

‘There you go, that should hold it, at least until we can get you to a hospital!’ Jane said, confidently.

Chris tentatively put his weight on one foot, testing the effectiveness of the splint.

‘It hurts, but I think I can manage’ he replied, wincing ever so slightly. ‘Let’s try to find the sloths first. Please! I didn’t come all this way just to be carted off to hospital. I won’t be beaten by the rainforest!’ Jane and David looked at each other, searching the other’s face for clues as to what their thoughts were. Simultaneously, smiles took over their faces, and they both rushed at Chris wrapping their arms around him in a tight hug.

‘Ow! Ow! OW! You two! Watch it will you?’ Chris huffed as he freed himself from the embrace. ‘I want to make it to the sloths, not be crushed by you two maniacs!’ He said this with a smirk on his face, causing laughs of relief to escape from Jane and Chris’ lips.

‘Right then, let’s go! We’re actually not far,’ Jane announced, already reaching for her backpack. She pulled out her trusty compass and map and checked the directions. ‘OK, we need to follow the river until we reach that tributary,’ she informed, pointing at the map. Both Chris and David nodded in agreement. ‘Then we head West until we reach a small clearing in the trees. At that point, we should be smack bang in the middle of the sloth’s territory...if our predictions were right, of course!’

As the group hiked (though rather slowly due to Chris’ leg) along the riverbank, they saw yet more animals – they even caught a glimpse of the majestic giant river otters, out on a family fishing expedition. They stopped and enjoyed watching them for a short time, observing the way they communicated with one another; it was astonishing.

Once the otters had moved on, the three friends continued their journey, eventually reaching the tributary Jane had pointed to earlier on the map. ‘Right, West it is then,’ David said, confidently, turning away from the river and beginning to walk back into the dense undergrowth. Jane and Chris followed suit, and before they knew it, they were in a clearing – a grassy area surrounded by trees, with a small space above where they could see directly up to the sapphire-blue sky. They marvelled at it for a moment or two.

It was silent: no rustling of leaves or scurrying feet. 'I think we might have misjudged their position,' Jane said glumly. She plonked herself down on the ground, her head in her hands. David and Chris stayed silent, listening for any sign of movement. Seconds ticked by, it felt like hours.

'There!' shouted Chris, pointing into a nearby tree. Jane jumped up, scrabbling to get a closer look. Tears filled her eyes. 'I can't believe it! He's beautiful.' All three of them gazed up, eyes wide, in awe of the fact that they had found this wondrous creature that they'd longed to see for so many years.

'Just goes to show what we can achieve if we stick together,' spoke Chris, eyes still fixed firmly on the sloth.

'Yeah, if you don't go wandering off again mate!' David replied, grinning. The three friends peeled their eyes from the sloth to look at each other. They laughed until their stomachs were sore and their eyes were wet with tears.

'Won't happen again buddy,' Chris retorted. Those were the famous last words!