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## **My First Camping Adventure**

By Joel Baumwoll



Illustrated by:

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I was a kid of twelve and had never been in the woods. I was born in New York and lived in the city most of my life. So when my friend Mark Anderson invited me to go on a trip with him and his family to his uncle Lars Anderson's farm in Maine, I was *very* excited.

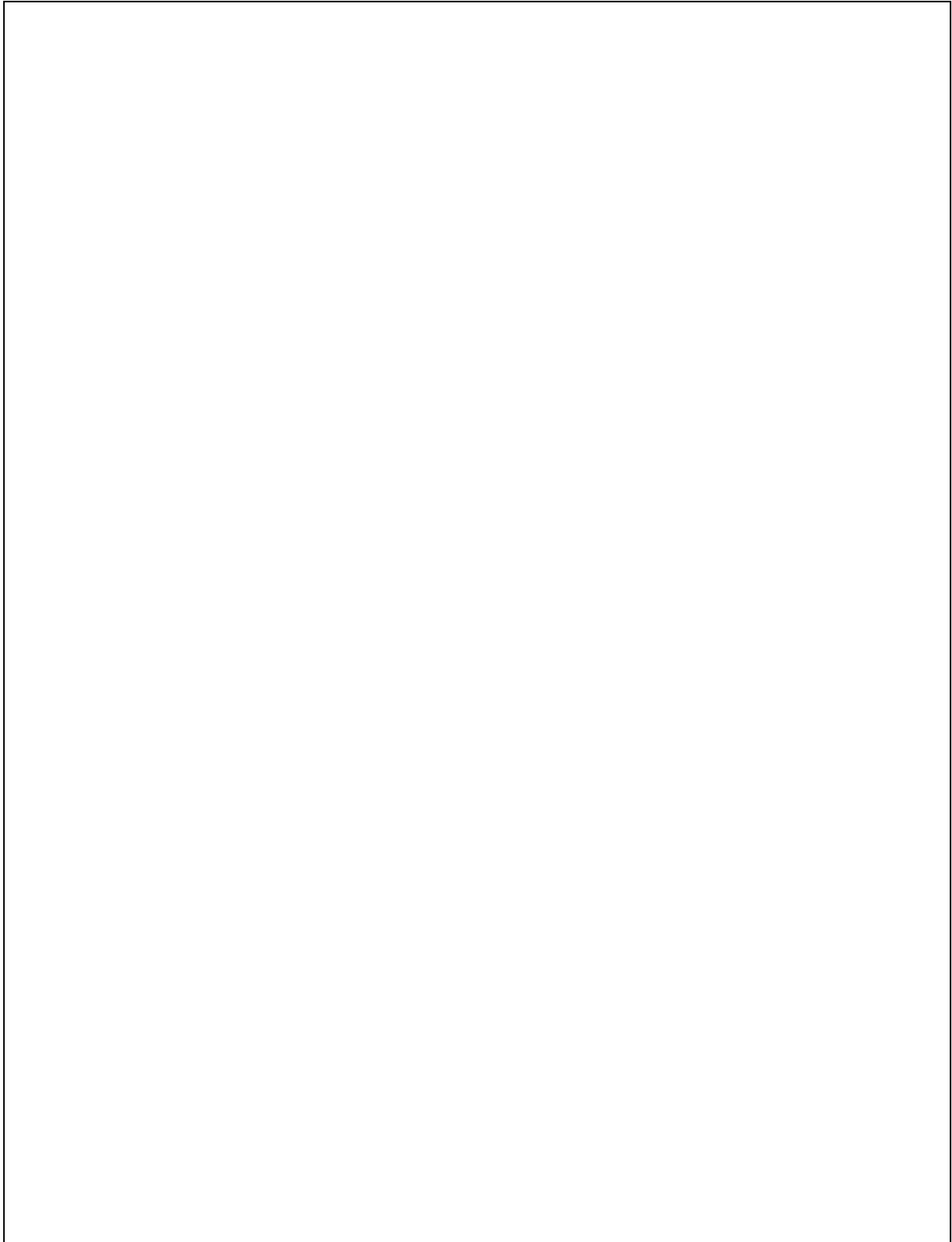
I had *no* idea what Maine was like. I knew it was a state up north that had a lot of forests, lakes and farms. Mark said his uncle lived on a farm in a very small town, and raised goats, sheep and chickens.

He *also* said we could sleep in a tent. Now that *really* sounded like fun! And Mark said we could shoot a real gun in the woods.

Our friend George Gugliotta came too.

Mark's father drove us, with his mother in the front, and the three friends in the back seat of the car. The trip took over seven hours, and when we finally got there, I was very tired and hungry.

Mark's uncle greeted us in front of his big white house. It was an old house with three floors and a big porch around it. Chickens were running around pecking at the ground and making "bwawk bwawk" sounds. I heard a cow "moo" and goats making funny sounds. This was a *real* farm!



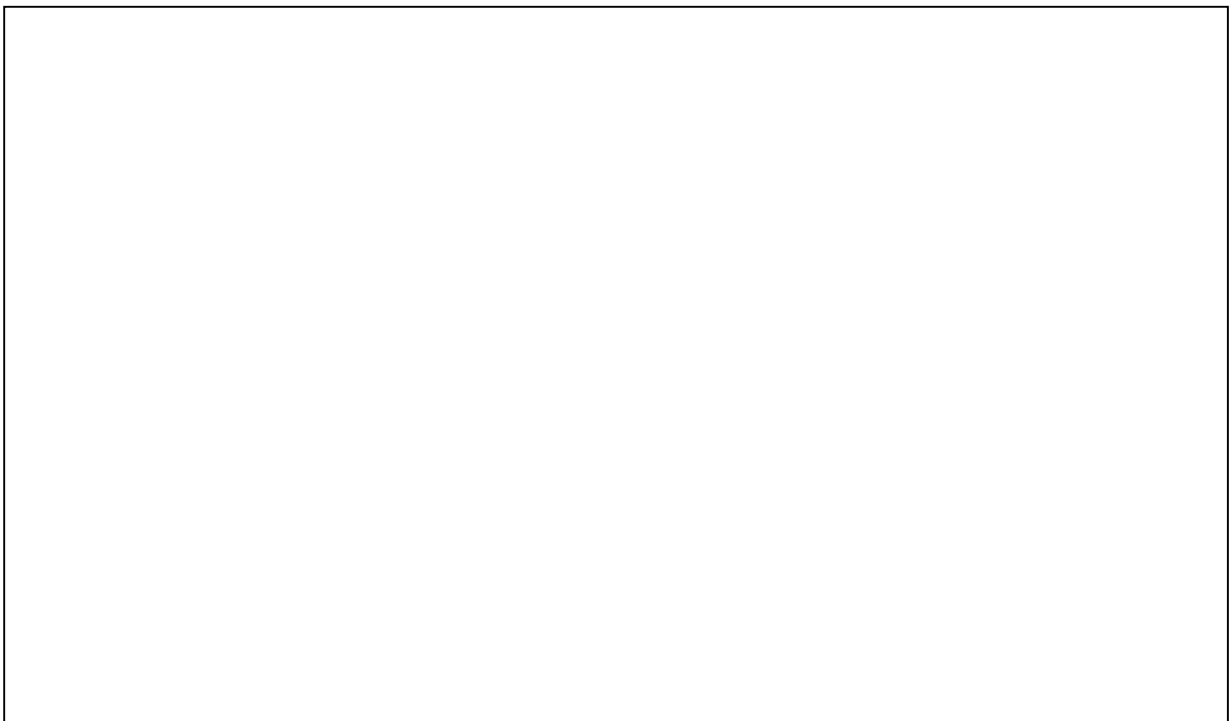
We took all our stuff out of the car. I had some clothes and my toothbrush in a small suitcase. This was the first time in my life I had taken a trip somewhere *without* my parents. It felt kind of strange and exciting.

Mark's uncle was a big man with blonde hair and a red beard. He was from Sweden and talked with an accent.

"So are you boys going tah sleep in the house or do yah plan to camp out?" he asked us.

"Camp out," Mark answered. We nodded in agreement.

"Okay then," he said, let's see where you can pitch your tent. Follow me." And he walked into the field in the back of his house. We walked a long way to the edge of the woods. I looked back and saw how far we were from the house.



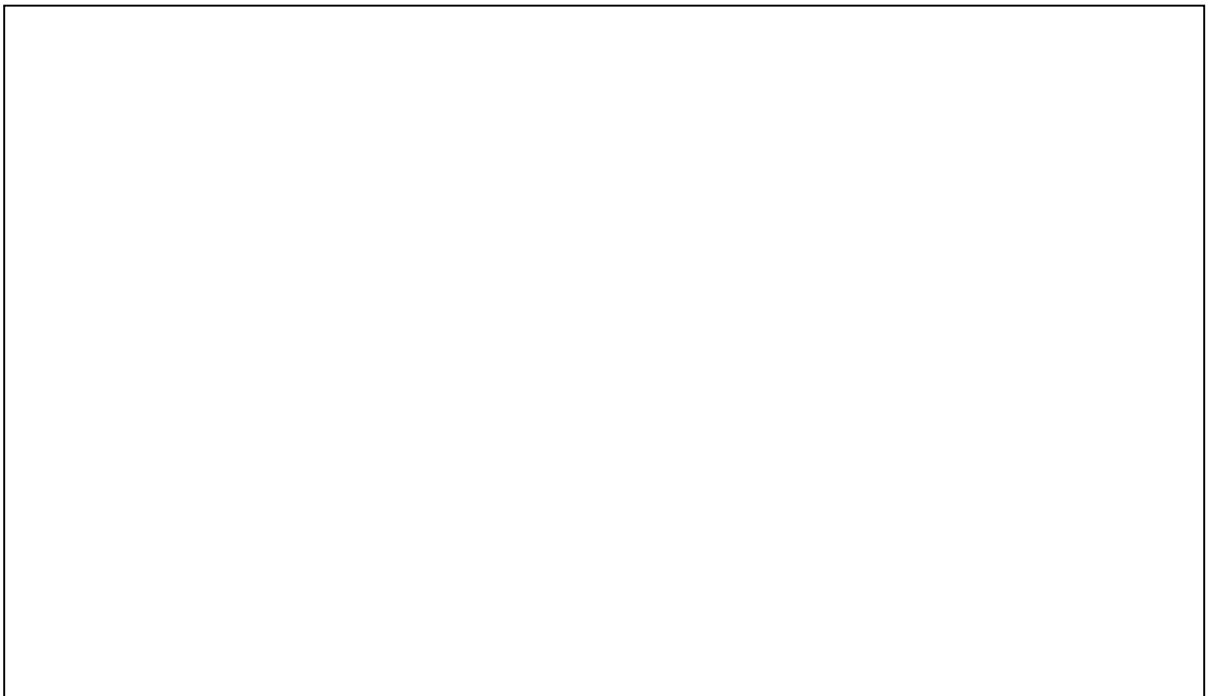
Finally, we came to a tree by a big stream. The ground was covered with small apples, and the stream made a burbling sound as the water rushed by over rocks. A bridge of logs crossed the stream. It was made of thick tree branches all cut to the same length.

"Are there animals around here, Uncle Lars?" Mark asked.

"Oh yah," his uncle answered, "we got snakes, cougars, wildcats, raccoons, skunks, deer and bears."

I wasn't too sure I liked the sound of that! "Excuse me," I said, "do the snakes bite?"

"Oh yah," Lars answered, "there are rattlesnakes and they can kill yah if you don't get the poison out quickly. They live in the rocks by the stream. I wouldn't go near there if I was you." And he pointed to a rocky area on one side of the stream.



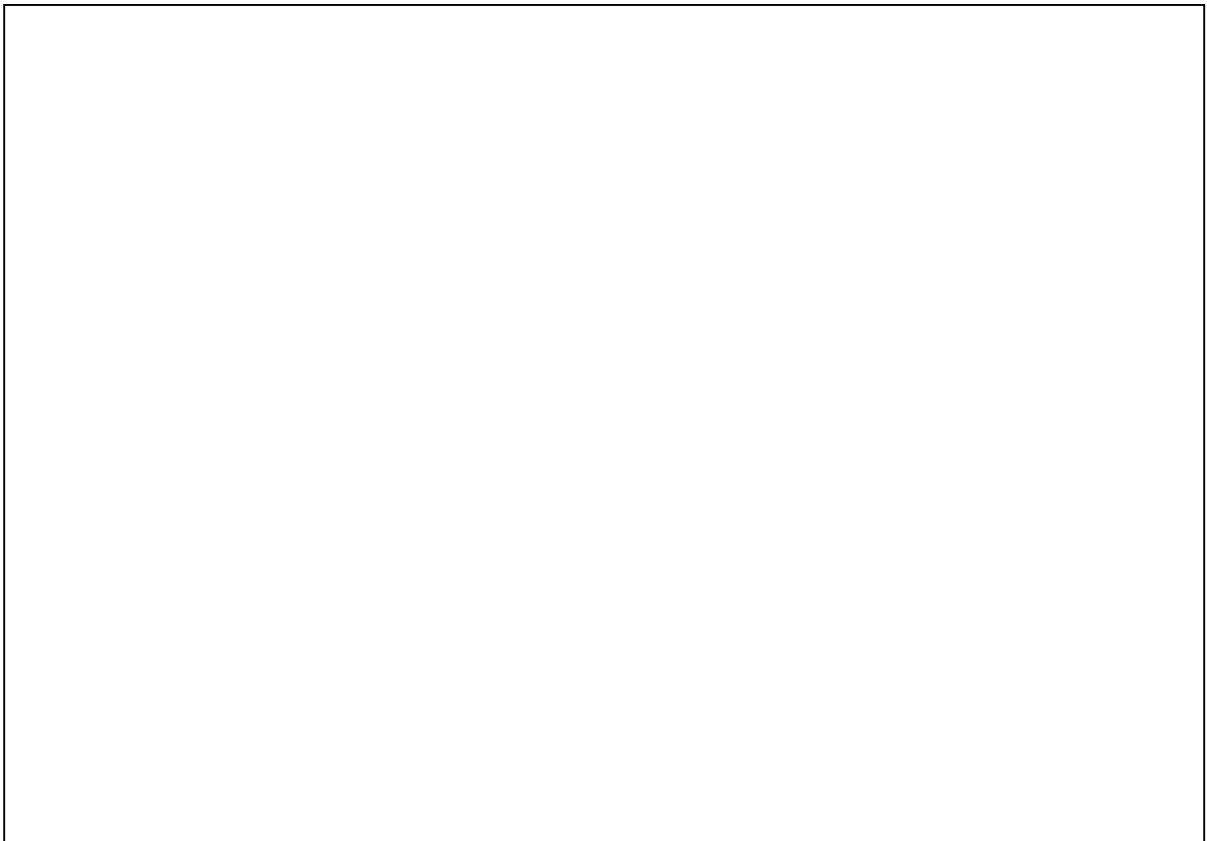
"And there are *bears?*" my friend George asked, sounding a little scared.

"Oh yah, bears fer *sure*," Lars said. "They like to come to the stream at night for a drink and to eat these apples." He pointed to the ground and all the little apples lying around.

"What should we do if a bear comes *here?*" George asked.

"Well, they won't bother yah much if you don't bother them," Lars said. But if you hear what sounds like a big animal over at the stream, I would be *very* quiet, so not to attract his attention. And make sure yah don't have *any* food around your tent, of he'll come over for sure."

I was starting to think that camping might not be such a good idea.



"What if the bear comes *near* our tent?" I asked.

"Well, if I was you, I'd be *very* quiet. If the sounds get close, I would open the zipper *very* slowly, push the flaps aside, AND RUN LIKE HELL!"

"Run like hell" seemed like good advice.

Mark's uncle said goodnight and went back to the house.

So we set up the tent, put our sleeping bags inside, made a fire, and toasted marshmallows.

It got very dark and we could hear the sounds of owls hooting, coyotes howling like angry dogs, and the stream burbling nearby. I had *never* experienced anything like this, and I was a little scared. But I would never tell Mark or George that, because I did not want them to call me a "fraidy cat."



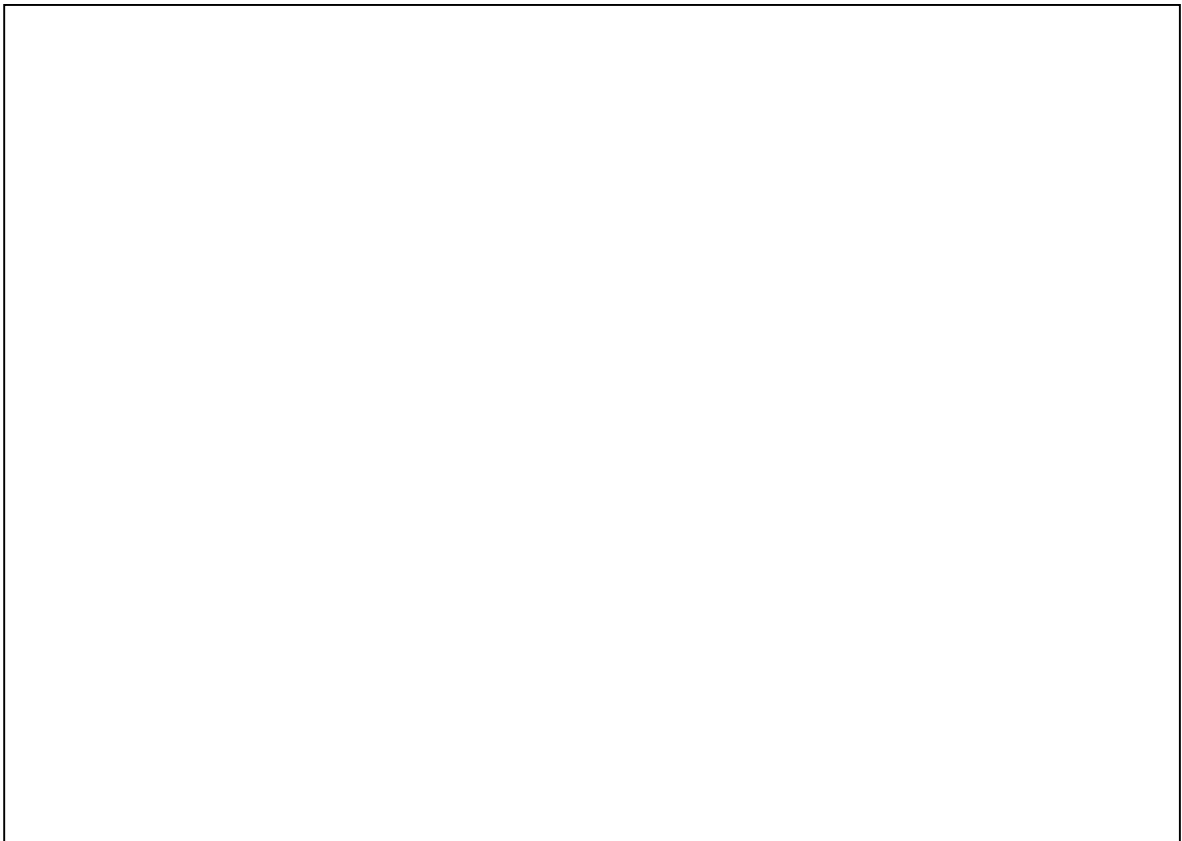
"George," asked Mark, "are you scared?"

"Me scared?" he said, "*no way.*" But I could see him looking around every time we heard a sound in the woods. "I bet he's scared," I thought, "and he won't say so."

After a while we decided to go to sleep, so we went inside the tent, zipped the door shut and got into our sleeping bags. It was totally dark.

I could not fall asleep.

Then I heard some sounds outside. There were shuffling noises and the sound of splashing and slurping. Some *animal* was drinking water from the stream.





"Mark," I whispered, "do you hear that?"

"Yeah" he said instantly. He had been lying there awake too. Listening.

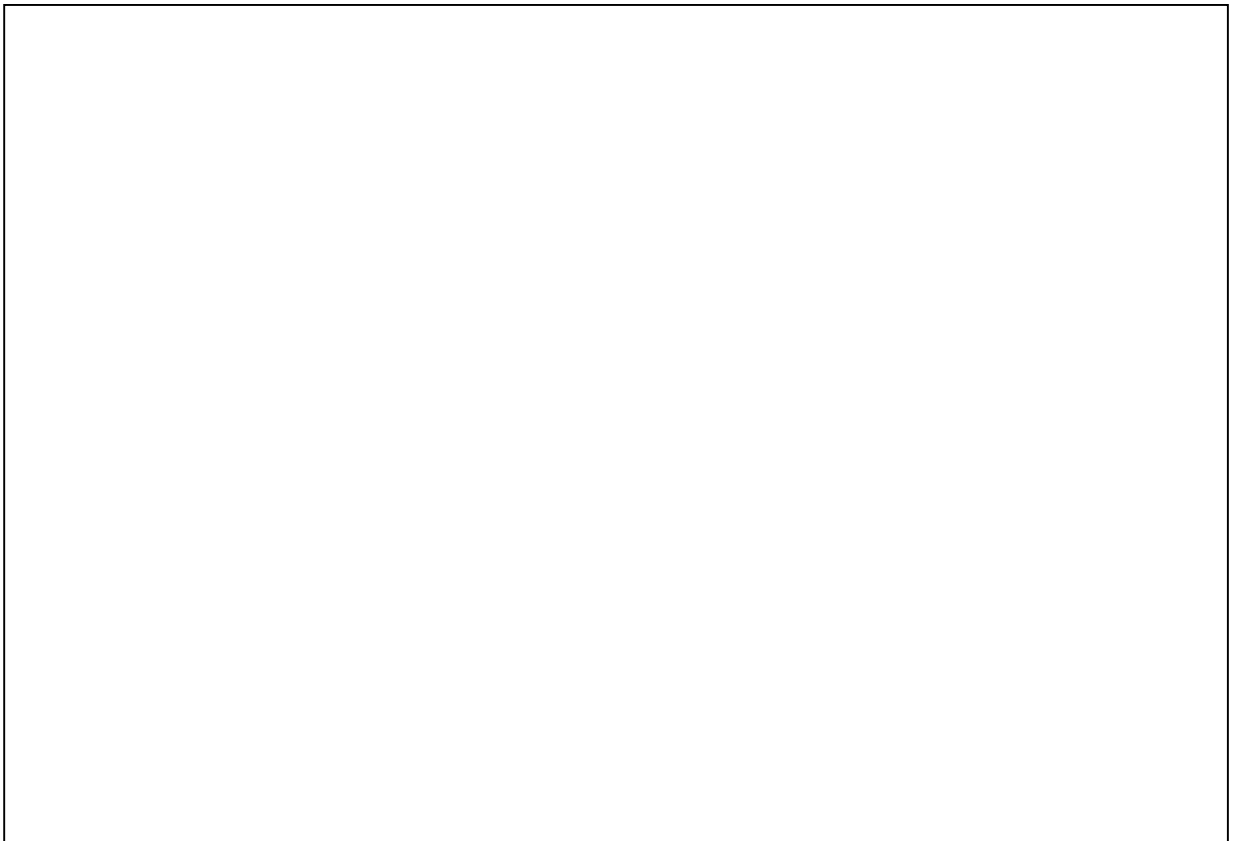
The sounds got closer. It sounded like a *big* animal. Of course, we could not see anything from inside the tent in the dark night. We could only hear the sounds.

"George?" "George?"

No answer.

"George, are you awake?"

"Yeah," he said in a quiet voice. "I hear it too."



Now we could hear *breathing* sounds. And *chewing* sounds. Whatever it was, it was eating apples *very close* to our tent.

We lay very still. Then Mark said, "I think we should get outta here."

So he quietly pulled the zipper down and opened the front of the tent very wide.

We got up slowly in a crouch, and then Mark said "Let's go."

AND WE RAN LIKE HELL!



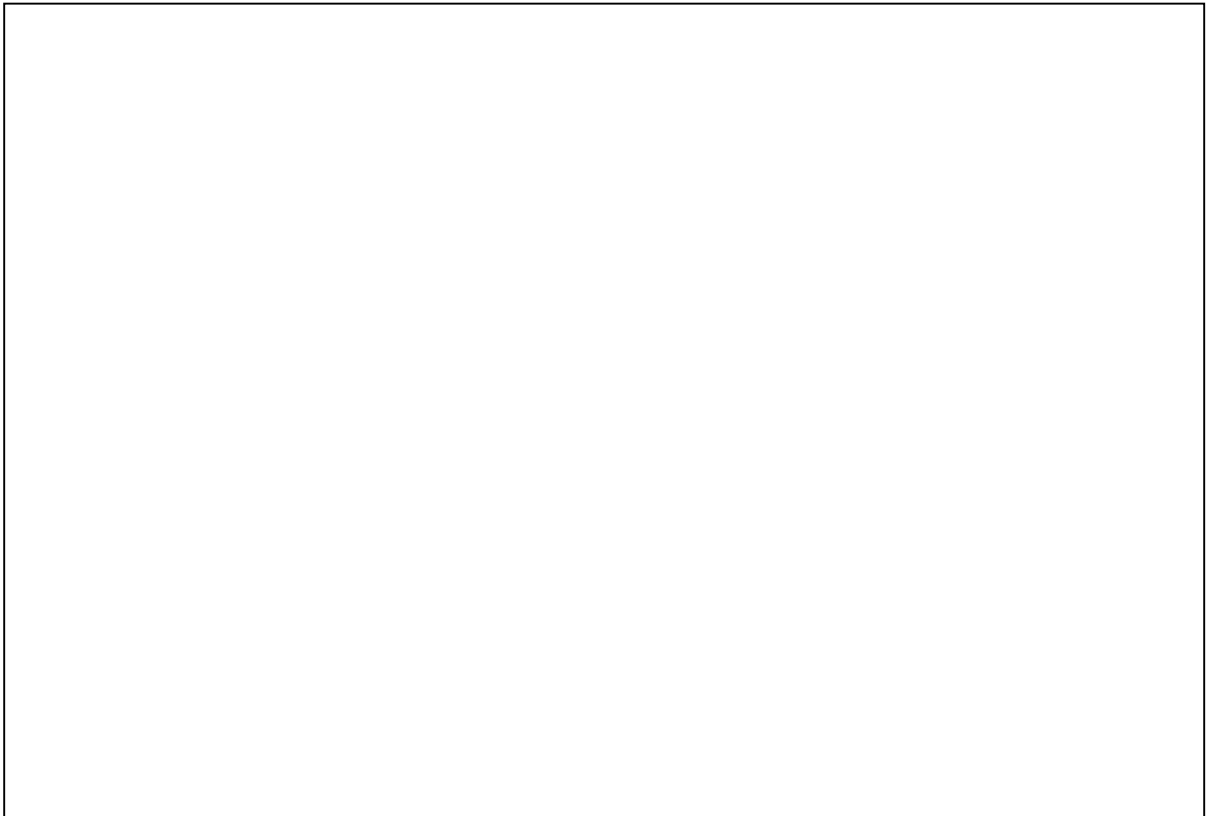
In our underwear, we dashed across the field to the farmhouse in the distance. It was dark and locked. No one came when we banged on the door, scared as all get out.

"There's a bear!" Mark yelled. "Let us in." But no one came.

So we decided to go into the car and that's where we spent the rest of the night. It was not very comfortable, but at least we felt safe.

In the morning, Uncle Lars came out and saw us in the car. He laughed. "I guess you boys met a *bear* last night."

We were cold, tired and hungry. We went inside and had a breakfast of pancakes, bacon, eggs and sausage, with big glasses of milk Mark said came from his uncle's cow. The eggs came from his chickens.



I was used to getting food from the store, so this was new to me. The milk tasted very creamy.

Later, we went back to our tent with Lars, and he pointed out the marks on the ground. "Yup, there *was* a bear here last night. He was a *big-un* alright. Look here." And he pointed to the footmarks in the loose earth. They were bigger than our feet.

"Look there," he pointed to the log bridge. Some of the big branches were tipped up in the water and they had deep claw marks on them. "The bear fell off the bridge getting a drink, and he made those claw marks climbing back up."

So there *was* a bear! Good thing we remembered his advice, and RAN LIKE HELL!



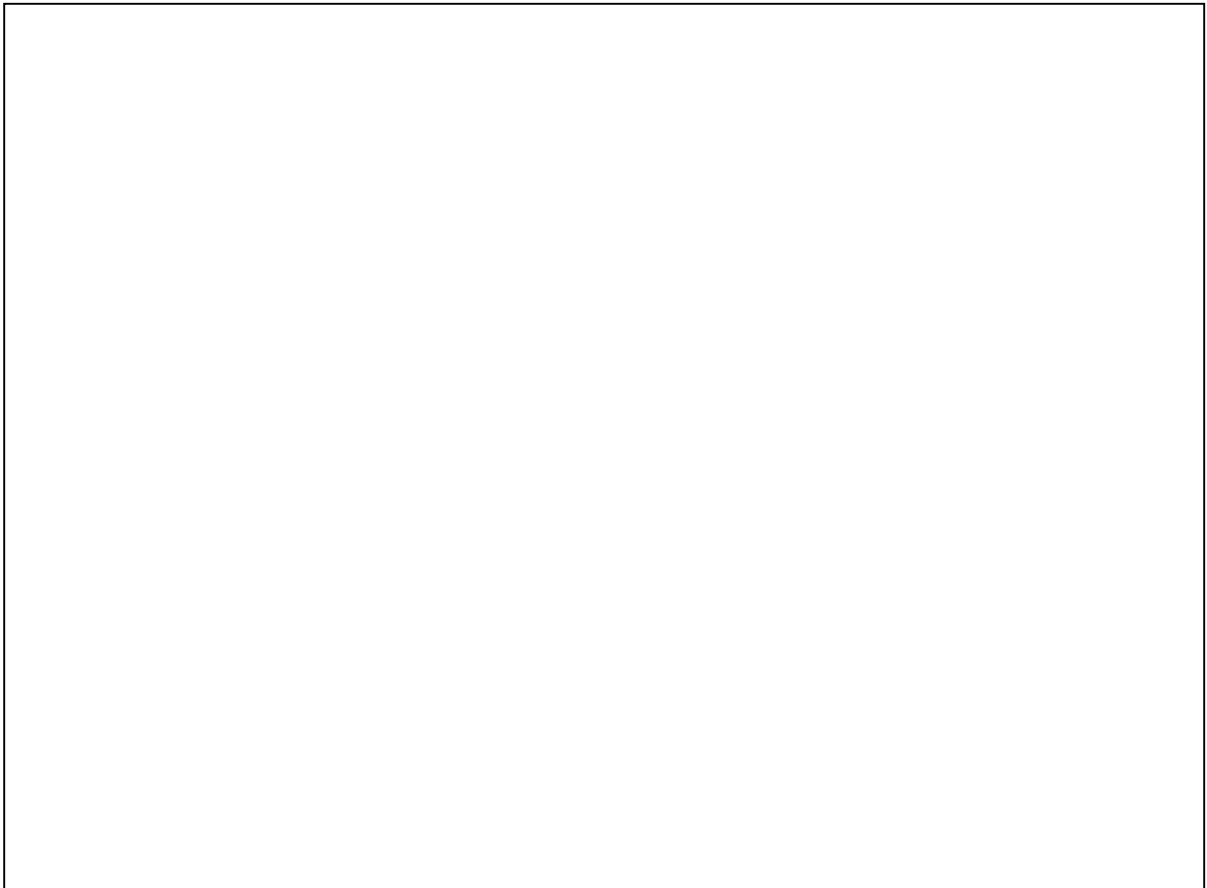
Then Uncle Lars said, "My neighbor called this morning and said he surprised a big black bear in his barn. Said it was carrying a bag of chicken feed when he opened the door. Said the bear was *so* big, it stood up with the bag and *crashed* right through the door. Broke it."

"You boys planning to camp out tonight?"

We looked at each other and all three of us said at the same time "NO WAY!"

Uncle Lars smiled.

We spent the rest of the trip sleeping in the farmhouse. One night of camping in the Maine woods was quite enough for us.



My First Camping Adventure/Questions. Answer the questions. p.14.

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1. How old was the boy in the story? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where did the boy in the story live?

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3. Who invited the boy in the story on a trip?

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4. Who else was invited?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.15.

5. To which state were they going?

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6. To whose house were they going?

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7. What kind of a house did the uncle live in?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.16.

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8. Had the boy in the story ever been on a farm before? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many hours did it take to get to the farm?

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10. What were some of the animals on the farm?

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11. What did Mark's uncle look like?

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12. What country was Mark's uncle originally from?

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13. Where were the boys planning to sleep?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.18.

14. What made a burbling sound over the rocks?

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15. What kind of a tree was near the stream?

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16. What was on the ground around the tree?

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17. What was the bridge crossing the stream made of?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.19.

18. What were some of the animals that lived in the nearby woods?

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19. Where do the snakes live?

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20. What animals come to the stream at night to drink and eat the apples?

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21. How did the boys feel when they heard there were bears?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.21.

22. What did the uncle say the boys should do if a bear came near the tent?

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23. What did the boys make and toast outside the tent?

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24. What sounds could the boys hear in the night?

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hooting.

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howling.

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.22.

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25. Were the boys able to sleep? \_\_\_\_\_

26. While they were in the tent, what sounds did the boys hear?

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27. When the sounds got closer, what did they hear?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.23.

28. What was the animal they heard doing?

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29. What did Mark do?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.24.

30. What did the boys do?

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31. How were the boys dressed when they ran from the tent?

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32. What did the boys do when they got to the house?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.25.

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33. Did anyone answer? \_\_\_\_\_

34. Where did the boys sleep that night?

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\_\_\_\_\_

35. How did the boys feel once they were in the car?

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36. The next morning, how did the boys feel?

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37. How did the milk from the cow taste?

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38. What did Lars show the boys when they went back to their tent?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.27.

39. What did Lars' neighbor see in his barn?

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40. What was the bear carrying?

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My First Camping Adventure/Questions cont'd.

p.28.

41. Where did the boys sleep for the rest of the trip?

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My First Camping Adventure/Answers. Check your answers with those below. p.29.

Answers

1. 12.
2. New York City.
3. His friend, Mark Anderson.
4. George Gugliotta.
5. Maine.
6. Mark's Uncle Lars Anderson.
7. A big white farmhouse.
8. No.
9. Over 7.
10. Chickens, a cow, and goats.
11. A big blonde-haired man.
12. Sweden.
13. In a tent in a field in back of the house.
14. A stream.
15. An apple tree.
16. Small apples.
17. Logs.
18. Snakes, cougars, wildcats, raccoons, skunks, deer, and bears.
19. In the rocks by the stream.

My First Camping Adventure/Answers cont'd. Check your answers with those below.

p.30.

20. Bears.

21. Scared.

22. RUN LIKE HELL!

23. A fire and marshmallows.

24. Owls; coyotes.

25. No.

26. Shuffling, splashing, slurping.

27. Breathing; chewing.

28. Eating apples.

29. Quietly pulled down the zipper.

30. RAN LIKE HELL!

31. In their underwear.

32. Banged on the door.

33. No.

34. In the car.

35. Safe.

36. Cold, tired, and hungry.

37. Creamy.

38. Bear tracks and claw marks in the bridge logs.

39. A big black bear.

40. A bag of chicken feed.

41. In the farmhouse.