

KidVenture Vol 3: Through The Maize - Long Excerpt

When I get really lost, usually I ask for help. This time though, I was feeling so disoriented, I didn't even think to ask for help. Fortunately, help came to me.

I went for a walk right after lunch and my blow-up with Cody. I told my sisters I just needed to clear my head and I'd be right back. I like going on walks when there's too much to think about. The walking makes me feel like I'm making progress, even if the thoughts are still stuck in me and unorganized.

I must have been walking longer than I thought. I had drifted off Farmer Tannenbaum's property and was walking on the dirt road, back to town.

I was almost at the alpaca farm when a car stopped and asked if I needed a ride.

"Dad?" I was surprised to see him. "What are you doing here?"

"Hop in, Son."

I opened the door and complied.

"Where are we going?"

"Fire department."

"What?"

"Working on getting a permit from the Fire Marshall," my dad said. "Why don't you come with me?"

"How did you know I was on the road?"

"I didn't," my dad chuckled. "I'm just as surprised as you are."

"Oh." And here I thought my dad knew I was in trouble and came to fetch me. I kind of liked that idea.

"I just came by to get some signatures from Brock," my dad explained. "And ask him about water sources and fire prevention measures."

"I see."

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“Let me tell you, dealing with the county is a lot easier than dealing with the city.”

“Did you see Addie and Sophie?”

“Yeah.”

“How are they doing?”

“Oh they’re fine,” my dad said nonchalantly. “Cody put them to work clearing what will become the parking area.”

“Oh.”

I didn’t know whether to be mad that Cody was making decisions without me again, or relieved that Cody was still on board and the maze project was still moving forward.

“You ok?” My dad peered over at me as he turned onto a new road. “I was surprised not to see you there.”

“Yeah,” I said. “I just needed to clear my head.”

“How’s it going, working with Cody?”

“It’s alright, I guess.” I looked out the window.

“Really?” My dad wasn’t satisfied with my answer. “There seemed to be some tension between you the other day.”

“I just got annoyed because he wanted to take credit for my idea.”

“What was your idea?”

“I said we should move the bridge so it’s easier to see from the road.”

“That is a good idea.”

“I know!” I suddenly got animated. “It *is* a good idea, and it was my idea, but then he wanted to take credit for it.”

“Why is it important you get the credit?” my dad asked.

I hadn’t thought about the reason why. It seemed too obvious to think about.

“Because — I came up with the idea,” I probably sounded a little annoyed. “So I should get the credit.”

“What’s more important to you, that you have a successful business, or that you get credit for your ideas?”

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“Well, both.”

“Pick one.”

“Why do I have to pick one?”

“Just pick one.”

“To have a successful business.”

“That’s right,” my dad said, turning onto yet another road.

At this point, I didn’t know if the fire station was really far away, if we were lost, or if my dad was driving in circles so we could keep talking. It didn’t matter to me. “I made you pick one because more often than not, that’s how it works.”

“I don’t get it.”

“Your job is to make sure the corn maze business is successful, right?”

“Right.”

“You’re the leader.”

“Um...” I wasn’t sure what to say.

“Are you the leader?”

I still wasn’t sure what to say.

“This whole idea, this venture, came together because of you,” my dad said. “So let me ask you again, are you the leader?”

“Yes,” I said unevenly. “Even though Cody doesn’t act like I am.”

“That’s because you’re training him to act like you’re not the leader.”

“What?” I almost shouted. “How can you say that?”

“Well let’s break it down,” my dad said. “Why did you suggest moving the bridge closer to the road?”

“Because, that way, more people will see it as they drive by,” I sat up in my seat as if I were in court and giving a sworn statement in my defense. “And if more people see it, more people will want to come to the maze. It’s free advertising.”

“Yes, it is. So you suggested it because it’s what was best for the business, getting more people to the maze. Right?”

“Right.”

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“Or did you suggest it just so Cody could be impressed by your acute business sense and strategic acumen?”

“Come on, Dad,” I said. “You don’t need to mock me.”

“Fair enough,” he said. “Did Cody agree to move it?”

“Yes.”

“Because he saw it was a good idea. In other words, it was something that would help the business.”

“Yes.”

“So there’s your credit right there,” my dad said. “Cody moved the bridge after you suggested it.”

“Yeah but—”

My dad cut me off. “So at that moment, you were the leader. You had an idea, Cody saw the merit of the idea, he followed your lead, and moved the bridge, right?”

“Right.”

“So why is it important that he *also* give you credit publicly?” My dad lingered over the word *also*.

“Because then he tried to pass it off as his own idea,” I protested. “And that’s not fair.”

“Do you want things to be fair, or do you want to have a successful business?”

My dad turned to look at me. It was a good thing we were on a deserted country road and there were barely any other cars around.

“Pick one.”

“Successful business,” I muttered.

“I wish things were always fair, and we always got the recognition we deserve,” my dad said, not unkindly.

I just grumbled.

“Why do you think Cody tried to take credit?”

“I don’t know.”

“Think about it.”

My dad pulled into the fire station and parked. He kept the motor running so we could keep talking.

“Did Cody take credit because he wanted to hurt you?”

“Um...” I hadn’t really thought about it. “I don’t think so.”

“Maybe he was excited,” my dad said. “Maybe he was excited and wanted to share the idea. Or maybe he just wanted to impress his uncle.”

“His uncle?”

“Yes, Brock is his uncle.”

“Oh.”

“You didn’t know that?”

“I think I forgot.”

“Yeah, he’s his uncle. I’m sure Cody wanted to impress him, just like you wanted to impress me.”

I gulped. I really hadn’t thought about it, but now that my dad said it, I recognized the truth in what he was saying. I *did* want to impress my dad. I had a great idea and I wanted my dad to know it. Especially after feeling helpless all day hauling wood and being Cody’s glorified assistant.

“Son, I know it was your idea.” He patted me on the back. I mean he literally patted me on the back. “And I know it was a good idea.”

“Thanks.” It did feel good to hear that. I needed the boost.

“Think about it, maybe Cody just wanted his uncle to think he had a good idea.”

“But...”

“I know. It’s not fair,” my dad agreed. “But try to imagine a different way.”

“A different way?”

“What if you had let Cody take the credit?”

“Um...”

“What if Cody got a chance to impress his uncle, and be excited about building the bridge? How would Cody feel?”

“Good, I supposed.”

“Would he be more or less excited to work on the business and help make it successful?”

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“More.”

“Would he be more or less likely to want to offer ideas after that?”

“More.”

“And Cody knows it was your idea. But letting him take credit, would that make him more or less likely to want to follow your lead next time?”

Suddenly I didn’t feel so good. “More.”

“Instead...” my dad continued —I was grimacing at this point— “instead, what has he learned from this interaction?”

“That it’s a competition.”

“Exactly,” my dad said. “You’re training him to think it’s a competition, only one person can get credit, so you’d better guard your ideas carefully and only express them where everyone can see that they’re yours.”

I sighed loudly. “I see that now.”

“You’re training him to see you as an adversary and not as a leader. For him to win, you must lose.”

“That’s terrible,” I said. “I did that?”

My dad nodded seriously.

“But all I said is that it was my idea.”

“Yes,” my dad said sympathetically. “But saying that is also saying all these other things.”

“What can I do?”

“You’re the leader, Chance,” my dad said. “Keep your eyes on the prize.”

“The prize?”

“Growing the business,” my dad said. “Do that, and you’ll get lots of credit.”

“I will?”

“First time you hear a family say they’re at your maze because they saw the bridge...well that’s credit enough.”

“True,” I agreed. Sort of. It wasn’t that easy. “But Cody doesn’t respect me.”

“How do you know that?”

I was silent.

“He moved the bridge, didn’t he?”

I nodded.

“That’s respect.”

I nodded again.

“Listen Chance, if you want to be a successful leader, you need to treat people how you want them to be, not how they are.”

Cody's...	I Take Credit	vs	I Let Cody Take Credit
Focus	What's Fair		What's Best for Business
Motivation	Deflated		Excited to Work
Perspective	Sees Me As Rival		Sees Me As Leader
Mood	Feels Unimportant		Feels Like Hero
Incentive	Keep Ideas, Unless Can Get Credit		Offer New Ideas

“What do you mean?”

“How do you want Cody to be? Do you want him to be someone excited to work on the business, eager to share ideas, someone who gets to go home every day and brag to his uncle how many great ideas *he* had?” my dad held up his hands and used air quotes when he said he. “Or do you want him to be someone resentful, who doesn’t share ideas, who’s not excited to work on the business, someone who believes the only way he can get recognition is if you don’t?”

“The first, obviously.”

“Then treat him like the first, even when he’s acting like the second.”

I looked at my dad skeptically.

“Try it,” he said. “I can’t guarantee it will work, but I can definitely guarantee the second approach will *not* work.”

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"I see that already."

"We train people how to treat us by how we react to them," my dad said. "You're training Cody to act like your adversary because that's how you're reacting to him. Like an adversary."

"But it really does feel like he's my adversary."

"So stop treating him like one."

"What should I do instead?"

"Treat him like someone who's a really valuable member of your team."

"Like a partner."

"Like a partner," my dad said. "And partners let partners take credit."

I still didn't like that part.

"And you know what?"

"What?" I answered.

"If you're the kind of leader that lets other people take credit for your ideas, most of those people are going to love following you."

"They will?"

"Sure they will," my dad turned the engine off. "Because they get to be heroes in their own story."