

Horseflies

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With a gulp I reached for the door handle and stepped onto the gray cement. Forest songs filled my head as I observed my new home, a patch of sunlit grass surrounded by green trees that swayed back and forth above us. We had arrived at Yancy Mills Camping Grounds, the most beautiful camping area in all of Southern Missouri. My mind filled with wonder as I looked down to where the river rushed. "I wonder what will happen this year..." I thought. The truth would be almost too much to handle.

"Wake up Maria, come on." I rolled over; what was the meaning of this disturbance?

"Uggh." I rubbed the sleep from my eyes and pushed off the sleeping bag. Before me stood my mother, fully dressed and awake ready for whatever the day would throw at her. While I, grumpy in the early morning sunlight, sat in a daze unable to grasp reality.

"Walk time." She smiled. Unhappily I got up, changed, and made my way out of the old tent that reeked of a lifetime in a basement. I sat down heavily on the wooden table laden with leafy shadows from above. My mom handed me a water bottle, took my limp hand, and we were off. The forest rose around us as we made our way along the small dirt trail around all the overgrown plants that stood in our way.

"Too much green...." I mumbled. Around us green was all I saw, I felt trapped in an ocean of it no matter which way I turned.

"Calm down. We're almost to the Blossom Rock." My mother, far ahead of me, called back. On numerous accounts I found myself karate-chopping through unexpected spider webs or stumbling into poison ivy which bordered the trail until we finally reached the rock which was truly many huge rocks jutting up out of the ground. At its top, grass and trees grew above the canopy of the forest. With new found stamina of the hope of an adventure, I pulled myself up and up the mossy rocks until I was at the very top. The foliage of vines and trees encircled my view as I sat pushing the highest trees limbs out of my face. From far below I heard my mother calling muffled tones through the trees.

"M..ra! ..ome down!Not..afe!" I looked down in awe, had I truly climbed *that* far? With a gulp I slowly scoured down the rock face and ran after her. The rest of the walk was in silence as we traveled along. I looked ahead, just the same path, over and over; how boring. I peered down at my feet for new scenery. I blinked my eyes, what was that I saw? I stopped in my tracks and bent down to take a closer look at my ankle. A hundred little red dots were walking up my leg!

"Gaahhhh! Help!" I hopped over to my mother and grabbed a leaf to try to scrape off the little deer ticks who hunted for my flesh. With pushing effort we raced back to camp to get the rest off.

After the terror with the little red beasts, we decided to check out the river. With blow-up boat and swimsuits in tow, we pushed through the reeds to the water's edge. The sparkling water gleamed in the sunlight while down at the bottom brown tadpoles swam lazily. We jumped into the little boat and did our best to paddle down the shallow river. Not long after we had gotten in, we turned a bend to find two families sitting on the beach next the "swimming hole." I sat in front trying to look important as I paddled, but then my weight started to shift. "Please no. Please," I thought, and I went head first into the deep, cold water. My skin was met by the chilly, spring fed water that sucked the air out of my lungs. Trying to stand up I ran into the boat, only embarrassing myself even more.

"Colder than you expected, right?" One of the ladies smiled on the beach.

"Very," I said as I tried to scramble back into the boat. Deciding to dry off, my mom dragged the boat onto the shore and started talking to the two mothers as I sat grasping my towel.

"Hi." One of the boys smiled, and before I knew it we were carrying on a conversation. As the day progressed, Jessie (the boy) and I became friends as we gritted our teeth and jumped into the frigid water. Late in the afternoon, the horseflies started coming out, so as soon as we heard their evil buzzing we'd scream and I'd hide under the boat while he went screaming through the water. Soon though, the sun began to sink behind the horizon, and it was time for him to go. We walked up to where our cars waited, (my mom had brought our car down to the parking lot). "We come here every Sunday afternoon, you know." He stared down at his feet. "So, bye. See 'ya later."

"Yeah, bye," I looked down, my face a deep mulberry blush. I watched as he got in his truck and drove away before Mom and I headed in the opposite direction.

The next day passed in silence, going on a walk, swimming once more, and eating macaroni and cheese made on

a little green camping stove. That evening my mother sat by the fire trying to pluck out a song on the guitar (she can't play), so I snuck away to the river with the boat. Fog was just starting to appear above the sunset-colored water.

Pushing the boat out to where it reached mid-calf, I jumped in and lazily, inch by inch, moved down the river. The night seemed eerily quiet as I noted the beauty of silence around me. Already the possibility of swimming was gone, too late in the day to risk jumping into 50 degree water. It was finally a time to relax and be calm. I thought of the many adventures I had already had: hiking, Jessie, swimming, horseflies. My eyes widened in disbelief...There on the boat sat the fattest and biggest horsefly I had ever seen. 'I will not be bitten,' I thought, 'It is a bug and I shall squash it,' I reminded myself.

With lightning speed the horsefly (despite its huge size) took to its wings, surrounding me with its horrendous song. I jumped over the edge of the boat to the only safety I could find in the very shallow and fast-moving water and covered myself with the upside-down blow-up boat.

"Mom!!! Help!!!" I screamed in terror; around and around the monster flew as I lay cowering in the freezing water. One of my water shoes came loose, and I was not quick enough to grab it. My mother came rushing down.

"I've got it!" She stood above me waiting for the fly to land, and then as if on cue, it landed on the boat right above where my head was. BAM!!! I received a brutal slap to the head.

Now my head hurt, I had lost a shoe, and I was frightened to death, freezing and unhappy.

I jumped up and hobbled as fast as I could back to camp, stepping on sharp rocks all the way.

Camping, it is the joy of summer, the burden of summer yet always anticipated. What will happen *this* year? It always seems to change, but last summer's trip was the best so far, a jewel to be treasured a lifetime. With a gulp I reached for the door handle and stepped into the car, the forest songs now silenced. "Till next year," I thought as we drove away the next morning. Time flies when you're having fun, on little horseflies' clear wings.