemy. The line-followers found that it was hard to stay in a straight line, and Johny and Elsie, saw them all going towards the camp and getting flour.

"What are you doing?" asked Elsie.

"Getting flour to drop every so often, to make it easier if we have to go round something," replied Jessie.

"Good idea," said Johny, "and it will also help if the some get there before others," said Johny.

"And we'll have to dig for a lot after we've found it," said Sam.

"And make sure the enemy doesn't find out," said Max.

"Oh well," said Rose. "Well, the sooner we get on the sooner we'll find it."

So they split up once more, and soon Johny and Elsie had found the people. It wasn't very hard for them really because the 2 men seemed to be having an argument.

"You said it would be easy!" one of them was saying. "That we'd just come here and dig it up. What you didn't say was that it could be anywhere here. If we're searching much longer then I'm giving up and going home. We've been here for weeks and I don't intend to stay for a year!"

"Well we are just coming here and picking it up," said the other. "We just don't know where from. And anyway, it's not my fault the map disappeared!"

This went on and on for a while. Meanwhile, Max and Jessie had found something.

"Look! More flour!" said Jessie.

"The others must be near!" said Max. "Noew, the house is that way, so they are this way!"

Max and Jessie started running, and soon Sam and Rose heard them. They got up and started running back to where the flour paths met.

"How will we know it's here?" asked Jessie. "We don't want to spend the whole of every day looking!"

"We can put a flag in the trees! the intruders will be too busy digging to see a flag if it's above them!" said Sam. "Anyone got anything?"

They did have something. It was actually the bag the flour, which by now had all been used on the ground, had been in, and was large and waterproof as it had contained been a large amount of flour. They hooked it onto a tree branch and went back to camp, where they foud the others, who hadn't wanted to listen any more to the argument and didn't think that the intruders would ever stop. That night, everyone slept well and dreamt of the treasure.