



GATHERED AROUND THE  
**CAMPFIRE**



S'MORES & STORIES UNDER THE STARS

MELODY A. CARLSON

ARTWORK BY MICHAL SPARKS



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*Entry 1*

# THE URGE

The mountains are calling and I must go.

JOHN MUIR

You're in your hometown, just going about your business, like mailing a package or picking up some fresh produce, and you see one. You stop and watch from the corner of your eye as a big ol' RV ambles down Main Street. Maybe you admire the paint job, or perhaps you think it's somewhat garish. But that rig's grabbed your attention. Then you wonder: *Where are they headed and where have they been?* And the next thing you know, you have the *urge*—that unexplainable urge to drop everything and hit the road too.

Now you're thinking about the comforting interior of your RV or trailer. Or maybe you're imagining your campsite with that cozy tent all set up and your camp chairs around a crackling fire. You can almost smell marshmallows

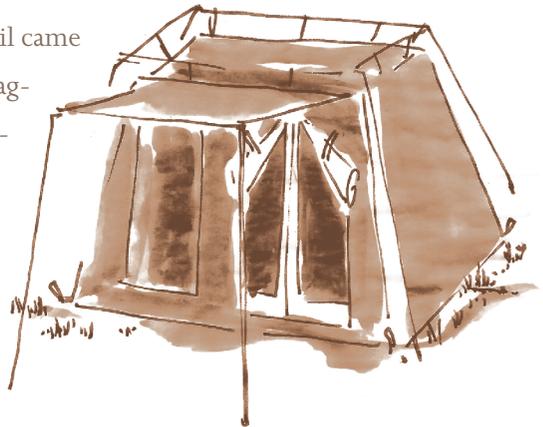
roasting. You're reminded of the peace and quiet of the woods...and escaping the demands of the day, free from your neighbor's noisy leaf blower.

As you drive through town, you feel an uncontrollable urge to go home and check the air pressure in your camp trailer's tires. Or you want to see if there's gas in the RV. Or you're making plans to dig out your camp supplies, hoping you aired out your tent after that last trip. Whatever the impulse that's grabbing at you, the wanderlust has bitten.

Perhaps you find yourself thinking about that cute set of unbreakable containers you found at the local flea market last fall...or considering the weight of cast-iron pans. And maybe you should drop by the hardware store for some camping toilet paper that's on special this week. Before you know it, you've pulled out your well-worn road map and you're planning a little getaway. Just a few days maybe, or weeks, or months...

But where does that urge originate? Why do some people feel the need to go, while others don't? Could it be the adventuresome spirit of pioneer ancestors, those brave people who traveled unthinkable distances to find a better way of living? Because almost everyone in this country has ancestors who migrated here from someplace else.

No doubt, life on the rustic trail came with daunting challenges, but imagine the moments when a weary traveler paused to gaze upon a raging river, the morning sun across the prairie grasses, a chain of snow-capped mountains, a herd of elk,



a placid lake. Despite their hardships, these ultimate campers must have relished the rewards of the wilderness too. Because they had the urge to travel.

Perhaps your ancestors arrived by boat or plane. Whatever brought them to this country, something motivated them to travel. And perhaps that same seed lies within you, a need to go and see, to experience and explore. I think it's simply the way God made some people. We're seekers, hoppers, dreamers... curious for what lies over the next hill or what we might find at the end of the rainbow. Any excuse is a good excuse to go.

Wherever this wanderlust comes from, why not simply embrace it? Why not enjoy the thrill of the open highway and head out for your next adventure? Sure, your excursion might last only a day or two, and your biggest thrill might be finding a whole sand dollar on a windswept beach. But when it's all said and done, you'll be happy you went. You'll be a bigger person for it. Maybe you'll even be glad to come back home again. And if not, there's always another unexplored road to find.

It is good to have an end to journey towards;  
but it is the journey that matters in the end.

URSULA K. LE GUIN



## TIP FOR THE DAY

Resealable plastic bags are perfect for camping. Freezable bags can be filled with soups or stews and frozen at home. Then place them in your cooler to keep other perishable foods cold—and ready for easy eating later. A Ziploc bag filled with premeasured dry ingredients (for your favorite camp recipes) makes cooking quick and easy at camp. Baggies also provide dry protection for matches, first aid items, meds, or whatever.



## *Entry 2*

# THE HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS

Money can't buy happiness, but it can buy a camper,  
which is kind of the same thing.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

We're staying at one of the few beachside RV parks in Oregon. On the left side of our trailer is an older Class C motorhome—the kind that looks like a van met a camp trailer and two become one. In this small RV reside eight people, including what appear to be grandparents, parents, and kids. I marvel at this extended family's tenacity for surviving in tight spaces, and try not to imagine the smell of those teenage boys' feet on this humid summer day. Although I do wonder where they all sleep. I imagine them stacked head to toe like sardines in a tin.

Suddenly it feels as if our modest although comfortable motor home is quite spacious. And even though our Bounder is getting up there in years, it's in pretty good shape. Not like the crowded one next door. With its faded paint and

dents and dings on the outside, I can't imagine what its interior must look like. And each time I hear the door slamming on the little class C, I hope it won't fall off its hinges.

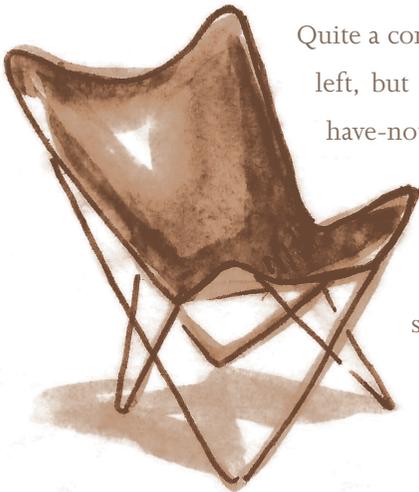
But lest I get smug about our accommodations, I need only look to the right of us to feel like we're the ones slumming. I noticed the fancy RV as soon as it pulled in earlier today. This mobile mansion is shiny and new, and obviously equipped with every convenience imaginable. Custom-designed from a very expensive luxury bus, this huge motor home has an airbrushed mural of a Southwest desert on one side.

It's no secret that these kinds of RVs cost more than most homes and are popular with celebrities and millionaires. Residing inside this palace on wheels is an attractive couple who appear to be in their late fifties. I'm guessing they retired early and are quite well off. Their license plates are from Texas, and I imagine their RV's interior has all the electronic amenities—not to mention dishwasher, washer and dryer, and probably a bathtub to boot.

Quite a contrast to the packed-in yet lively neighbors to our left, but that's the way it is in RV parks—the haves and have-nots...and those (like us) somewhere in the middle.

But I must admit to being amused by the contrasts.

The big fancy RV is noticeably quiet. I rarely see its owners. Perhaps they're so comfortable inside that they don't care to venture out. Meanwhile, the small rundown motorhome remains lively. People come and go, and we hear snippets



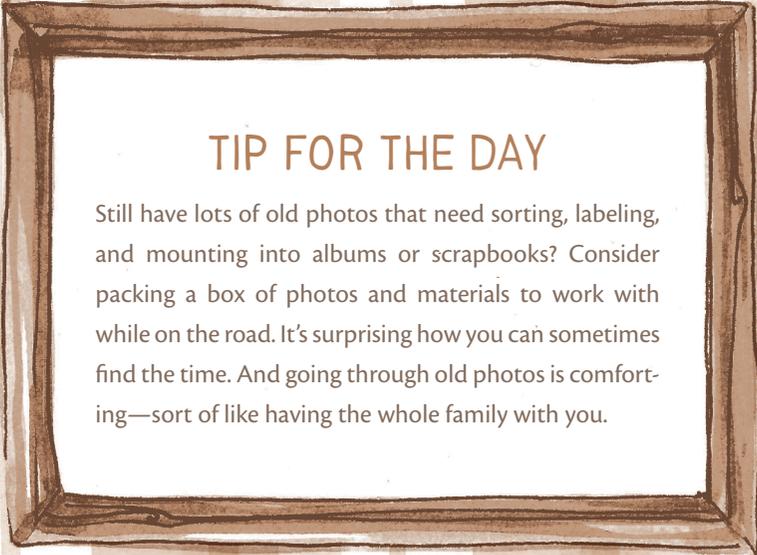
of conversation, jovial laughter, and even a few friendly squabbles. But the campers over there seem genuinely happy. They're having fun! It's a good reminder that material wealth or fancy rigs don't guarantee a good time.

A day or two later, I learn that the woman in the luxurious motor home spent the past several years attempting to nurse her adult daughter back to health. But her only child died. The daughter was unmarried and childless... and it seems she took her mother's joy of living with her when she left. The woman's husband tells me this. With hopes of alleviating his wife's grief—and his own—he leased the big fancy motor home for a year. He took a year's leave of absence and set out to see the country. Apparently his plan is starting to work, but they still have a long road ahead of them.

So I am reminded that while one family is out making memories, another is out trying to forget them. The haves and the have-nots.

What a wonderful life I've had!  
I only wish I'd realized it sooner.

COLETTE



## TIP FOR THE DAY

Still have lots of old photos that need sorting, labeling, and mounting into albums or scrapbooks? Consider packing a box of photos and materials to work with while on the road. It's surprising how you can sometimes find the time. And going through old photos is comforting—sort of like having the whole family with you.



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