

Outdoor

Adventures

#1

**Build a fire
in the wild
using only
primitive
materials!**





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offgridweb.com
helpxadobe.com
wideopenspaces.com

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mmitextiles.com
reddit.com
somageneralstore.com
spiritualityhealth.com
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untamedscience.com
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Letter

Dear Sir,
Your magazine is amazing! I love all the articles and short stories, and I am going to save every issue so I can read them any time I want, over and over again.

I practiced all the survival techniques mentioned in the preview issue, in my backyard. I can now start a fire consistently, using the fire plow strategy that you mentioned in the second paragraph of the third page in the Survival Techniques section of your preview issue. I can't get the bow technique to work, though. Do you have any suggestions? My favorite moment was when I finally managed to purify water by distillation, which I also read about in the Survival Techniques section.

The short stories are also very entertaining. The best one is the story about Gerald Indefal and his hunting trip in Alaska. It was really funny when he fell out of his tree stand and landed on top of the bear!

I also bought every product that had a good review in your magazine. They all work perfectly! Where do you get such good ideas for your magazine? The poems are beautiful, the stories are fantastic, and the survival strategies are easy to follow. When I grow up, I want to know all those skills, just like you!

Sincerely,
Lasdal Chidrars age 14

Mr. Chidrars,

Thank you for your flattering letter complementing the preview issue of my magazine. Now that we have begun writing full, monthly issues, we will make sure to keep the same elements that you (and other readers) enjoyed. As for the bow technique for starting fires, make sure that the wood you are trying to ignite is dry and dead. Also, to make it more efficient and work faster, leave a little slack in the string to keep the bark from "grabbing" at the fibers.

Keep practicing your survival strategies, which will be kept coming in your subscription for future issues.

Thank you for reading,
Dallas Richards-CEO and Editor

Send your letter to us at
www.outdooradventures.com!

A Fantastic Ballad

There once was a man who believed in magical beings.
In fairies, sprites, elves, and leprechauns, too.
In earth elementals and wish-granting genies.
He thought these creatures as real as humans like you.

One day he hiked into the woods.
In peripheral vision he spied a flash of red.
A leprechaun's beard! He thought to himself,
As wild fantasies played in his head.

He thought of jewels and gold and decided right then
I must catch the creature and demand he give me his treasure!
The man took off just a few steps behind,
And chased flashes of red for what seemed like forever.

The pair crossed valleys and rivers and miles of forest
Before the man caught up to his prey.
And what did he see? A red, fluffy squirrel
Perched atop a boulder of gray.

Away the man slowly marched under green sylvan shadows
Until he arrived back at his home.

The last that was heard of this same let down man,
He was searching the hills for a lost dryad tome.

And what can we learn from this lonely old man?
Gnomes and trolls and creatures of fey,
Mermaids and yetis and dragons to slay
Are all best left in children's games.



A close-up photograph of a wolf's fur, showing the texture and color variations from dark brown to light tan. The fur is thick and appears to be on the back or side of the animal. The background is dark and out of focus.

Wolves!

By Dallas Richards

Bawkagawkawabawk! The familiar flurry of desperate squawks startled Jack awake. Growling, he ripped off his sheets and stood up to jam his feet into the heavy black boots beside his bed. He flung open his bedroom door and stormed down the stairs. He grabbed his old, wood-stocked rifle off the wall, stuffed a hat over his grey-streaked black hair, and kicked open his front door.

He aimed his rifle at the run-down chicken coop that stood to his left, lit by a single light bulb on a pole, a few feet from the corner of his flaking, white-painted house. A jagged hole was ripped in the wire mesh that surrounded the wood frame and the small flock of chickens were huddled in the corner of the pen, crowing in distress.

The cause of the commotion stood, a limp bird clamped its mouth, on the edge of the circle of yellow light cast by the lamp. It was a muscular grey and beige wolf with thick fur and fangs digging into the dead chicken's feathers. Its icy blue eyes, which were illuminated by the bulb, were locked on Jack.

Bang! A bullet flashed briefly as it streaked past the wolf, missing its head by inches, and struck the dirt behind the canine, throwing up a shower of dust. The wolf bolted straight away from the house toward the dark forest on the other side of a grassy field.

Jack fumbled to rack another bullet into his gun's chamber as he chased the animal across the meadow, yelling. He finished and pulled the trigger, and the projectile followed the wolf as it disappeared into the trees.

"Get your butt off my farm and never bring

it back!” Jack roared in his slight Canadian accent. He stalked back to his house, fuming. His breath turned to thick steam clouds that billowed past his face and dissipated into the night air as it was carried off by the breeze.

The wind halted as Jack entered the small cove of his yard. He was shielded from the breeze by the semi-circle of buildings that made up his farm. An old, red hay barn rose on his right—the chicken coop in front of it—and towered a few stories above his squat cabin. On his left rested another run-down barn that was connected to a fenced pasture, which stretched a few acres behind it. From inside this barn came the gravelly bellows of cows who had been woken by the noise. Attached to the barn was also a lean-to stall that was open to the yard area, and a pigpen with a trap door leading into the rotting wooden structure.

A shaggy black draft horse was tied in the stall, its grey flecked muzzle swaying back and forth as it looked around with alert eyes. Jack angled his path toward the beast and began his day by affectionately brushing dust from the horse’s mane, just as the first traces of light seeped over the treeline.

Jack grunted as he heaved a bale of hay off of the shelf where it had been stacked with an assortment of tools and other hay bales. He lifted it onto his shoulder and stepped down the stairs from the hayloft. Streams of golden sunshine popped through cracks in the barn’s worn-out boards, illuminating flecks of dust and pollen that floated around the warm interior.

It was midmorning on the third day since the wolf had killed Jack’s chicken. He hadn’t seen any wolves since then.

He nudged open the wide, square door and stepped out into the

fresh morning air. The sky was pale blue, and wispy clouds swirled lazily around.

Jack dropped the hay into a wheelbarrow and drove it over to the stall. The horse was noisily slurping water from a large silver trough when he arrived. He unloaded the bale and stuffed a few flakes into a steel cage that acted as a feeder. Jack put the rest of the hay on a shelf, out of reach of the horse, and patted his friend on the nose.

“Eat up, Jeff,” he scratched the horse’s neck and wandered back toward his house to make himself some lunch.

He placed a pan onto the stove and turned it on, then cracked a few eggs onto the hot surface. He sat down to wait for his food to cook while he looked at a magazine. That’s when he heard Jeff’s whinny. He stood up, knocking over his chair, and slapped his magazine down on the table. He bolted out the door, calling his horse’s name. He sighed in relief when he saw Jeff standing unharmed in his stall.

Then he caught a glimpse of movement out of the corner of his eye and snapped his head around to face it. The same wolf that Jack had encountered earlier was slouching around the outside of the pigpen, trying to find a way into the pen where two fat swine were trying to escape the predator by knocking down the blockade that Jack had placed in front of their swinging door that morning.

“What’re you doing back here?” Jack growled at the wolf. It stopped in its tracks and bared its teeth. Jack snatched the revolver that was holstered on his belt and pulled back the hammer. The wolf’s muscles tightened right before it sprang off toward the forest where it had fled before. Jack fired a hasty shot and missed. He screamed in frustration and anger as the wolf entered the

forest and escaped once again.

His shoulders slumped and he walked over to Jeff, who was stomping his hooves and snorting. "I'm just glad you're okay," He filled the horse's trough and went back inside to finish his lunch.

That night, high-pitched noises crept into Jack's dreams, disturbing his sleep. His eyes snapped open, but the squeals didn't go away. Nieceeeuh! Jack jumped upright in bed and desperately flung open his door, raced down the stairs, and sprinted out the front door in his bare feet, grabbing his rifle on the way out.

He roared in rage at what he saw. The wolf that had been tormenting Jack, along with another smaller white one, were lunging at Jeff, clawing ruts in his muscle with their teeth and claws. The horse was bucking and lunging, trying to throw the wolves off his back. Streams of blood ran down his legs and he screamed in

pain.

Jack charged toward the predators, roaring curses. The wolves turned to face him, snarling, then ran away towards the woods. Jack contemptuously raised his rifle and shot down the bigger one. He racked the empty casing out of his bolt and shoved the piece of metal forward again to load a new one.

Then he aimed and fired at the white one, hitting it in the gut. It howled and disappeared into the trees, trailing blood.

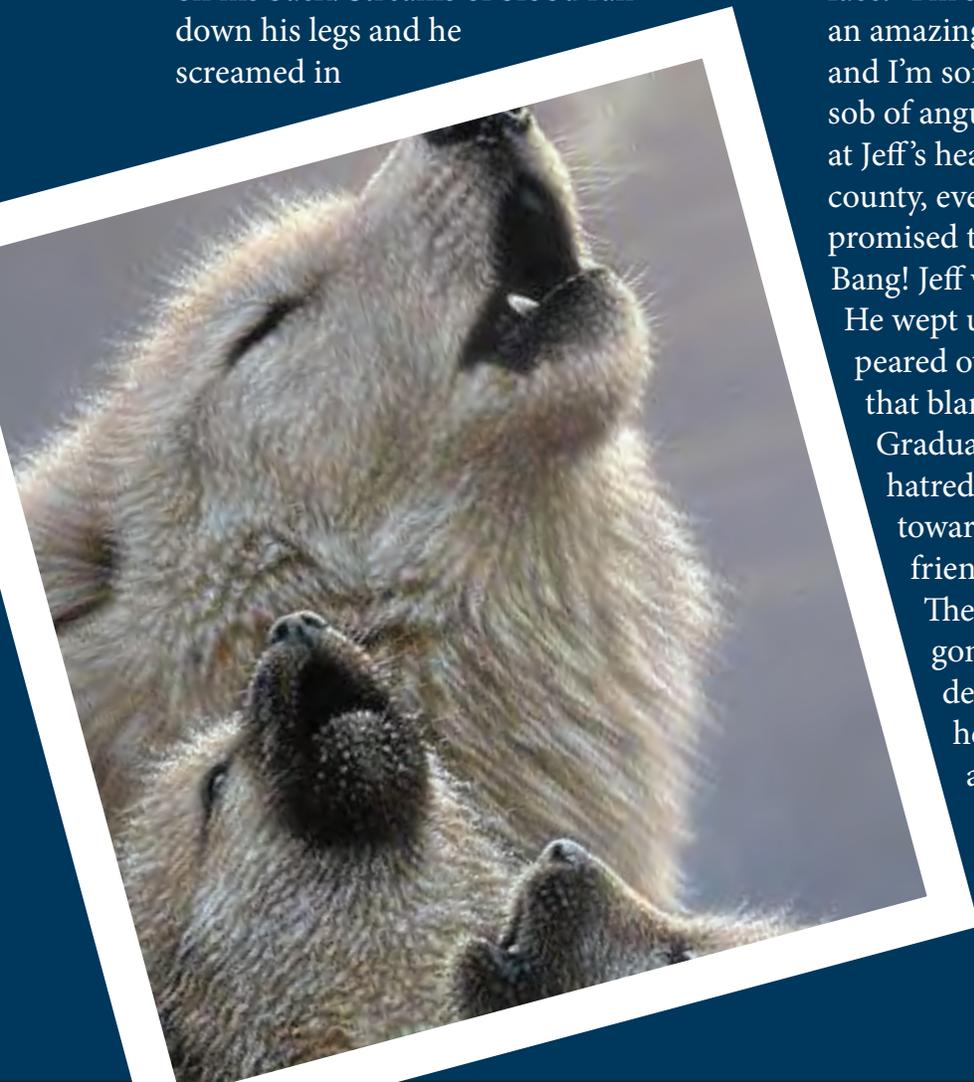
Jack lowered his gun and ran back to the stall, where Jeff had laid down and was breathing heavily. As soon as Jack saw him, he knew that there was no hope. The horse's body was shredded with bright red grooves, and one leg was twisted sideways, broken.

Jack fell to his knees beside the wounded animal, tears sliding down his face. "I'm sorry," he choked. "You've been an amazing worker for twenty-one years, and I'm sorry I can't save you." He released a sob of anguish as he raised his rifle to point at Jeff's head. "I'll kill every last wolf in the county, even if it takes the rest of my life," he promised the horse, gritting his teeth.

Bang! Jeff went still and Jack cried bitterly. He wept until the orange orb of the sun appeared over the horizon and the thin mist that blanketed the ground burnt away.

Gradually, his sorrow transformed into hatred. White-hot, rage fueled hatred toward the animals that had killed his friend. The wolves.

They did this, Jack thought. Now I'm gonna give those beasts what they deserve. He trekked back to where he had wounded the white wolf and located the crusty, dried, red splatter that marked the place where the animal



had been standing when the bullet had torn through its body.

“I’m gonna find your lair,” Jack swore. He tracked the trail of crimson left behind by the wolf and followed it into the forest. It wound around trees and twined through the underbrush, heading roughly east. Branches and thorns cut Jack’s bare feet, but he didn’t care. He had to crouch to fit through bushes and even lost the trail a few times, but he backtracked and scoured the area until he found the next marker of the wolf’s route. The sun arched high into the sky until it was directly overhead, then was reduced to a watery glow through the clouds that marched across the heavens, sprinkling fall rain on Jack’s head.

It was around midday when a shadowy hole appeared in the side of a hill, with the blood trail leading into it. Jack unslung the rifle from his shoulder and approached slowly. It was about three feet high, so he could easily peer into it by squatting. He could see the other side of the small dirt cave from the entrance. The walls were littered with roots protruding at random and the floor was covered in feathers and gnawed bones. And in the middle of the cave was the dead body of the white wolf, sitting in a pool of blood. Surrounding the wolf, was a litter of about five puppies.

“Jackpot,” Jack said, then added louder. “Mommy’s gone, pups. And you gonna go with her, so you can never grow up to be the cruel monster that she was.” The babies paid him no attention as they pawed at their mother, trying to wake her up.

Jack shrugged and raised his rifle, eager to avenge Jeff. He flicked off the safety and his finger tightened on the trigger. Then one of the puppies released a pitiful wail of loss. An image of him-

self making a similar noise a few hours ago flashed through Jack’s mind.

His resolve faltered and he repeated one phrase in his mind, They’re getting what they deserve, they’re getting what they deserve, they’re getting what they deserve. His conviction faded further when he noticed how frail and thin the babies and their mother were. They’ve been desperate for food.

He began to lower his gun, but then remembered how the pair of wolves had ended his only friend’s life. “Jeff,” Jack whispered. He gritted his teeth and pulled the trigger, driven by the need for vengeance. A loud bang and a flash filled the cave and one puppy fell over, his blood joining his mom’s on the floor.

The siblings of the dead wolf yelped and pressed themselves against the far wall. Jack’s breath caught in his throat as he looked at the still baby, and the weight of what he’d done hit him. The puppy was innocent, he realized. And not just it, the adults were too. They were all gonna starve if they didn’t find nourishment, and I owned the biggest sources.

A single tear slid down Jack’s cheek and he fled the entrance of the hole, heading back for the farm. As he traveled, pictures of the remaining puppies filled his imagination. They will all die without their mother’s milk, he remembered. What have I done? I practically killed them. A thought hit him. Would it be possible...? I have enough money, and I owe them.

He turned back, and when he reached the cave, he bent over and looked in at the four wide-eyed babies and choked, tears filling his eyes, “I’m sorry for what I’ve done to you.” Then he reached in, scooped their scrawny bodies up, and carried them back to his flaking farmhouse.

Venison Jerky Recipe

This jerky recipe is easy, healthy, and makes a perfect grab-and-go snack, or long term survival food!

1. Gather ingredients

You will need:

- Venison steak or shoulder
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup honey
- 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper
- 1 ½ tablespoons crushed black pepper
- ½ cup soy sauce
- Optional ingredients (You have a lot of freedom with this part. You can add about 1 tablespoon of any spice that you would like to show up in your jerky's flavor: garlic, onion powder, etc. I have even used chopped chili peppers to add some heat.)



2. Slice venison

Use a sharp knife or scissors to cut your venison into thin slices. The thinner the better!

3. Mix the marinade

Add the pepper, sauce, and spices to the water and honey in a large mixing bowl. Stir well.

4. Marinate Venison

Place the venison slices into the bowl and leave it in your refrigerator for 6-8 hours. You can leave it for as little as 3 hours, though, for a weaker flavor.

5. Preheat Oven

When your meat is almost done marinating, preheat your oven to 175 degrees.

6. Dry venison

Remove your meat from the marinade and place it on a paper towel for 10 minutes to dry.

7. Bake Jerky

Place the venison on a wire rack and bake it in your oven for 3-4 hours. I recommend placing a tray or aluminum foil under the meat so the drips don't make a mess in your oven.

8. Remove from oven

Take your homemade, custom jerky out of the oven and let cool!

This jerky is perfect to put in a survival kit or to take backpacking or hiking, as it lasts a long time without going bad and is a nutritious and tasty snack (or meal, depending on your situation). Add salt and place it in a sealed bag for maximum lifespan. Enjoy!

Autumn

Gold leaves swirl around.
Rays of sun break through the rain,
shining in the mud.

Campground

Campers
and tents crowded
together. Babies cry,
men shout. I wish I had camped in...
my yard.

Hunting

A buck walks out of
the trees. The rifle levels.
The trigger is pulled.

Ashes

The pile of charred wood
sizzles on the ground, smoking.
A heap of cold ash.

Birch

Bark like paper
Inky black stripes
Reaching for the sunlight
Curving peacefully in the wind
Housing birds and squirrels

A photograph of a forest path covered in fallen autumn leaves. The path leads towards a bright sun in the distance, creating a lens flare effect. The trees on either side are mostly bare, with some green and yellow leaves still clinging to the branches. The overall atmosphere is warm and serene.

P
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T
R
Y

Poetry (Cont'd)

Hiking

There once was a boy who went on a hike.
He became lost as disappeared the light.
The boy sat down on the ground
and wished to himself as he frowned,
that he'd stayed home and played Fortnite.

Pollution

The black fog drifted from the city.
It swirled in the wind and through the forest trees,
invading and infecting.
The toxic sludge flowed into the river,
poisoning the creatures that relied on its waters.
Garbage was dumped into the fields,
ruining farmlands and burying dens.
The trees wilted and animals became weakened with disease...
as pollution destroyed their home.

POISON IVY. The two words that are feared and dreaded by forest dwellers and hunters across the globe. The sight of those evil trios of jagged leaves is enough to send the toughest woodsman running for his life (or, more accurately, his shower and steel wire scrub brush).

But not my dad.
No matter how many times he ends up with the excruciatingly itchy rash, he refuses to take any precautions against getting it again.
Every time

he comes in from our ivy infested woods, my mom suggests that he immediately scrub off in the shower. And every time she is met with an excuse along the lines of “I stayed only on the trails”. Unfailingly, he wakes up the next morning with a rash of varying severity.

This continued in the same manner for several years, until my dad was plagued by the most extreme case of poison ivy in recorded history. One day he came in from clearing trails in the forest without taking a shower (HUGE mistake).

He went to sleep that fateful night slathered with poison oil, completely unaware of the agony he was going to face the next day.

I couldn't help but scream a little at the creature that emerged from my parents' bedroom the following morning. It had a tomato red face covered in baggy, swollen growths, which were oozing pus. Its body was also bright red and swollen, with shoulders hunched in misery.

I was trying to decide whether this creature was an orc or a troll when I realized it was my father. With a case of poison ivy. But not just any case of poison ivy. No, this was much, much, MUCH worse. I don't know what kind of mutated ivy he ran into out there in the swamp, but I blame genetic modification for the beast that caused that rash.

My dad labored his way through the day, expending enormous amounts of willpower to keep from scratching himself. That night he went to sleep, dreading the next day. In the morning, the rash had progressed from disgustingly hideous to so bad it was hard to look at. And to make it worse, that day we were planning to drive down to Tennessee to go on vacation with our friends at Dale Hollow Lake.

I was honestly surprised that none of their kids cried when they saw my dad (although I did catch them staring, horrified, at him from a distance later on our trip). As for my dad, he pretended nothing was out of place the entire time. We stayed at the lake for a few days, then headed home. I recently heard that to this day the locals of Dale Hollow still tell stories of a red water-goblin that haunts the lake, kidnapping and eating small children.

Eventually, the rash started to go away and my dad regained a normal appearance. After that experience, I knew he would never again come in from the woods without taking a shower.

We finally got to see for sure the next week, when he entered the house from the forest and my mom said, rather smugly, “You should probably take a shower so you don't get poison ivy.”

And he said, “Nah, I'm fine. I stuck to the trails.”

POISON IVY



I never knew one appliance could ruin an entire camping trip!

Despite its name, the Port-a-Grill Camping Cooker is not even close to portable. When it is folded up it's hardly any smaller than when it's unfolded. It took my entire family to load it into my truck. It is definitely not ideal for camping. Then when it is finally unloaded, it takes at least an hour to get it set up. The clips don't stay connected, the extendable legs get stuck, and the instructions make no sense at all. Eventually I got it set up and threw some steaks on the grill. I kept lifting up the front of one to see if they

were done, but every time I checked, it was still raw. Finally, I flipped it over to see what was going on. The half that I had been checking was completely raw but the other half was charred past edibility. All the other steaks had the same issue because the grilling surface was unusably uneven. I trashed the steaks and switched to the griddle cooking surface to make



grilled cheese. I was starting to have the same problem with the sandwiches when the clips failed. The entire grill fell to the side and my grilled cheeses were ruined on the ground. The cheaply made plastic clips had cracked down the middle like I smashed them with a sledge hammer. I was lucky that I didn't burn myself on the hot griddle. I eventually ended up eating granola bars for dinner because the grill was completely useless. The other issue with the grill is that it scratches as easily as a wax candle. It looked like somebody had thrown it down a mountain (Which I was considering doing at this point) after the first use. The coating on the griddle surface had already mostly flaked off, leaving cheese grease plastered to the bare metal, impossible to clean off. I highly recommend that you never buy a Port-

a-Grill. If you do, it will ruin your food, take up hours of your vacation, and leave you sitting miserably at your campsite with no dinner. (Mine may or may not have ended up in a dumpster!)

Product Review: Port-a-Grill

L



Based on a true story!

The soft thumping sound built up into a steady roar as it came closer. It rang through the forest, scaring birds from their roosts and squirrels from their nests.



It reached the ears of Sajean Geer and she sprang to her feet. A helicopter! she thought. She jogged past her makeshift shelter and snatched up her small dog from beside the pile of scavenged berries and pine needles. She turned and raced through the trees toward a nearby clearing.

She burst free from the undergrowth and climbed up on a fallen log, where she set down her dog and began waving her arms frantically. “Help!” she shouted. “Down here!” The noise reached its peak as the helicopter passed directly over the clearing and disappeared on the other side.

S

Sajean silently parked her trail blazer on the curb and trudged into the forest of Olympic National Park carrying an urn. Her Chihuahua trailed behind, smelling the ground as he walked. “C’mon, Yoda, keep up,” she sniffed. They traveled through the woods until they reached a flowery clearing.

“I guess this’ll do,” Sajean said as she opened the urn and dumped the small pile of white ashes into a cluster of large purple blooms. Tears slid down her cheeks as she silently said goodbye to her husband, to whom she had been married for almost 49 years. “Let’s go, Yoda,” she sobbed. She took one last look at the lilac bush that contained the ashes and turned to head back to her car. She plodded out of the clearing, with Yoda following, and started in the direction that she thought the road was in.

Eventually, her tears subsided and she could think clearly again.

T

Did I really walk this far on the way in? she questioned herself. She crawled up a rocky hill and looked around as Yoda yapped below her, unable to climb the steep boulders. Uh oh. Sajejan thought as she scanned the wooded landscape for the road. Where is it? She searched a while longer, then gave up. She began to climb down from the peak, but stepped on a loose stone and slipped. She dropped the urn and it shattered on the rocks as she regained her balance.

What should I do? she wondered when she got back to the ground. She wandered in a random direction until she came to a stream, where she decided to build a shelter and wait for rescue. As the sun slowly sank below the treeline, she laid branches and moss across two fallen logs to create a small enclosed space in between. The she crawled into her shelter with Yoda for her first night in the wilderness.

Sajejan's phone rang in her bedroom beside her kingsize bed for the 8th time, but with no one to pick it up, it kept ringing until the answering machine picked up. "Hi Sajejan," the message rang through the still room. "I'm calling again to wish you happy 71st birthday, but please call me back soon. I'm starting to worry. If you don't call back today, I'm going to contact your sister. If I didn't live in Hawaii I would come check on you. Please get back to me! Bye." The phone beeped and went silent.

Sajejan woke up to Yoda sniffing her face. She climbed out of her shelter and looked around. Today I have to find

Don't end up like Mrs. Geer!

Get your Lostnot tracking beacon FREE* today!

- Transmits help request with the press of a button
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*Offer includes button/transmitter. Lanyards sold separately for \$58.99. Small service fee of \$998.89 will be automatically taken from your bank account at the start of each month to pay for the expenses of keeping your beacon up and running. In certain cases, rescue team may take more than a few minutes (up to 72 hours) to arrive. This happens in approx. 98.9% of cases. Offer not available in Texas or California. Shipping fee not included. Made in China.



food, she thought as her stomach rumbled. By midday she had a small pile of berries and pine needles sitting by her shelter. Yoda was napping contentedly after spending the whole morning catching flies out of the air to eat. Sajea sat down on a rock and pondered her situation as she sipped stream water from a shiny yellow leaf. Ugh. I should have paid more attention to the direction I was going. It could be days before anyone realizes I'm missing since I didn't tell anyone that I was coming here! As she was thinking, an ant crawled onto her leg and bit her. She looked down at the little bug and plucked it off her skin. "Well I've got a bigger mouth than you, so I'll eat you." "Well I've got a bigger mouth than you," she told it. "So I'll eat you." Then she tossed the insect into her mouth and swallowed. She began thinking about her deceased husband and how she needed to enjoy the people around her before they were gone too. When I get out of here I need to talk to my brother. We can't not talk for the rest of our lives. We have already been angry at each other for two years. Sajea wiped a tear off her cheek and walked over to her shelter. That was how she lived for the next four days; she collected food in the morning then rested and thought in the afternoon. The sixth day started the same as the others. Sajea strolled into the forest until she came to a patch of wild berries where she fed some to Yoda before gathering her own meal. After she was done with breakfast, she carried a handful of berries back to

her shelter and placed them in her food stockpile along with some pine needles and dead ants. She sat down on her rock to rest when she heard the helicopter. She hopped up and ran over to the shelter to retrieve Yoda. She snatched him off the ground and sprinted toward a clearing where she had gathered ants the day before. As soon as she entered the grassy area she set down Yoda and hopped up on a log, where she began screaming and waving her arms. The helicopter came into view over the trees and flew over the clearing, but continued on its flight and disappeared on the other side. Sajea's heart dropped as the noise faded. The thumping noise decreased slowly and Sajea's hopes disappeared completely. DududuDUDUDUDUDU. It's coming back! She thought triumphantly. The helicopter appeared and stopped, hovering, over the clearing. Then a rescuer dropped a rope and rappelled down. As soon as his feet touched the ground, Sajea ran over and hugged him. She felt as if a thousand pounds had been lifted from her shoulders. She was carried up into the helicopter in a basket with Yoda, and they were flown to a hospital. As she was laying in her hospital bed, the door flew open and Sajea's brother burst into the room, tears of relief streaming down his cheeks. He strode over to her bed and gave her a long hug.

SNOWBOARDING

The watery winter sun sparkles in the snow.

The birds chirp in the dripping trees.

The fiberglass of the snowboard cuts cleanly through the fluffy drifts.

Turning slowly back and forth

Like a ship tacking smoothly on a sea of perfect, white water.

Swerving around the trees.

Plastic silently caresses powdered water.

Snowboard glides over mounds

Like shining marble.

Drops of melting snow fall from the boughs

Like glittering diamonds.

Tracks left behind meld perfectly

With the curvy landscape.

Rays reflect off the chips of bark on a tree

Like a many-faceted jewel.

The rider absorbs the sights as he slides by

And admires the gem-like beauty of nature when

The watery winter sun sparkles in the snow.

Fire Building

This is a primitive fire building technique that is very useful in the wilderness. It uses readily available materials in a survival situation. It requires persistence, but its simplicity makes up for that. It is an easy way to make a fire when you lack a lighter or matches.

1. Gather Materials

You will need:

- A piece of dry wood (preferably flat)
- A straight wooden stick, about 18" long
- A flexible stick, about 2' long
- String, 2'6" long
- A knife or saw
- A rock or other smooth object (ideally it will have a cup shape or at least be flat on one side)
- Tinder (dry grass or twigs that will burn easily)
- Larger twigs and firewood

2. Make the bow

Make one small notch on each end of the flexible stick using the knife/saw. Then, tie the ends of the string into the notches, leaving a small amount of slack.

3. Secure the Base

Place the dry wood on the ground and hold down the ends with heavy objects or by digging a shallow hole and placing the entire plank into the depression. If you are really in a crunch, then you can even secure the ends by holding them down with your feet or legs.

4. Attach Bow to Rod

Take the bow and twist the string one time to create a loop in the middle. Then, place the loop over the straight rod so that there is no slack left in the string. If there is still slack, remove the loop from the rod, shorten the string, and try again.

Bow Technique

5. Place the Fire Rod

Use the saw/knife to cut a depression in the flat board, then place the straight rod vertically in the hole. Hold the cup-shaped rock in your hand and place it on top of the rod to reduce friction on the top.

6. Twist the Rod

While using your left hand to hold the rock on top of the rod and keep the rod vertical, hold the attached bow with your right hand and make quick back-and-forth motions. The loop around the rod should transfer the motion into the rod and cause it to spin quickly, creating friction on the flat board, and, eventually, heat and fire. Keep turning the rod until smoke and a glowing coal appear in the hole on the plank.

7. Start the Fire

Remove the rod from the hole and place the tinder over the coal. Blow very gently on the coal until the tinder ignites. Continue for a few more seconds, then let it burn. When it gets going, add more twigs and let them catch. Slowly add more wood, building up in size, until your fire is satisfactorily large.

Use this fire to keep warm and cook your food, or to signal for help to aircraft.





Hunting

My eyes snapped up from the pages of my book to scan the rich green landscape surrounding my tree stand. I had heard a noise off on the right of the grassy clearing in front of me.

Where did it come from? I glanced down at the leaf-littered forest floor about thirty feet below. Nothing but mud and sticks. I shrugged and resumed reading. Snap! There it was again. I gently placed my book on the plywood platform of the stand and retrieved my crossbow from the nearby branch where it was hanging. I flinched as one of the cocked limbs caught on a flimsy twig and cracked it with a soft pop. I paused and navigated the bulky weapon around the branch, then set it on my lap.

Snap! Crack! The noises sounded closer this time. I searched the thick trees bordering the clearing and readied my crossbow.

There! A flash of movement between the layers of leaves caught my attention. I strained to see another sign of whatever it was.

A slight breeze disturbed the silence and stillness of the mottled scene, filling my vision with thousands of movements similar to the first. I leaned my head back against the rough, scratchy bark of the tree, slightly frustrated.

Pop! Another branch broke and I focused on the area where the source of the noise lay hidden. What are those? Moving branches? No, antlers. A buck! Now I could make out the shape of the reddish-brown colored deer's body as it began to emerge into the clearing. Tight, knotted muscle stretched around its legs and yellowish bone protruded and forked from its skull. I raised my crossbow and prepared to fire the instant the animal fully appeared.

That's when the deer left. It pivoted to its right and sauntered off into the trees without a second thought.

I lowered my crossbow, disappointed. I waited a few minutes before retrieving



my
About
and
once
in
as
story.
I dis-
forest
how
shoot-
Then
branch-
the bushes
my heart
hesitated,

book and continuing reading.
twenty minutes passed,
the wind faded to nothing,
again leaving the forest
silence. Dang! I thought

I looked up from my

I was so close!

I distractedly scanned the

as I thought about

near I had been to

ing my first buck.

I noticed moving

es-Antlers!-among

in front of me and

skipped a beat. I

then softly dropped my

book back on the platform and lifted the crossbow off my lap. The buck is back!

The deer angled toward a path that was in full view of my tree stand and my elation increased. I pressed my cheek against the

cold plastic of my crossbow's stock, my heart thudding like a drum. The deer's

head entered the path. I aligned the dot in my scope with the buck's chest. And

then my walkie-talkie beeped. My dad.

The deer's head snapped around to stare directly at my hiding place.

As slowly as I could, I picked up the radio from where it was clipped on my coat,

put it up to my mouth, and breathed the words: "Stop it. There's one right here."

The buck's gaze lingered for another moment, then turned away. The deer took one

more step exposing his front leg and midsection. That was as far as he got before I pulled

the trigger and the crossbow bolt zipped away and punched into its target. Heart shot.

WILDERNESS IN A WAREHOUSE?

Experience the wild in a warehouse of goggles? I don't think so. But supposedly that's the new best way for people in the cities to get away from the noisy streets and polluted air.

Freedom Through Screens is a tech company based in Los Angeles, California that builds virtual reality masks and theatres. Recently, the company has started opening VR centers where busy families can

ness”.

When they arrive, they are given VR goggles and put in a personal room that is pumped full of “fresh mountain air”. Then, depending on how long they paid for, they can walk around in a virtual forest for a time range between 10 minutes and 1.5 hours.

This new fad has been very controversial. Some people say that it is relaxing and fun, while others say that it gives the younger generation a wrong impression of the real outdoors.

Will the pastime continue to grow at the astounding rate that it is currently going at, or will the centers be shut down and the practice stopped? We'll have to wait and see. (Read a more detailed article on our website)

come to “experience the peace of the wilderness”.

Tired of climbing out of your tree stand every time nature calls?

Buy our Tree Potty now for **40%** less at www.poopinyourtree.com!

- Installs in minutes
- Soundlessly delivers waste to the ground without alerting game
- Comes in pink, green, navy blue, burgundy, camo, and the all new rainbow



Ask the Editor!

Dear Mr. Richards,

Recently, I read a news story in which a couple got lost during a hike. They didn't know how to efficiently trap food and, eventually, one of them died of hunger before the other was rescued. I want to know how to catch small animals so that won't happen to me if I ever end up in a similar situation.

What is the best way to trap meals in the wild?

-Alli Schradsr

There are many different ways to trap animals that are all equally efficient, but people disagree on which one is "the best". The STA (Survival Trapping Association) recommends the snare trap, as it is made with readily available materials in a survival situation (string, sticks, tree, dirt). This trap is made with a loop that an animal can get tangled in and trigger a bent tree branch to snap up and pull the animal off the ground and hold it in place until you get there to retrieve your meal. However, this trap can be hard to assemble properly so that it works correctly.

So, if you aren't interested in experimenting with complex catches and slip knots, surveys show that people voted for the pit trap as easiest-to-build trap. This one involves digging an inward sloping hole, covering the mouth with twigs, and waiting for a mouse or groundhog to fall in and get stuck. Some trappers include pointed sticks at the bottom to kill or incapacitate your prey so its chances of escaping lower even more.

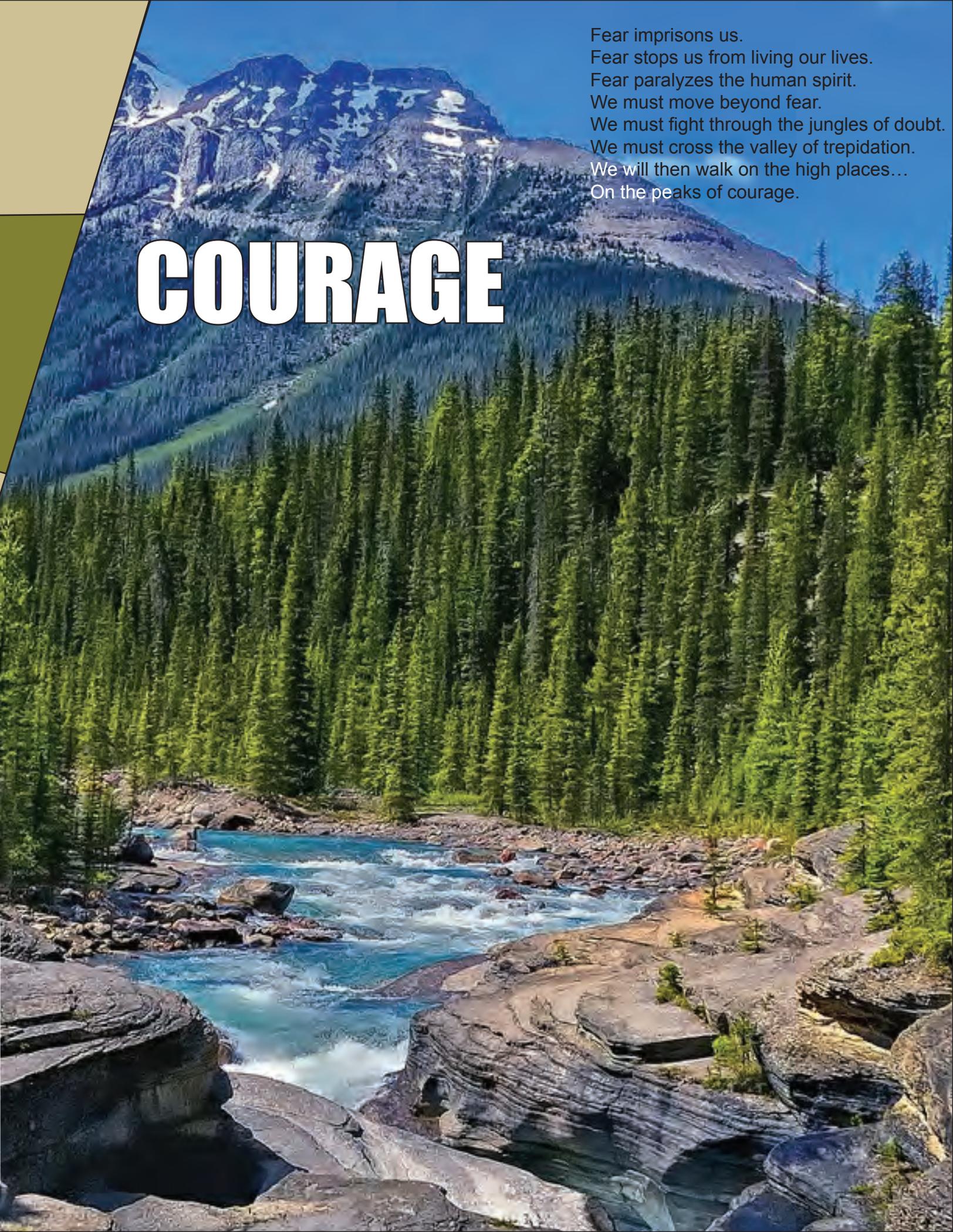
Whatever trap you use, almost everyone agrees that you should try to make the kill as clean as clean as possible and not prolong the animal's suffering. Survival expert George Anson also recommends trying to wear gloves and keep the trap site clean to lessen the possibility of the animal detecting your scent.

I hope this helps,

Dallas Richards

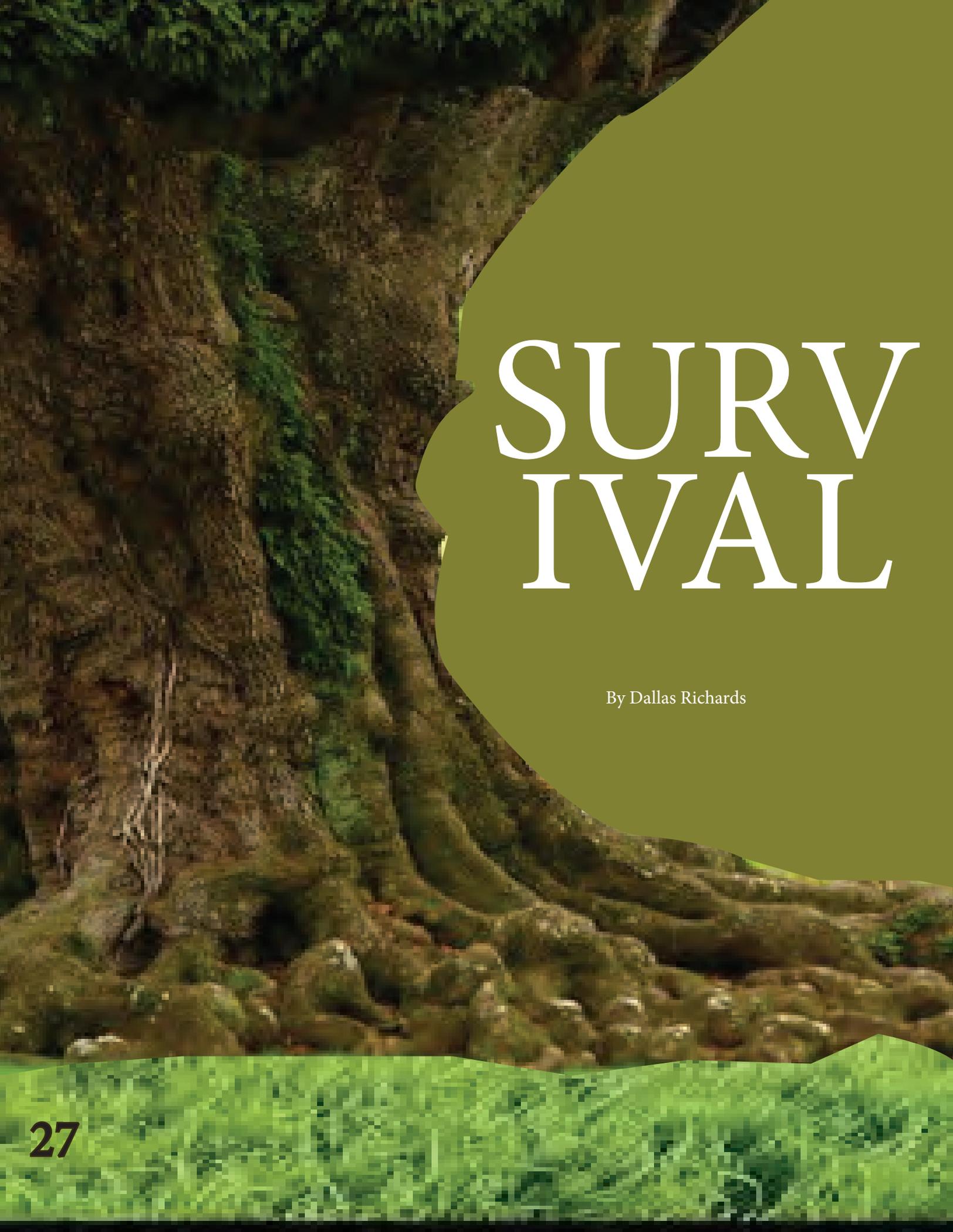
P.S. Most states require a permit for trapping, so, unless you have one, only use these techniques in a life or death situation.





Fear imprisons us.
Fear stops us from living our lives.
Fear paralyzes the human spirit.
We must move beyond fear.
We must fight through the jungles of doubt.
We must cross the valley of trepidation.
We will then walk on the high places...
On the peaks of courage.

COURAGE



SURVIVAL

By Dallas Richards



The tree was rough and gnarled, hardened by over a century of harsh wind whipping past its rooting place about fifty feet up the side of a rocky cliff face. Aging just over a hundred years, Sprout-in-the-Rock was young by the standards of her kind and expected to enjoy many more decades drinking hidden water and watching over the forest sprawling below her (or, in the case of the largest of her kin, shadowing over her).

Years passed, almost every day coming and going in the exact same manner, until one day in early fall when Sprout-in-the-Rock's slow consciousness was awoken by the sound of a rumble-bird flying over her mountain. The metallic beasts were not uncommon flying over the forest, and Sprout-in-the-Rock had seen them before; they would glide over the landscape, flashing lights or glinting in the sun, and fill the air with their peace-destroying rumble, then fade from view and the noise would disappear.

But this time would be different. The rumble-bird roared toward the mountain, this time leaving orange streams streaked behind its

wings. It reached the forest and ripped through the trees, sending twigs flying through the air. The sparkling cylinder became caught between two massive oaks and stopped dead about sixty feet from Sprout-in-the-Rock's perch, then crashed the remaining distance to the forest floor and broke in half. Glittering pieces of glass exploded into the air as the beast hit the dirt, then fell tinkling to the ground.

Silence. Silence once again ruled the woods, and even the wind fell quiet as if in horror of the scar left behind from the passing of the rumble-bird. Sprout-in-the-Rock herself was in shock. Nothing like this had ever happened in her long lifetime. The trees were snapped in half like twigs, smoldering pieces of rubble scattered the rocks, and the rumble-bird wasn't even a bird at all, Sprout-in-the-Rock now saw. It was artificial, like nothing the forest had ever seen before, with wings of shining steel and shattered windows of sparkling glass. *How could something so beautiful cause so much destruction?* Sprout-in-the-Rock wondered. She felt a stab of anger at the thought of her destroyed brothers, but it instantly disappeared when she saw movement inside the rumble-bird.



Two bipedal creatures emerged from the wreckage, coughing and stumbling away from the metallic remains. One was muscular and stocky with a tuft of blond hair growing from its chin, and the other was slimmer and more graceful, with auburn locks tumbling over its shoulders in tangled knots.

Sprout-in-the-Rock was intrigued by the aliens, having never seen anything like them before. She observed as the aliens slowly recovered, then crawled together and embraced each other, water spilling from their eyes and dripping onto their dirty clothing. They stayed in this position for hours, until the sun had passed its apex and began descending.

The male (at least Sprout in-the-Rock assumed that the stockier one was male) cringed as his companion moaned softly and released her mate to study a cut down the side of her pants that exposed a long but shallow wound in her calf, which Sprout-in-the-Rock

could see in clear detail with her very sharp eyesight. The male reached into a pocket on his belt and removed a roll of white fabric. Then he used a canteen to pour water on the wound and wrap his friend's leg with the white stuff.

Sprout-in-the-Rock continued to watch the aliens over the next few hours as they made a small campfire using more supplies that the male produced from his pelt pouches. The companions snuggled together, as the sun dipped below the horizon, and fell asleep below Sprout-in-the-Rock, unaware of the watchful eyes upon them.

Clank! A piece of charred steel

broke loose under the foot of the male alien, awakening the female, as well as Sprout-in-the-Rock. The yellow orb of the sun had begun to peek above the trees, and the cloudless sky was beginning to fill with the bouncing shapes of the forest birds chirping and flapping about.

Creeeaak! Another segment of twisted metal fell to the ground, and Sprout-in-the-Rock returned her attention to the alien, who was climbing into the rumble-bird through the open gap where there used to be a window.

"What are you doing, Phil?" called the female.

Phil? Sprout-in-the-Rock thought. Is that the two-legs's name?

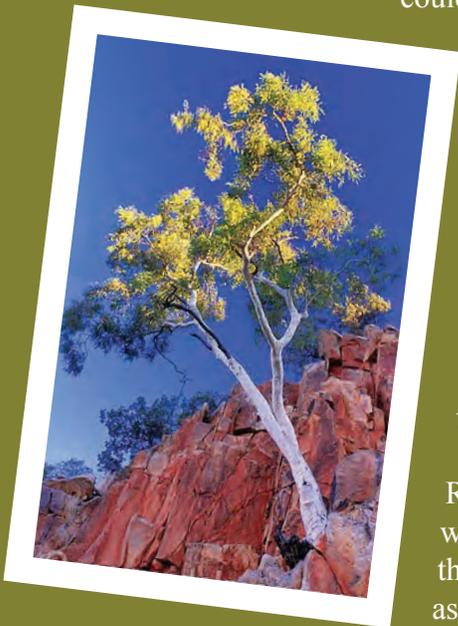
"Trying to find more supplies in the wreckage," replied Phil. "We're gonna need something if we're gonna survive." He ducked through the window and disappeared from view. The female scrambled from her prone position and climbed through the gap after him.

Sprout-in-the-Rock heard a muffled conversation coming from rumble-bird, followed by a series of loud thumps as the aliens sorted through the debris and tossed useless hunks of metal out the windows.

It was midmorning by the time the two-legs emerged from the bird, each carrying a small pile of tin cans and other various supplies. Phil balanced a strange metal tube with a wooden handle on top of his stack. The aliens placed their salvages on the ground and picked out two cans, which they popped open with a recovered object of steel that appeared to be very sharp. They then used their fingers to scoop out the contents, and devoured them like hungry wolves, which Sprout-in-the-Rock had seen roaming the forest on several occasions.

The tree watched the aliens eat for a while, until her slow, peaceful consciousness drifted into the meditative trance--the plant equivalent of sleep--and dreams of decades past floated through her mind as her leaves soaked up the bright morning sun.

She was brought back to the present a few hours later by the sound of raised voices.



The aliens were arguing.

“We need to leave,” pleaded the female. “Nobody’ll ever find us this far from civilization!”

“They’ll come, Ann,” (Sprout-in-the-Rock made a mental note of the female’s name) “Somebody will realize we’re missing, and then they’ll send someone to find us!”

“We didn’t tell anyone where we were going, or even that we were leaving!” Ann retorted.

“We scheduled our departure from the airport in Anchorage!”

Ann just glared at him.

“What do you want to do?!” Phil spread his arms in a helpless gesture. “March off into the woods right before winter, holding onto the slim hope that we might survive long enough to find a road or town?!”

“No, we need to prepare before we leave!”

“Will we be ready before winter?” Phil asked.

“I don’t know!” Ann shouted, frustrated.

“I’m going to find us some food!” Phil declared, picking up the odd tube from the pile of supplies and stomping off into the forest. His companion started off in the other direction, kicking a tree as she went.

Sprout-in-the-Rock watched her do this, irritated at her lack of respect for the old oak, then began to settle back into her trance at the disappearance of entertainment.

Bang! Sprout-in-the-Rock snapped back to awareness and scanned

the woods for the source of the disturbance. Phil came into view, carrying the limp form of a bushy-tail, which he dropped near their campsite before he walked away again, this

time up the mountain toward Sprout-in-the-Rock. The alien climbed his way about forty feet up the treacherous cliff, then stopped suddenly on a small ledge, raising the metal tube to point at another bushy-tail perched on one of Sprout-in-the-Rock’s overhanging branches.

Curious, the tree turned her attention to the little mammal on her limb. *Adorable creatures.* The thought crossed her mind just in time for her to see the bushy-tail fall from her branch and onto her roots in a splatter of warm blood.

Horrified, Sprout-in-the-Rock looked back to Phil, who was lowering the tube. The alien propped the object up against the rocks and reached for a handhold so he could retrieve the dead animal. Just as he was doing that, the dead bushy-tail slowly rolled off of Sprout-in-the-Rock’s roots and fell, landing right on top of Phil’s unsuspecting head.

The startled alien lost his balance and instinctively tried to compensate by stepping backward...off the ledge. He scrambled for something to grab as he was falling, and his hand closed around the strange tube, which slipped off the ledge and was thrown to the ground. Phil started to yell as he dropped, but the shout was cut short as the alien’s chin smashed onto the edge of the ledge with a loud smack. His head flew backward and his mouth opened releasing a trail of blood and the last half inch of the alien’s tongue.

That’s when a miracle happened. A small outcropping of rock snagged the front of Phil’s shirt, scraping along his chest and smacking his jaw again as he came to a stop. Sprout-in-the-Rock could see that the alien was barely cohesive. His head lolled back and his eyes were crossed more often than not. Most disturbing of all though, was the pool of blood gathering in his upturned mouth; he didn’t have the strength to lift his head and let it out. At first he coughed it out, but it was replaced before he could suck in a breath of air. As his lungs emptied, the surface of the crimson pool rose until it



was spilling freely down his cheeks, neck, and eventually dripping off his feet.

What a horrible way to die, thought Sprout-in-the-Rock, her outrage at the death of the bushy-tail disappearing in a rush of sympathy and realization that the aliens needed food too. *Drowning in your own blood*. She felt sorry that there was no way that she could help the alien who had appeared in her life just the day before. Phil ran out of oxygen about two minutes later.

His body suddenly convulsed of its own will, trying futilely to get rid of the blockage. Phil's eyelids drooped and Sprout-in-the-Rock's mind was filled with sorrow. Then, drawing strength from his last reserves, the alien forced his eyes open and threw his head forward, spewing the blood onto the outcropping that had saved him.

Sprout-in-the-Rock's consciousness flooded with a feeling of elation as she listened to the alien's grating gasps. Many minutes passed, and Phil, in his semi-conscious state, had a hard enough time keeping the blood from filling his mouth, and didn't make any plans toward escaping.

But, as time went on, he recovered to a certain extent and tried to pull himself up. Sprout-in-the-Rock could see that he would need Ann's help to escape. The alien apparently realized that too, and called his companion's name.

"Ann." It was hardly more than a whisper. As the sun began to set, and the color slowly disappeared from Phil's face as he lost more and more blood, Ann finally strolled into the clearing below, her hair damp and untangled, and her clothes washed and straightened. Sprout-in-the-Rock realized she had been at the nearby stream, which the tree knew existed because it could be heard trickling through the forest on windless days. The female sat down on the ground, unaware that Phil dangled three stories above her head...until she spotted the tubular instrument that her companion had used to shoot the

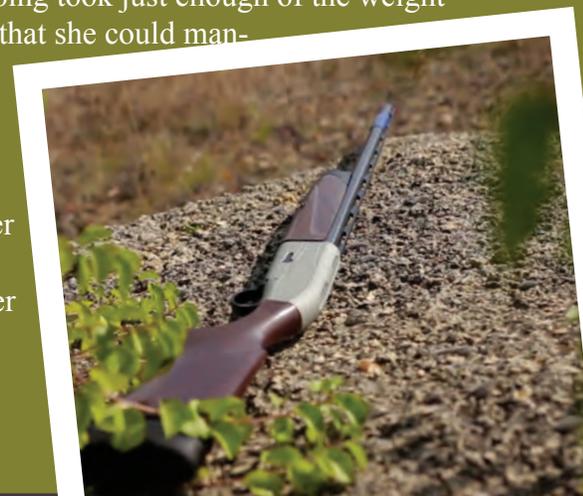
bushy-tail. The wooden handle was shattered, and the moving pieces bent beyond recognition.

Ann walked over to the object and picked it up. She looked around, trying to find out how this had happened, the panic apparent on her face. Phil called her name again. She still didn't hear. Then, the helpless alien kicked out with his legs, releasing some rocks wedged in the cliff in front of him. The stones tumbled to the ground, clacking together and bouncing off the cliff as they went.

Ann turned as her ears caught the sound, and she saw the rocks smash into the ground. Her gaze wandered upward, and she jumped in horror at the sight. "Phillip!" she screamed.

She rushed around the camp, grasping a coiled length of rope and a short blade as she went. Then, without a thought for her own safety, she nimbly scrambled up the cliff face, with the rope over her shoulder and the blade in her waistband, until she found a ledge a few feet below and beside Phil. Once she was there, she looped the rope below his armpits and tied it off. Then, she wrapped the rope around the outcropping a few times and pulled herself up on top of the jutting piece of rock and straddled it. She held the rope in one hand, and with the other tried to slide the ragged remains of Phil's shirt off the edge. But the weight on the piece of cloth, combined with the jagged surface of the rock, was too much to overcome. Instead, Ann slid the blade from her pants and, still using one hand, cut the garment free.

The male alien dropped a few feet before the rope caught him. The tendons in Ann's arm stood out in high relief as she grasped the cord with all her strength, but the loops around the outcropping took just enough of the weight off her arm that she could manage. The female jammed the steel object back into her waistband and her other



hand joined the battle.

Hesitantly, she loosened her hold on the rope and a few inches slid past her fingers. Then she clamped back down and the movement stopped. She repeated the process hundreds of times. The rope began to burn the skin off her palms, Sprout-in-the-Rock saw, but Ann kept going. It was well into the night by the time Phil lay safely on the forest floor. Ann joined him a few minutes later, cradling her raw hands. The bleeding from Phil's tongue had stopped, but his face was as pale as the watery moon that peeked through a fresh blanket of clouds, and the tuft of blond hair on his chin was stained dark brown by dried blood.

Sprout-in-the-Rock did not sleep that night. She stayed up, keeping watch over the oblivious companions.

The next morning Phil mustered the strength to prop himself up against a tree and eat some more food from the salvaged cans, this time a lumpy reddish-brown sludge. Sprout-in-the-Rock observed the female as she tinkered with the remains of the tube-like weapon, and eventually threw the instrument to the ground in frustration.

The day progressed, Phil recovered enough to stand and wobble into the trees to relieve himself, but Sprout-in-the-Rock could see that he would not be much use if there was trouble. Unfortunately for the aliens, trouble lurked just out of sight.

Sprout-in-the-Rock spotted it first. The huge, brown-furred monster had a large, flat head with round ears and a long muzzle. Its stubby tail slapped a fall fly as its rolling gait carried it toward the companions' camp. It had been watching the two-legs, wary at first, but now, sensing their weakness, it had decided to attack and get one more good meal before hibernation. Sprout-in-the-Rock had seen the big-brown take out bigger animals than the aliens, so she was concerned that the beast would be too much for them to handle, especially with Phil in the condition he was in. She stared down at the unaware aliens in anticipation.

Ann was hunched over the rations, sorting them, and Phil was asleep when the big-brown cleared the trees, gaining speed.

It was upon the female and swiping at her with its heavy paw before she could turn around. The wicked claws raked across Ann's back, tearing rows of long gashes into her garment and, underneath, her skin and muscle. The alien arched her spine and screamed as the pain seared her flesh.

The big-brown was lifting its paw for another attack. Ann turned on the beast just in time to snatch the blade from her waistband and hold it out. The paw's own momentum drove the piece of shiny steel through the thick pad on its underside, but the knife wasn't enough to stop the whole leg, and it continued its swipe, smashing into the female alien and sending her a few feet through the air before she crashed to the forest floor in a heap. The big-brown's foot landed back on the ground, but when the beast put weight on it, the ground jammed the blade further up its leg, slicing tendons and scraping against bone. The huge animal roared, a monstrous wail of agony that practically shook the mountain.

Ann rolled herself over, gasping for air. The big-brown began to charge, opening its cavernous maw as it came. The alien desperately scrambled backward until she found her bleeding back pressed against the wrecked rumble-bird. The big-brown braced itself and prepared for the feeling of its two-inch fangs sinking into warm flesh. Ann screwed her eyes shut, and Sprout-in-the-Rock would have cried out in fear if she could.



Thump! The big-brown crumpled to the ground, revealing a machete protruding from the base of its skull. Phil stood--barely!--on the edge of the clearing, recovering from his throw. He stumbled over to his companion and wrapped his arms around her trembling form.

Sprout-in-the-Rock relaxed, relieved that both aliens were still alive. When the two-legs had first appeared, the tree had been curious, but actually a little annoyed at the disturbance to her peaceful existence. But now, just two days later, she found she cared about the aliens, and her mind tightened in fear every time their lives were threatened.

Down below, Ann lay on her stomach as Phil rinsed her wounds and wrapped her midsection in the white material that also covered her calf and Phil's chest. *How quickly their roles have reversed*, Sprout-in-the-Rock observed.

As the days passed both aliens slowly recovered from their accidents enough to remove the wrappings and walk around easier. They butchered the big-brown. After cutting away its skin, they gutted it and chopped the meat into smaller pieces, which they sprinkled with a crystal-like mineral and sealed in clear bags; they had found both materials among the salvages from the rumble-bird.

They also began building a shelter after deciding to wait it out and hope to be rescued. They constructed it out of dead logs and thin sheets that they had brought with them.

The weather grew colder as winter approached and

it became obvious that the aliens' clothes would be insubstantial for keeping them warm. Besides being thin and sleeveless, the

garments were worn and tattered. Both pairs of pants were rubbed through at the knees, and Phil's shirt was completely open in the front where Ann had cut it. Ann's shirt was already torn in the back from the big-brown, and the slices had deteriorated further, exposing more skin to the elements.

The companions couldn't find a solution to the problem, until they remembered the furry hide that they had deposited nearby a few weeks before. After they retrieved the big-brown's skin, they worked together for days to make themselves each a one-piece dress-like garment with the warm fur on the inside.

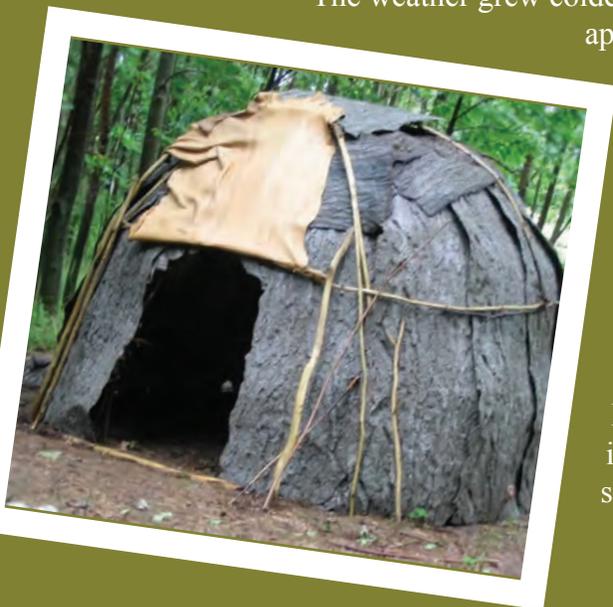
Their survival chances seemed to get better and better as the weeks passed and the aliens became more used to the wild and more prepared for winter. Sprout-in-the-Rock spent her time observing them and listening to them talk. The tree became confident that the two-legs would make it through the cold season.

That is...until she was awoken in the middle of the night by a horrible retching noise. Ann ran out of the shelter and doubled over, gagging and spewing up partially digested food. Her face was flushed red but she shivered as if she were cold.

Phil scrambled out of the makeshift hut a few seconds later, just in time to see Ann finish throwing up and slump into a sitting position, the front of her clothing covered in returned food. The male rushed up to his companion and placed a hand on her forehead. He instantly withdrew, and Sprout-in-the-Rock could tell by the look of concern on his face that Ann was very sick.

He stayed up all night, cradling the female and giving her sips of water. Later that night, it snowed.

It was still well above freezing temperatures, so it was a surprise, and it was only a light dusting, and most of it melted as soon as it hit the ground, but in some areas it accumulated about an inch deep, painting the forest speckled gray and white. Phil dragged Ann back into the shelter as soon as it started, and Sprout-in-the-Rock



could hear his soft whispers.

“You have a really high fever,” he informed his friend. “I’m gonna try to cool you down in the morning, but just try to sleep for now.” Ann croaked a reply, but Sprout-in-the-Rock couldn’t make it out.

As soon as the sun peeked over the horizon, Phil helped his companion back outside and laid her on the ground. Then, he went to gather some snow from an accumulated patch. When he returned with an armful of white fluff, he placed it on the dirt next to Ann. He took a handful and gently smeared in onto her forehead.

The female recoiled and whimpered at the icy touch of the snow. “This is how they used to treat fevers in the pioneer days,” Phil crooned. “It’s very uncomfortable for the patient, but it should bring your temperature down.” Ann nodded miserably.

Over the next hour, Phil built a small campfire to keep Ann from getting too cold, then slowly packed snow around his companion’s body. Ann cringed every time the ice touched her skin, but her face gradually returned to a normal color.

That afternoon, Phil brushed the snow off her body and they went back inside. The next day they repeated the process. And the next. And the day after that. On the fifth day, neither alien emerged from the hut until late afternoon, when Phil ducked out of the shelter, his eyes clouded with tears.

Sprout-in-the-Rock could tell by his body language that Ann was not yet gone, just on the brink of death. The male kicked a large rock at his feet, then picked it up and threw it into the forest.

Then he threw an empty can. He continued with his fit of frustration for about ten minutes, until he ran out of objects in the immediate area that could be thrown. He dropped to the ground and buried his face in his hands.

Suddenly, his head snapped up and his tears evaporated into thin air. He sprang to his feet and sprinted to the rumble-bird, where he

practically dove through the window. A series of creaks and bangs issued from the wreckage, and a few minutes later, Phil jumped back out the window, carrying a small, pointy steel-and-glass object filled with a white liquid.

The alien raced to the shelter and entered. A few seconds later, Ann’s agonized scream sounded like music to Sprout-in-the-Rock’s listening ears. The next day, Ann walked out of the hut practically good as new.

Sprout-in-the-Rock’s consciousness buzzed with joy day and night as the aliens settled back into their survival rhythm. She had grown to care for the strange creatures whose love and devotion to each other were so unlike anything that she had ever encountered in the brutal kill-or-be-killed world of the wild. She hoped that the two-legs’ story would be happy and peaceful for the rest of the time they spent in her forest.

It was too much to hope for.

The aliens awoke one morning to the smell of smoke in the air. They wandered around curiously, trying to find the source of the smell. But after a few minutes of searching, they passed it off as the remnants of their fire from the night before still floating around, and went about their daily routines. Sprout-in-the-Rock was not so ignorant.

In the dry time before winter, forest fires were not particularly uncommon in the area. Sprout-in-the-Rock had seen a few before, blazing orange in the distance and shooting ash and smoke into the sky. But they had never touched her stretch of the forest before.

The tree spotted the telltale orange glow in the distance and recognized it for what it was. But even she was not too concerned; she had seen it before and it had never affected her.

Gradually, as the days wore on, the smell of smoke grew stronger and Sprout-in-the-Rock could now make out the individual trees burning. Ann and Phil started to suspect something more, too. They moved their belongings against the rock of the cliff, throwing nervous glances into

the forest.

“I’m gonna investigate,” Phil decided later that day.

“I’ll come too,” Ann declared. Phil opened his mouth to argue, but realized by the female’s stubborn expression that it would be futile.

The companions marched into the woods, each carrying a sharp blade and a small canteen of water, just in case.

Sprout-in-the-Rock couldn’t relax the entire time they were gone. She constantly scanned the trees, anxiously awaiting their return. The sun was almost on the horizon when they burst out of the bushes, covered in ash but apparently unharmed.

They quickly gathered armfuls of supplies and stacked them against the wall of the cliff. “Now the fire won’t be able to burn them as easily,” Ann remarked, as satisfied as one could be in her situation.

“The fire might not even make it this far,” Phil said, though his voice lacked even a small measure of conviction. Sprout-in-the-Rock could see that he was wrong. The tree watched, concerned, as the fire ripped across the land, gaining speed as it went; the fire would reach the cliff before the sun passed its zenith the next day.

The glowing orb now dipped below the horizon, sending the cloudy sky into darkness, lit only by the fiery glow in the distance. The aliens slept uneasily, waking often from nightmares only for their fears to be amplified by the illuminated sky. Sprout-in-the-Rock did not sleep at all, she helplessly watched as the hungry maw of the fire devoured her kin. She lamented the loss of so many of her kind, but her deeper worries lay with the helpless aliens.

The next morning arrived what seemed like days later. The two companions huddled against the cliff, helplessly watching as the fire drew nearer. The flames licked hun-

grily at the trees on the edge of the clearing and began climbing up their roots. The little

hut that the aliens had built burst into flame and collapsed just minutes later.

The stifling heat emanating from the fire seared the aliens skin and they screwed their eyes shut, wrapping each other in a comforting embrace. But still the fire clawed its way closer, sucking up the dry grass in the clearing.

Sprout-in-the-Rock’s mind clenched in worry as Ann released a tearful wail and the greedy hands of the fire felt at the aliens’ stacks of supplies. The two-legs realized that they wouldn’t survive if they stayed on the ground, so they desperately scrambled up the cliff, struggling to hold onto the fire-heated rock. Tears slipped from their cheeks and evaporated instantly as they landed on the now-completely-consumed ground.

The forest roared and crackled as the fire destroyed the area. Smoke filled the air, choking the aliens and swirling like black clouds of death. The companions reached the ledge where Sprout-in-the-Rock was perched and could go no further; above the tree, the cliff became smooth and sloped outward, offering no hope of escape.

The aliens locked together, each trying to comfort the other. The flames reached toward their huddle from nearby trees and the ends of Ann’s auburn locks began to singe and hiss. Phil pulled his companion further into the cliff, trying to shield her from the heat.



Sprout-in-the-Rock suddenly felt an overwhelming desire to help these two, no matter the cost. The tree forced all her willpower into her deep roots, wanting them, willing them, to move with all her strength. Then she felt it. A tiny scraping feeling deep in the rock. But it wasn't the stone moving...it was her! She squeezed harder with all her roots.

Phil's garment caught on fire and he whacked at it with his hand to put it out. The flames disappeared...temporarily. Ann wailed again, this time a long, low keened of such finality that it shook Sprout-in-the-Rock to the core. And it put her over the top.

Crack! The noise startled the companions and they turned, just in time to see Sprout-in-the-Rock fall. The tree tipped, ripping out boulders and large stones, until she came to a stop protruding horizontally from the cliff. And where her roots used to be, there was a cavern. A small cavern housing an underground spring that pooled into a pond—Sprout-in-the-Rock's secret source of water.

The aliens couldn't believe their luck. They ducked into the damp cave and pulled a boulder in front of the opening.

The fire ended the next day. Sprout-in-the-Rock's whole top half had been burned to a crisp, but she was still vaguely aware of her surroundings. The aliens emerged from the cave and climbed to the forest floor.

As the weeks passed, the animals returned to re-begin their lives (although the trees would not start to grow back until spring). Phil and Ann built another shelter and salvaged enough of their food to keep them alive for a week or two.

The winter slowly passed, and Sprout-in-the-Rock felt her consciousness slipping more and more every day. She knew that, by spring, she would be gone.

One warm spring day, the tree noticed the aliens were packing up and gathering food into animal-skin sacks. She realized what they were doing, and her last feeling in life was one of immense happiness as she watched the companions hike off into the blackened woods, hand in hand.

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