

WE WERE ON A TRIP. A TRIP THAT WOULD CHANGE OUR LIVES FOREVER. IT STARTED AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. ME (JOHN) AND MY SISTER, LISA, WERE IN OUR ROOMS WHEN OUR PARENTS CALLED US DOWNSTAIRS. THEY NEVER REALLY DID THAT AND WHEN THEY DID, IT WAS USUALLY TO TELL US SOMETHING IMPORTANT. WE WENT DOWN THE STAIRS AND SAT ON THE COUCH ACROSS FROM OUR MOM AND DAD.

"SO YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY WE CALLED YOU," SAID MOM.

"YEP," I SAID.

"WELL WE'RE GOING ON A TRIP!" SAID DAD.

"REALLY? WHERE?" I ASKED, MY EYES WIDE WITH EXCITEMENT.

"CAMPING!" SAID DAD.

ME AND LISA GROANED.

"CAMPING?!" SAID LISA. WE'D GONE CAMPING A COUPLE TIMES BEFORE AND WE HATED IT. AND THAT'S DEFINITELY NOT AN EXAGGERATION. I MEAN SERIOUSLY, WHO WANTS TO BE IN A CRAMPED TENT AND BITTEN BY A BUNCH OF MOSQUITOES?

"DO WE HAVE TO?" I WHINED. "YES WE DO." SAID DAD STERNLY.

"FINE," I SAID IN A BITTER TONE. ACTUALLY I WAS KIND OF EXCITED TO TEST OUT MY NEW CAMERA I GOT FOR MY BIRTHDAY. LISA, HOWEVER, SEEMED TO BE...LESS EXCITED.

THE NEXT DAY, WE ARRIVED AT THE CAMPGROUND AND DAD SET UP THE TENT IN NO TIME. I JUST SAT IN THE TENT LISTENING TO MUSIC. I THOUGHT IT WAS A LITTLE STRANGE THERE WAS NO ONE NEXT TO US BUT I DIDN'T THINK ANYTHING OF IT. LISA LOCKED HERSELF IN THE CAR AND TRIED TO BE AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE WITH EVERYTHING STUFFED ON TOP OF HER.

WE ROASTED HOTDOGS OVER THE FIRE, BUT LISA STILL LOCKED HERSELF IN THE CAR AND TRIED TO ACT LIKE SHE WAS AT HOME. SHE MADE IT CLEAR SHE WANTED TO BE ANYWHERE BUT HERE.

I WOKE UP TO RUSTLING BEHIND THE TENT. MY FOREHEAD STARTED TO SWEAT AND I WANTED TO WAKE UP MOM AND DAD BUT IT COULD'VE JUST BEEN A DEER OR SOMETHING. OR, AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I TOLD MYSELF.

THEN I HEARD FOOTSTEPS TOWARD THE FRONT OF THE TENT. I QUICKLY CLOSED THE EXTRA ZIPPER THAT CAN ONLY BE ACCESSED IN THE TENT. I HEARD THE ZIPPER OPEN AND THEN IT QUICKLY CLOSED AS IF THIS MYSTERY PERSON WAS IN A HURRY. I FORCED MYSELF BACK TO SLEEP AND, TRUST ME, I DID NOT HAVE SWEET DREAMS.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF OUR "VACATION" I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER RIGHT NEXT TO THE CAMPGROUND. I WAS THE ONLY ONE THERE BUT I GOT A WEIRD FEELING THAT THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE THERE TOO.

I RAN BACK TO THE CAMPGROUND AND OUT OF THE CORNER OF MY EYE I SAW SOMETHING BUT I KEPT RUNNING. I WENT BACK INTO THE TENT AND GOT OUT MY NEW CAMERA. I KNEW THAT THERE WAS SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE TENT BEFORE SO I SET UP THE CAMERA TO FAST MOTION AND I DECIDED I WOULD PRESS RECORD LATER. I TOLD MY DAD I HAD TO GO TO THE BATHROOM SO HE DROVE ME EVEN THOUGH IT WAS WALKING DISTANCE. IT WAS CREEPY AND LOOKED LIKE AN ABANDONED HOUSE. WE ATE SANDWICHES AND WE WENT TO BED. LET ME REPHRASE THAT. THEY WENT TO BED. I PRESSED RECORD ON THE CAMERA. I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO CLOSE MY EYES. I TOOK A PEEK OUTSIDE WITH A LITTLE PEEPHOLE THERE WAS. I FROZE BECAUSE IT SEEMED THAT SOMEONE WAS OUTSIDE. THEN I REALIZED IT WAS DAD AND BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF, THOUGH I WAS CONFUSED ABOUT WHY HE WAS AWAKE.

WHEN I WOKE UP I REALIZED THAT THE BATTERY ON THE CAMERA DIDN'T LAST FOREVER. HOW COULD I HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT? I LOOKED AT THE CAMERA AND SURE ENOUGH IT DIED. GREAT. NO REASON TO BE EXCITED ABOUT THIS TRIP. ON THE BRIGHT SIDE AT HOME I COULD LOOK AT THE VIDEO. WE ONLY WERE GONNA BE HERE FOR 4 MORE DAYS. I THOUGHT ABOUT GOING TO THE RIVER BUT DECIDED NOT TO AND STAYED AND HELPED MAKE BREAKFAST. WE HAD PANCAKES WITH FRENCH TOAST SO WE HAD A GOOD BREAKFAST. LISA LOOKED UNEASY AND KEPT LOOKING AROUND HER AND EVENTUALLY RETREATED INTO HER TENT. I SHRUGGED IT OFF AND KEPT DAYDREAMING. LATER SHE CAME OUT AND TOLD ME SHE HAD BEEN UNEASY. SHE SAID SHE HEARD RUSTLING AROUND THE TENT AND I DECIDED I SHOULD TELL HER ABOUT THE ENCOUNTER AT THE RIVER AND THE TENT OPENING. SHE SAID IT COULD BE MOM AND DAD BUT I ASKED HIM WHY HE DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING. SHE SAID MAYBE IT WAS A MONSTER. I SAID THAT WAS RIDICULOUS BECAUSE WHAT MONSTER CAN OPEN A TENT. "WELL WHAT IF IT WAS JUST DAD OR MOM CHECKING IN ON US AND YOU'RE WRONG" LISA SAID. "I GUESS". WE ALL PLAYED A BOARD GAME AND HAD SOME FUN. MOM AND DAD ALSO WERE ACTING A LITTLE STRANGE. THEY WERE KEEPING US CLOSE AND WEREN'T LETTING US GO TO THE LAKE BY OURSELVES. LISA SAID SHE ASKED THEM WHAT'S UP AND THEY QUICKLY SAID THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON. WE STILL HAD SOME FUN. LISTENED TO MUSIC ON MY PHONE. THEN I PLUGGED IT INTO MY PORTABLE CHARGER. AND LEFT. LISA WAS READING A BOOK AND DIDN'T LOOK HAPPY BUT SHE DIDN'T LOOK MISERABLE SO I TOOK A NAP. WHEN I WOKE UP THEY WERE ALREADY HAVING DINNER SO I GOT OUT OF THE TENT AND WENT TO THEM. THEY WERE HAVING

HOTDOGS AGAIN SO I JOINED IN. WHEN WE GOT READY FOR BED I CLOSED THE TENT AND ONCE AGAIN BEING SCARED AND PARANOID LOOKED THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE. MY BLOOD RAN COLD WITH WHAT I SAW.

3 MORE DAYS. I DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT. YOU SEE I SAW A PERSON IN A HOOD GOING THROUGHOUT BAGS SO YEAH. NO WAY MY PARENTS KNEW ABOUT THIS RIGHT? I ASKED THEM WHY THEY WERE BEING PARANOID AND SAID I KNEW THEY WERE LYING. THEY SAID ON THE RADIO THEY HEARD ABOUT A PRISON BREAK AND WANTED TO KEEP US CLOSE. I JUST STOOD THERE FROZEN. THEY SAID THAT THEY WERE PACKING UP STUFF IN THE CAR TO GET READY TO LEAVE AND THAT EVERYTHING WAS SET EXCEPT THE TENT. THEY SAID THEY WANTED TO CHECK WITH THE PEOPLE AT THE ENTRANCE AT THE CAMPGROUND. I ASKED WHY THEY DIDN'T GO. THEY SAID THE CAR BATTERY SEEMED TO BE MISSING. SO I ASKED THEM WHAT THEY WERE GONNA DO. AND WELL...IT'S A 20 MINUTE DRIVE. AND WALKING TAKES AN HOUR SO THEY DIDN'T WANT US TO BE ALONE. THEY SAID THAT ONE OF THEM IS GOING TO WALK. DAD SAID IT SHOULD BE HIM. MOM DIDN'T PROTEST SO SHE COULD STAY WITH US. I KNEW THAT DAD WAS WORRIED BUT HE NEEDED TO GO. HE SAID HE'D LEAVE NOW. I TOLD LISA AND SHE JUST WENT BALLISTIC. WE ATE SOME PASTA IN OUR TENT.(DON'T ASK HOW WE DID IT.) THEN WE WENT TO SLEEP

IN THE MORNING I WENT TO WAKE LISA UP BUT SHE WASN'T THERE. I CHECKED OUTSIDE AND SAW HER IN THE CAR. SHE LOOKED SCARED. SHE SAID SHE HEARD SOMEONE OUTSIDE OUR TENT WHO SEEMED TO BE TALKING TO HIMSELF AND WAS LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY. SHE SAID THAT SHE WOULD RATHER WALK HOME THAN STAY HERE. CAN'T BLAME HER. "JOHN LISA?" "YEAH?" I SAID. YOUR FATHER SAID HE'LL HAVE TO COME BACK TOMORROW BECAUSE THERE IS A STORM. WE SHRUGGED IT OFF STILL A BIT WORRIED. WE PLAYED SPIKEBALL BUT I COULD TELL MY MOM WAS UNSETTLED. WE ATE BRUNCH AND WENT IN THE TENT TO TALK. "I KNOW DAD ISN'T BACK YET." "BUT THINGS WILL BE ALRIGHT YOU'LL SEE."

LAST DAY. THIS PERSON IS OBVIOUS NOW. LIKE I HEARD THEM POKING THROUGH STUFF ALL NIGHT LONG. DAD CAME BACK WITH A NEW BATTERY AND WE PUT IT IN. WE DROVE AWAY SO FAST I BARELY SAW THE PERSON PEEKING BEHIND THE TREES WITH A MANIAC SMILE.

FAST FORWARD WHEN I GET HOME I CHARGE MY CAMERA AND LOOK AT THE FOOTAGE. TO MY HORROR A MAN IN A HOOD SMILES AT THE CAMERA AND ENDS THE RECORDING. I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WOULD HAVE SEEN IF HE DIDN'T STOP IT.