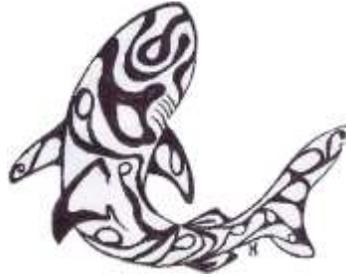


One



FAMILY FUN DAY

Today

“I can do this ... no problem,” Evan whispered, as sea foam nestled around his toes. A chill passed through his core, and he shuddered.

“Surf’s up.” The boy grinned, but as the waves grew higher with each succession, he clutched his surfboard tighter. Ready to take his first step toward the onslaught of rising waves, he went to lift his foot. One problem: It wouldn’t budge.

Evan’s feet sank into gritty, wet sand, and fear coursed throughout his fourteen-year-old body. He stiffened his grip on the surfboard and tried to free his legs from grasping sand.

Water rushed toward him with even more force, racing over shells and sand crabs. It climbed higher and higher, until at last, a single wave froze mere inches from his face. Something clear and solid held it back — something resembling a thick sheet of ice. Behind the invisible wall, sparks of yellow, coral, and crimson formed into sinister shapes. They circled, edging closer. And suddenly, Evan knew what they were.

Bull sharks!

“Get away!” Evan screamed at the collection of teeth and coal-black eyes.

Something shoved his shoulder, pushing him into the wild surf. A trace of seawater splattered across his face, and salt scorched his lips.

“Stop!” he yelled, his arms thrashing against the unrelenting wave.

The board!

Evan reached for it and pried himself free of the gluelike sand. He stumbled backward, landing with a painful thud onto a strangely hard surface.



“Hey, let go of me!” Claire yanked her arm from her brother’s unexpected grip. “It’s time to get up. Remember, today is ‘Family Fun Day.’ Be late, and Mom and Dad will freak out.”

Evan’s older sister rushed out of his bedroom. Most likely heading for the bathroom, where she’ll toy with her hair and put strange lotions on her face. Countdown to flowery perfume overload, 3, 2, 1 — he needed to flee and do it quickly.

“Wow, what a weird dream.” Evan scratched the side of his head and leapt off the wooden floor. He shuffled through mounds of clothes and found his lucky ball cap dangling from a chair. At least now he wouldn’t have to bother with running a comb through his tousled hair. And sure, his T-shirt didn’t exactly match his shorts, but he honestly didn’t care. His dad held four tickets to Boredomville, and there was no turning back.

“Come on guys; let’s go! We have lots to see!” His mom’s voice echoed throughout the entire house.

“She sounds a little *too* enthusiastic,” Evan said after meeting his sister at the top of the stairs. “If it were up to me, we’d be at the beach surfing waves.”

“Evan, you’ve lived in Michigan your entire life. Have you ever surfed on lake ripples? Get a clue.” Claire turned away from him, smacking him in the nose with her blond hair.

“Whatever,” he mumbled, cringing as he followed her flowery scent down the stairs.

Ride in minivan: boring. Family day: boring. Museum: boring. Evan’s life: boring. What bad luck being held captive by his parents for an entire day. Ever since his mom took a job at the art gallery, she had decided to make every single Saturday “Family Fun Day.” It might as well have been called “Evan Has to Do Something He Really Doesn’t Want to Do Day.”

He would much rather spend his time slurping soda and eating chips while playing *Hungry* on Xbox or reading *Breaking Down*. Ah, that would have been more like it. Instead, he was stuck in the backseat of the minivan next to his bossy older sister.

“What are you looking at?” Claire scowled at him.

“I was just wondering how our parents managed to switch you at birth and keep it from you all these years,” Evan teased.

“Kids, remember the rules: There’s no fighting on Family Fun Day,” said Mom, turning toward them. “Come on, you two. Can you please at least *try* to be civil to each other for just one day of the week?”

“It’s kind of hard when he smells like a sweaty sock,” Claire said with a smirk, clearly pleased with her “witty” comment.

“Oh yeah, well —” Evan started, but his mom cut him short.

“Claire. Evan. I’m not kidding around here. We’re going to spend time together as a family, even if it means sitting around the dining-room table and staring at each other all day!” The sharpness of their mother’s tone contrasted with her

normally cheerful demeanor. Evan and Claire looked at each other and nodded in a silent truce.

“All right, Mom; I’m sure we’ll have a great day,” said Claire, nudging into Evan.

“Yeah, it’ll be fun,” he said, trying to mimic his sister’s false enthusiasm.

Immediately, their dad chimed, “You two will be surprised by how awesome Henry Ford’s museum is. There’ll be old trains and planes. And that’s just inside the building. There’s a whole other world waiting just outside its doors. People refer to it as Henry Ford’s train set. That’s because he brought in historical buildings from all around the world.

“Imagine a house being taken apart, brick by brick, board by board. It’s then transported over sea by boat or across country by train. And then it arrives in many pieces, and workers put it back together. It’s really fascinating ...”

Blah, blah, blah.

Evan kept a smile on his face and acted like he was listening, but truthfully, he only paid attention to every other word. He did, however, perk up when Dad mentioned something about an exhibition of swords. And Dad would know detailed information about each one; after all, he was a popular history teacher ... an overly enthusiastic one, at that.

Last week, Evan’s family spent an entire day at an art museum. It was all right, except for his father rambling on and on, saying, “*Blah-blah*’s use of symmetry and *Blah-blah*’s use of color.” And since Mom sold artwork for a living, she too piped in details about every single sculpture, painting, drawing, lithograph, photograph, and tapestry.

Honestly, she was even worse than Dad.

“Look, there’s the building,” said Dad, pointing to his left. “It’s truly amazing. I know I’ve said this a million times before, but you won’t believe what’s in there.” He then continued to blather about the neat stuff contained inside.

Up ahead, a gigantic stone building sprawled the entire length of the parking lot. To the right, a brick wall stretched for miles, circling historic Greenfield Village. Secretly, Evan shared his dad’s excitement . . . just a little. And from what Evan could see from this side of the high wall, he believed that maybe a whole other world did await him.

Sand scratched under his sneakers and scraped lines over the sidewalk as Evan followed the rest of his group through the main gates.

“Over there’s the old Firestone Farm; we’ll see it later. For now, I’ve arranged a surprise for you,” said Dad.

Just then, something snuck up behind Evan, and an obnoxious *honk-honk* made him practically jump out of his skin. A friendly-looking man, wearing a goofy hat and floppy bowtie, sat behind the wheel of an old Model T.

“You folks ready for the tour?” asked the man with a large smile.

“You bet we are,” Dad exclaimed. “That’s right — the Jones family’s going to see Greenfield Village in style.”

Evan’s parents slid into the back seat, and Claire wedged in between them, leaving Evan the pleasure of sitting in the front seat next to the newly dubbed “Mr. Happy.”

“Well, at least it’s a convertible.” Evan slouched into the old leather seat.

“Welcome to Main Street. Is this your first time here?” Mr. Happy asked.

“We old folks have been here many times, but this is a first for our kids,” said Mom over the rumbling engine.

“Leave nothing out. We want to see and hear it all,” said Dad — and with that, their lives would never be the same.



Evan planted his chin onto his balled-up hand and watched people wander from place to place. As far as tours went, it wasn't completely boring. And to his surprise, each historic building came with an interesting story.

The Model T drove idly down the single-lane road and rolled past a house marked "Closed for Renovation." Evan noticed something scamper below the roof's eaves. He could have sworn whatever he saw had llama ears, but that would have been impossible, unless a petting zoo was nearby.

"Did you see that?" Evan asked.

"You mean the house? Why, that was Dr. Irving's residence. It sat empty for more than eighty years before Greenfield Village purchased it. There were many items to categorize, and the team ended up taking longer than normal to transport the house and its contents here — all the way from England. But I'm afraid it won't be open to the public for a few more weeks. Funny story with that house: I've heard the professor went missing while in the field, completing his research. You see, he was a botanist, and from what I understand, a brilliant one at that. An amazing lab was hidden inside the front study. It was found only when our team began preparing the house for the move."

There it was again! Something dashed across the front porch. A strange creature with bulging eyes stared right at Evan.

"What is that?" Evan asked. But nobody paid any attention, and the creature disappeared. The tour needed to end right away, otherwise Evan would never be able to sneak back and find the creature. Unfortunately, Mr. Happy seemed to have other plans, and no matter how much Evan shifted in his seat and shuffled his feet, the tour continued to drag.