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### Encountering the Wonders of the Wilderness

On the west border of Glacier National Park, tucked among mountains, and separated from civilization by seven miles of dirt road, lies an outdoorsman's hidden treasure. That hidden treasure, Bowman Lake Campground, gave me the memories of a lifetime when I, my family, and my two best friends chose it as our vacation spot one summer. Not an ordinary campground, Bowman Lake offers innumerable opportunities for outdoor activities, including camping, kayaking, and hiking, all of which my friends and I could not wait to experience. A long way from our homes in Louisiana, we planned to take home stories and memories of camping and kayaking to share with friends and family. I anticipated the chance to share the wonders of nature with my best friends. Upon arriving at Bowman Lake Campground, after a tedious, dusty drive up a winding road, we faced our first challenge in a showdown against Mother Nature.

That challenge came in the form of the rain that greeted us at Bowman Lake. Although the rain dampened our spirits, we drove through the twilight forest, searching for a camp site and hoping optimistically that the rain would soon stop. After choosing a camp site, we made a dash into the light drizzle to quickly erect our tent; however, a harder downpour forced us to retreat to the truck. As the rain did not stop, we retreated to our tents without even stealing a good look around our campground. The warmth of my sleeping bag and the comfort of having a friend on each of my sides, sharing the adventure with me, lulled me to sleep. No one expected the pleasant surprises to come.

In the morning we were unprepared for the stunning beauty that confronted our eyes when we awoke and peered out. Without the rain from the day before, we could not have truly

appreciated the splendor of the sun, filtering through the forest that surrounded our tent. The trees dripped with glistening raindrops, and only the harmonious songs of birds could be heard. Our hearts skipped a beat when we realized that we shared the forest with numerous white-tailed deer, untainted by fear and bold enough to walk right through our camp site. We watched the deer with wide, excited eyes as the graceful creatures silently grazed on the plethora of grasses, flowers, and plants that blanketed the land. Despite the beauty of our camp site, the real treasure of the camping trip, Bowman Lake, awaited our eyes.

From our camp site a short trail led us to the lake after which the campground was named; standing at the foot of the water, we beheld an incredible sight. The enormous, towering mountains bordering the lake humbled us and left our jaws hanging open in states of awe. Their reflections shimmered in the crystal clear waters of the lake, and I found myself mesmerized by the stones lining the lake's bed, stones so colorful that they painted the waters of Bowman Lake a thousand shades. As the sun shone from behind the clouds, snow left from winter scintillated on the mountains' peaks. What made the experience all the more memorable were my best friends, sharing the beauty with me and feeling the same exhilarating wonder. Enraptured by the mountains and the crystalline lake, we exchanged no words, but only savored the moment, experiencing the glories of nature in each other's company.

That evening we decided that a kayak trip in Bowman Lake would end our day, so once again we set out to meet the lake's wonders. After paddling only a short distance, we stopped, unable to go any further, for the sunset, the sky, and the color changing mountains had captured our full attention. As the sun set, the once white, puffy clouds became a rosy pink, and the sky a canvas of orange and gray. I could hardly believe my eyes when a double rainbow formed over the mountains to the east, making the moment seem almost enchanted. I was blissful as I slowly circled our kayak, disturbing the still, peaceful water with my paddle and gazing at the

panoramic show nature was giving us. Rainbows in the east, the sunset to the west, and encompassing mountains, changing from brownish grays to deep blues because of the setting sun, left me in love with nature and utterly content.

With my friends in what I consider one of the most spectacular places on earth, I made memories of a lifetime; I realized that by sharing the trip with those I loved, I enjoyed the experience twice as much. The camping, kayaking, and sight-seeing allowed me to deepen my appreciation of nature and to realize that witnessing the beauties of nature, no matter where one might be, creates a better regard for the environment. A part of my heart will forever lie at Bowman Lake Campground, waiting for me to return.