

## The Valley

The setting sun diminished over the western mountain and the darkness of night began to creep into the narrow valley. Three young hikers had stopped for the night and had just finished setting up their camp. The oldest hiker put several pieces of wood into a teepee like structure with paper underneath it and lit a match. Within minutes a hearty fire gave light and heat to the campsite.

“Hey! You two slow-pokes c’mon! The fire’s not gonna last all night,” shouted Mike.

“Melody, hurry up. Mike’s got the fire going,” said Sarah.

“Yeah, yeah. I need to finish setting up my sleeping bag. You two know that I don’t go camping much so I am not as fast as you when it comes to setting up camp.”

“Mm’hmmm, excuses excuses. I seem to recall a certain someone who used to go up into the mountains for days just to get away from everyone.”

“Alright! So I used to hike and spend a lot of time in the woods, but that was a long time ago, Sarah”

“If you call four years ago a long time then yeah—“

“What are you two doing in there?” asked Mike. “Never mind I don’t wanna know.”

“We’re not doing that!” yelled Melody and Sarah in unison.

“We’ll be right out, okay?” explained Melody.

Melody finally finished setting up her sleeping with the impatient Sarah looking over her shoulder and asking if Melody needed any help. They both exited the tent and made their way to the fire pit that Mike had made.

“Oh, I so love a warm fire,” exclaimed Sarah as she sat down on a log that Mike had set next to the fire.

“Me too,” said Melody sitting next to Sarah and holding her hands near the fire.

“After you two are done warming yourselves up, lets get cooking dinner,” said Mike plainly.

“Okay, mother,” Sarah blurted out sarcastically. “We can’t help it, Mike, that we get cold really quick.”

Melody and Sarah both looked at each other and began laughing. Mike simply shook his head and placed his dinner on the fire. Mike knew that once Sarah and Melody joined forces to make fun of him, he did not stand a chance.

Time passed slowly as the three friends talked and laughed while waiting for their dinners to cook. The valley had remained still and quiet since the sun had set and the only sounds heard were the leaves rustling on the treetops and the fire crackling.

“I am gonna go get some more wood for the fire,” Mike said. He then stood up and walked toward the woods turning on his flashlight as he walked.

“Don’t be gone too long, Mike,” said Melody.

“I won’t,” said Mike. “I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Sarah and Melody could faintly see the light from Mike’s flashlight through the trees.

“Melody, what did you bring to eat?” asked Sarah.

“Well I wanted to try—did you hear something?” asked Melody as she looked around the campsite.

Sarah paused a moment trying to see if she could hear anything. “No. Except for our talking, I have really only heard the fire. Why do you ask?”

Melody did not say anything for a few minutes. She just sat still listening. Sarah looked at Melody, puzzled.

“I don’t know. I swear I heard something.”

“Well, we are in a forest and in a fairly narrow valley. Sound can play some pretty mean tricks with that type of setup.”

“Yeah, I suppose you’re right. Now, what did you ask me? Oh yeah about my food,” Melody said. “I wanted to try some new recipes. I found—there it was again. Didn’t you hear it that time?” Melody again looked around the campsite to try and find the source of the noise.

Sarah again looked at her friend and noticed that Melody’s face had changed. She had very serious look as she looked around the camp.

“I still don’t know what you are talking about. I didn’t hear anything that time either.”

“You seriously didn’t hear anything?” asked Melody.

“Nope, I didn’t hear anything except for you,” explained Sarah.

“I really thought I heard something that time. It was exactly the same as the first sound.”

“Well, try not to think about it. You were about to tell me what you brought,” said Sarah.

Melody looked around the camp once more before turning to talk to Sarah. Sarah had her usual inquisitive look on her face. Melody knew that face all too well because it usually proceeded Sarah asking her for some special treat that she had brought with her.

“Alright, you have that look on your face again, that ‘I want to ask you for something’ look,” said Melody.

“No, I don’t,” said Sarah shaking her head from side to side.

“Yes, you do,” replied Melody shaking her head up and down.

“No, I don’t.”

“Yes you—there it was again!”

Sarah again looked puzzlingly at Melody. “Is this some kind of joke, Mel? You keep saying that you hear something and I haven’t heard a thing. Are you trying to scare me? ‘Cuz if you are it is not funny.”

“Sarah, I am not joking. I really heard a noise.”

“Right. If this isn’t a joke, how come you can hear this noise and I can’t,” said Sarah flippantly.

“I don’t know why. Maybe if you would pay attention to something other than what you want you might have heard the noise too.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” asked Sarah.

“Oh come on Sarah, you have a habit of only thinking about what you want. Sometimes you are the most selfish person I have ever known.”

“I am not selfish,” said Sarah defiantly. “I am always—“

“You’re always what? Selfish?” Melody said cutting Sarah off. “You’re always selfish.”

Melody could see anger flaring up in Sarah’s eyes. Sarah’s body tensed up and Melody saw that Sarah had made fists. Sarah opened her mouth to say something when a loud shriek sounded from the woods.

“What was that?” asked Sarah as she darted her head around to try and find the source of the sound.

“I don’t know. That is the sound I heard earlier. I told you I heard something,” said Melody.

At that moment, the same loud shriek came echoing from the forest again. Sarah and Melody grabbed each others arms and desperately searched the forest to try and find the source of the noise. Melody stopped looking around and had fixed her eyes on a specific section of the forest right in front of them. Sarah noticed that Melody just sat there not moving.

“Mel, what’s the matter? Do you see something?” asked Sarah.

Melody’s hand trembled as she lifted it and pointed straight ahead. Sarah slowly turned her head in the direction of Melody’s hand.

“Oh my gosh, what is that?” asked Sarah.

Melody’s body suddenly went limp and sunk down next to Sarah. Sarah shook Melody to attempt to wake her.

“Melody! Wake up. Melody!” shouted Sarah in desperation.

Sarah turned her head and let out a loud scream that could be heard all over the forest. As Sarah’s scream subsided, silence was all that could be heard.