

Secrets in Yellowstone

“Hey, guys! Do you want to go exploring together while your dad and I set up this tent?” Mom suggested, right after we pulled into a campsite in the famous Yellowstone National Park. “Just stick together and follow the trails!” Excited, we rushed to get our hiking bags so we could explore. “So, where exactly are we going?” Ethan asked as we jogged along the nearest trail. “Well, I was thinking that seeing Old Faithful—” “What’s Old Faithful?” Maddie interrupted. “It’s a big geyser Yellowstone is famous for. Now, please let me look at the map Mom gave us.” But as I was studying the map, my siblings ran off without me!

A cry of pain made me jerk up my head. That’s when I realized I was alone. A million thoughts filled my head as I dashed down the path after the scream. Was it one of my siblings? What could have happened? Heart pounding, I came upon a breath-taking view. Old Faithful lay in front of me, a rainbow of colors reflecting the bright sun. But I couldn’t take it in. I had to find my siblings!

My eyes scanned the clearing. Then, just before I thought I would have to move on, I spotted my brothers and sister! Owen was crying, Ethan was trying to cheer him up, and Maddie was looking around for help. Just then, Maddie spotted me, and we sprinted toward each other. “Emily, Owen’s hurt! He tripped on a rock, and we can’t calm him down!” “Oh, Owen, you’re OK. I know it hurts, but it’s just a little scratch,” I said soothingly.

All of a sudden, arms pulled us back. A sound like thunder reached my ears next. Then, steaming hot water poured down on the exact spot we were just sitting. “Careful, you kids. You would’ve been roasted like a duck! Old Faithful’s water always comes down in that spot, don’t you know as much?” an old man’s voice bellowed at us. “Th-th-thank you, s-s-sir” said Maddie timidly. “You’re welcome, little missy, but be more careful next time.” replied the old man. “Em,” whispered Ethan, “Why do you think it always comes down right on that rock Owen tripped on?” “I don’t know,” I whispered back. “Let’s find out.”

We raced to the rock and stood in a circle around it. "Let's dig it up!" cried Ethan, always eager to get his hands dirty. We immediately began digging along the rock's edge. "One, two, three, lift!" Together, we lifted the heavy rock and plonked it down, face-up, on the ground. "Wow!" We all gasped, because on the rock in front of us were these words:

*"If you seek adventure,
here is a mystery.
If you dare to venture,
back in history.
You can find treasure,
beyond your greatest dream!
But be careful what you measure,
there's more danger than there seems."*

"Danger?! I'm definitely not doing this!" Maddie cried. "Maddie!" reproached Ethan. "This is a once-in-a-life-time opportunity! Don't you want to solve this riddle!?" "Ethan, everyone has to agree. Maddie, I'm sure there won't be any danger, but it's up to you. Do you want to do this, or not?" I asked. Maddie gave in. "Fine, we can go." "Yes! We're going on an adventure," the boys cheered.

After the boys calmed down, we sat in the shade of a tall rock to talk seriously about the riddle on the stone. "What do you think the secret is?" asked Maddie. "Well, I think the more important question is 'Where is the secret?'" Ethan countered. "For starters, I think we should assume that this secret is close to the spot where the riddle was buried, right there," he pointed. "Hey, guys!" Maddie interrupted. "If I wanted to hide something important, I would hide it there." "Maddie! You're a genius! Of course!" I exclaimed. Maddie was pointing to the wall of rock behind us. "Let's start looking right now!" But before we could start to search the towering rock wall, we heard the faint cry of, "Emily, Ethan, Maddie, Owen! Where are you?!" "Mom and Dad

are looking for us!" said Owen. "Let's go!" So, instead of searching for secrets, we ran toward the voices of our parents.

"Mom! Dad! Come here!" We cried. We dragged Mom and Dad to the 'riddle rock', as we now called it. "Guys!" Mom protested. "We need to get back...Wow. Mike, look at this!" Dad whistled. "Where on earth did you find this?!" "Over there," I pointed to the freshly turned-up dirt. "We want to find the secret." "Well, I'd love to go on this treasure hunt with you, but I'm not sure if we are allowed to do this." "Oh," I sighed. "Wait!" Ethan yelled. "We can give the secret to the Yellowstone Museum of History... if we find it!" "Yeah! Pleeese, Dad?!" we begged. "Fine. Okay. But *only* if we do it tomorrow." "Yay!" We cheered.

The next morning, I woke up bright and early. I yawned and stretched, and wondered why I was so excited. Then I remembered the 'riddle rock' and the adventure we were in for today. I ran out of the tent, only to find my family eating breakfast already! "Good morning, Sleeping Beauty." Dad said. "What have you been doing?" "Well, I've been sleeping late, I guess." I replied. "Emily, hurry up and eat!" Owen shouted. "We've got a treasure hunt to go on!"

After a hurried breakfast, I strapped on my backpack, and we set off. It didn't take long to get to the wall of rock. "So, are we ready?" Ethan asked. "That's hardly a question." I replied. "Let's do this!" With that, our family spread out to search. But before long, I heard a piercing scream from behind me.

I whipped around and searched for the source of the scream. It was Maddie who had gotten hurt this time. Apparently, her foot had slipped in between two boulders. It had fallen too deep for her to get out again, and in her struggle, her foot had gotten even more tightly wedged! She continued screaming with fear and pain while we all pitched in to get her out. But the boulders were heavy, the sun felt like fire, and we were getting exhausted. "Alright guys!" Dad called. "Three, two, one...lift!"

Together we tried to hoist up one of the boulders. It was so heavy that we could barely lift it at all. But somehow, through lots of willpower (and some pretty strong muscles, too), we

raised the rock just enough for Maddie to pull out her leg. Then we let go of the boulder. It hit the ground with such a loud noise that we all thought an earthquake had occurred. In fact, there was a reason the crash was so deafening; the huge boulder had split in two!

We all gasped at what we saw. "Is it real?" Owen whispered. "Yes. I think it really is! I can't believe I'm looking at real gold right now." I exclaimed. "Actual gold! Wait, I wonder if the other rocks have gold in them too." "There's only one way to find out. Let's start cracking!" Ethan shouted. It turned out that there was gold in every boulder that surrounded the wall! Suddenly it hit me. "That's the secret of Yellowstone National Park!" I burst out.

"Don't you see it?!" I said breathlessly. "No one knows how Yellowstone got named, right? Well, the answer is right in front of you. Gold is yellow, right? *Yellowstone!*" "I see what you're getting at," Ethan said. "You're saying that maybe the founder of this National Park hid the riddle and the gold so that someday someone would find this and realize that's why he named it Yellowstone. But what about the danger part?" "I think that would be dangerous only if we dug into the actual wall of rock. It could collapse. So let's *not* do that!" I said. "The mystery of Yellowstone has been solved," cheered Maddie.

We ended up giving the gold to the Yellowstone National Park Museum of History. Thankfully, they weren't that mad at us for misusing the property. They actually put up a plaque in front of the new gold exhibit for us! The staff also put up a sign about the wall of rock and the gold that had been discovered there. As for us? Well, we enjoyed a nice, relaxing camping trip, and then we headed back home. On the way, we tried to convince our parents to go to Kings Canyon for our next trip. Who knows? Maybe another adventure awaited us.

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