

Tent Tales

By ReadWorks

Toward the end of my summer, Mom decided to spring a “vacation” on me. I say “vacation,” because what she suggested as a relaxing getaway was actually the worst idea in the world for someone wanting rest and relaxation. If you wanted to take some time off and rejuvenate, wouldn’t you pick a fancy spa or a nice hotel or a luxurious beach resort to go to? But when my mom gets tired of working (she’s a nurse, and works a lot of early-morning shifts), she likes to go on hikes.

Not that I don’t like outdoorsy things: earlier this summer I raised a butterfly, and I love planting things. But what I want to do when I’m tired is sit by a pool. Hiking is *hard!* I’d more likely take a vacation from hiking than I would go hiking on vacation.

But there Mom was, standing in the kitchen with a map in one hand and a tent pole in the other. She was poking me with the pole as I tried to eat my toast.

“Mom. Seriously? I don’t want to go camping. I want to ride my bike and go to the pool,” I whined.

“Anne, I already reserved a campground for us. It’s not the backcountry. And it’s only for three days.” Mom stopped poking me with the tent pole.

“Ugh. I hate bugs and I hate sleeping on dirt.” I knew I was being a pain, but I said it anyway.

“That’s what bug spray and sleeping pads are for.”

The case was closed. Mom said we were leaving the next day— Friday—and I went upstairs to pack a bag while she went to the grocery store. *I forgot to tell her to get marshmallows, I thought as I angrily shoved a sweatshirt into my duffel. If I’m going to be outside in the woods, I at least want to make s’mores. Figures I’d forget something like that. And Mom’s such a health nut, there’s no way she’d buy them on her own.*

In the morning, we wrestled the tent and a cooler into the car. It only took an hour to get to the campground, but it took two hours to set up the tent. The plot mom had reserved for us was damp with rain from earlier in the week, and I had to scrape out a mountain of ashes from the lonely grill. The picnic table was covered in ladybugs.

“This is already awful,” I said, a little too loudly.

“Well, it’s about to get worse, then, little lady. Put on your hiking shoes.” Mom hammered the last tent stake into the ground, and disappeared under the flaps.

I wanted to ask how long that first hike was going to be, but I didn't have to. The trailhead (which was already a fifteen-minute walk from our campsite) had a signpost that read: *Oak Crest Trail: 6m loop*. Six miles, in case you were wondering, is not far when riding a bike but is really far when you are walking up rocky hills. I killed a mosquito that was sucking the blood out of my calf.

"Ugh." That's all I had time to say, and then I had to run to catch up with Mom, who had already started walking.

For the first half an hour or so of the hike, we walked in silence. Mom stayed a good few yards ahead of me, and I struggled to keep her from hiking out of my sight. I could tell she was disappointed in my attitude, but I was too out of breath to even suggest I was sorry. And I wasn't really sorry, anyway.

I just couldn't believe that Mom didn't even ask me what I wanted to do. She had just decided to go, and since I'm not old enough to be home alone, I had to go with her. I stopped on the trail and watched Mom turn around a corner. Frustrated, I almost didn't notice the deer staring at me from the woods, but when it snapped a branch, I looked up.

It was a buck, with tiny fuzzy antlers adorning its head, and it gazed at me as it took a bite out of a frothy green bush. A butterfly sank and rose and landed on one of the buck's antlers, just for a split second. And then the buck and the bug took off.

The sight managed to calm me. I ran to see Mom, and found her standing by a raspberry bush. She picked one and threw it at me. I caught it and popped it into my mouth.

"I'm sorry, Mom."

"You should be," she said, but she laughed. "I know you're not an outdoorsy gal. Just be glad I didn't pick a ten-miler, eh?"

"This isn't so bad. I saw a deer!"

The rest of the hike took two hours, mainly because it was hilly and I am slow. When we finally reached our camp, I had seven bug bites and a little sunburn, and even my mom was tired. She started the grill and I set up our picnic table, brushing away the ladybugs from one end so we could sit.

We grilled corn and my mom made jambalaya in a saucepan, and we sucked down homemade lemonade as it got dark. I was regretting the fact that we didn't have dessert when Mom asked me to go find two thin sticks.

“What? Why?” I stacked my plate on top of hers as she pulled the jug of water from the car.

“Because,” she started, “we have to roast these on something, don’t we?” From under the backseat, Mom held up a bag of marshmallows. *She had gotten them after all!*

“Mom! Graham crackers too?”

“And chocolate.” She almost dropped the water and the marshmallows when I ran up to hug her.

Together we set our first few marshmallows on the fire, threatening one another with the sticky remnants.

“Have you ever had peanut butter on a s’more?” Mom asked me. “Because it’s the best thing ever.”

* * *

I went to bed wrapped up in my sleeping bag, on top of a remarkably comfortable sleeping pad that night, thinking about how camping actually might not be so bad. That, or my mom is just the coolest.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does Anne’s mom decide to do for their vacation?

2. What is the main problem Anne faces in this story?

3. Read the following sentences.

"For the first half an hour or so of the hike, we walked in silence. Mom stayed a good few yards ahead of me, and I struggled to keep her from hiking out of my sight. I could tell she was disappointed in my attitude, but I was too out of breath to even suggest I was sorry. And I wasn't really sorry, anyway."

What can be concluded about Anne's attitude at this point in the story based on this information?

4. Why is Anne pleasantly surprised when her mother holds up the bag of marshmallows at the camp?

5. What is this story mostly about?

6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

"Toward the end of my summer, Mom decided to spring a 'vacation' on me. I say 'vacation,' because what she suggested as a relaxing getaway was actually the worst idea in the world for someone wanting rest and relaxation. If you wanted to take some time off and rejuvenate, wouldn't you pick a fancy spa or a nice hotel or a luxurious beach resort to go to? But when my mom gets tired of working (she's a nurse, and works a lot of early-morning shifts), she likes to go on hikes."

What does the word "rejuvenate" mean in this text?

7. What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

Anne doesn't like hiking or camping, _____ she whines and complains to her mother about it.

8. What are two things that happen on Anne's camping trip that make her feel that camping isn't so bad?

9. How does Anne's attitude towards camping change over the course of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

10. How does Anne's attitude towards her mom change over the course of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

