

Reading Street Sleuth

Unit 1

Down the Wrong Path

Preparations for our family vacation were underway, and our house was bustling. Dad was securing camping gear to the roof of the car, and Mom was packing a cooler with food. My sister Maggie was fidgeting with the compass she got for her birthday, but I was just sitting on the couch dreading our trip to Yosemite National Park.

Once on the road, Dad reviewed every detail of the itinerary, and at every turn, Maggie announced the direction on her compass.

When we arrived at Yosemite, Mom passed out sandwiches. “Be sure to leave not even a crumb,” Mom warned. “There are hungry black bears around here.”

“Great,” I grumbled.

After lunch, we set out on the Valley Floor Loop, which is a 13-mile trail, but we were only walking half the loop. When we came to a fork in the trail about a mile into the hike, Mom asked, “Which way?”

Maggie studied her compass while Dad consulted the map. “That way!” they exclaimed in unison, pointing to the left.

An hour went by and then another; the sun sank to the west. “Dad, are we there yet?” I asked.

“Not sure, kiddo.” He frowned.

“We must’ve walked more than six miles by now,” Mom said. “Let’s take a break.” We rested on a log while Dad examined the map and compass.

“Maggie,” Dad started, “which direction did the compass point back at the fork?”

“I don’t remember,” she said.

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“Great,” I grumbled. I refused to spend the night in the wilderness with my family and those bears. “Let me take a look,” I said. I had aced my geography class, so hopefully I could get us out of this sticky situation.

I spread the map on the ground and turned it so that north on the map matched north on the compass. We had just passed El Capitan, so I located that on the map. “We are following the whole loop trail, not the half loop,” I explained, “so we need to turn back.” I traced the path on the map with my finger.

As we approached camp, Mom exclaimed, “Max, you did it!” I smiled a little shyly. I think Mom was glad we didn’t have to sleep with the hungry bears.

That night we roasted marshmallows on the campfire. Maybe camping isn’t so bad after all.