

Saved by Boomer



by Bill Schryver

Pay attention, you never know who or what you might see on your trip to the bathroom.

A late September weekend was chosen by John and Maggie to try out their new pop-up camper which they had just purchased with an end-of-season discount. This would be a special treat for their two children, Johnny and Marcie. A state park was an hours drive from the city, so they decided it would be a great place to start their camping adventure. John took off work early Friday afternoon and picked up some last minute supplies and then helped Maggie pack. When the kids got home from school, they hit the road. They reached the wooded campground and check-in was a breeze because the summer rush was over. While John set up the camper, the kids looked for firewood and Maggie got things ready for dinner. The family enjoyed a meal of hot dogs, beans, and fried potatoes. Later, they fixed s'mores and told stories by the campfire. Sleep came easy that night with a light breeze and the quiet of the campground.

In the middle of the night, John was awakened by a nearby "WHOOO...WHOOO". It was an owl. He looked at his watch and it was 2:30 a.m. Now that he was awake, a quick trip to the bathroom would be in order before going back to sleep. He quietly slipped out and headed 75 yards to the bathroom. There was a full moon overhead illuminating the way. The wind had picked up and it was a little chillier now. As he walked down the silent gravel road, he took notice of a few travel trailers on the right and a handful of tents scattered on the left. He was thankful for the comforts of his new camper, recalling his many campouts with the Boy Scouts and sleeping on the ground. He also noticed the embers of a few dying campfires and a motorhome with Christmas lights across the top up ahead. Then, he saw the bathrooms inviting yellow light between the men's facility on the right and the women's on the left. The bathrooms were well lit inside and had numerous shower and toilet stalls to accommodate the many campers there during the peak summer season. Upon exiting the bathroom, he took a few quick steps and then came to an abrupt stop; something was different. He glanced to the left, then the right. He was on the gravel road alright, but where were the trailers and tents? What about the Christmas lights and the smoldering campfires? Something was definitely wrong with this picture, as he stared into vast emptiness. John, a forty-three year old accountant, knew he couldn't be losing his mind, so he returned to the bathroom; something was different there, too. The men's room was on the left and the women's was on the right; wasn't that opposite of the way it was before? He thought maybe he was losing it. He splashed some cold water on his face and pinched himself a couple times. No, this was not a dream! He again ventured out into the dark and he saw the same thing, no campers or tents. This time he wandered a little further, the wind was picking up a little more and he was chilled with his light windbreaker on. The clouds were now darkening the glow of the moon. It appeared to be a deserted campground, but it looked nearly the same as the one he had just come from. As he surveyed the eerie scene, desperate thoughts raced through his mind. Where was his family? Had they missed him yet? Would he ever see them again? And, what in the world was going on here???

Saved by Boomer (continued)

According to his watch, it had been sixteen minutes since he first heard the owl, but it had seemed like hours. The only thing he could think of was to return to the safety of the bathroom and wait until daybreak; then, venture out again to look for some sign of human life.

He slowly opened the creaking door and spotted an older, portly gentleman with a white beard in a red flannel bathrobe washing his hands. The startled man looked up and stared at John. A sly grin came over his face as he asked, "Answering the call of nature, son?" John tried to answer but he was at a loss for words, so he just nodded. "Everything o.k. buddy? It looks like you've just seen a ghost," the man responded. After a long pause, John asked, "Have you ever been here before Mr.?" "Once or twice every year for the past 20 years or so. My name's Boomer, the Mrs. and me try to get down here during the off-season you know. We like the peace and quiet this time of year. Pulled in late and didn't hook up to the water supply yet." he replied. "Well," John said, "I've got a little problem here and...uh..." Then John explained how one moment he was with his family in his camper and a few minutes later, he seemed to have been transported to this deserted campground with no sign of life, until, of course, he met Boomer. Boomer scratched his head and said, "You know what? You just came through that door right there, right?" John nodded. Boomer then turned and pointed to a door on the other side of the room and said, "You know, there are two entrances to this here latrine; one on the east side and one on the west. My guess is you came in here the first time through the west door over there and got turned around a bit and went out through this here east door." "Maybe," replied John, "but, what about the empty campground...where had everyone gone?" Ah, shucks, sonny boy, that's the other half of this here camp. Fills up pretty quick in the summer, but ain't nobody campin' there this time of year," was Boomer's explanation. "Same thing happened to me a few years back. Could happen to anyone this time of the night, I suppose. Now, let's get out of here and get you back to your family."

As they left the bathroom (through the west door this time), they were met by Boomer's faithful collie. Looking up, John saw the Christmas lights, the campers, tents, and off in the distance, his own pop-up camper.

"Lead the way, Rudolph," Boomer instructed his dog. "Rudolph? As in Rudolph the red-nosed...no way...guess I really am losing my mind," thought John. As they walked, the chill in the air seemed less intense. As Boomer and his dog retreated to their RV, the one with the Christmas lights, of course, John asked, "Are you sure your name's Boomer?" Boomer just winked and gave him a thumbs up from his motorhome steps. A moment later, a relieved John was crawling back into his sleeping bag. Maggie rolled over and whispered, "What's going on, John? You've been gone an awful long time." "Nothing to worry about, honey, I was just in the bathroom talking to Boomer." "The bathroom...Boomer?" she said. "Just go back to sleep; I'll explain the whole thing in the morning."