

CHAPTER ONE

**INTO THE FOREST
WE GO!**

The worst thing has happened. I mean, maybe not the worst, but it's pretty bad.

We're going on a **HOLIDAY ADVENTURE!** A holiday **with** adventure in it. I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm not exactly the adventurous type. I mean, I don't mind a bit of walking when it's sunny, and staying by a lake (which we are, apparently) could be kind of pretty, but **adventure** suggests climbing, swimming, attaching myself to harnesses and swinging about from a height. **NO**. That is not my idea of fun. Being terrified is not fun.

In fact, it could actually be my worst nightmare,

the worst type of holiday I could think of.

Of course, I'm the only person in my family who thinks this holiday adventure is a bad idea. Everyone else is super excited!

"Did you know there are hundreds of native species of wildlife in Sherwood Forest?" was the first thing my best friend Milo asked me when Mum and Dad announced we were going on a family break to the home of Robin Hood, and that Milo could come too.

My cousin Manny had replied, "Did **YOU** know the forest can be an **extremely** dangerous place! Luckily, I know all the top survival tips and I can build us a shelter out of twigs and leaves! I've been watching this documentary with one of the UK's top survivalists and he says we can learn to be at one with nature. He teaches something called '**bushcraft**', which is all about living off the forest and using things around you to survive. I'm learning everything I can about it. It could save your life one day!"

"Umm, I think we're going to be staying in a perfectly safe lodge, Manny, but it's good to know we'll be alright if we do run into trouble," Dad had chuckled.

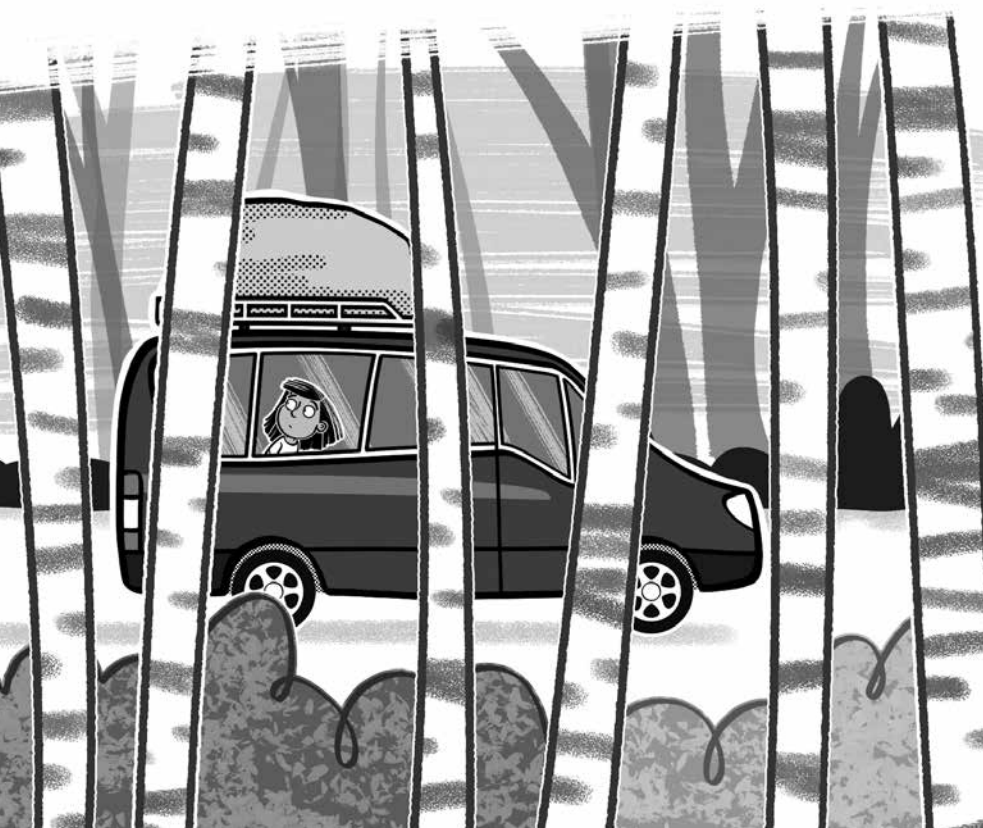
That was two weeks ago and Milo has been researching all those hundreds of species ever since. He's got a fact file and everything! Manny, in the meantime, started packing his essential survival kit straight away, including a funnel for catching rainwater and a first-aid kit for the injuries he imagines we will all be getting. He's even convinced his dad to buy a set of four walkie-talkie radios for us to use. According to Manny, you can't rely on Wi-Fi in the forest so we need an emergency mode of



communication. I've tried not to worry about what emergencies might happen and instead think of things I might be able to do while the others are swinging about on ropes or whatever.

Now we're all packed into the minibus Dad borrowed for the trip and finally driving down the longest, most winding, tree-lined path I've ever seen.

"There are more trees than I imagined," Mum remarks.



"It's the forest, dear, it's kind of expected that there will be trees," Dad answers.

"We grew up climbing trees," Granny says.

We all turn to look at her, except Dad, who is driving.

"Granny, you climbed trees?" I ask, not able to imagine it at all.

Granny smiles. "I wasn't always your granny, **beta**. I was a young girl once. I did all kinds of adventurous things – much to the despair of your great-grandmother, my mum, who just wanted me to be calm and quiet."

"Hmm," says Dad. "I kind of wish you would be a bit calmer now, Mum!"

We all laugh then, because my Granny Jas is not your average granny at all and totally not very calm or quiet either.

Just then we see the sign for the car park and we enter a clearing. There are lots of people milling around, some on bikes. Dad carefully drives round



and finds a space. Thankfully his parking skills have improved since the last time we took a family trip in this huge minibus!

We all pile out and look around. Directly in front of us is a building with a big sign that says **RECEPTION**. Just to the side of the double glass doors is the most **unexpected** thing! A giant white duck sculpture! It's about as tall and wide as a doorway. It has big wings made of strips of fabric that look like feathers. It's very grand and I notice

it's wearing a necklace that says **Delilah**.

"Wow, that is a big duck." Mindy whistles.

"I think it's cute!" says Milo.

"Of course you do," Manny grins. "I'm not sure your mum will let you bring that one home though!"

"I'm going to find some real ducks! I read they have whole families of ducks that nest here every year!" Milo replies happily.

"I've never made a duck curry." Granny grins mischievously.

Milo looks horrified. "You wouldn't, would you, Granny?"

Granny smiles. "No, **beta**, I wouldn't. I'm just messing with you."

Mindy cackles. "Granny's got jokes!"

Milo sniffs. "Protecting our wildlife is no joke!"

Granny looks worried then. "Oh, **beta**, I really was only joking. I didn't mean it."

Milo cracks up laughing. "I know, Granny – had you going there for a second though!"

Granny chuckles, relieved. "Phew, yes of course, I knew that!"

Mum, Dad, Aunty Bindi and Uncle Tony wander over from the minibus.

"What are you all giggling about? No time for that, we need to get checked in," Dad says. "I cannot wait to get back to nature."

"When were you in nature before?" Mum asks.

"Well, you know what I mean. They say being at one with nature is very good for the mind,"

Dad huffs. "I need all the stress relief I can get."

Aunty Bindi smiles. "You go for it! I've decided I'm going to sign up for the first class I like the sound of. We're going to do it **together**, aren't we, sweetums?" She turns adoringly to Uncle Tony.

"Umm, yeah, but not dancing, okay? You remember how our wedding dance went," he replies.

Aunty Bindi looks offended. "I thought our wedding dance was lovely. My friend Tina said I looked like that woman off Strictly! I think I'd be good on that show, you know," she says wistfully.

Just then another family walk past us, two grown-ups and a boy. The two adults go into the building, but the boy approaches us. "This place is awesome!" he says, holding out his hand. "I'm Dillon."

Dad goes to shake his hand, but as they touch there's a sharp buzzing sound and Dad yelps, pulling his hand back and shaking it in pain. It looks like the boy has a little electric buzzer in the palm of his hand and he's deliberately given Dad a shock!



Dillon rolls around laughing. "**Prank!**"
he screams.

Dad frowns. "Yes, um, well, you'd better run
along and follow your parents."

"That's okay. They won't even notice I'm not
there and they'll be back out in a minute anyway."
Dillon shrugs. "Hey, do you want to see something
cool?"

Granny looks at him suspiciously. "I'm not sure,
do we?"

"Oh, you definitely do," Dillon says confidently.
"Look!" He holds out his other hand, which is closed
in a fist.

Aunty Bindi steps forward. "What is it?"

Dillon grins. "Give me your hand."

"I don't think you should, Aunty Bindi," I say
warily.

"It's nothing bad," Dillon says.

So Aunty Bindi puts out her hand. Dillon places
his fist over her hand and drops something into it.

Aunty Bindi squeals. "**feeeeeeeeeeek!** Is that
a spider?!" She shakes her hand and the big, rather
furry thing in her hand goes flying. We all jump back
startled. It lands on Uncle Tony, who shrieks too and
jumps about a metre into the air.

Dillon howls, "**PRANK!!!!**"

It's not real! **HAHA**
HAHAHA!"





**FOREST-OF
ADVENTURE**
CHAPTER TWO
THE FUN BEGINS!

Granny Jas steps forward as Aunty Bindi and Uncle Tony cling onto each other. "Now listen here, that is not very nice, is it?" she says sternly.

"Just a joke." Dillon shrugs.

"It's not very funny," I say.

Before he gets a chance to reply, Dillon's parents come back out and call him over. He sticks his tongue out at me and runs over to them. "Later!" he calls out.

I hear his dad say, "Making friends?"

"Not really, they were a bit boring," Dillon replies.

"He was annoying!" I say.

"Yeah, really annoying," Mindy agrees.

"Don't worry," I say. "It's a big forest, we probably won't see him again!"

"Right," says Dad, "let's get checked in and get the keys to our lodge. You all wait here."

He and Mum are about to go inside but we're interrupted by a loud cheery voice. "Welcome, family, welcome to the **Forest of Adventure Holiday Park!**"

We all look over to where the voice came from. Approaching us is a tall muscular man, wearing a polo shirt and combat trousers.

Dad reaches out to shake his hand. "I'm Mr Mistry and this is my family," he says.

The man beams at us. "I'm Mr Gilbert – call me Tom. I'm the manager and owner of the park."