

'For anyone thinking of becoming a Scout, go for it, come and join the big adventure.' BEAR GRYLLS



The main title "SURVIVAL SQUAD" is rendered in a large, bold, purple font with a distressed, splattered texture. The word "SURVIVAL" is on the top line and "SQUAD" is on the bottom line. A compass rose is integrated into the letter 'V' in "SURVIVAL". The background of the title is a high-contrast image of a mountain biker performing a wheelie, with a large, stylized clock face behind the text.

NIGHT RIDERS

JONATHAN ROCK

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The Tiger Patrol's Diary

About the Author

Also by Survival Squad: the series

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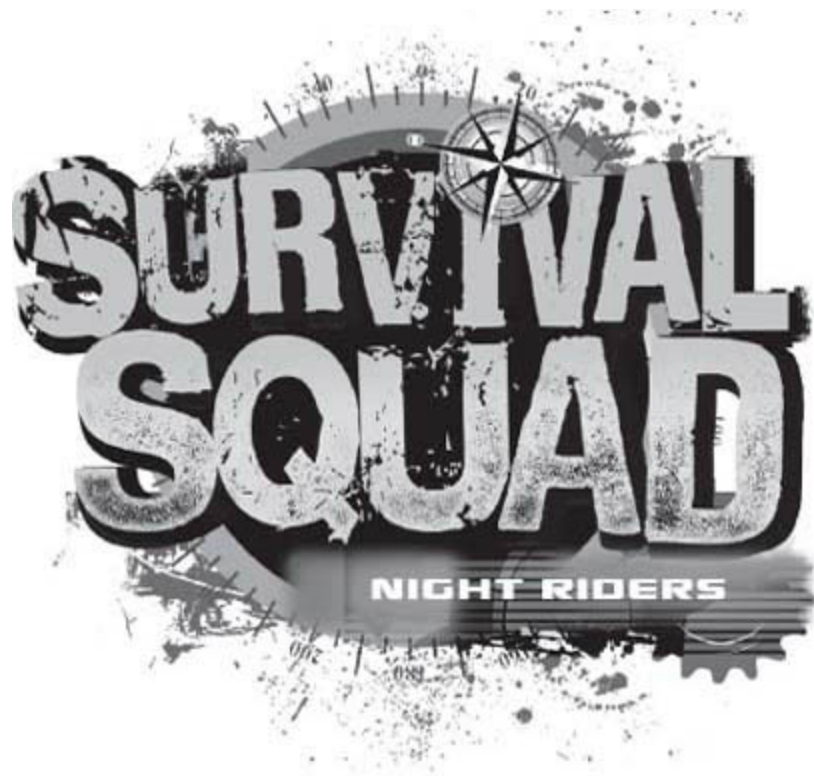
About the Book

There's a reason they're known as the Survival Squad . . .

An ordinary expedition for Tiger Patrol turns into an exciting adventure that involves paragliding, cycle racing and catching thieves in the night.

No matter what situation they're thrown into, they manage to come out on top . . . is there anything that Tiger Patrol can't do?

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RHCP DIGITAL

A MESSAGE FROM BEAR GRYLLS, CHIEF SCOUT



Tiger Patrol is a team of intrepid Scouts who look out for each other no matter what challenge they face.

They've made a promise to do their best and this means picking up skills like navigation, planning, fire lighting and first aid. From moors and woodlands to river rapids, Tiger Patrol is willing to give anything a go - as long as they stay safe.

Scouting is full of great adventures, but you'll only make the most of them if you give everything you've got. You'll need to be alert, committed, trust your friends and never be too proud to ask for help.

Maybe you're already a Scout. If so - be inspired by Tiger Patrol. If you're thinking about joining, then go for it. I did, and I've never looked back.

Are you up for the challenge?

Beaf.

CHAPTER 1

CONNOR SUTCLIFF STOOD high on the ridge, looking down into the valley. The river was a silver snake far below, glinting in the sun. It was a long way down, and Connor fought to control his nerves.

‘Are you ready, Connor?’ asked the instructor, James, from behind him. James was a skinny guy with long blond hair and an infectious smile.

‘Ready!’ Connor replied, taking a deep breath. He could hear the wind inflating the long curved wing behind him and lifting it into the air. Ahead of him was a short stretch of rough grass, and then the ridge dropped steeply towards the valley. Away to one side, the other members of Tiger Patrol were watching eagerly as they awaited their own turns.

‘Go!’ yelled James. ‘Run! That’s it. Here we go!’

Suddenly they were in the air. Connor heard a ragged chorus of cheers from below and looked down to see the Tigers waving madly. Julie, their Assistant Scout Leader, was with them. She was a slim, athletic sports enthusiast and, more importantly, a seasoned paraglider. It had been Julie who had organized today’s activities for the Sixth Matfield Scout Troop, and it looked as if it might just be their best day out ever.

In the sky ahead of him, against a background of fluffy white clouds and blue sky, Connor could see the shapes of five - no, six - other paragliders swooping through the air.

'I bet you've never been this high before,' James's voice said in his ear, over the rushing sound of the wind.

Connor looked down. The figures on the ridge were tiny now, and the road in the valley just a narrow black line with cars moving along it like multi-coloured beetles. 'Only in a plane,' he replied as James altered the position of his hands and the paraglider made a wide turn to the left. 'And that was nothing like this. Hey, look at those swifts! What are they doing?'

Above them, and slightly to their right, a flock of small fork-tailed birds were flying in tight circles, rising quickly through the air.

'Good spot!' said James. 'You've just found us a thermal, Connor. Or those swifts have. Let's go up!'

'What do you mean?' asked Connor.

Then James turned the wing again and the earth seemed to tilt beneath them.

'The sun warms the land down there,' James said. 'Then the hot air rises. Birds are great at finding thermals. Especially swifts. I love them - they really know how to fly! Let's see how high this one takes us. Here we go! Listen to that!'

Connor just had time to remember Julie explaining to them about thermals before the high-pitched beeps coming from a small device strapped to James's arm suddenly accelerated and he tilted the paraglider. 'Imagine you're riding a bike,' he yelled. 'We lean into the turn.'

As they turned round and round in the rising air of the thermal, the landscape fell away rapidly below them. Connor saw the distant smudge of a big city, and beyond the city the faint blue shadows of faraway mountains. And then, all at once, James left the thermal and sent them into a long downward glide.

'Sorry, Connor,' he said. 'That was a really good one you found us, but your mates are waiting for their turn.'

They zigzagged downwards and Connor picked out the ridge where the others were standing. Lower down he saw a line of Scouts making their way up the hillside from where they had been climbing on the crags. Until today, rock climbing had been Connor's favourite thing, but he knew he'd never be able to forget the experience of soaring through the sky like a bird.

Suddenly he realized that the ground was much closer. He could see the upturned faces of the other Tigers and the helpers. James had told him that they might have to run a few steps when they came down, but he circled round, came up into the wind and spilled air from the wing so skilfully that landing was no harder than stepping off a train. Connor's legs felt like jelly as he was helped out of his harness.

'You look ridiculously happy,' Abby said. 'Just wait till you see your face. That is the biggest smile I've ever seen!'

Abby was one of Connor's oldest friends. Her long brown hair was blowing in the wind and she held her helmet in one hand, ready for her turn. Connor knew that she would love paragliding as much as he did. Meanwhile her best friend, Andy, was aiming a camcorder at Connor's face.

Andy, often mistaken for Abby's twin, was a really talented photographer and was never without his favourite camera or camcorder. 'Can we have a few words for the camera?' he asked in his best TV interviewer's voice, flicking his brown hair out of his eyes. 'Can you describe the experience of paragliding for us?'

'It was just totally . . . incredibly . . .'

 Connor paused. He couldn't think of a big enough word. 'You wait,' he said at last. 'You wait till you've tried it.'

'And I'm going to,' said Abby. 'Right now. I'm ready,' she said to James. 'What do I have to do?'

Connor joined the other Tigers. Jay and Priya, who had only joined the Scouts last September, were both looking a

little apprehensive as they watched Abby being strapped into her harness. James completed his final checks, and seconds later Abby gave a scream of excitement as the inflated wing carried her into the sky.

'It's not as scary as it looks,' Connor told Priya and Jay reassuringly.

'I'm not scared,' Jay began; then he paused and grinned. 'Well, OK, I am a bit, but only like when you go on a big roller coaster.'

'That's how I feel too,' said Priya, her big brown eyes shining. 'And it wouldn't be exciting if it wasn't a bit scary, would it?'

Connor smiled. Priya was the youngest of the Tigers, but she loved a challenge. Even though she was wearing the same Scout uniform as the rest of them, she still managed to look as if she was ready for a fashion shoot. Connor could never understand how she did it.

'Who's next?' asked Toby, coming over to join them. The small dark-haired boy was the Tigers' APL. He was fiddling with the complicated-looking watch on his wrist. 'I'm not sure if my altimeter is working properly.'

'Don't worry,' laughed Connor. 'James has got a machine that logs the whole flight. We went up to four thousand feet. I reckon I could see for a hundred kilometres. And anyway, you need to look out for birds rather than checking your watch.'

'Birds?' said Toby. 'Why?'

'The birds know how to find the warm air,' Connor explained. 'The thermals, remember? Julie told us about them but I'd forgotten until James reminded me.'

'I want to find one,' Andy said. 'I'm going to strap my camcorder to my arm and video everything I see. Do you think you can see Wales from up there? That's where my family came from,' he reminded the others. 'They lived in this really remote valley. My parents keep promising we can go there, but somehow it never happens.'

'Maybe you can,' said Julie, who had been listening to their conversation. 'You know you're all going to be planning an expedition this term? There's no reason why you couldn't go to Wales.'

'It's a long way,' said Toby. 'How would we get there?'

'That's easy,' said Jay enthusiastically. 'We could cycle. I've always wanted to go on a long trip on my bike.'

Andy looked at Julie. 'We couldn't . . . could we?'

'I don't see why not,' she replied as Connor remembered the blue line of mountains he'd glimpsed from the paraglider. 'You probably wouldn't be able to cycle the whole way, but you could take your bikes on the train for some of it. It would fit in well with what Rick and I had planned. Next weekend we're going on our night hike, but our first meeting after that will be about cycle maintenance. Hey - look! Abby's about to land.'

They all stood up to watch as James and Abby touched down and stumbled towards them.

'That was just incredible!' Abby gasped as James helped her to remove her harness. 'It was totally amazing! Really awesome! I want to do it again.'

Priya sat and listened as Abby described her ascent and the other Tigers filled her in on the possible expedition to Wales.

'We might have to do a few repairs to our bikes first,' Abby said. 'I'm pretty sure mine's got a flat tyre.'

'It'll be OK,' said Jay. 'I can help you fix it. You can go a really long way on a bike in a day. They cover hundreds of kilometres in the Tour de France.'

'Yeah,' said Toby, laughing. 'But we're not in the Tour de France, are we?'

'I wouldn't mind, one day . . .' Jay said, then looked embarrassed.

Priya glanced at him curiously. She and Jay had joined the Scouts on the same day the previous year, and she was still learning new things about the stocky fair-haired boy. Jay had been a reluctant Scout at first, and although Priya knew that he liked cycling and owned a shiny, expensive mountain bike, she would never have guessed that he was ambitious to become a serious racer.

The others had all started talking about the night hike that Julie had mentioned. Since their winter adventure in the snow the Scouts had been busy with a series of indoor activities and as a result she now had an Artist badge and a Chef badge newly sewn onto her uniform. But now, for the first time since Priya had joined the Scouts, they were planning an activity that she really didn't want to do. The thought of stumbling about in the countryside at night gave her the creeps. She was a bit worried about this cycling idea too, because she didn't even own a bike. Maybe Mihir would lend her his. He hadn't ridden it for ages. She would ask him when she got home—

'Hey, Priya!' Abby's friendly voice interrupted her thoughts. 'You need to get ready. Here comes Andy.'

Priya stood up and walked over to the landing zone. Connor joined her, his blond hair still messed up from his flight. His blue eyes were screwed up against the sun.

'Hey - good luck! It's an incredible rush - a bit scary at first, but you'll see, it's amazing to be able to fly.'

'Thanks,' said Priya quietly. She could tell that Connor was doing his Patrol Leader thing and trying to put her at ease. She smiled at him gratefully.

They both watched as James came towards them.

'Great!' he said. 'You don't look like you weigh much. We should be able to go really high.'

Priya listened carefully as he strapped her in and gave her some final instructions. 'Ready?' he asked her. 'Run!'

Priya felt her heart race as she ran with him, then suddenly the paraglider soared into the air. She felt a rush

of elation as the earth seemed to shrink below her and the air rushed past her ears. As they glided out across the valley, she remembered what Connor had said earlier about looking out for birds.

‘Would you like to try steering?’ asked James in her ear.

‘Really?’ She couldn’t believe he was offering.

‘Sure. It’s easy. Reach up and take the controls. That’s it. Keep your hands level.’

Priya could feel the wind on the wing, trembling through the web of cords that ended in the hand-grips. It was alive!

‘That’s great! You’re a natural. Let’s steer to the left. Look to the left. Left hand down, right hand up. Gently does it. Brilliant!’

The paraglider swooped round in a wide circle and began to climb slowly. More and more hills came into view. And then Priya saw the birds. ‘Look!’ She almost took her hand off the controls in her eagerness, and the wing gave a sudden lurch.

‘Whoa! Hang on there!’ James took back the controls.

‘Sorry, James. But I saw some swifts.’ Priya gazed all around, trying to spot the flock of birds. ‘There!’ She pointed.

‘Hey, cool!’ said James, swinging them round once more. ‘Let’s go!’

As they met the rising air of the thermal, Priya felt the paraglider accelerate upwards, turning tightly. Up, and up, and up. The wind was cold on her face, but she hardly felt it as the ground receded below them and she saw the long line of distant hills that Connor had seen before her. Wales! It looked magical. It would be so great to go there.

As they turned once more and she picked out the two tiny white dots that were the Scout minibuses far, far below, she decided that there was no way Mihir wasn’t going to lend her his bike.

Just let him try and stop her!