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Word Count: 686

Into the Wilderness Alone

Shauna looked forward to the camping trip. She and the other campers had spent weeks preparing for the trip by learning how to survive in the wilderness. They had practiced the different skills needed for surviving forty-eight hours alone while avoiding hypothermia, dehydration, and hunger.

Shauna and the other campers sat down with their camp leaders, Jill and Maria, to discuss priorities in the wilderness. Shauna was hoping that she would not need to trap any animals because she hadn't yet mastered tracking or trapping.

As the Sun set over the camp, the campers boarded the van that would deliver them to a remote area far from even the nearest house. Maria dropped Shauna at the first stop and said, "Here are a small knife, a wool blanket, and an empty water bottle." She put her hand on Shauna's shoulder and added, "I know you can do this."

Shauna smiled nervously and nodded. Then she turned away to head into the forest and sprinkle shells to mark a trail.

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“Well, I’d better find a clearing to build a fire.” A chill crept up Shauna’s spine. “Feels like it may be cool tonight.”

Shauna walked a bit farther and noticed an opening in the forest and a small, slow-moving creek. She gathered kindling and dry wood and searched carefully for a piece of flint. “Gotcha!” she said, reaching down.

Shauna methodically scraped some shavings with her knife to make a nest. She knelt down and began to strike the flint against her knife. Her eyes focused on the flint and blade as she worked diligently—she needed them to spark. After what seemed like an hour, she felt defeated. “Why is this so hard? I’ve started at least a dozen campfires this summer.”

Shauna began to panic as the dark and chill set in. Finally, sparks flew and hit the shavings, and smoke began to rise.

Shauna smiled, admired her accomplishment, and wiped the sweat from her forehead. Sweat and cold air would have been a dangerous combination with no fire. Shauna stood and approached the creek. She crouched and scooped up water in her hand. She tested the water

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by tasting just a pinch of it, just as she had learned during survival camp, and it tasted clean and smooth.

By now it was pitch dark, so Shauna filled her water bottle and studied the area in search of a place to lay her blanket. Then she drank only a bit of water. If clean water stayed in good supply, Shauna could stay properly hydrated.

The next day, Shauna set traps to catch animals, but every time she checked the traps they were empty. She gathered nuts and berries that she had learned were safe to eat, but her stomach felt empty and hunger pains started. Aware that she was wasting energy, Shauna checked and rechecked the traps until nightfall.

That night, making the fire came easy, but Shauna didn't sleep much because she kept hearing animal noises. She thought she spotted a bear, and for a moment she was overcome by fear. She reminded herself that she just had to make it through the night.

When the sunlight pried open her eyes, Shauna felt her stomach rumble. Slowly she stumbled over to one of the traps. Nothing. She sighed and walked to the creek.

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She peered bleary-eyed into the water and saw a fish near the surface. In a flash, she grabbed her pocket knife and stabbed it into the fish. “Bingo! Breakfast!” she shouted triumphantly.

Shauna knew it was the turning point—she had conquered hypothermia, dehydration, and now, officially, hunger.

Shauna later packed up her campsite and headed back toward the camp van, following the trail of shells. Ahead she saw Maria standing at the end of the trail. “I knew you could do it, Shauna!” Maria shouted, her voice a mix of relief and honest glee.

“It wasn’t easy, but I’m glad that I did it.”

As Shauna climbed into the van, Jill hugged her tightly and handed her a wilderness survival badge.

“Great job, Little Sis! I’m so proud of you!”