

CHAPTER 1--WEEKEND CAMPING

“Tap, tap, tap!” The sound woke Bartina. She jumped out of bed and ran to the bedroom window. Bartina opened the shutters and looked out.

“Good Morning, Robbie.” Bartina greeted the large blue dragon.

“Do you have any fish for me?” asked Robbie as his bright yellow eyes peered through the window.

Bartina rushed from the window and reached under her bed. “Yes, I saved some salmon from dinner.”

Bartina uncovered the plate. She pinched her nose closed. “Ooh, it stinks!” She held out the dish of fish.

*Slurp!* went Robbie’s big pink tongue. “I want every last bite,” he said licking the plate clean. “Thanks, Bartina.”

“I’m glad we’re best friends. Do you ever miss England, Robbie?”

“Sometimes, but I really enjoy all the beautiful forests and yummy salmon here in Norway. And I never had a human friend until I met you last year.”

“Bartina! Are you up? Time for breakfast!” Bartina’s mother called from the kitchen.

“Goodbye, Robbie. I’m going camping today with the Tree Huggers. I hope I’ll find lots of frogs and bugs and birds. Something exciting always happens at camp.”

Mrs. Ramborg gave Bartina a big good-morning hug. “How’s my little nature lover? Are you ready to go camping? Bartina, be very careful this weekend. There are a lot of things in Skanska Skoonska Forest that could get you into trouble.”

“Don’t worry, Mom. I’ll be fine. Let’s go.”

Mrs. Ramborg drove Bartina to the campground. Bartina jumped out of the car and ran toward the group leader Mrs. Hike-N-Bike.

“What’s wrong, Mrs. Hike-N-Bike? You don’t look good.”

“Bartina you’re here!” stammered Mrs. Hike-N-Bike as she nervously wiped the sweat off her forehead. “Run up the hill and join the other girls in the tent area.”

Bartina ran off toward her friend Helga. Mrs. Hike-N-Bike whispered to the assistant group leader Ms. Hop-N-Skip, “There goes my relaxing weekend with nature. Bartina is sure to give me ten more gray hairs!”

“Helga, Helga, I’m here!” shouted Bartina. “Let’s share a tent together. We’ll have lots of fun.”

“I don’t know,” replied Helga. “My mother thinks you’re a bad influence on me.”

“Come on, she’ll never find out unless you tell her.”

“I guess it’ll be okay then,” Helga meekly replied.

After unpacking their gear, the girls sat down at picnic tables to eat lunch. “Girls, don’t keep any food in your tents. Wild animals will smell the food. They might creep into your tent in the middle of the night,” warned Mrs. Hike-N-Bike.

“Bartina, Bartina,” whispered Helga. “I have a box of Tree-Hugger cookies in the tent. Do you think that’s food?”

“No. Cookies are snacks. Cookies don’t spoil like food does.”

“Okay, I just don’t want any wild animals in our tent.”

“Don’t worry, Helga, we’ll be fine.”

Mrs. Hike-N-Bike interrupted the conversation with an announcement. “Girls, now that lunch is over, you have a choice of a nature walk or a craft activity.”

Bartina said, “Let’s go on the nature walk, Helga. It’ll be a lot more fun than sitting around here making a potholder.”

“I’m scared to walk in the forest. Wild animals might eat us.”

“Don’t worry. The animals are sleeping. They’ll stay away. Hurry up. Everyone’s leaving.” Bartina grabbed Helga’s hand and pulled her along to join the group.

Other than Bartina finding a frog, the nature hike was uneventful. After the hike Mrs. Hike-N-Bike whispered to her assistant, “I’m very surprised that Bartina didn’t get into trouble.” Ms. Hop-N-Skip nodded her head in agreement.

Later that evening the troop built a campfire. They roasted hot dogs and enjoyed S’mores for dessert. After endless campfire songs, Mrs. Hike-N-Bike finally announced, “Tree Huggers, it’s time for bed.” The girls groaned and trudged to their tents.

Bartina and Helga made their way to the tent and snuggled into their sleeping bags. They stayed up for awhile telling ghost stories. Suddenly, Mrs. Hike-N-Bike barged into their tent and yelled, "Girls, be quiet! It is time for bed."

This scared Bartina so much that she whispered, "Helga, I need to go pee."

Silence.

"Helga, you know that I need a buddy to go down there."

Helga complained, "I'm warm in my sleeping bag and the latrine is smelly."

Bartina kept pulling on her arm until Helga finally gave in. "Okay! I'll go!"

Bartina and Helga tramped down to the latrine. On their way back, however, they heard a noise. "Bartina, that noise is coming from our tent!" exclaimed Helga.

Bartina shined her flashlight on the tent and saw the shadow of a bear. The bear had found Helga's cookies. When Helga saw the bear, she ran away screaming for Mrs. Hike-N-Bike.

Just then a huge breeze kicked up. *Whoosh! Whoosh!* Bartina looked up and cried, "Robbie!" Robbie the Dragon was flying overhead, all two tons of him. His huge thick tail was swaying back and forth. The moonlight shone on his wings as he approached.

"Bartina, pull open the tent flaps," yelled Robbie. Bartina yanked the flaps open. Robbie blew his hot dragon breath. That startled the bear. He dropped the cookies and ran out of the tent.

Robbie scolded Bartina. "What were you doing with food in the tent? You know that bears like food."

“I know. But I didn’t think cookies were food. You don’t keep cookies in the fridge.”

“Well, now you know,” replied Robbie. “And I better leave before I get discovered.”

Just after Robbie left, Helga came running up with Mrs. Hike-N-Bike. “...and there was this bear, and he was in our tent, and,” Helga stopped in her tracks.

Bartina smiled, “Helga, you have such an active imagination. There was no bear. It was just the shadow of my coat. Those ghost stories must have really scared you.”

Mrs. Hike-N-Bike glared at Bartina. But all she said was, “Okay Helga. That’s enough excitement for the night. Let’s put you back to bed.”

And with that, the two friends fell asleep and dreamed of bears and dragons.