

## Backyard Camping

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The long weekend stretched before us. The weather was warm and sunny, and many of our friends were away camping or at their cottages. Judy and I, bored, sat on our garage roof looking over the neighbourhood. Mr. Fournier the neighbour behind us, came out of his back door carrying a large bundle of material. He spread it over his back porch and we realized it was a tent. Suddenly I had a brilliant idea.

“Judy, don't you have a tent at home” I asked.

“We have an old one in our basement” she replied.

“Why don't we set it up in your backyard and sleep in it tonight?” I asked excitedly.

“We can't, my dad just put earth and grass seed all over our yard. Could we bring it over here?”

When my parents agreed, we hurried to Judy's house, found the tent, and hauled it out of the basement. Once out on the sidewalk, we half carried and half dragged the heavy tent down the street. Then we did another run to fetch the poles, as well as Judy's sleeping bag and her overnight stuff in a paper grocery bag. We sat in the backyard amid a bewildering array of various-sized poles and a huge lump of canvas. Luckily my dad saw our plight and helped us put everything together.

When the tent was set up to Dad's satisfaction, we made another trek, this time to the corner grocery store for “supplies”. We stocked our little house with Humpty Dumpty chips and our favourite, RC Cola. The biggest decision was which chocolate bar to buy. Judy decided on Malted Milk; my choice was a Snack Bar.

We could hardly wait for nightfall. The tent was tastefully furnished with sleeping bags, pillows, flashlights and a transistor radio. At one end was a box containing our snacks, drinks and plastic glasses. Of course we brought along our trusty eight ball.

When the sun set, we piled in and cranked up the music. “Hey Paula” and “The End of the World” provided the background to our gossip about the cutest boys in our class. We thought the slow songs were sappy though, preferring songs like “Walk like a Man” or “Sugar Shack”. Our reliable eight ball answered our deepest questions, revealing which boys liked us.

After a couple of hours of giggling, sharing secrets and singing along with the radio, we fell asleep, exhausted, around midnight.

Something woke me with a start in the middle of the night and I sat up in my sleeping bag, listening intently, my heart pounding. There was a rustling in the grass, then a large, dark shadow floated across the wall of the tent. I shrieked loudly, Judy woke up and instantly screeched, then my dad's voice said, “I just thought I would check on you girls, not scare you to death”. Gradually we settled down again, and slept until morning.

As we packed up our gear and took down the tent that morning, we agreed that we would have to do it again. Next time though, we would invite a couple more friends. We had learned well enough that there was safety in numbers - and protection from the creepy sounds of the night.