

The  
Secret  
Puppy

For Zoe

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# Chapter One



Daisy jumped out of the car, looking eagerly round the field. It was the first time she'd been camping, and she was really excited.

“Is this our tent?” she asked her dad, gazing at the big green and red tent they'd parked next to. “It's huge!”

Dad nodded. “It can sleep six, the lady on the phone said. So that means

you and Oliver can each have a room to sleep in.”

“A pod,” Oliver corrected him. “They’re called pods, Dad.”

Daisy rolled her eyes. Just because Oliver had been camping with Cubs, he thought he knew everything. He always thought he was cleverer than Daisy anyway, being a year older than her. Oliver had enjoyed Cub camp so much he’d begged and begged for them to go camping in their summer holidays. But Daisy didn’t mind. Usually they rented a cottage by the seaside, and it was nice to do something different. Riverside Farm had loads of things to do, and lots of animals to make friends with. Mum wasn’t quite so convinced about tents, though.

She’d finally agreed to camping, but she’d insisted that they went to the kind of campsite where the owners would put up one of their tents for you, if you wanted. Even though Oliver said that was cheating.



“Pods, sorry, Mr Camping Expert.” Dad lugged one of the big boxes out of the car. They might not have needed to bring their own tent, but there was still loads of stuff. They’d hired a little gas stove and some cooking things from the campsite as well, but they’d had to bring sleeping bags and mats – and folding garden chairs to sit on. Dad had said he couldn’t cope with sitting on the ground for a fortnight. Then there was all the food and clothes. Mum had insisted on bringing raincoats and wellies, just in case.

“Can we go and explore?” Daisy asked hopefully. “Look at the river! It runs right by our tent!” She’d known there was a river running through the campsite – the name was a bit of a

giveaway – but she hadn’t realized they would be camping so close to it. She could imagine curling up to sleep in their tent, hearing the water rushing along. “There’s a bridge to get to the rest of the farm. Oh, and look! Ducks! There might even be baby ones. And I have to go and see the horses!”

“I want to go and look at the pool,” Oliver put in. “We won’t be long, Mum.”

Mum shook her head. “Not just yet. You can explore soon, I promise. We need to unpack, then Dad and I will come with you to have a look round. I need to know where you’re going to be before I let you disappear off.”

Oliver looked like he was about to argue, but then he sighed and grabbed an armful of sleeping bags out of the car.

“Can I have this room?” he asked, unzipping one of the doors off the main living area. The three bedrooms stuck out at the sides and the back of the tent, and there was a sort of open canopy at the front, which they could cook under if it was raining.

“I thought it was called a pod?” Daisy said sweetly, dodging the sleeping bag he flung at her. “If you’re having that one, can I have this one at the back?”

Dad nodded. “I don’t see why not. They’re all the same size.”

“And that leaves us the furthest away from Oliver and his snoring,” Mum pointed out.

Daisy picked up the sleeping bag Oliver had thrown at her (it was hers) and unzipped the door to the back

bedroom. It was actually quite big, she realized, feeling surprised. She’d expected the tent to be tiny, but her bedroom even had a back door! She unzipped it and peeked out, smiling to herself as she saw the river running along a few metres behind the tent. She wasn’t going to tell Oliver she had her own secret door – he’d only want to swap.

Luckily, it didn’t take too long to unpack – Daisy didn’t have to put her clothes away, since there wasn’t anywhere to put them. She spread out her sleeping bag and mat, thinking that she was actually looking forward



to going to bed. She'd never slept next to a river before.

"Daisy? Are you ready? Shall we go and have a look round?" her mum called. Daisy jumped up, stepped out of the pod and zipped the door closed behind her.

"Will you be all right, sleeping in there by yourself?" her mum asked a little anxiously, but Daisy beamed at her.

"It's lovely! Why wouldn't I be all right? It's only like having my own room at home, Mum."

Her mum nodded. "I suppose we're very close to you, if you do get nervous."

Daisy giggled. "I could probably reach a hand out of my bedroom door and tickle your feet if I stretched."

"So what shall we go and see first?"

Dad asked. "There's a little café that sells ice creams. Do we fancy that?"

"Ice cream?" Oliver poked his head out of his pod. Daisy nodded eagerly. It was very warm in the tent; an ice cream sounded perfect.

Mum looked at the little map she'd picked up when they'd arrived at the campsite. "Once we've done that, and we've had a quick look around, I don't mind if you two go off on your own, as long as you promise to tell us where you're going and be back when we say."

Daisy smiled. She didn't usually get to go to places on her own, although Oliver sometimes walked to school with his friends now he was in Year Five. Being at the campsite was like a big adventure.

They walked past lots of other tents on the way to the café, which was part of the old farm buildings. They'd all been converted now, with a little food shop, and a gift shop, and a craft area that did workshops they could sign up for. Daisy really fancied having a go at the jewellery one.

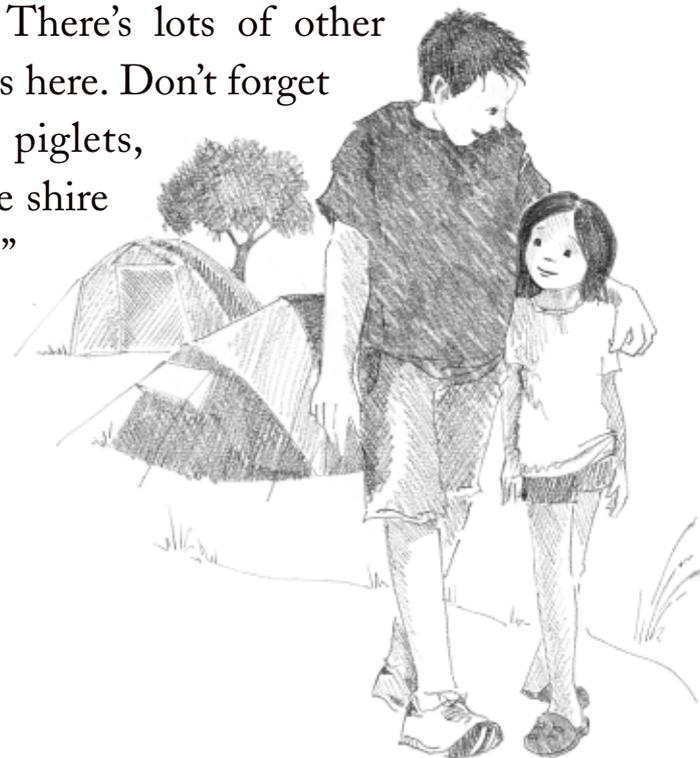
There were quite a few other boys around – including a couple about Oliver's age playing football outside a tent close to theirs. But Daisy couldn't see many girls, apart from a few little ones. Still, she didn't mind. There was loads of stuff to do, and she was looking forward to exploring on her own.

“No one's brought dogs with them,” she said to Dad, as they walked along the line of tents. Daisy loved dogs,

and she'd thought that there might be a few staying in tents with their owners.

“I don't think dogs are allowed, are they?” Dad said. “I'm sure I read that somewhere on the website. They might frighten the animals, I suppose.”

Daisy sighed, and Dad put an arm round her shoulders. “Never mind, Daisy. There's lots of other animals here. Don't forget those piglets, and the shire horses.”



Daisy nodded. She *was* excited about the piglets, but a dog to play with would have been even nicer. She'd been trying to persuade her parents that they should get a dog for ages, but it didn't seem to be working. Mum was worried that their garden wasn't big enough, although Daisy was sure that people with much smaller gardens than theirs had dogs. Besides, there was a huge park close to their house, so it didn't really matter. But Mum said that wasn't the same.

She'd tried to get Oliver to help her persuade them, but he wasn't really bothered. He already had a pet, a red-legged tarantula called Otto that he'd got for his ninth birthday. Daisy hated spiders. If Oliver wanted to upset her,

he'd open his bedroom door and pretend he was letting Otto out of his tank. It made Daisy scream. That was one of the good things about camping – Otto couldn't come too. Oliver had left him with his friend Max to look after.

Daisy shuddered, just thinking about the enormous spider. How could Mum and Dad let Oliver have such a horrible pet? And Otto was huge. Not that much smaller than a very small dog, really...

“Come on, slowcoach!” Oliver turned to look back at Daisy, as she started to trail behind the rest of the family. “Don't you want your ice cream?”