

What I've Done

Fear and panic overtook me as I ran as fast as I could. I wasn't really sure where I was going, but anywhere was better than there. It was unfamiliar territory, an eerily quiet forest. I struggled to try to find any sign of civilization.

Tears swelled up in my eyes as the bitter, cold wind hammered against them. That, along with the sun slowly setting made it increasingly difficult to see.

I remember thinking to myself that I never should have quit Boy Scouts. With the minimal knowledge of wilderness survival that comes from watching Bear Grylls, I figured I wouldn't make it past the first night alone in the woods, especially with the biting cold. I was determined to find some sort of shelter to keep me alive that night so I could find a way home.

But did I deserve to go back home? After what had happened that night, would it have all been better if I would have died in those woods? Possibly. I'm sure more than one person would have been happy if that were the outcome.

As the sun started to sink deeper behind the trees, the sky turned a beautiful orange-purple. I knew I had less than an hour before it was too dark to see, and even less time before I was unable to run. My knees were getting weak; my entire body ached; my throat burned from the cold, dry air; and my head was swimming.

I thought back on the events of the day. Less than 12 hours ago, I was sitting in my kitchen, eating the last of my Lucky Charms and catching up on the past night's Facebook statuses and Twitter posts. I remember it was Friday. I had made plans that night to go bowling with some old friends. My day seemed to be going normally.

Then everything changed.

I walked out to my car thinking how wonderful a morning it was. Ready for an end to the workweek, I got in the car and headed off. The drive to work was unusually slow, and when I finally arrived, the spot I typically parked in was taken.

"No big deal," I thought to myself. "I'll just park in the parking garage."

I pulled into the dimly lit garage and parked in the back. I got out of my car and headed to the main office building. Suddenly, I felt a sharp pain in the back of my head and everything went black.

I woke up in a decrepit shack in the middle of the woods. I could see light seeping in through holes in the poorly constructed walls and ceiling, but other than that there were no lights.

Once my vision cleared, I saw a shadowy figure standing in front of me. He slowly walked to me and knelt down in front of me. I was not prepared for what happened next.

He asked me a question.

Considering the circumstances, I had no idea what to say. My friends and family always told me to prepare for what I would do in this situation; but whenever something like this happens, it always happens to someone else, never to us. Thinking that it would never happen to me, I never gave the topic much thought, and now I was confronted with a situation and had no idea how to handle it.

What happened after that is still a blur. I guess the fear and pain has caused me to block it out. All I know is that night, I did the unthinkable. I don't know what came over me. Fear? Anxiety? Something supernatural? The bad Mexican food I had the night before? Whatever it was bended my will until I did things I never thought a sane human being was capable of.

I tried to suppress these vivid images from my mind as I continued to run into the night. As I ran, I could hear what sounded like footsteps behind me. Needless to say I began to panic even more. I thought I got away, but it was only a delusion. I was being followed... I was being chased.

I felt that hope was lost until I finally saw a lone, small house in the distance. I only had to make it there before I was caught. I couldn't imagine what would happen if I was caught, especially after what I'd done.

As I neared the house, the sky got darker and darker, and the footsteps got louder and louder. I could feel whatever was following me getting closer. Any second I felt like it would take me and it would all be over. Ready to pass out, I barely made it to the house.

Thinking on my feet, I ran around the house and ran in the back door. I peeked out of a window as a large shadow bolted past and continued into the woods behind the house. I had lost whatever was chasing me. I was in the clear... For now.

I checked my phone to see that I had no service, so instead I used it as a light to find my way around. I resolved to head to the basement and sleep in a dark corner, just in case something happened. Making my way through the creepy, abandoned house, I finally came across a stairway leading down.

I found my way to a corner to settle into in the cold, dark cellar. I could hear the scuttling of mice feet as I shifted in the dark and tried to sleep. After the day I just had, it's no surprise that the little sleep I did get was not restful.

The next morning, I looked up and saw light poking through to the basement from the window in the room above. I walked upstairs to see that the room was a small kitchen. Everything seemed normal except for one thing.

The shadowy figure from the night before was sitting at the table staring at me. He raised his hand and motioned me to sit in the chair across from him. I just stood there petrified with fear.

He saw that I was unwilling to move. Again he beckoned me without a word, this time with a little more irritation in his gesture. I figured there was no way out of this situation, so I slowly crept to the table.

When I sat down, we stared each other down like two old west gunmen in a duel for what seemed like hours. After a while, he stood up.

“I hope it was worth it,” were the only words he spoke as he slid my “reward” across the table to me.

Was it worth it? This question has haunted me every waking moment since that morning. Was everything I had done worth what I got? Was it a fair tradeoff? Even after all this time, I still struggle with these questions.

I like to think that had I been more prepared the night before, none of those events would have taken place. But even if I were prepared, would I have had the courage to stand up to this shady man? I don't know. It's hard to imagine things ending differently than they did.

I guess the point of my story is: What would you do?

I looked down at the shiny silver of what he had given me. When I looked up, I realized the man was gone. Where he went I'll never know. I don't really even want to know. I haven't seen him since, and hopefully I'll never see him again.

There was nothing left for me to do but enjoy the bitter-sweetness of my ill-gotten prize, and try to find a way home.

This is my story.

This is the story of what I did for a Klondike bar.