



## **Disastrous Directions Short Story Entries**

**Noah H., 12, Pennsylvania ~ 1<sup>st</sup> Place**

While taking a canoe trip down beautiful the Amazon River, I surveyed my supplies: a canteen, a cooler with ham and bread, rope, and a bush knife. I looked at my compass. *I don't need this.* So, I tossed it overboard. Monkeys chattered from the forest of green, red, yellow, and brown. As I came to a fork in the river I took out my map- go left and watch out for crocodiles.

*Great*, I groaned as I took the left fork. *Now I have crocodiles to worry about.* I continued on and after two uneventful minutes I saw a log in the middle of the river. It moved and swam toward me. *That crocodile doesn't look to scary* So, I reached down to pet it.

Suddenly the crocodile's tail shot down and splashed water all over me and into my canoe. Then the crocodile let out what I thought was a snarl and then it swam away.

I paddled to shore, but realized I had no bucket to bail the water with. So I bailed with my canteen. As I paddled on I thought *if one more crocodile gets near my canoe I'm going to whack it with my paddle.*

5...10...15...19...23...27...30 uneventful minutes. Then I saw some fish. I flipped in my Amazon River Travel Guide to the fish page. Wow those are piranhas. *I'm going to feed one some ham.* I put my hand with some ham on it in the water. A pirana shot towards me and would have bit my hand if I hadn't jerked it out of the water.

*Well if that isn't the most ungrateful fish I've ever met,* I thought. I continued paddling and finally stopped for lunch. I ate a ham sandwich and let the river carry me for awhile. Suddenly I realized the current was moving faster and faster. I was headed for rapids.

I saw the white caps and dangerous sharp rocks in the river. The canoe entered the rapids and started to leap around making it difficult for me to steer. Finally I made it out of the rapids and paddled to shore. When I got to shore I saw the canoe had a hole so I dragged the canoe onto land and let it drain. I went into the forest to get wood leaving my supplies in the canoe.

Suddenly I saw a snake slithering toward me. It was about 2.5 meters and its skin was black and brown. I started walking toward it. Just then I heard leaves rustle above me and a jaguar leaped from a branch above me and attacked the snake. I quickly ran back to my canoe to avoid being involved in the fight.

I pulled out my map and saw a town was just a little bit down river. I pulled my canoe into the water and started paddling. Water sloshed around my legs so I paddled as fast as I could. Finally I reached the town but it was deserted.....

## **Jesse M., 11, Iraq ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Place**

My mom drives me to Karate practice every day, except Fridays. On one particular, unfortunate day, we seemed to pass every corner at the wrong time. We opened the gate so my mom could back out. Apparently, I had forgotten to put the brick in front of the gate to hold it open. As she backed up, the wind blew in a sudden gust and the gate slammed closed on the side of the car making a gigantic dent. My mom got out of the car. She was on the rampage, but there was no time. I told her I was sorry and we got in the car.

At the roundabout, we took the second exit. I think I saw the radar camera snap a picture as we flew by. I decided to keep quiet about it, because it would have served as fuel to the fire. We skidded through the turn at the stoplight. I thought I saw a chicken crossing the road, but when I looked back all I saw were feathers floating everywhere. I whispered a prayer for the chicken's soul.

My mom's rampage had doubled in size, just as we reached the corner with the fish market. As we were driving, Toby gasped, "There's a flopping fish on the road!" It was too late. The front tire hit the fish and we skidded right past the turn. We had to find a place to U-turn. My mom was near boiling level. We decided to stay quiet.

We made it to the tunnel. At the next turn, my mom was beyond caring and hit three pylons. We turned right onto the main road. We went past the hospital and took the exit on the right toward the bridge. We made it to the big blue building, only to remember, it's Friday. When will I ever learn to look at the calendar and slow down?

## **Annalise B., 12, Arizona ~ 3<sup>rd</sup> Place**

### A Driving Disaster

I was exasperated! There had been nonstop traffic for 2 hours. After the traffic cleared away, I was stuck on a 40-mile stretch behind this extremely slow driver. I would never make to San Diego in time for my Archery tournament.

I cocked my head? What was that sound? Out of nowhere, rain started to fall. I gripped the searing wheel so tightly that my knuckles went white. The car swerved then swerved again. I should've checked the weather before I left my apartment.

All of a sudden, a giant truck roared in front of me. I swerved off the road and landed in a ditch. What a mess.

I was glad I wasn't hurt. I used my phone to call a tow truck. I settled myself for a wait. Once the tow guy got there, he took the toothpick out of his mouth and said, "Well, at least your car isn't damaged, but it will cost two hundred dollars to tow your car out." My eyes became the size of saucers.

As the tow truck drove away, I started my engine. At least it was sunny again so that I wouldn't slip for a second time. I looked down at my map and realized the orange juice I spilled on it this morning had made the map unreadable. I sighed.

In the distance I spotted a blue lake with little blobs moving around. Those must be people. I'll ask them for directions.

I parked my car and walked over to a picnic table where a family was eating sandwiches. Some kids playing a baseball game nearby laughed, having a good time. "Excuse me, could you give me some directions?" I asked.

"Why sure!" exclaimed a woman with puffy hair who must have been the mom of the family. While she was talking, a shout of "heads up!" rang out over the grass. A baseball flew through the air and landed with a crack on my windshield. I grimaced. I shouldn't have parked my car there.

"That will be \$300," said the man with Fred's Windshield Company on his navy shirt. I handed him a check and was on my way. This was an extremely expensive trip.

Suddenly, my car began to beep like it was possessed. The gas tank light flashed bright red. I had only 10 miles of gas left! I looked around frantically and spotted a gas station. I pulled in with relief. I should have been paying more attention to my gas gauge.

When my gas tank was full, I pulled out of the station. I rolled my window up so I didn't have to hear the noisy construction crew right outside the gas station. "What a day," I thought to myself. "I need to pay more attention to what I am doing." There was a jolt. I looked out my window. I had driven the car into lane of wet cement.

## Abby I., 13, Georgia ~ **Honorable Mention**

### Round Trip

It was that time again! Time for the annual trip to Daytona Beach! I like the beach and all but I dread the long ride over there. This year Mom announced that we would be using a different form of transportation, a plane.

As we arrived at the airport, I was quizzed on airport safety.

The boarding dock was crammed with people who had the exact same idea as ours. Beach balls and pool-noodles littered the floor along with flip-flops and discarded sunscreen. Babies were wailing and bratty little kids were acting like baboons! A couple of the kids my age were pretending to joust with pool-noodles! And if that wasn't enough, the guy in front of us didn't even bother to wear deodorant!

Once we got to the hotel I plopped down on the couch and fell asleep. The next morning when I woke up I went down to the beach and spent almost the whole day there. When I went back up Dad asked if I wanted to go to a restaurant down the street.

The restaurant was hanging over the ocean like a pier. Mouth watering smells wafted through the air. Buttered crab, and steamed shrimp, blended together with the salty aroma of the sea.

We sat down and a server that looked like a cross between Jar-Jar Binks and Stimpy brought us our food.

After dinner as I walked back to the hotel room, I thought of something. Tomorrow was my last day at the beach! Well at least I didn't have to take a car ride (ugh...) back home.

When I woke up the next morning I headed down to the pool not wanting to miss any minute of that beautiful day! It made me sad to leave! I was kind of happy though, especially since I wouldn't be in the car!

In the morning at the airport our flight got put on a 30 minute delay. Afterwards we were informed that the plane needed a part replaced, and that we would have to wait a whole day to leave!

Then came the most frequent wave of cursing that I have ever heard in my entire life! Mom stood there with her mouth open like a gopher hole as she told me to put on my earphones and watch YouTube on her phone to block out the language.

“Get him!” the mob yelled as they charged at the clerk. A terrible riot took place and the clerk hobbled away sporting a swollen black-eye.

We were then all relocated to a hotel and told to come back at 8:00 am the next morning. One by one we hit the hay.

In the morning at the airport our flight got put on a two hour delay. (How surprising.) Getting home made it all seem worth the trouble. After all of this, a car ride doesn't seem too bad!

## **Grace R., 11, Rhode Island ~ Honorable Mention**

I was walking down Maine Street on an early Wednesday morning by River-Stone Port, in California. A giggly group of girls were chatting by the shore; I just happened to overhear them.

“It’s going to rain cats and dogs!”

“Ha, you sound so serious!” I look up at the sky. Dark clouds were forming in the distance. Panic strikes me!

“At the rabies rate going on here this will be a bad one. I need to get out of here!” Suddenly, a tall man bumps into me from nowhere.

“Did I hear you need to get out of here?” He grinned.

“Yes, quite so! Do you have suggestions?” I asked.

“I certainly do! Our new cruise liner, the *Scamming Fox* is leaving this afternoon, would you like a ticket?”

“Well...”

“Of course you do!”

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Sitting on a deck chair, I lean over to look at the ocean. The cruise liner was large and sky blue. A four-year-old boy was looking over the edge.

“Mommy, Mommy, look! It’s a school of fish!” Blinking in surprise, I question the boy.

“Who is teaching them? Do they have a license?” I set down to my room to prepare a lesson without an answer. As I reach my room, a German Shepard, by the look of it, bounds towards me.

“Phoebe! Come back!” A teen rushed after the dog. Dashing into the nearest door, I find myself face to face with a waiter in the dining hall. Bustling me into my seat she asks,

“What would you like? We have Shepard’s Pie, freshly made!” I recoil in shock!

“*Shepard’s Pie!* You murderer!”

“Sir!”



“Where is my lawyer? Police! We have a murderer in the house!”

“Sir! Shepard’s pie is the *name* of mashed potato pie!”

“Oho! It’s a meat pie! There must be Shepard in it!”

“Sir! We are not uncivilized cannibals! We have lamb meat in our pie!”

“I see. Good day.” Frowning with disappointment, I strode to the library. I choose a book, with the peculiar name of *Funny Jakes*.

*Joke: ask a friend if you are a tree, say no.*

*Joke: say that Australia celebrates Christmas on July 25.*

Looking up, I check the date: July 25!

“Dearie me, we must celebrate!”

Practically jumping to the main deck, I get hold of the life boats on the edges of the cruise liner. After flipping them all over on the deck, I sigh happily.

“Now we can celebrate our ‘Upside-Down Country’s Christmas!” When a few people mowed down angry looks, a warning siren sounded; a large rainstorm was heading our way. Panicking, I took cover under a boat for hours until the “pitter-patter” cleared up. Lifting the boat, I saw a crowd of passengers clapping. The captain, smiling, led me to his quarters.

“Well, sir, you are our new hero. When the storm came, the water fell on the upside-down boats and leaked out our liner!” He cheered, shaking my hand. Well, this was quite a marvelous adventure I took!

## **Micah P., 12, Minnesota**

Today I am going to tell you how I got to Gull Lake Beach. First I pulled off onto County Road 15. As I pulled onto County Road 15 I got nervous because this is one of the biggest roads in the state. A car, all of the sudden, was on the wrong side of the road. We swerved, and we barely missed it. We went into the ditch and got stuck. We called the tow truck, and he was there in 15 minutes. In 2 miles we turned onto West Gate Road. As we drove through the woods a huge storm picked up, pushing trees down across the road. We tried to go and weave through them. As we went through, a tree almost hit us as we drove out of the storm. Then we turned left onto Gull Lake Road. When we were driving down the road, we drove by the lake. Suddenly an alligator slowly walked out of the water. We lost control of the car and ran into a tree. It fell right in front of the alligator's way. We kept driving until we got to a fork in the road. We turned right then we turned left onto Gull Lake Drive. We only had a little bit left to go, but all of the sudden it started to flood. We almost got washed away into the ditch. Out of nowhere the alligator was back. It laid right were the flood was coming from and he stopped the flood. We all drove quickly to a parking spot and ran down the steps to the sandy plain were waves crash against the shore. We all had the time of our lives.

## Alexander, 14, Washington

### THE POT OF MEAT

One morning I woke up to the delicious smell of sizzling lamb. When I came downstairs the first thing I saw was how clean the kitchen looked. The pots and pans that usually littered the counter were gone and in their place was a collection of decorative plates. The grime had been completely scrubbed of the oak cabinets and tiles glittered as if they had been waxed. Only after taking all this in did I see my mom cooking. I asked,

“What are you cooking?”

“Lamb, I invited a few of my friends over for dinner and I need to make sure we have plenty of food for when they come over. By the way, I just remembered, I need to buy ingredients for a pie. Please watch the meat, set the table, and groom your cat while I am gone.”

“Ok” I answered. And before hearing my reply my mom was out the door. As soon as my mom left my cat came downstairs. He was a beautiful long haired orange cat with white stripes running along the length of his body, of the type that despise everyone and anything besides food and the people who feed them.

I started walking upstairs, but as soon as I did, my cat bolted for the meat, he jumped from the top stair as he was flying by. I caught him, set him down on the ground and stood there. This was going to be a rough morning.

After a while, drool began collecting on cat’s lips as if he had not eaten for years. Then it happened. My cat slowly inched forward like a panther stalking his prey, and then he pounced! I grabbed him by the scruff of his neck in mid air and took him upstairs enraged.

To my cat this meat was what a birthday cake is to us. Even before I got back downstairs, I saw him sprinting past me; luckily once again I was able to grab him. This time I

would show no mercy I took my ever more bothersome cat outside and locked the door behind him.

Ignoring my cat's yowling was like trying to study without books. Then, everything went silent. I realized that either my cat had a new plan or he was absorbing the deeply hidden beauty of the outdoors. But when I saw the monster leap through the open window, I almost forgot to grab him as he once more made a dash for the meat. I locked him in the entry room.

The scratching at the door was as irritating as a thousand bees swarming around my head. The "fog of bees" was so thick I almost missed my mom coming home. I walked through the entry room and out the door to help carry stuff in. When I got back inside, the meat was gone. I hadn't groomed the cat, or even set the table. I wonder where the time went?

## **Jake, 13, Texas**

### From Bad to Worse

As you know, I am one of the writers for this magazine, and my assignment for this issue was to write an article about the Gymnastics World Championships. When I told the story below to my editor, he decided to use my colleague's article, who I was supposed to cover the Championships with. My editor had me write about my attempt at getting to the venue instead.

The coworker who I was supposed to go with is a firm believer in Google maps, but I have always felt that it is better to get directions from people. A friend of mine said that there is a great site where you could get free directions from real people who posted on the site. There

was only one set of directions to Worlds, but it said you just had to get on State Highway 121 and then use the directions the rest of the way.

The drive into downtown Dallas was bad from the start. I walked out to my car and saw that the one entrance to my small apartment complex was blocked. Two cars had crashed head on and the exit was blocked by cops and other emergency personnel. After forty- five minutes I was finally able to leave.

My directions said to drive until I saw a Papa John's Pizza. This seemed strange, but I thought that maybe there was a back way that could only be accessed from Papa John's, it was not likely, but it could be. I saw the restaurant as I passed the exit, and it took me awhile to circle back around. My directions then said to order a pizza. I saw a footnote that said this got you dinner and it would let traffic in front of you work its way out. Just as I read this, someone threw a beer bottle at my car for no reason. I did not see who it was, so I pulled out onto the frontage road.

My weird directions said to drive until I saw a homeless man in a parka and then turn right. I could see at least four homeless men up ahead. I decided to turn when I got to the first homeless guy. The next thing I had to do was get on Interstate 35. I drove a few miles, realized it must have been the wrong guy because I could not get on the freeway. I had to back track.

I decided I had had enough, so I read through the rest of the directions to see if there was anything useful. The last thing it said was to park my car and call an Uber! I tried to use the GPS on my phone, but it did not work, so I did have to call an Uber. The driver mugged me. Needless to say, I was not able to watch the World Championships.

## **Sam H., 10, Arizona**

### Vacation to the Mines

Waking up, finding no breakfast waiting for me, I soon came to the conclusion my dog ate it all. Sleepily stumbling to our Jeep, we started off heading westbound on Interstate 17. Later in the day, we finally arrived at a rest stop. Getting out and stretching our legs, we took a little walk. Once we got back in our Jeep we realized that we needed gas! This delayed us by one hour of standing around asking for help. Once we finally got back on the road again, we drove for a few more miles on the US-60 and arrived in Wendon. Passing through the little town, we stayed on the US-60 until it came to a turn off. It was easy to assume that this dirt road was the worst in Arizona. When we turned on it, this road had many washes and holes. Once we arrived I sprang out of the car not even waiting for it to come to a complete stop! I took interest in many things but my dog showed much interest in a lizard. Chasing it, she stumbled into the mine shaft. Seconds later, she sprung out again, a golden bone clenched tightly in her jaw! We had much more fun that day, but this is how we made our fortune.

## **Toby M., 13, Iraq**

### My Unlucky Day

Everybody hopped into the car and I started the engine. We were headed to the swanky sports car dealership. We drove off and as we were leaving our neighborhood, Nali City, the guards at the gate stopped us and did a “routine bomb check” as they called it. I frowned. Why? An hour later they let us go on our way.

As I turned into the round about, I thought about why they did that. I was so deep in thought that I missed the turn. Twice. When I finally got onto the right road, I was thoroughly exasperated. As we were passing a small amusement park, a cow dashed out into the road and we smashed into it. We had to stop and bury it.

After that, I looked at the directions again and we went off in the direction they indicated. We drove for another hour and we caught a glimpse of the two tall towers. We then followed the road to the right. As we merged into traffic, I crashed into another car. Fortunately, no one was injured.

The other driver and I had a heated discussion about whose fault it was. I vented all of my frustration on him and then we decided it was my fault. I payed him \$1,000. Could this day get any worse? I looked at the directions again and turned left at the traffic light. I turned right before I merged onto the main road and then I saw the car shop.

It was a small dilapidated looking building that had second hand cars parked outside. They had duped us.

## **Madeleine W, 11, Virginia**

### The Little Old Barn

Look. At. You. You look pretty bored. Well, if you want an adventure, and you like farms, then I have the perfect thing for you. It starts right now. Get in the car. We're going to a little barn.

Drive towards Sweet Minision. When you see a fork in the road, go left. But remember, there's no turning back. You kept going? Oh well, don't tell me I didn't warn you! As you drive watch out for a rusty old sign that says Exit 963B. Stop and take the exit. Drive fast but no faster than 110 mph. Do as I say: the trees here don't have very good roots. Go straight until you see a 7-Eleven - it is the only working gas pump for days. Don't tell me you don't need gas, because you will. The road you are going to go on is pretty haunted, so you don't want to have to walk. Now, do whatever you have to do to get back on the interstate, and don't look back, because there's a tornado behind you. Go 140 mph for 30 miles. By that time the tornado should have stopped. Take a sharp right and go forward until you see rusty old barn that smells like cigarettes and liquor. I know it looks haunted, but go inside anyway. This is your destination. Make yourself a bed, being sure to avoid rats and possums. Now, I know this is not what you expected, but you did want to go. Alright, I'll cut you some slack. Leave the barn and get into your car. Turn left to leave the farm and go straight, then turn right after traveling 50 miles. Turn right again after traveling 175 more miles. There is an eternal rain for the next 20 miles, but after that you will see sunshine and paradise. Green grass, green trees, and a bright red barn with wonderful animals inside that are waiting for you.



Going on this journey, you probably learned to be on your guard and be patient. I brought you to an old run-down place, and because you were patient and didn't rip the paper up you got to go to Paradise.

## **Grace W., 14, Virginia**

### So Close

“GET IN THE CAR!” my mom screamed frantically. We had to get to the Free Every-Type-of-Food-Ever Buffet by 5 before it was closed. It was 4:55. I was wearing my white Converse as I ran through my muddy yard to get into the car and sadly, my Converse are no longer white. I hopped in and slammed the door shut. My 16-year-old brother Liam backed out of the driveway and it was at this point that I realized that my seat belt was stuck in the door. I held tightly on to my seat as Liam crashed into 3 curbs on the way to Salem Library. Suddenly out of nowhere a possum appeared and ran across the road. Liam slightly swerved but sadly it wasn't enough. We felt a bump as we ran over its ugly head. I Looked back and saw a pool of blood surrounding its body. On the way into the library's parking lot, the car in front of us crashed into a tree and it fell through our front window. A squirrel that had fallen with the tree raced around our car frantically trying to escape. Everyone was screaming. The next step to getting there was to turn the wheel as much as much as possible to the right. I braced myself for the impact right and instead, when Liam slammed on the gas, we went soaring left. We recovered and went right as planned, wheels screeching loudly, as we spun in circles. My little

brother coughed twice as was needed for the magic to kick in but instead it triggered something in his throat and he threw up EVERYWHERE. Unfortunately, when we went to straighten out we quickly realized the magic had never worked as we slammed into the brick library wall. We redid the entire process and finally got to the buffet when we realized: it was 5:01 and the buffet was closed.

## **Keturah D., 12, Wisconsin**

### The Worst Day

The journey to Zorok Amusement Park is perilous. I wish I could have turned back, to save me from this experience. I was on my way to the castle, I was walking right through the cross-walk to Maple Street and it started pouring! Why didn't I check the weather before I left? I have no umbrella and no hoodie. I didn't think this day could get much worse! I bolted for the cover of our local market.

Guess who was waiting inside the market for me? The town bullie Rodney Juster! On your way to school he steals your lunch money. After class he forces you to do his homework. Of course I run into him! This is what he said to me.

“HEY! Peewee, buy me a soda or no lunch at school.”

“ You already steal my lunch money, no way I'm buying you a soda.” I told him.

“All right. Get ready for a monumental pounding!” Rodney threatened.

“Seriously, I just came in to get out of the rain!” So he tried to pound me, but I slipped through his legs but not before he got a shot at my jaw. “OW!!!! Really, Rodney!”

I bolted as fast as I could. I found an old tree to hide under, but just before I got to the tree lightning struck! “Why?” I thought and then...

“Little girl, what are you doing on my property? Skedaddle before I call the cops!” old mister Pollmeronie shouted at me.

“Okay!” I shouted. Why did it have to be today that this happened? Zorok finally came to town! Now I have to ride the ferry across the river.

As I boarded the ferry I tripped and lost my keys in the river. “Come on!” WHY?! At least the ferry is moving now. Now half way across the river someone steals my phone! We dock at the other side and I get off as fast as I can. I can finally see the Zorok signs.

I Finally get to the front gate and someone steals my purse! I had my wallet in there! I had a hundred dollars! I can’t even call my mom because, my phone was stolen! I should have taken my mom up on her offer to drive me. Time to walk home!

## **Abigail P., 13, Virginia**

### The Worst Journey

The first direction was to exit your city and go north on I-95 to exit 1073A. When I tried to exit the interstate it was blocked off, so I had to drive around for another hour to find it. The next direction was to rent a canoe and travel down the Sugar River. When I got to the canoe rental place, there were no more left, so I had to float downstream on a branch. I got soaked and was freezing cold, but at least the water tasted good. I reached a bridge suspended over the river

and I was supposed to get out of the water there and follow a path. But I forgot to and had to swim upstream to get back to the bridge. When I tried to get out of the water I get kept slipping in mud so I was covered in it. When I finally got out, the directions were soaked, and I did not find the path. I looked around, and while looking, I ran into a bear's den!

It hurt! I was seeing stars dancing around my head, and now it was badly bruised. I continued walking up and down the riverside to find the path and finally I spotted a clearing at the edge of the woods. Hoping this was the path, I began to walk down it. The next direction wanted me to leave the path to find a tree with a door in it. I did not think this was a very smart idea, so I stayed on the path. The next step said to open the door. I knew then that I had to leave the path to find the tree. I cautiously left the path. I searched and searched for a tree with a door. As I was about to give up, I found it!!! I pulled, but the door would not open. Suddenly, I heard a creaking noise. I looked around but didn't see anything. I looked up and a tree was falling right over me!

I was so scared, I froze and it landed on the edge of my foot. I screamed in pain. The tree bruised my toes for good. I turned back to the door to see if the fallen tree hit it, and to my amazement the door was open. The tree must have done this. I read the next direction, and it said to go down the slide inside the open tree. I slid down the steep, long slide. The slide twisted and turned and it made me really dizzy. When I reached solid ground, I almost fell over. My arms and legs were hurting, too. My whole body was bruised, burned, and throbbing from the slide. Thankfully, I was almost there. The next direction was to enter my destination. I was bruised, cold, tired, and my toes were broken, but it was worth it. I finally made it to The Candy Shop!

## **Kacey P., 15, Virginia**

### The Dangerous Challenges

I'm Blake Blagden and I'm on a mission to get a job. That is why I am here in a small rowboat with a piece of paper, giving me directions. I don't know what the job is because some of the paper is smudged. I start to row. I look around as it gets ominously foggy. The lake reeks of fish and something unpleasant. I see the lake start to bubble. I keep rowing with determination, despite the uneasy feeling rising in my stomach.

Thud! I scream as a piranha is in my boat. I kick it overboard. More keep coming and I hit them with one of my oars. With my energy depleting, I glance behind me to see the gap between me and the other of the lake may be jumping distance. I have to risk it, so I jump.

I fall onto the ground. I look ahead of me to see a desert!? I groan as I stand up. I walk into the desert and I can feel its unmerciful rays on me. I start to run. I've been running for a short time and my energy is already running low. I become slower and slower, until I am walking, practically hyperventilating.

It starts to get windy. I sigh in relief. The breeze starts to blow harder, until sand is surrounding me! I cover my mouth and nose with my shirt. I squint my eyes and I try to see if there is any sort of shelter. I see a dark shape. I battle the storm as I run into the little cave. I fall over exhausted. I scoot myself into a comfortable position and I fall asleep.

\* \* \*

I woke up from my slumber to find the storm is over. I stretch and walk out of the cave and see that it is night time. I shiver as I look up to see that my next challenge is to climb a gigantic mountain. Good thing I went to survival camp. I start to climb the mountain.

\* \* \*

I make it up to the top of the mountain with ease. As I start to catch my breath, I hear a grunt. This is the final challenge. I look up to see that it's a gigantic cyclops! He charges me with a war cry. I dodge. He attacks me again and I barely dodge him. He swings at me endlessly and I try to block him. I pull out my pocket knife. I swing at him, but he pushes me to the ground. I fall backwards and he swings his fist back, about to take the final blow. I take this opportunity to stab his stomach. He falls beside me. I sit up weakly. I hear slow clapping behind me. I turn around and ready my pocket knife.

“Come with me, kid. We've got work to do.” My boss states. I stand up and follow him.

## **Isadora L., 11, New York**

### The Mountain Mistake

“Sunscreen? Check!” Ash says with excitement. I read more from the long list of directions. “Why are we doing this again?” Ash said while slowly stopping her exaggerated excitement. “OMG! How many times do I have to tell you? We are going to a magical mountain, climbing it, and as it says here, there will be a magical gem at the summit! It's supposed to be really special!” I glance at Ash and approach a confused face. She says, “I don't understand all that mumbo jumbo.” “We are going to get a prize after we climb the large hill.” I try to narrow it

down so she understands. Ash finally gets it. "OHHHHHHH! Why didn't you just say so?" I sigh and try to keep a straight face.

"Ok," I say confidently. "The first thing we have to do to arrive there is... spin around 3 times!" We both spin 3 times. I continue reading, "it says here that we should do the worm dance...that's easy right?" Ash looks at me with an optimistic face. "I got this," she says while getting on the floor. She tries doing the worm, but fails, and hits her head on the hard ground. I quickly help her up. "You don't know how to do the worm, do you?" I grab some ice from my safety backpack. "Thanks Izzy," she says with a grin. We both smile at each other. I read another one of the steps. "Jump 4 times on your right foot." In sync, we jump 4 times. "We should be transporting now." All of a sudden, Ash and I are falling from the sky. I hear her screaming beside me, "AHHHHHHHHH!" Our eyes closed, Ash starts to cry, but her tears fly up into the air. SPLASH! We are soaking wet. I rise from the water breathing heavy. I see Ash a couple feet away from me, I also see the mountain.

"ASH!" She sees me waving my arms. "Meet me at the mountain! It's right over there!" I point my arm to direct her. Soon enough, we meet up at the mountain. "Race you to the top," Ash says. "WAIT!" I exclaim, but it doesn't faze her, so I start to climb. "Ugh. It's been over an hour," I say with exhaustion. Meanwhile, Ash is staring at the summit. "Hubba-," she mumbles. "What's wrong?" I start walking up behind her, and I put my hand on her shoulder. She turns and looks at me, and points to the summit. I couldn't believe it. The gem was gone! "Look at this," Ash says while picking up a piece of paper. "Read it!" I insisted. "Ok...it says...wrong mountain, try again soon." I have no words. And, I just realized there is a staircase.

## Selah M., 13, Oregon

### A Circus of a Trip to the Circus

It was a clear spring day as I, Selah, attempted to go to the circus. Take I-80 North from Portland to Salem. Were the words on my pamphlet of directions. I glanced at the road in front of me. I could see the place I was supposed to turn onto, quite a ways away. What separated me from getting there was traffic. There was no way I could get out of the place I was in now. I felt like I was moving one centimeter a hour and the line of cars stretched on forever. I gazed out my car window, looking in envy at the speeding cars going the other way. I am not waiting any longer, I thought. I craned my neck out the window to see if there was any possible way out of the sloth like traffic. I turned the car sharply to the right and drove off the road and onto the uneven ground. A few seconds later I heard a bang followed by a hiss and a loud grating noise. I leapt out of my car and then I noticed my tire. I let out a dry laugh and turned my head away utterly dismayed.

Roughly half an hour later after asking car after car for help, a man came over and helped me change my dilapidated tire. Twenty minutes later I was back in traffic except for the fact that I was further behind than I was originally before.

Finally, after what seemed like days of waiting, the traffic thinned and I was on my way to the circus. I was pretty excited to go to one and had promised a friend I would take pictures for her.

I took a look at my directions again. It read, Take the third exit off 1-80 onto Highway 23 East. I drove on. A few minutes later I noticed flashing red and blue lights. "Please don't be the exit, please don't be my exit." I begged aloud. Sure enough, as I came closer the exit was



blocked. “Oh come on!” I gave an exasperated sigh rolling my eyes. I drove over to a policeman standing by his car and rolled down my window.

“Can I go through?” I asked hopefully. The police jerked his head towards a car crash.

“I’m sorry ma’am but there’s been a car crash o’er there and one of the cars is leaking gasoline. If you’d like to wait it’d take bout’ half an hour to get the road open again.” I pursed my lips. I didn’t want to wait another half an hour.

“I’ll just try finding another way.” I decided. He nodded and I continued on my way.

Three hours later I was back on track. It would of been better if I’d waited back at the crash site. I pondered. I picked up the directions on the seat beside me and read the next step. In 8 miles turn left at the intersection onto 9th street. I turned onto 9th street with a smile on my face. Nothing would happen that would slow down my trip anymore. I sped up, a lush green canopy of trees above me. I turned the corner and continued faster. Suddenly, out of nowhere a mountain of rocks appeared in front of me. I smashed into it full on and I was hurled forward into my airbag.

I woke up from unconsciousness and surveyed my surroundings. My car had smoke billowing from under the hood, and the front of the car was buried in rocks from an old landslide. I pulled out my instructions. I shook the debris off. Turn left at Trundle Village until you see a sign that says “Circus one mile.” You arrived when you see the bright orange and yellow. I sighed, “I might as well start walking,” I laughed half-heartedly. “I’m almost there anyway.” I started shuffling towards Trundle Village. Ten seconds later it started raining. I sighed, sagged my shoulders and stared up into the clouds my hands clenched in tight fists. I took a deep breath and continued, getting soaked to the bone. At last I entered Trundle and found the sign. I trudged on and finally, when I laid eyes on the bright red letters that read “Circus” my frown

turned upside down. I half walked half skipped to the tent then stopped short when I noticed the sign. It read. "Show canceled due to rain. Will start once rain stops."

"Wha--?" I stuttered, then put my hand on my forehead. "What do I do now?" I remembered the deflated tire, the cause? Impatience. I reflected back to the time of getting lost for hours, the cause? Impatience. And then I thought of my crushed car, the cause? I was speeding, because of my lack of patience. "Why did I not realize this earlier?" I mused. I smiled, snickered, then started laughing at myself. I plopped down on a log under an old oak tree and waited thinking on how I could be more patient next time. A few minutes later the rain stopped and the show started. As I think back to that day now, I realized it was worth it having all that trouble but learning patience. I also ended up experiencing two circuses that day.