



QUOTH THE MAVEN

BY BEVERLY KING POLLOCK

Camp Answers

Every once in a while my 12 year old son gives me a hard time. Particularly when there is a holiday from school.

Like last week he started up with a new campaign. I should let him and his friend sleep overnight in Levine's woods. (That's the wooded area behind Levine's house.)

Fortunately I have a supply of stock answers to use in all such emergencies. I tried #642. "Why don't you sleep in our backyard?" I said. "Then if it rains, you..."

This time my son was ready. "Buddy's mom said it was okay."

Why does Buddy's mom always say okay? I gritted my teeth in my stomach. Those kids shouldn't be out in the woods by themselves. There's absolutely no light and the ground is wet and... Why do I always have to be the one who seems overprotective?

Then I remembered another favorite stock answer. I cleared my throat. "Why don't you ask your father?"

My son said, "We did and it's okay. Thanks a lot, Mom."

I cleared my throat again.

My son recognized the sound. "Okay," his voice dropped. "Talk it over with Dad first."

I waited till my son was out of earshot.

before I had my husband take the newspaper from his face. First his eyes appeared and then his mouth started talking, using the editorial "we". He said, "are we being over-protective today?"

I came to my husband because I thought he would give me his usual warm, sage advice. I didn't come to hear him agree with our son. So my husband just looked at me and I mumbled something and he reminded me that Levine's woods are only two houses away. Then he told me about his first overnight camping trip.

My husband lived in a small town as a boy and his Bubbeh kept an eye on him while his parents worked in the store. So she was the one who permitted him to go on the camping trip.

And it was his Bubbeh who insisted on his packing a frying pan, a steak and some schmaltz, which in the heat of the hike melted down his pants leg and onto his underwear, all of which he had to wear through the next day.

I confessed I didn't want to be a bubbeh at my tender age. So to my son I acted as if I sponsored the overnight idea myself.

My son jumped at the news, and after an inspection of the campsite by his father, gathered up hot dogs, cookies, water, a hammer, knife, insect repellent, paper plates, cups, forks, flashlights, skewers and sleeping bag and went into the woods with his friend.

Without the gameroom television blasting, you could hear the house breathing. Two hours later the wind started to howl and the rain poured.

One thing my husband absolutely will not tolerate is "I told you so," so I just sighed into the night.

Suddenly something dropped on the front step and then a muddy drenched creature ran into the house.

After it took a bath, we recognized him as our son. He spoke. "I had to ditch the sleeping bag, Dad." Mentally I ditched \$14.

I extracted a kiss from the boy as he clambered into bed. And as his head hit the pillow he spoke.

"Thanks for cutting the cord, Mom."

Sometimes a gal can forget her supply of stock answers.



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