

Zion Gold Rush

C. R. Fulton

THE CAMPGROUND KIDS

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Zion Gold Rush by C. R. Fulton
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*To my family...
we have been “glamping” full time for years now.
I wouldn’t change a thing!*

THE CAMPGROUND KIDS

No. 1

Grand Teton Stampede

No. 2

Smoky Mountains Survival

No. 3

Zion Gold Rush

No. 4

Rocky Mountains Challenge

No. 5

Grand Canyon Rescue

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Dad stares at his phone for a minute before he hangs up. “Well, that was certainly an interesting conversation.”

My nine-year-old sister Sadie looks up from her drawing, pushing her long brown hair over one shoulder. She hasn’t smiled much lately, which is weird.

Mom pulls a tray of brownies out of the oven. “Are you going to tell us about it?”

I run a hand through my short blond hair, biting my tongue with excitement. *Dad’s eyes don’t glint like that unless he’s got big news.*

“Hmmm.” He scowls at his phone, tapping away.

Mom turns to him, one hand on her hip. “So help me, I will not give you even one stevia-sweetened brownie if you don’t speak up soon.” Mom slaps her oven mitt playfully on the counter.

I sure am glad she found stevia; it tastes like sugar but doesn’t make Sadie go wild.

A teasing grin appears on Dad’s face. “You drive a hard bargain.”

Mom simply raises her eyebrows.

“Right. So, that was the St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site.”

That is interesting.

“Annnddd?” Mom asks, holding the brownies hostage.

“They would like me to come out to scan and 3D print some of their new dinosaur fossils that haven’t even been classified yet.”

“Where is it?” I ask, my head already filled with hopes.

Dad’s grin grows. “It just so happens that the discovery site is only a stone’s throw from Zion

National Park, one of the most beautiful places on the earth.”

Sadie and I gasp.

This could mean adventure!

“They want to fly me out next Friday.”

Sadie and I deflate. *Now we won't even have Dad at home?*

“But...” he adds, and then pauses for a long time to drive us all crazy. Mom scoots the tray of brownies farther behind her.

Dad squints, giving in. “One of the staff members at the museum has an RV parked at the Watchman Campground in Zion National Park, and they said we could stay in it.”

“We?” The word squeaks out of my mouth.

“If we pay for your tickets, we could all go. What do you think, Ruth?”

Mom sniffs, pretending to be hurt. “Well, you’re certainly not going without me!”

“Or us!” Sadie and I add.

“So, should I call them back with a yes?”

“Yes!”

“Wait! What about Ethan? It wouldn’t seem right to go camping without him,” Sadie says.

“*Glamping*, you mean.” I correct her.

“What?”

“Staying in an RV is not camping; it’s glamping—like a combination of glamorous and camping.” Still, if Dad’s work gets us to Utah, I’ll take it.

“I’ll call Sylvia and see what they think about Ethan coming along.”

The images of the St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site are on his phone.

“I want to be a 3D printer when I grow up,” I say.

Sadie makes a face. “Well, too bad you were born a boy and not a robot.”

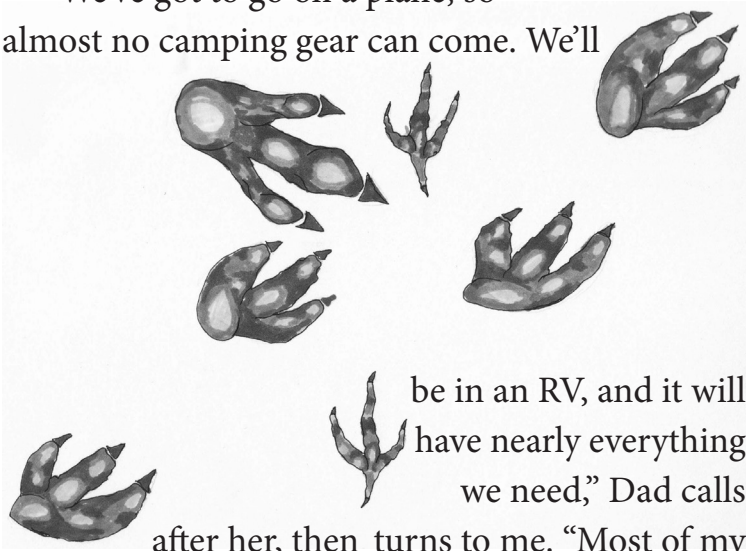
I roll my eyes, but it’s good to hear her teasing. She’s seemed so serious lately.

“I don’t want to *be* a printer; I want to *run* one!”

“Well, why didn’t you say so?” She shakes my arm and then looks at the pictures as well. “Wow!”

Real dinosaur tracks? It's so cool!" She heads off to her room. "I'll pack my sleeping bag."

"We've got to go on a plane, so almost no camping gear can come. We'll



be in an RV, and it will have nearly everything we need," Dad calls after her, then turns to me. "Most of my 3D work is quite mundane, Isaiah—just creating shapes with very precise measurements on the computer. But I think you would be good at the job."

Mom sighs as she lowers her phone. "Ethan can't come. He's supposed to do a roofing job next week."

Time grinds to a halt.

“No!” Sadie cries from her room. *She hears everything.* “We can’t go without him.”

Mom shrugs, then nibbles a brownie. I snatch two of them and head into Sadie’s room. We scarf the brownies and then get to work on the Ethan problem.

“How much money do you have?” she asks.

“Well, after I bought my compass, I have \$76.27.”

She releases a slow breath. “I’ve got \$110. I don’t think it will be enough to cover what the roofing job would pay.”

Mom sticks her head in and comments, “It’s not so much the money he would earn; it’s the commitment he made to the crew. That’s part of growing up. Fun things sometimes take second place to bigger commitments.”

“In that case, I’ll stay nine.” Sadie’s comment makes Mom laugh.

Her birthday is coming up quick, so she can’t do that anyway.

“Still, the dinosaurs will be so cool.”

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“But Ethan loves dinosaurs.”

“You mean he’s terrified of them?”

The memories of Ethan’s screams at Grand Teton National Park and the Smokies make us both laugh.

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“Are you excited to fly?” Sadie asks as we inch through the security line at the airport.

“Um, yeah,” I answer as if she’s crazy to even ask. This is our first time on a plane, and I’ve always dreamed of what it would be like.

“I don’t want to,” she mumbles. The heavy seriousness I’ve been noticing is back.

I tap her gently with my elbow. “What’s up with you lately? I miss my bubbly, jokester sister.”

Her eyes get even more sad, and she shrugs, “I don’t know.”

“Come on.”

Her words come out in a rush. “Jenna told me

I was a mean tattletale and that she'll never be my friend again."

My jaw hangs open. "Jenna? Like the one you've hung out with since you were five?"

Sadie nods, sniffing hard. I blink rapidly, trying to absorb just how deep that would hurt.

"What did you tell on her about?"

"That new girl Breanna was making of fun Nell, and Jenna jumped right in with her. I told them to stop because Nell was already crying. But they wouldn't, so I told the teacher."

"And somehow that makes *you* mean? Sadie, you know you did what's right."

She makes a disbelieving face as we heft our carry-on bags onto the rollers at the inspection station.

"Shoes off, empty your pockets, put your items in the bin, and then step through the metal detectors." The security guard shoves our bags through a short tunnel, and we follow Mom and Dad through the archway.

I breathe a sigh of relief that Mom had double-checked to see that I hadn't packed Poppa's knife in my pocket. I had planned to leave it in the truck, and at the last minute, we had switched it to the checked bags that will ride in the plane's belly. *I feel naked without it.*

Sadie pulls her cowgirl boots back on and gives Mom a sad little smile as she lifts her backpack off the far side of the conveyor.

Mom's eyes flick to mine. Even without words, we agree. *We have got to help Sadie.*

Dad hangs up his phone. "Well, that was an interesting conversation."

"Not again!" Mom, Sadie, and I say in unison as we head toward our flight's gate.

"And you all...with no hot, gooey brownies to use as leverage," Dad gloats.

"Ugh!" Sadie groans.

"I'll tell you on one condition."

We all hold our breath. "Sadie smiles, for real. She cocks her head and rolls her eyes, but with

all of us staring at her so intently, that familiar grin grows on one side of her mouth then spreads to the other.

“Deal. Now tell us!” she begs.

“Someone will be meeting us in Utah.”

I frown. “Who?”

“Guess...” Dad says.

Sadie and I look at each other sharply. “Ethan?”

Dad nods, and we cheer. “The roofer ordered the wrong materials, and the right stuff won’t be in for at least a month. Ethan’s flight should land an hour after ours.”

Zion National Park now seems like the perfect adventure.

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With an angled roof and large sections made of glass, the St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site building looks cool.

“Scel...Scelidosaurus? The only one of its kind in America?” Sadie reads the big sign on the side of the wall.

“Wow!” Ethan’s voice is full of the awe that I feel as we step into the site. Huge rocks full of dinosaur footprints stand upright throughout half of the building. The other half has a walkway built over the actual ground punctured with hundreds of dinosaur tracks.

Dad shakes hands with a staff member named

Dixie, and we get to step behind the scenes into a large room labeled “Staff Only.” There people are studying rocks.

Dad sets down his scanner, and Dixie turns to us. “Would you kids like a guided tour?”

“No way!” Ethan is over the top. “Dinosaurs actually walked *right here!*”

The lifelike statues right next to the footprints send chills across my skin. *It sure feels like one could run through here any second. But now I’m being like Ethan.*

Dixie points to a spot where a herd had passed by. “These are called Grallator tracks. If you know some about dinosaurs, you might know that there isn’t a dinosaur called a Grallator. That’s because the tracks are named differently from the creatures that made them. Because it’s really difficult to determine exactly which species made the print, it’s easier to give the prints their own name.”

I think the most amazing exhibit in the entire building is the place where a dinosaur had laid on

the lakeshore with its front feet curled up just like our hands would be when we sleep.

“Marcy, can give you the keys to the RV if you’re ready.”

Mom and Dad nod at Dixie’s comment.

“We would love for you to get started with the scans this afternoon...” Dixie continued, “if you think you can get settled by then.”

“No problem,” Dad says.

My head is full of dinosaur facts as we drive into Zion National Park. One thing’s for sure, I’ve never seen a place that looks more like it should have living dinosaurs in it. The sheer red and gold cliffs rise skyward, and the lush green valleys look like the garden of Eden.

We jump out at the huge park sign and line up for the picture. I throw my arm around Sadie, making a funny face to make her laugh.

“Three, two, one...”

“Pterodactyl!” I shout, pointing to a huge, winged shape cruising between the canyon walls. Of course,

it passed over just in time for me to look ridiculous in the picture.

“Thanks, *Ethan*.” Sadie elbows me, and I smile sheepishly.

“Actually, *young Sir*,” Ethan says in the deep voice of a radio announcer, “the creature you’re referring to appears to be a golden eagle.” We pile back into the car.

“Wow!” Mom says, leaning over the dash of the rental car for a better look.

There’s just something about Zion...it’s as if we’re being sucked back in time where anything could happen.

Dad turns in to the Watchman Campground. “Our RV should be in spot number six on row two.”

We smash our noses into the window, leaning over to count the sites.

“It’s huge!” Sadie squeaks as we turn in next to a huge fifth-wheel camper. “And I must admit, it looks pretty cool!”

“Take your shoes off at the door!” Mom calls as

we make a mad rush to look inside. Ethan wins the race with his longer legs, but there's a pile up on the metal stairs. Dad reaches over our heads to unlock the door. Ducking under Ethan's arm, Sadie shoots inside first!

"It has a bunk loft!" she cries as I finally get in the door. The kitchen is straight ahead, with a couch to the left.

"I call the loft!" I shout as I stare up at the bed that's tucked up against the ceiling. *Maybe glamping won't be that bad after all.*

"Um... How does the toilet work?" Sadie calls from the bathroom.

I leap up the two stairs, leading to the bedroom and bathroom. "You flush it, of course..." I frown over her shoulder at the strange pedal on the floor next to the toilet. "Oh..."

Sadie's mouth makes a flat line as she blinks at me. "See?"

"Okay," Dad says, squeezing into the tiny space with us. "You push the pedal halfway to fill the toilet

with water. After you finish, push the pedal all the way down to flush.”

I test out the pedal, and sure enough, water rushes in when I push it.

“All right! Out with you all, please,” Sadie begs, nearly dancing in place.

Dad and I head back to the kitchen. I’m about to climb up the loft when Dad says, “Isaiah, help me bring in the bags. Then I’ve got to get back to work.” “Sure thing, Dad.” All I want to do is climb the ladder to the loft, but Mom smiles at me for my good attitude as I turn to help Dad.