

# **The Dreamland Sagas**

*Book Two: The Sagas Continue*



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*This book is dedicated to my daughter Tiffany, who inspired this series.*

*And her three exceptional children, Abigail,*

*Joel, and Bethany (my grandchildren).*

## About The Dreamland Sagas

This collection of short stories aimed at two overlapping audiences; children ages 3-7, to be read as bedtime stories, and early readers aged 5-9 who are ready to explore imaginative adventures on their own.

This book contains 20 short stories, each aimed at sparking the audience's imagination and designed to be read in ten to twenty minutes.

Woven into the stories are examples of positive behavior and character that will reinforce children's honesty and respect for others. There are no witches, dangerous animals, monsters, or other characters which could cause nightmares in young children.

Hopefully, the Dreamland Sagas can become a part of your child's bedtime routine and encourage them to fall asleep quickly so they can join their friends in Dreamland.

The first book was built around three incredibly adorable mice called Harper, Remy, and Millie. Every night, these mice come alive through the stories, each designed to take around ten to twenty minutes to read.

Book Two, *The Sagas Continue*, is built around three light-hearted children, Abigail, Joel, and Bethany, along with three friendly and helpful hamsters, Archie, Amber, and Alice.

These days, children get more than enough screen time but not enough imagination time. As there are few illustrations in this book, children must recreate the story using their imagination.

Allow *The Sagas Continue* to become part of your child's bedtime routine, encouraging them to fall asleep quickly so they can join their friends in Dreamland.

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# Dreamland



## CHAPTER 1

### The Jenkins kids in the attic



Joel was already bored out of his mind, and summer break had only just begun. He lay in bed, deciding what adventure to get up to today. Of course, Mom would call it mischief, not adventure, but she was a girl and was grown up. She probably didn't remember what it was like to have an adventure anyway.

Summer in Florida may seem ideal if you live in the North, but in reality, it was sweltering and humid, and there were a lot of bugs and mosquitos. When it was this hot outside, most adventures had to happen indoors, where the rooms were air-conditioned.

"I think I'll start in the attic," Joel decided. "I'll go now before it becomes hot too up there."

Once dressed, Joel tippy-toed past Abigail's room, trying not to wake her. But before he got far, she asked, "So where are you sneaking off to?"

"I'm not sneaking," replied Joel. "I just didn't want to wake you."

"Okay, where are you going?" asked Abigail.

"To explore the attic."



Joel was a very adventurous eight-year-old, and his sister was a mature eleven-year-old. They made a great pair, mainly because Abigail could often talk some sense into Joel before things got out of hand.

“Wait for me. I’ll make sure you don’t get in trouble...I mean so that I can help you,” Abigail corrected herself. “Did you get Mom’s permission?”

“She didn’t tell us not to go there,” responded Joel. He was much better at asking for forgiveness than asking for permission.

“Ask Mom while I get ready, and don’t wake Bethany,” Abigail said. Their youngest sister was still fast asleep, and it wasn’t safe for Bethany to climb into the attic. She was only five years old.

Mom was in the kitchen making breakfast when Joel walked in.

“Hey, Mom, what’s for breakfast?” Joel asked casually.

“I’m making buckwheat pancakes with blueberries,” his mom said, flipping the first pancake over.

“Can I help?” Joel asked.

Mom was immediately suspicious. Joel only offered to help when he wanted something.

“Sure, you can set the table,” she responded.

While putting the plates down, he said, “While I’m in the attic, can I bring anything down for you?”

“Did Dad ask you to go up to the attic?” asked Mom, already knowing the answer.

“Well, not exactly, but I thought I’d go explore, and if there’s something you need, I’m happy to bring it down,” Joel explained.

“Joel is trying to ask for your permission to go into the attic,” said Abigail, entering the kitchen.

“Joel, if you want permission, just ask,” said Mom.

“Mom, can I explore the attic this morning?” Joel asked.

“Yes, as long as you take Abigail with you, put everything back as you found it, and bring my pasta maker down when you’re done,” said Mom.

After breakfast, Joel helped clean up, tidied his room, and made his bed. Finally, he was ready.

Joel couldn’t reach the rope that opened the attic entrance. He was about to ask Mom for help when Abigail arrived, carrying the step stool. She stood on the top step on her tippy toes and was just tall enough to reach the rope. As she pulled it, the door opened, and a long wooden ladder descended.

The kids climbed up and stood for a moment, taking stock of their surroundings. Light shone through a window, so Joel didn’t need his flashlight.

The Jenkins had moved into this house before the kids were born, so there were many things in the attic that they had never seen.

After looking around for a few minutes, Joel found the pasta maker. As he picked it up, Abigail exclaimed, “Look, Joel!”

She pointed at an old chest with a tarnished brass name tag, ‘Property of the Drapkins.’

“The Drapkins are our distant cousins!” Abigail said excitedly.

“How do you know?” he asked, coming closer.

“I recognize the name from when Mom researched our family tree.”

Joel helped Abigail open the chest. He sneezed from the dust as the heavy wooden lid was thrown back.

They eagerly looked inside and saw all kinds of things from the 1900s. There were old books, clothes, dolls, tarnished silverware, china plates, and even an ancient map. Towards the bottom lay some tattered journals.

Abigail took the diaries, and Joel grabbed the map. As she was about to close the box, Abigail saw three large dusty matchboxes hidden under a fancy hat.

She grabbed one and opened it. Inside, a stuffed toy mouse was lying on a pillow and blanket, with a note that read, ‘This is Remy, who belongs to Constance Drapkin’.

“Curious,” muttered Abigail, staring at the mouse. It was in surprisingly good condition, considering it had been made so long ago.

Joel opened the other two matchboxes. Each had a mouse and a note. Harper had belonged to Titus Drapkin, and Millie had belonged to Evie Drapkin.

“Oh look,” said Joel, “here’s another note.”

Abigail took it and frowned. “The words have faded. Let’s read it downstairs where the light is better.”

They closed the chest and took their treasures and the pasta maker down. When Abigail pushed the ladder back, it closed with a loud bang, and Mom came to make sure they were okay.

“Looks like you found a few things of interest,” she said.

“Yes, we found some stuff from the Drapkins,” Abigail spoke up.

“Well, take good care of everything so we can put it all back when you’re done,” Mom said in her schoolteacher’s voice.

The kids went into the living room, and Abigail pulled out the note. It was easier to read now, and Abigail could make out the words, ‘These stuffed mice are dream starter animals. They will take you to Dreamland when you fall asleep with them by your side.’

Abigail looked puzzled. “What do you think that means?” she asked.

“I don’t know. Let’s look at one of the journals,” Joel suggested.

Abigail opened Journal One by Constance Drapkin. She read a couple of pages out loud and then closed it.

“If this is true, then we can also go to Dreamland with the help of these mice!” Abigail exclaimed. “Joel, I have an idea. For our first adventure, we could dream about traveling back to 1900 and meet our cousins.”

That evening at bedtime, Abigail told Bethany everything and explained their plan. She gave her Millie, Joel took Harper, and Abigail chose Remy.

They were all asleep in no time, having their first adventure in Dreamland.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Jenkins kids in Dreamland



Joel woke up early and went to Abigail's room. She was sitting at her desk, writing.

"Do you remember last night's dream, or was it my imagination?" he asked.

"Yes, I remember!" exclaimed Abigail. "I'm writing about it just like Constance did."

"So it was real? We really did have an adventure in Dreamland!" Joel was astounded.

"Shush, keep your voice down. You'll wake Bethany," Abigail whispered.

Joel sat down on Abigail's neatly made bed.

"Wow, this means we can go on adventures every night," he said.

"I've just finished writing in the journal. Here's what I have," said Abigail. "We went to Millie's home in Dreamland, and her mother, Mrs. Mina, gave us milk and cookies. Remy told us about our distant cousins, Titus, Constance, and Evie."

“Yes, I remember,” said Joel. “Then Harper told us about Dreamland, where everything is safe, and nothing can hurt us. Harper also told us that we were in the year 1900 and shouldn’t talk about anything from our time.”

“Yes,” Abigail agreed. “Then we went to Main Street in Puffin Village and got new clothes for the 1900s. We met the Mayor of Puffin Village and, after that, our cousins.”

“We met Rocco, the raccoon, and we sailed the *USS Puffin* to Rexroad Village near Arklay Mountain,” Joel added.

“And we stopped at Hamstern Hamlet, rescued Archie, Alice, Amber, and their dwarf hamster friends from being shipped off to become pets, and then we went to the hamster fair,” Abigail said.

“I told Constance I knew about her journal, and that’s how we knew where to meet them,” Abigail read.

“I can’t wait for tonight!” said Joel.

“Where should we start our adventure?” Abigail asked.

“On the dock in Rexroad Village?” Joel suggested. Abigail nodded in agreement.

“Do you think we should tell Mom and Dad?” asked Joel.

“Only if they ask,” responded Abigail. “Of course, we don’t want to lie, but let’s wait to see what happens over the next few nights, just in case we don’t go back to Dreamland.”

As he was tidying his room and dressing, Joel smelled bacon. When he went into the kitchen, he saw Mom taking baked oatmeal out of the oven.

Mom picked up an old family recipe for baked oatmeal during a trip to West Virginia when she was Abigail's age. It was delicious, topped with fresh blueberries, coconut milk, and a squeeze of honey from the honey bear container.

During the day, Joel, Abigail, and Bethany discussed last night's dream and wondered what to wear for tonight's dream. They agreed to go to the 1900s to experience what it was like to live back then, so Abigail used Google on her iPad to search for clothing from that time.

Joel decided to wear brown knee-high wool pants with suspenders, brown leather shoes, a white shirt, and a brown cap. Abigail selected a pretty blue and white dress with a white apron, brown boots, and a blue hat. Bethany chose a dress like her sister's but with a white bonnet made from the same material as the apron.

They hopped into bed with their Dreamland friends that night, hoping to have another great adventure.

Bethany appeared back on the dock first, then Abigail, and a few minutes later, Joel showed up.

"I'm sorry I'm late," Joel said. "I got another glass of water before I went to sleep."

They were standing on the dock in Rexroad Village, dressed in the clothing they had chosen.



“You’re back,” said Rocco.

“Where are Harper, Remy, and Millie?” asked Abigail.

“We decided that you should have your own Dreamland friends. The dwarf hamster, Archie, and his sisters, Alice and Amber, asked if they could be your Dreamland hosts,” Rocco explained. “If you go to your local toy store, in the real-world, you might find them.”

“We will,” said Abigail excitedly, wondering when last she had been to a toy store. Her parents bought most of her toys online.

Archie was the tallest of the three, as tall as Joel’s waist when he stood on his back feet. He had white and gray fur and cute little front paws that he used as hands. Amber was shorter with an amber-brown and white coat, and Alice was even shorter and had light brown fur.

“Let’s go back to my house and plan your next adventure,” Rocco offered.

As they followed him, Joel noticed that Rocco was taller and towered over the dwarf hamsters.

On the way, they passed a tall, skinny raccoon with mostly gray fur, wearing what appeared to be a buckskin jacket, pants, and moccasins. He had a long walking stick.

“Who’s that?” Joel asked.

“That’s Charlie, the famous Dreamland frontier guide,” Rocco replied. “Wait a minute! He might be willing to guide you on the first part of your adventure.”

When they caught up with Charlie, Rocco introduced them. Charlie greeted them with a deep, booming backcountry voice and shook everyone's hand.

Rocco quickly explained his idea, and Charlie said, "I'm about to take a wagon train to Wilderness Village, the last town on the Northern border. They're welcome to drive the supply wagon," said Charlie.

The children and Archie, Amber, and Alice agreed that this would be a fun adventure.

"I'll come with," said Rocco. "I'll drive the chuck wagon, then Charlie and I can return the wagons together."

They'd all stopped walking. Joel looked around.

"Rocco, where's your house?" he asked.

"We're standing in front of it," Rocco replied.

Joel didn't see anything that resembled a house and was surprised when Rocco bent over and grabbed the handle of a round wooden door lying on the grass. As he opened it, Joel looked down a staircase that led to a well-lit room. He could smell freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, his favorite, so he knew he was in the right place.

"After all, why would I dream about cooked broccoli or Brussels sprouts?" Joel smiled to himself.

They climbed down the staircase and entered a large room with a round wooden table in the center, surrounded by eight chairs. The table was made from a slice of redwood tree with bark on the outside

and rings inside. To the left was a large fireplace, and near that was an old cast iron oven.

“This is my wife, Rebecca,” Rocco said.

Rebecca was taking the cookies out of the oven. She put them on the counter to cool off and greeted the guests.

Then Charlie rolled a large map out on the redwood table. After being served milk and cookies, they all gathered around.

Abigail found Puffin Village on the map and pointed to it. “That’s the town we visited last night,” she said.

Alice pointed to Hamstern Hamlet and said, “This is where I live.”

“This is where we are,” said Charlie, indicating Rexroad Village. He found the stable on the map and drew an X on it. “This is where the wagon train will start. It consists of five families in covered wagons, one chuck wagon, and the supply wagon. Joel and Archie can drive the supply wagon. Rocco, Abigail, and Amber can drive the chuck wagon with Bethany and Alice in the back.”

Everyone nodded, so Charlie drew a line on the map and explained, “Tonight, we should make it to Holey Hamlet, assuming we don’t have too much trouble with the wild gophers.”

“What sort of trouble?” asked Joel.

“The gophers believe that the land between Rexroad Village and Holey Hamlet belongs to them, so they sometimes stop travelers and

demand payment,” said Charlie. “After leaving Holey Hamlet, our next stop is Fox Den village, at the start of Mystery Forest.”

Just then, there was a knock at the door. Rebecca opened the door, and in came a short, fat raccoon.

“What’s up, Rob?” Charlie asked.

“Our scouts tell us that the gophers have a big gathering at the foot of Raccoon Mountain Range. If you leave soon, you should be able to avoid them,” Rob said.

As Charlie rolled up the map, they thanked Rebecca and headed to the stables to start their journey.

On the way, Joel asked Abigail, “Are you happy with this plan?”

She nodded. “I will be learning about wagon trains and settlers in social studies soon. It’ll be fun actually to travel on a wagon train.”

A line of wagons, filled with families and supplies, was at the stables. Joel and Archie hopped up to the driver’s seat of the supply wagon, and each took a rein to control the horses. Abigail and Amber climbed in the front of the chuck wagon with Rocco and Bethany, and Alice climbed in the back and sat on a comfy bed between the supplies.

After checking everything, Charlie rode to the front of the train and yelled, “Wagons ho.”

And the adventure began.

As the wagon train pulled out of the village, little raccoon kits ran alongside, yelling goodbye to their friends who were leaving.

Soon, the wagon train left the village and followed a dirt trail through fields of wheat and corn. They passed some small farms and orchards and finally reached the beginning of the plains. Soon after this, they entered gopher country.

Joel thought the plains were a nice change; he enjoyed watching the wind blow through the tall grass, making it look like waves on the ocean. But he was soon hungry.

“When are we having lunch?” he asked Charlie.

Charlie pointed to a group of trees ahead. “We’ll stop there to eat and water the horses.”

“Excellent,” said Joel, pleased. He was hungry, and his bottom was sore from sitting on the hard wooden seat. He was ready to get up and stretch.

When they arrived, Charlie asked Joel to circle the wagons around the trees. When he finally came to a stop, the chuckwagon was in front.

“This is convenient,” Joel thought to himself.

Abigail and Rocco jumped down and opened the sides of the chuck wagon. Families gathered around as they handed out bags of nuts, fruit, and berries.

Joel dreamt inside his bag was fried chicken, a vanilla milkshake, and an oatmeal cookie with M&Ms. Sure enough, that’s what he got! Joel was beginning to really like Dreamland.

Bethany walked around and poured fruit juice for all the kits. 'Kit' is what young raccoons are called.

Joel spoke to the raccoon family, traveling in the wagon behind him. Roger, the father, introduced his wife, Ronda, and his kits, Ronnie and Rachel. They were on their way to Wilderness Village. Roger planned to open a hardware store to sell supplies to travelers heading East through the Raccoon Mountain Pass.

Charlie sat down with Joel. "We're halfway to Holey Hamlet. Hopefully, we'll make it there without problems."

Before Joel could finish his cookie and milkshake, he woke up. It wasn't long before Abigail and Bethany woke up and disappeared from Dreamland.

## CHAPTER 3

### Time Travel Toy Store



**A**bigail wrote about the latest dream in her dream journal while Joel helped Mom make breakfast.

After enjoying two helpings of pancakes, they went into Abigail's room while Bethany helped Mom clean up.

"What do you think about last night's dream?" asked Joel.

"It was fun," said Abigail. "Let's stay on the wagon train until we reach Wilderness Village."

"I agree," said Joel. "Maybe we'll visit a western town and see some real cowboys."

While Joel talked, Abigail searched for a local toy store on her iPad.

"Joel, look here," Abigail said, pointing to the map on her iPad.

"There's a toy store called Time Travel Toy Store. They sell new and antique toys, and it's only three miles from here. Maybe we can find Archie, Amber, and Alice, the dream starter stuffed animals?"

"How will we get there?" asked Joel.

"Leave that to me," Abigail said and went to speak to Mom.

Soon, Joel heard Mom's voice.

"Get ready; we're going shopping in ten minutes."

Joel had no idea how Abigail made that happen, and she would not give her secret away.

As they pulled into the parking lot and hopped out of the minivan, Joel thought how comfortable it was compared to the wagon. He would need to include a cushion in his next dream to make the journey comfier.

Time Travel Toy Store was in the old part of town. The building looked like something from the 1900s. Joel thought it would fit perfectly in Dreamland. The store had an old wooden floor and shelves stacked with toys from the last century.

As they entered, Mom told the children to look around while she spoke with Mr. Thompson, the store owner.

While the children were browsing, Scooter, Mr. Thompson's grandson, approached them and said, "Hi, is there something I can help you with?"

Abigail asked if they had a dwarf hamster called Archie, and Scooter replied, "I suppose you'll also want Alice and Amber."

Joel, Bethany, and Abigail were speechless. How did Scooter know about their Dreamland friends? Before Abigail could ask, Scooter smiled and explained that his great-great-grandfather had opened this



toy store back in 1900 and that it had the largest selection of Dreamland animals in Florida.

Walking to the hamster display, they passed sections with puppies, kittens, squirrels, raccoons, unicorns, and fairies.

Scooter said he was ten and had been going to Dreamland for five years. He showed them a beautiful purple unicorn with a long white mane and a sparkly horn.

"This is my Dreamland buddy, Popcorn," Scooter said.

"Aren't you too young to work here?" Joel asked.

"Well, I only help my grandfather when I don't have school," Scooter explained.

With Scooter's help, it wasn't long before they found what they were looking for. Joel took an Archie hamster, Abigail got an Amber hamster, and Bethany grabbed an Alice. They were delighted. Abigail had plenty of questions to ask Scooter, but just then, Mom called.

"We'll have to come back to talk to you again," said Abigail.

The children went to the counter, and Abigail took out her small purse, which held everyone's allowance. But Mom offered to pay for all three hamsters and the little hamster hamlets to sleep in.

Abigail's trick to get Mom to go to the toy store was to remind her that Joel's birthday was coming up. She explained that the Time Travel Toy Store had a great selection of Legos and offered to keep Joel distracted while Mom secretly bought Joel's present.

After dinner and baths, the kids were ready for another adventure. They each got in bed with their new Dreamland friend and quickly slept.

Abigail and Bethany showed up first on the chuck wagon, with Rocco driving the horses. Moments later, Joel popped onto the supply wagon that Archie was driving.

“About time you returned,” said Archie, looking relieved. “I’m ready for a break.”

Joel sat on the cushion he’d brought, took the reins, and asked where they were.

“We are almost through gopher country,” Archie said, stretching.

Just then, Charlie raised his hand to stop the wagon train. Directly in front of them were at least twenty gophers on horseback with slingshots.

“You may not pass,” shouted the tallest, meanest-looking one, who wore a large sombrero hat and a leather vest with many pockets.

“We’re a peaceful wagon train on our way to Wilderness Village,” said Charlie.

“Well, this is our land, and you don’t have permission to pass,” responded the gopher. Then he peered at Charlie closely and asked, “Wait a minute, aren’t you Charlie, the famous frontier pioneer?”

“Yes, I am. So you’ll know that I aim to get my wagon train safely through with or without your permission,” said Charlie in a commanding voice.

“Were you with Davy Crockett when he explored East Dreamland?” the gopher asked.

“Yes, I was,” Charlie admitted.

“Tell you what,” smiled the gopher, “if you tell one story about Davey Crockett at the gopher gathering, we’ll let you travel through our country.”

Charlie had plenty of stories about Davey Crockett, so he agreed.

As it turned out, the gopher gathering was only two miles off their path. As they neared, they saw hundreds of gophers surrounding a stage. The wagon train parked behind the crowd. They had a good view of the stage as they were higher off the ground.

The Famous Sanderling Island Flea Circus was performing their signature high-wire circus act. Next, miniature elephants came on. They walked in a circle, each holding the tail of the one in front. Fleas performed circus acts on their backs.

Once the elephants cleared the stage, the circus Ring Master announced that the gopher gathering was in for a huge treat. “Charlie, the famous frontier raccoon, is going to tell us a story about Davey Crockett!”

The crowd cheered, yelled, and clapped as Charlie walked on stage and bowed. Then he sat in the large easy chair that someone placed in the center and proceeded to light his corn cob pipe. He waited until the crowd had settled down, took a long draw on his pipe, blew a large smoke ring, and began his story.

“It was 100 years ago that Davey Crockett and I went on an adventure in the real-world of Tennessee. I was not only Davey’s Dreamland stuffed animal but also his hat in the real-world, so I went with him on all his adventures,” Charlie said.

“When Davey had just turned thirteen years old, he used to get up at six in the morning to walk to school. After school, one day, a bully picked on him. Davey knew he would be in trouble for fighting, so he did not fight back. The next day, the bully picked on Davey again. By the third day, Davey had enough, and when the bully picked on him, he beat him up.

“Davey was afraid of getting into trouble, so instead of going home, he went on an adventure. He was walking along a trail near the river when a couple of cute little bear cubs came running past. Having spent most of his life exploring the woods near his home, Davey knew that where there were bear cubs, there would be a mother, and she would probably not be happy.

“Moments later, Davey was knocked over by a large cougar chasing the cubs. When Davey fell over, I went flying and got caught on a branch. Then I heard a roar, and just as Davey got on his feet, he was knocked over again by the cougar running in the opposite direction.

The cougar climbed the tree onto the very branch I was on. This knocked me out of the tree, and I fell on Davey's face."

At this point, Charlie stopped, took a long pull on his pipe, blew a smoke ring, and took a sip of dandelion tea. The crowd started chanting, "Tell us more, tell us more."

After a long pause, Charlie started speaking again.

"Okay, where was I?" he asked.

The crowd all said at once, "The cougar was in the tree!"

"Oh yes, as Davey put me back on his head, a large black mother bear came into the clearing, roaring and showing her teeth. Davey was about to climb the tree to escape her path when he realized the cougar was above him."

"What did he do?" yelled the crowd, all on the edge of their seats in suspense.

"Well, in the real-world, animals don't speak, so Davey could not reason with the mad mother bear. He also knew he could not outrun her, so he picked up a large stick and knocked the cougar out of the tree. It landed on its feet, facing the mother bear.

"For a second, time seemed to stand still. Davey was looking at the bear, the bear was looking at the cougar, and the cougar was looking for an escape route. It was one thing for the cougar to chase bear cubs but another to take on the mother. In no time, the cougar jumped on

a large rock, then jumped over the mother bear and headed towards the bear cubs.

“The mother bear and Davey looked into each other’s eyes, and then the bear turned and ran after the cougar. Davey decided to head home and take whatever punishment his dad would give him for getting into a fight after school. Given a choice between getting a spanking or being eaten by a bear or cougar, a spanking didn’t seem as bad.”

Charlie put down his tea and stood up when someone in the crowd yelled, “What happened when Davey got home?”

“His dad was furious and was going to give Davey a punishment he would never forget. Davey decided it was best to leave and travel around until his father cooled off.

“Davey and I met a group of cattle drivers and spent the night in their camp. They gave us dinner and a bedroll and offered Davey a job as a cattle driver. We did this for a few days, and after a while, Davey left the cattle drive and headed home.

“Eventually, we made it back, and his family was so happy to see him that he wasn’t punished. Davey realized how much his family loved him and how worried they had been when he was gone, and he never ran away from home again.”

Charlie stood up, as did all the gophers clapping loudly.

“Thank you for your hospitality, but now it’s time we were on our way to Holey Hamlet,” Charlie shouted over the crowd.

The mean-looking gopher came over to Charlie, thanked him for the great story, and told him about a shortcut to Holey Hamlet to get them there before nightfall. He also promised that no gophers would give him more trouble on his journey.

Before the wagons started moving, Abigail, Joel, and Bethany woke up back in Florida.

## CHAPTER 4

### Holey Hamlet



Joel went into Abigail's room, and as usual, she was writing in her dream journal.

"What did you think of the story about Davey Crockett?" Joel asked.

"Well, I did some research and found out that he really did beat up a bully and ran away to join a cattle drive when he was 13," Abigail answered. "But I couldn't find anything about him hitting a cougar with a stick or being threatened by a black bear."

"I really like Archie, my new dream starter animal. Have you had much chance to speak with Amber?" asked Joel.

"Yes, she seems nice but quite shy. I think it'll take time before we become close friends," Abigail said.

That night, the children returned to Dreamland. Joel appeared on the supply wagon next to Archie and Abigail next to Amber and Rocco. Bethany arrived in the back of the chuck wagon with Alice.

"Where are we?" asked Joel.

"About five miles from Holey Hamlet," responded Archie.



Now and then, the supply wagon rolled over a hole in the road, causing the wagon to shake.

“Why is the road so rough?” asked Joel.

“These are gopher holes we are rolling over,” answered Archie.

“Oh, I get it. That is why Holey Hamlet is called *Holey* Hamlet!” exclaimed Joel.

“Wagon hold,” shouted Charlie.

“We’re on the outskirts,” shouted Charlie. “We’ll camp here tonight. Let’s draw the wagons in a circle.”

Joel did as he was told and found himself behind the chuckwagon again.

“Abigail, Bethany, Alice, and Amber, do you mind starting dinner?” asked Charlie. “Joel and Archie will come with me to get supplies in town.”

“We’ll be happy to,” responded Abigail.

Joel hopped on the back of a horse, with Archie sitting in front of him. Their horse followed Charlie’s as they made their way to town.

“Charlie, tell us another story about Davey Crockett,” Archie pleaded.

“In Dreamland one summer, when Davey was nine, he wanted to explore the country between Rexroad Village and Holey Hamlet. Back then, the gophers were especially unfriendly, especially towards Real-worlders,” Charlie began. “So, as we were riding our horses

through gopher country, we found ourselves surrounded by a pack of them. The head gopher, Running River, told us that we were his prisoners and he'd take us to Chief Golden Fur to decide on our punishment for trespassing.

"Now, keep in mind this was before Davey was famous. Anyway, as we approached the gopher village, there was a lot of activity around one specific tent. Running River asked a young gopher where the chief was, and the young gopher pointed to the busy tent.

"As we entered, we saw the chief kneeling next to his son, Jumping Jack. We soon learned that Jumping Jack was ill, and even the chief's healer could not help. Davey broke away from his captors and went to investigate. He could tell by Jack's lips that he had eaten something poisonous. Davey noticed a few red berries near Jack and assumed these berries had poisoned him.

"Davey dashed outside and searched through the bushes until he found what he was looking for. When he returned, he made Jumping Jack eat the green leaf he had picked. In no time, Jumping Jack was on his feet and running around the tent. The chief thanked Davey and ordered the other gophers to set a feast for his new friends."

"What was the leaf? How did Davey know it would work?" asked Joel.

"It was from a peppermint plant, and Davey's mom used to give it to him when he had an upset stomach," Charlie answered.

As they were nearing Holey Hamlet, Charlie quickly finished the story. "So, we all sat down for a giant feast of corn, fresh vegetables, and roasted wild boar. Then the chief stood up, declared Davey a friend of the gophers, and gave him the title of King of the Wild Frontier, which was also given to him later in the real-world."

It was late in the afternoon when they entered Holey Hamlet. The last part of the trip had been much slower due to all the gopher holes in the road.

The hamlet was almost deserted except for a gopher and a raccoon. They were standing on the main street with their backs to each other. Each held a slingshot.

As the two animals were right in front of the stable, Charlie calmly rode up and tied his horse to the hitching post in front of the stables. Joel followed him and did the same. Then, Charlie slid off his horse and faced the raccoon whom he knew.

"Randy, what do we have here?" Charlie asked.

"I was just sitting on a rocking chair in front of the post office, drinking my dandelion tea, minding my own business, when this gopher tripped over my leg and spilled my tea all over my pants," Randy responded.

"That is not how it happened at all," yelled the gopher. "I was walking on the sidewalk in front of the post office when this smelly raccoon put his leg out, tripped me, and poured hot tea on my head."

Davey walked around to look at the gopher and saw that his head was wet. Davey looked at Roger's pants, and they were damp, too.

Joel knew all about Sherlock Holmes and decided to see if he could solve the mystery and find out what had really happened. He walked over to where the incident had occurred, noted the tracks on the sidewalk, and returned to the group.

“So here is what happened,” Joel explained, “Randy was sitting on the rocking chair in front of the post office. Judging by the marks, Randy had his legs out far enough to block half the sidewalk. Looking at the gopher tracks, I saw that the gopher was not paying attention to where he was walking because his tracks wander from side to side.”

Then Joel looked at the gopher and asked, “By the way, what’s your name?”

“Hopping Henry,” the gopher responded.

Joel continued, “Hopping Henry was not paying attention, and he tripped over Randy’s legs, causing the tea to spill onto Randy’s pants. Then Randy stood up and poured the rest of the tea on Hopping Henry’s head.”

“Is that how it happened?” Charlie asked Randy.

“Well, maybe something like that,” admitted Randy. “But he did trip over my legs.”

“Okay, it looks like you are both at fault. Randy for putting his legs across the sidewalk and pouring the tea on Hopping Henry’s head, and

Hopping Henry for not paying attention while walking. How about we stop the duel, and I buy everyone a round of dandelion tea?" Charlie offered.

With that, they all walked over to the café and sat down at a table by the window. A cute little gopher girl with pigtails and a white apron came over with a large pot of hot tea and five cups. She also had some freshly baked peanut butter cookies, which smelled so good that Joel took two, putting one in his pocket for later.

"These are the best peanut butter cookies I've ever had," Joel exclaimed with his mouth full.

"What brings you to Holey Hamlet?" asked Hopping Henry.

"I'm leading a wagon train to Wilderness Village, and we came into town for supplies," answered Charlie.

"Mr. Deepar's general store closes at five o'clock, so you should go there as soon as we've finished our tea," advised Hopping Henry.

After tea and cookies, Charlie laid the map on the table to show Hopping Henry their route and asked if he had any updates on the trail ahead.

"If your wagon train is south of the hamlet, I suggest that you take this road, which runs around the back of town and will take you to Fox Den Village faster," suggested Hopping Henry, tracing the route with his paw. "Make sure to leave the village early in the morning because beyond this lies Mystery Forest, which you don't want to travel

through at night. After that, if you get through the forest without delays, you should make it to Fort Dove by nightfall.”

Before Joel could ask about Mystery Forest, Charlie stood up, rolled up the map, and told them it was time to go.

The store was about to close, and Mr. Deeper was sweeping the floor when they arrived.

“Can I help you find anything?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m looking for a can of dandelion tea, some bacon, eight loaves of bread, and some dried ragweed for my pipe,” Charlie responded.

As Mr. Deeper wrapped the supplies in butcher paper and tied the package with some twine, Joel and Archie looked around the large store. Joel had seen pictures of old country stores in books and on his computer, but he had never been in one. He went to the toy section and saw many hand-painted toy soldiers, forts, horses, and carriages. There were even some modern inventions, such as the new cast iron Ford Model A car and truck models.

Mr. Deeper went to the door and turned the ‘Open’ sign to ‘Closed’, and they took the hint and left.

It was getting dark when they returned to the wagon train, and dinner was being served.

As it was the first time everyone had sat down together, Charlie introduced each family to the children. In the first wagon behind Joel

was the Springer raccoon family: a mom, a dad, two little girls, and one boy.

Next was Mr. English, a large, old, rough-looking raccoon who traveled with a pet kumon named Filo.

Behind him was the Ruby family's wagon with a mom, a dad, and 11 raccoon kits.

The last two wagons, before the chuck wagon, carried a large family of Siberian hamsters on their way to the Raccoon Mountain Range onto the town of Centennial.

"Charlie, tell us another story," asked Abigail.

"I have a better idea. How about you each take a minute to introduce yourselves," suggested Charlie. "Abigail, you can start."

"Okay," Abigail said, a bit shy. "My name is Abigail, and I'm 11 years old. I live in Florida in the real-world. I love playing piano and violin, reading, and spending time with my family and friends."

"I'm Amber, and I live in Hamstern Hamlet. I love taking long naps during the day and staying up late at night playing ball or games with my friends."

"My turn," spoke up Joel. "My name is Joel, and I also live in Florida. I am eight years old. I like riding my bike, playing soccer, and doing math."

Feeling that she was about to wake up, Bethany jumped in and said, "My name is Bethany. I'm five. I like playing with Joel and Abigail. I

also like playing with dolls, riding my bike, and helping Mom in the kitchen.”

Bethany had just finished her last sentence when she vanished.

“I guess we’re going to miss the rest of the introductions,” said Joel. And then he was gone.

“Abigail, when you return to Dreamland, we’ll be in Fox Den, the small settlement outside Mystery Forest. Wear explorer clothes, as traveling through Mystery Forest will be quite an adventure,” Charlie suggested just as Abigail disappeared.