

Lost and Found | Texto Completo

The Jenson family had been camping in the Smokey Mountains for the last three Spring Breaks in a row. They loved to get away from their busy lives, slow down, and enjoy nature and each other. The Jensons had two little boys. William was their older son at nine years old. He took after his mother, with deep brown hair and eyes and olive-toned skin. He took every responsibility given to him seriously, just like his mother, and he enjoyed giving advice to his younger brother. Zack, a five-year-old, was more like his father with strawberry-blond hair and a pale complexion. He was also more like his father in his love for mischief. His father enjoyed hiding around corners and popping out at the next passer-by, saying, "Boo!" and startling them. Zack also loved to hide and surprise people, but he had other added mischievous behaviors, as well.

The Jensons camped in an old RV that Mr. Jenson had to repair during just about every trip. Last season, a gasket on the toilet had given out, causing a leak the Mr. Jenson spent hours fixing. He'd had to travel to the nearest RV specialty store to replace the part. This year, there seemed to be some problem with the RV's electrical system. The Jensons had tried everything they could think of, and they couldn't get the air conditioning to run. Mrs. Jenson had decided to walk the campsite, looking for RV campers that seemed to have a good deal of experience. Maybe someone had had this problem before and knew how to fix it. Mr. Jenson stayed at the RV, trying different fuses, checking plugs and connections, and generally tinkering with anything he thought might relate to the problem. He looked up to check on the boys every time he thought about it.

William and Zack were playing Adventure Seekers, which was basically hide and seek while wearing safari hats and supply backpacks. Their parents' rule was that they could not leave their particular campsite without permission. That gave them the thirty yards between their camper and the next. There weren't many hiding places in this small space. On Zack's turn to hide, his brother covered his eyes and counted to twenty, while Zack tiptoed out of the campsite and into the woods across the street. He watched from behind some bushes as his big brother searched everywhere in the campsite. Zack couldn't help but giggle that he'd outsmarted William, but as soon as he heard that laugh, William's head whipped around, following the giggle to Zack's spot in the bushes. William started to run toward his little brother, yelling that it was breaking the rules to be out of the campsite.

William looked around for his dad, but didn't see him. He must've been inside the RV working on the problem. So, William ran to get Zack and bring him back to the campsite himself. Zack saw his brother running toward him, but he laughed even harder and ran off in the opposite direction. He heard William calling, "No! Stop! We can't leave the campsite. We're going to get in trouble!", Zack wouldn't stop, though. He wouldn't give up and lose the game that easily. William finally caught up to Zack when his little brother tripped over a tree root. Angry that his little brother was about to get him in huge trouble, he yanked Zack up by the arm. "What are you thinking, you little idiot?" Zack had a skinned knee from the fall, so his brother's yelling made him cry with pitiful little sobs. William sighed and hugged Zack. "I can't stay mad at you when you cry. No fair."

When Zack's fit ended, William said, "Let's try to retrace our steps and get back to the campsite. Maybe, if we hurry, we'll get back before dad notices we're gone." The boys walked back in the direction they thought they came from, but they didn't find the campsite. They walked and walked, but everything looked the same. William had been so busy watching where Zack was running on their way out into the woods that he really had no idea what any landmarks might be. He had no idea if they were headed in the right direction or the wrong direction. They couldn't see or hear any other campers, and it was starting to get dark. William thought back to the lessons his parents had taught him about camping. The most important thing they needed was water. After that, they'd need shelter and food. William had Zack stop and sit down so they could take inventory of the supplies in their backpacks.

Back at the campsite, Mr. Jenson had realized his boys were missing a few minutes after they disappeared into the woods. He began calling their names, trying to get them to come out of hiding. When this didn't work, he tried searching around the campsite, but he couldn't find any sign of them. Beginning to panic, he called his wife and together they called the park rangers. Soon, every available person in the campground was getting organized in a search pattern beginning at the Jenson's campsite. Both Jensons were determined to help in the search, although they struggled to control their panic enough to listen to directions. Soon, the woods were filled with the voices of rangers and volunteer searchers calling, "William? Zack?" After a few hours with no sign of the boys, the rangers called in their "secret weapon." An hour later, a man named Chuck arrived with a droopy, drooling, red-eyed old bloodhound. "This here's Rufus," Chuck told the Jensons. "He

may look a mess, but he can track a scent for miles. Just get me something that smells like your boys."

Mrs. Jenson ran to the camper and returned with the stuffed animal Zack cuddled in his sleep and the blanket that William slept with. "That'll be perfect," said Chuck, holding the items out to Rufus. "Rufus - Find!" In their backpacks, William and Zack both had an almost full water bottle, two granola bars, and a few packets of snack crackers. Zack had a small flashlight in his bag, and William had a book he'd been reading. As night fell, instead of looking for the campsite, William began looking for shelter. He told his little brother what to look for, as well. They found a place where a tree with a huge trunk had fallen and become embedded into a hill. The trunk and hillside formed something like a cave. The boys cleared the ground and snuggled back into the cave for the night. William explained to Zack that they shouldn't eat all their food and drink all their water. They should ration these items in case it took more than one night for their parents to find them.

"Do you think it'll take very long," Zack asked. He had run out of mischief, and all he felt now was fear. "Of course not," said William. "I just want to be careful just in case. I know mom and dad started looking for us as soon as you ran off. They'll probably be here before morning." "It's gonna get really dark, isn't it?" "Maybe. But it'll be okay. We'll see all the stars. And we have your flashlight." William put his arm around his little brother. He felt scared, too, but he knew that he had to act brave or Zack would get even more afraid. "I'm really tired, but I don't think I can sleep," said Zack. "How about I read to you?" William asked. "I don't like books with no pictures." "I know. That's why it might help you sleep." "Oh. Okay."

William read to his little brother by the tiny bright circle from the flashlight. Soon enough, his eyelids began to droop, and Zack was fast asleep with his head on William's shoulder. William kept watch as best he could, turning the flashlight toward any small sound that frightened him in the forest. He saw bugs, rodents, and one fat raccoon. Eventually, even as on-edge as he felt, William couldn't stay awake any longer. The next thing the boys knew, they were awakened by a howl. William jumped up and stood in front of his little brother, but it was a howl of recognition from Rufus the bloodhound. The dog had tracked the boys, bringing Chuck and the Jensons with him.

After the tears of relief and hugs of joy, the rescuers asked the boys how they had made it through the night on their own. William explained how he knew to ration the food and find shelter. He told them how he kept Zack calm by

reading. All the adults were impressed with his bravery and intelligence. The Jensions were happy just to be back together again. Still, they got invitations to be on the news and tell the boys' survival tale. Many people recognized William for the way he kept calm and protected his little brother. The ordeal made Zack pay more attention to the rules, at least most of the time.