Life is Sitting in the Back Seat

I sat in the backseat, neck throbbing from the uncomfortable position of trying to sleep. The air conditioner was screaming, but the front seats impeded the freezing air from reaching me. Little sweat droplets formed on face, as I turned green from the tilt of each curve. The endless road, reached and stretched, trying to grasp the next corner in front. I wished that the turn off was soon, but it never came. My butt was losing feeling, the seatbelt was digging into my bladder, and the bumps in the road made me wish I never agreed to this. I didn’t want to sit any longer. I didn’t even want to sit at all. I shouldn’t have even gotten in the car. I shouldn’t have said, “Yeah, I’d be thrilled” to pitching a tent in the ditch. Camping is the last way I want to spend my summer.

After what seemed like 4 days, 6 hours and 54 seconds, we finally turned off onto a road that had three arrows. Rickey, Johnny, and Clifford. Dad attempted to make a joke about the three lakes being brothers; it didn’t go so well. Mom sat there grinning hesitantly, as I faced palmed for the next five minutes wondering if Dad noticed that only he, laughs at his jokes.

Claustrophobia. It’s a cool word, and I started feeling it T minutes into the car ride. I was so ready to burst out of the car doors, and smell fresh air. My tolerance of the stench of my dog in the trunk, had reached its limits, and I wanted to breathe in the cool, crisp atmosphere. We came to a stop and I immediately felt relieved. I threw four or fives bags out of the way, and pushed the door open that, unfortunately, hit a tree.

*What a way to start this dumb trip.*

“HEY! HEY! HEY!” Dad spat out, “Watch it. You put a dent in the door.”

“Well it’s not my fault you parked beside a tree and didn’t tell me. I couldn’t see past the forty bags you stuck in the back seat with me.”

“Jessica,” mom said with a discerning look. “Don’t start.”

*I don’t know why her name is Barbara, that makes her sound nice. And Reuben, that’s from the bible, which certainly should not have been given to my dad, if they were nice they wouldn’t have forced me to come.*

The best thing that was going to come out of this trip was seeing my family. They decided to come last minute, and it was the only thing that made me think this trip might be okay. I trotted up to the picnic table and saw my Auntie Helene.

“Hey, my girl,” My Auntie Helene laughed.

“Hey, Auntie.” I hugged her “Where’s Elisa?”

“She should be sitting in my camper, why don’t you go see her.”

“Okay, peace.” I yelled sprinting away

Elisa, my cousin. Blonde like the sun, eyes like water, and tall as a tree. Hidden so well Man Tracker couldn’t find her. I climb exhaustingly step by step up the camper stairs, and swing the door open. I stomp around, looking for traces of my cousin, and see it everywhere.

“Smells like a turd.” I scream, flying out of the camper.

“You’re right but its not me.” Elisa climbed out, and traced my tracks.

She’s the only reason I agreed to come camping. Her smile, so bright. Her laugh, so contagious. Her company, more delightful than a cup of tea. I see her every summer, but it gets harder and harder to make plans. As our little minds develop, we receive responsibilities like a gun aimed at target. The day was fresh, but our motivation no longer existed to get out and do something. So, instead we flicked a few cards around playing bullshit; ultimately, it is impossible to win with two people. But we do it for the entertainment. The light in the sky dims, the clouds go grey, and the smell of moisture in the air, are reminders that my tent won’t build itself. Elisa and I mosey ourselves over, pick up the tent package and start assembling, incorrectly, I suppose. Once the temporary home we built from the ground up was completed, and the smell of smokeys filled the air. We mowed down our food, played some instruments, and listened to some short stories on the radio. The hum of crickets eventually took over. Our eyes began to thicken, and our lids became warm from the fire of assorted colors. I stumbled to my tent, laid in my poorly made bed, and felt myself sink deeper into the earth with every breath. My mind became loose and clouded with the sound of nature sneaking around in the night.

The squawking of a bird forced me to awaken from a deep sleep. I laid still for a few moments listening to the indistinct chatter outside my tent; breakfast was being made. The heat in my tent was becoming unbearable, forcing me to get up and start my day. I walk outside, relieved but feeling a bit greasy. I sat down at the picnic table.

“Good morning.” My Mom and Dad said in unison.

I ate breakfast with my cousin and auntie, as my parents cut up some fruit. After some time passed I slowly gathered wood, and made some marshmallow sticks by sharpening the end like a pencil. I lazed about for many hours before my mom yelled at me to do something productive. I slowly got up and changed into my bathing suit and prepared myself to go out with Elisa. White knuckles forming, grasping onto our floaties, approaching a trail that was covered in vegetation. My skin began to sting from being scraped multiple times at once, from the inconvenient thorns that have no purpose. Tiny little rocks decided to leave their assigned seats and relocate themselves in my flip flops. I gasped through my teeth, swearing.

“Do you want to go down here, or keep going straight?”

“Straight. It’s too weedy and not open enough.” I explained

Continuing the path, the color popped and appealed to the eye; the trees were soft and welcoming. The flowers hugging the base of the trees and the squirrels smiling gently. The branches gradually spread out, revealing a long, mucky, brown rope swing. Dangling there begging me to go on it. I clenched on tight, sprinted forward and leaped with faith, that the swing didn’t snap. The swing sang softly. I let go, flying through the air screaming ecstatically. The water bit my skin, and air ran out of my lungs. I opened my eyes and saw the light beaming through the clear water. I swam to the surface and saw the blonde sun dancing on the teal water. The clouds orange and purple in some spots, the red filled the air and outlined the mountains. My body loosening at every little detail. My eyes were gazing open, the dryness and sting forcing me to blink. I wanted every second to last. Originally I wanted to not be here, and now I wanted to stay. I felt free, I had no fear, no worries, and no stress to take over. The thought of sitting in the back of the car, crossed my mind and being squished by bags, was worth it because it made this area feel that much bigger. Life is sitting in the back seat. Squished and waiting for a reward. This was it. This is what made life worth it. To be free, to observe the beauty that we don’t get to see if we don’t search. The falling of the sun convinced Elisa and I to walk back to the campsite. I listened to the laughter of my family enjoying the last couple of hours our vacation. I waited patiently to experience this day once more before I had to press play and pack up. This is what I want to live for.