

Never Cry Wolf

There is an Aesop Fable called "The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf." It's a story about a shepherd boy who watched a flock of sheep near a village and brought out the villagers three or four times by crying out "wolf! Wolf!" When his neighbors came to help him, he laughed at them for their pains. When the wolf finally did show up, no one believed his cries for help. Unfortunately, the lesson one should have learned from this Fable was lost on me and my good friend Anne.

It was a warm summer day. Several ladies of the Forest Lake Getaway Gals were enjoying their annual trip to Forest Lake. It was early afternoon when several of us went down the Rifle River on rubber tubes. At the end of the trip, everyone jumped out of their tube except Anne. Somehow she got stuck in her tube and continued floating down the River. I went after her and with a little help, she was able to leave her tube and we both climbed out of the water and up on the river bank.

After looking around, we noted that everyone had disappeared. We both looked at each other and commented that if we were in real trouble, nobody was around to help. It was then we concocted a story that I can now only describe as ridiculous. I would hurry back to the cottage and tell everyone that Anne may have drowned. In her effort to get out of her tube, she had flipped over and because of the strong river current, floated away before I could help her.

This whole story took on a ring of truth when I dialed 911 and pretended to beg for help - what no one saw was my finger holding down the telephone receiver. The Getaway Gals were actually running to their cars in a panic when they noticed Anne calmly walking toward the cottage. That night, when our husband's called, we told them about our great hoax. They weren't impressed. In fact, payback time came the very next day.

It was a very hot afternoon when four of us decided to go canoeing. We rented canoes and were dropped off at High Banks just north of Skidway. Anne, who is not a good swimmer, wore a lifejacket. The trip started off with everything going smoothly. We were about half-way through our trip, however, when overhead clouds began to darken. It was not long before a major storm pelted us with heavy rain and non-stop lightening. We constantly heard loud siren warnings from somewhere close by. In our haste to increase speed, we scuffed a weedy river bank and in an instant, our canoe was filled with spiders running everywhere. Anne, sitting in front, began beating them with her paddle and I managed to stomp on those coming my way. Needless to say, our canoe became very unstable.

Unbelievably, the storm grew even worse and sitting in an aluminum canoe, with lightening in every direction, did not make for a fun trip down the river. Our only other option, sitting out the storm under a tree, did not make good sense. Finally, I had enough. I saw a small grassy hill and steered our canoe toward it. Stepping out in what I thought was shallow water turned out to be a real surprise. In a split second, the canoe tipped over and we both fell in water over our heads. To make matters worse, I had swallowed a lot of it. Luckily Anne's life jacket managed to hold the both of us up allowing me needed time to get air back in my lungs. Feeling very weak, I managed to swim to shore to try and get help.

Luckily, help was right over the hill. The livery employee and my friends were huddled under a shelter waiting for our return. When I ran up to them and explained that they all needed to help Anne who was in trouble and still floating down the river, my two friends began to laugh. "Don't listen to her," they said, "she told the same dumb story to us yesterday and the whole story was just a hoax. At this, the employee wasn't sure what to do. For a just a few seconds, she just looked back and forth at our faces. Finally she decided it would make good sense to investigate the matter herself. Anne, by this time, had floated into shallow water and the storm had somewhat abated. Soon we were able to retrieve Anne, the canoe, and everything else that emptied out of our canoe and into the river.

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