

The Adventure Afloat

A True Story

The light Montana breeze felt perfect mixed with the sweltering sunlight shining down on us. I hopped to my feet, next to the babbling Galatin river, and walked toward my parents and my aunt and uncle. They were sitting, gently weaving rope through the hand-holds of eleven water tubes, making a neat web of rope. Meanwhile, in the trunk of the car, my grandparents were organizing a cooler full of sandwiches for lunch.

My mom called me, my brother, and my two cousins over to help drag the tangle of rope and tubes toward the waters edge. Then my grandparents came walking over, my grandpa carrying the blue cooler, which they had just finished packing. My Grandma eased herself into the tube closest to the riverbank, and my grandpa, careful not to drop it into the water, handed the heavy cooler to my grandma, who set it into the easiest tube to reach. We were going to eat lunch on the river.

Later that day, we were drifting down the river, when disaster struck, literally. In the distance, we heard the boom and crack of a bolt of lightning, slamming to the ground. I felt my hair rising off my head, being pulled to the sky by the electricity pulsing through the air. Throughout the next few minutes, the air gradually got colder and colder. The river went from calm and peaceful to cold, dark, and restless. Everybody else ahead seemed to be getting farther away, their anxious conversations more hushed. I soon noticed that the rope attaching my tube to the others was sinking into the water, detached. My heartbeat quickened dramatically, as I started to imagine too many ways that this situation could escalate. I started going slower and slower, no longer being pulled along by

everyone else. My dad, I noticed, was a few feet behind me. He was not attached to the others, in the same situation as me! I was freezing, my teeth chattering, shaking only partially from the water pooling in the bottom of my tube, but also from the fear coursing through me. The mountain positioned on one side of the river only made it more ominous, restricting our view of the storm, which was certainly bearing down on us from the other side. My dad scooted off his tube and waded through the water towards me, grabbing the rope attached to my tube and the rope attached to his. He then started to walk swiftly through the water with the current, towards the rest of the tubes. With chilled, shaking hands, he tied the ropes to the others, and waded back to his tube. Thoughts of panic and fear were immediately replaced by gratitude and relief.

After a few long minutes of being thrust down the rushing river, we finally got back to shore, where the cars were parked. We were all numb from the frigid wind and pounding rain, but we all managed to clamber up the slope to the cars, dragging the tangle of tubes with us. We all worked together to pop open the seals on all of the tubes, letting them deflate while we loaded the coolers into the trunk. My Grandma started handing out towels to everyone, so I took mine gratefully and wrapped it around me so it was snug. I blissfully felt the fuzzy fabric against my skin, blocking out the piercing wind. By the time we all had our towels, and the coolers were packed up, the tubes had finished deflating. My mom walked over to the tubes to untangle the ropes, and was soon joined by everyone else. After untangling the ropes and putting them in the trunk, we started to fold up the deflated tubes, laying each gently but quickly into a box. My dad then heaved the box into the trunk, and everyone started rushing to the cars.

Me and one of my cousins got to the SUV first, along with my aunt, my mom, and my grandma. As I put down my wet towel, my aunt handed both me and my cousin velvety brown blankets. I took mine gratefully, and wrapped it

around me closely. I sunk into the warm and dry fabric, feeling safe from the fierce storm rumbling outside. I only felt slightly bad for the others, who were forced to ride in the roofless Jeep for about 30 minutes, with only their towels to shelter them from the chill, cutting wind and spattering beads of rain. I mostly just felt appreciative for the opportunity of such an exuberant ride down the river.