

Nature's Gift

It was the cold chilly month of December. Me and my friends were at Science Camp, which in my opinion, was one of the best trips ever. One day, we were walking on a extremely lengthy trail when our leader mentioned that near the end of the hike, she had a surprise for us. This immediately made us dream up the many possibilities on what the surprise might be.

“Maybe it’s more chocolate trail mix!” one of my friends said. “No way,” another exclaimed, “it’s probably extra free time near a river!” As my friends continued to argue with each other, I kept thinking about what the surprise actually would be. My thoughts kept bouncing around in my head. There were so many possibilities I couldn’t decide!

After hiking for what seemed like hours, my leader declared that we were there! She pointed at a few wooden benches and told us to sit on them. We did as she said, eagerly waiting for what the surprise would be! “The surprise is going to be a solo hike!” she said happily. The other kids looked at each other. *What is a solo hike?* I wondered to myself.

The leader continued. “Me and our chaperone, Advaith’s dad, are going to go ahead to the end of the trail. Along the way, we are going to place cards on the ground. You have to follow the cards to reach the end of the trail.” All of a sudden, it hit me. *We were going to hike the rest of the trail alone!* I was so excited, I could barely sit on the bench!

One by one, my leader called names for the solo hike. Each time a name was called, one kid excitedly got up from the bench and began walking along the path. After some time, I wondered if my name would ever be called. “Advaith?” I quickly looked around to see who called my name. It was my leader! Finally! I jumped out of my seat and sped off onto the trail.

The trail was really peaceful. The soft crunch of the dirt underneath my black boots was really relaxing, and it was quieter than a library. The trees gently swerved in the light, gentle

breeze, as if they were trying to convey something to me. “Wow,” I thought to myself, “this is really relaxing.” I kept following the cards that were on the ground. Soon afterwards, I noticed that the cards had messages written on them! I kneeled down and read the text on the card. “Take a deep breath.” I stood up and inhaled a large amount of air. The cool air entered my lungs, and for a brief moment, I felt sudden calmness from within me. After exhaling, I smiled and gazed at the lovely wilderness. Green trees and bushes, birds chirping, small rocks. It was like a paradise. A paradise in the wild.

I continued following the cards on the trail, wondering about what might be at the destination. I tried to hear the chatter of the children that reached the end, but I couldn't! I tried harder. Silence. “What happened to everyone?” I thought to myself. I began to pick up my pace. I was now going along as a slow jog, and I had the feeling that I was closer than ever! My legs hurt a little bit, but that didn't stop me! “Almost there, almost there.” I peered down, looking for the next card. “Where is the next card?” I began to panic. I was jogging so fast I probably went the wrong way! I had this unpleasant feeling that I was lost. Lost in the great vastness of the woods. I was about to retrace my steps, when someone called my name! “Advaith!” I continued walking forward. It sounded like... my dad!

I looked straight to my left side and saw my leader and my dad! They both had gigantic smiles across their faces. “Congratulations!” my leader said, smiling, “you made it to the end of the trail! Now, show off your best moves!” She pointed to my dad, who was holding his phone. I grinned and started dancing. I hate dancing, but I did it this time for the sheer fun of it. After my dance, I walked over to my leader. “So, what now?” I asked her. She smiled at me. “Look over there” she replied. She pointed to something farther off from the cliff we were standing on. I walked over there to see what it was.

Nothing! There was nothing to see. All there was were a lot of dark green trees and small brown pebbles. I kicked the tiny pebbles and they tumbled off into the bushes below. I scratched my head. I couldn't process it. What am I supposed to look at? "Are you confused?" my teacher said to me. I turned around to face her. "Yes," I replied, "what am I looking at? All I see are rocks, trees, the sunset, and other stuff in nature."

"You are looking at the beauty of nature." she said calmly. *The beauty of nature?* I wondered. I looked back at the wilderness, and saw something completely different! I saw the beautiful sunset, slowly sinking into the horizon, like water droplets trickling down a window on a rainy day. The bushes and trees were a lovely shade of green, and the light brown of the dust and pebbles contrasted perfectly with them. "Wow, you're right." I smiled.

"Now, take your journal and write about your experiences during the solo hike." She then walked away to congratulate the next kid. I pulled out my rain cover from my backpack and placed it on rough, rocky ground. I then sat down, reached into my backpack for my Science Camp journal and a pencil, and began to write. I wrote about my thoughts and feelings in the journal, and thought about nature's gift to us. I realized that nature can give us things that we can't see anywhere else. We can see amazing things, like interesting animals, unique trees and leaves, and hear calm, relaxing sounds. We shouldn't try to mess up this gift, because we may never get something like it again.