

One Shot

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8th grade

Librarian: Mrs. Anderson

Word count: 1,500 (not including title page)

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Scout camp has always been a long anticipated week of adventure, late nights, and no showering. Every scout camp involves the same principles: Merit badges, flag ceremonies, an afternoon free period, and The Camp Wide Games on the last day of the week.

For this particular scout camp, our troop was incredibly ready for The Games. We had about the most balanced team you could get. There was Hayden and Chris, our two geniuses, Isaac and Greg, our team's muscle, with Bryce and Justin as the team's divers. Finally, there was me, the team's best archer.

"Sam, we're gonna have you help with the golf ball challenge, the archery challenge, and the potato sack race," our Scoutmaster informed me. "Justin and Bryce, you'll be doing the golf ball challenge as well, Isaac and Greg will help with the potato sack race, and we'll have Justin and Greg be on our archery team. Hayden and Chris you two will cover the STEM science quiz. We only have one hour to complete the challenges so let's go!"

I set off immediately with Justin and Bryce to the nearest challenge: the golf ball challenge which would take place underwater. Some of the camp's staff had dumped over three hundred golf balls into a section of the lake. It was Justin, Bryce and my job to collect as many as possible in five minutes.

When we arrived, there were already two troops ahead of us. I watched as a scout surfaced from the lake with multiple golf balls clutched in his hand. It was then when inspiration struck, but I couldn't test my theory yet.

The minutes ticked away and soon it was my group's turn. As I walked onto the dock I took off my shirt. It was time to test my idea. As one of the lifeguards explained the rules I tied knots in the sleeves and neck of my shirt. I now had a bag.

"... Just put all of the balls you pick up into this bucket," The lifeguard was saying. "Is everyone ready?"

Bryce, Justin and I gave an affirmative nod. I put on my goggles and got ready to jump.

"Alright, on your mark, get set, GO!"

I leapt off the dock, diving as deep as I could into the murky water. Darkness and cold enveloped me, but before I knew it, I could see the bottom. Tons of golf balls littered the mud coated lakebed. I instantly started shoving the milky looking orbs into my makeshift bag. I had roughly twenty of them before my lungs forced my body to the surface. I gasped for air, but went straight back down for more balls.

After repeating this several times I heard the lifeguard counting down.

"Ten...nine...eight...seven..."

I swam over to the dock and emptied all of the golf balls from my shirt into the bucket. Justin and Bryce did the same.

The lifeguard began throwing our collection back into the lake tallying them as he went. After a few minutes he reached the last golf balls in the bucket. "Wow! One hundred and twenty-six golf balls! That's a new record! If you get over a hundred it's an automatic ten points."

"Awesome!" Justin exclaimed.

“Alright!” I cheered. “Let’s get going now. We only have forty minutes left.” The three of us split up and went our separate ways. My next challenge was the potato sack race.

When I arrived, Greg and Isaac were already there. There was no line.

“Are you three ready for a potato sack race?” A staff member questioned.

“Yeah, let’s do it,” Greg said.

“Okay, go ahead and get into those sacks over there,” The staff member gestured. “You have to hop around that tree and back to the starting line.” I pulled the sack up to my waist and bent my knees ready to jump.

“One, two, three, GO!”

I took off hoping as fast as I could, but Isaac was faster. I raced around the tree after him. I finished second with Greg in third.

“Nice job everyone,” The staff member said. “It’s a pretty easy ten points. You can’t really get any less. You can all go to your next challenge.”

Greg and I started running to the archery range while Isaac headed back to camp. The archery range was much farther than anticipated, and after lots of running, we finally arrived.

Justin was not there so, Greg and I sat on the gravel path and waited. I watched the other troops try the challenge. Three archers straddled a line drawing back their bowstrings. Their target was a platter sized blue disc that was fired into the air by a strange looking contraption. From what I saw it looked extremely difficult to hit. Just before our team’s turn Justin showed up. He was walking along the gravel path with a jug of orange juice.

“Where have you been?” Greg asked.

Justin raised his jug, "Sorry, I couldn't resist." I chuckled and turned my attention back to the range. It was our turn.

"You three next in line?" the Rangemaster inquired.

"Yes," I replied.

"Come on in then."

I walked into the range. We stood under a corrugated metal roof. The sun was to our backs. A good sign.

"Okay everybody; I'm Carina your Rangemaster. The objective of this challenge is simple enough: just hit the target and you get five points. Only one other troop has hit the target. You all get five arrows. Every time you hit the target it's another five points. You don't have to shoot every time we send up a target. If you lose one of my arrows you're done. Make sense?"

We all nodded affirmatively.

"You can pick up your bows now," Carina said. I walked to the middle of the firing line and unslung a bow from a hook.

"Whoever is on the far right will command when the discs will be launched," Carina instructed.

"You guys ready?" Greg asked. I nodded. "Fire!" He said. I let the first disc fly without shooting at it, so I could keep a picture of its trajectory in my head. Justin fired and missed. I failed to hit the next disc, and the one after that.

Soon Greg and I were down to one arrow each. Justin had none.

“You got this, guys!” My Scoutmaster called. I hadn’t noticed his arrival. I notched my arrow and drew it back to my cheek. My arm trembled slightly under the weight. I pulled back even farther and took in a deep breath to steady myself.

“Fire!” Greg called. The disc launched into the air. I didn’t think. I just let my arrow loose. I mentally willed my arrow to hit the target then marveled as it knocked it askew.

“YES!” I cried triumphantly. I did it! I hung my bow back up and ran to the disc. The arrow had pierced all the way through. I picked it up and held it above my head.

Greg came up next to me, “What are you doing?”

“Basking in glory,” I replied dramatically.

“Can I have it?” Greg asked expectantly. It was then that I realized what was going on. Greg thought that *he* had hit the target.

“You know I hit it, right?” I asked.

“No, I hit it.” He said.

“I’m sure I hit it.” I responded. “Who did you see hit the target?” I asked the Range master.

“You did. Well... maybe it was your friend. I guess I don’t really know.

“It looked like Greg hit it,” Justin pitched in.

“There we’ve got a witness,” Greg said to me. “I hit the target.” I watched in disbelief as He took the disc from me and had our Scoutmaster take a picture of him with it.

The walk back to the camp was one of mixed feelings. We had decisively won The Games, and yet I could feel a horrible fury building up inside of me. I *knew* I had hit the disc! There was nothing I hated more than someone else taking my credit.

That night everyone was celebrating over Greg around the campfire. I was unable to bear it any longer so I got up and walked into the woods. I leaned the back of my head against a tree and tried to calm myself down.

After being in the quiet I was finally able to think straight. If I always held this grudge against Greg who would that help? I would always be bitter and angry towards him. I would dissolve the friendship that we had gained together through our scouting experiences. I needed to do what I did back at the range with my arrow. I needed to just let it go.

That moment in the woods changed me forever. I realized two things that night. I could not let things offend me so easily, and I had to always give everything my best shot.