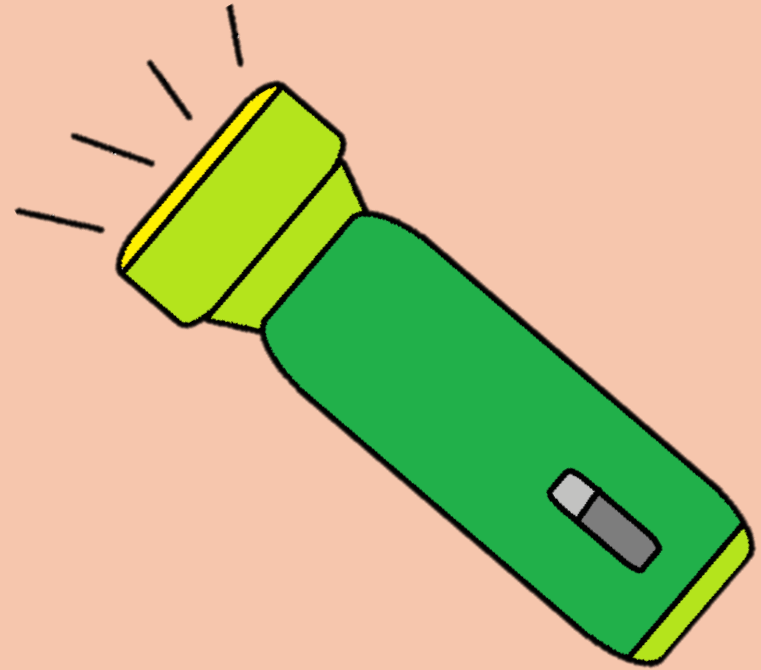
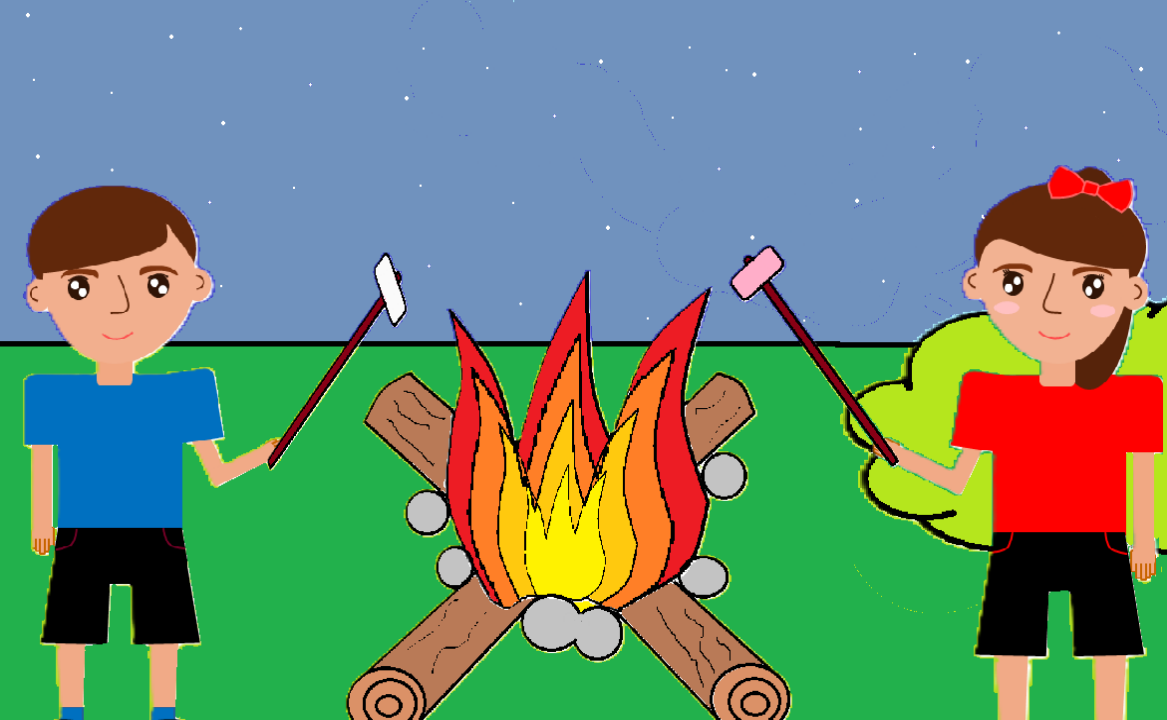


A Campfire Story



Written by Russell Holton
Illustrated by Russell & Somkamon Holton



Lek and Luca were on a camping trip with the whole family, and they'd been busy hiking and exploring the countryside. In the daytime they were having lots of fun, and they were also enjoying toasting marshmallows on the campfire at night. Sitting around the campfire was also a great time to tell a spooky story.

Dad was the best storyteller in the family and tonight he had a great tale to tell.

"This story begins around a campfire just like this one," said Dad. "Except, this campfire has only one person sitting next to it. A boy named Samuel who loved camping, but who also felt very lonely..."





Because Samuel always camped alone putting up a tent or getting a campfire ready was very difficult. It was lovely to spend time alone with nothing but the birds and forest animals for company, but sometimes Samuel wished he had a friend who he could share his wonderful experiences with.

One bright morning Samuel got up and made a hot drink on his camping stove. He decided to go for a long walk through the forest, so he packed a small bag with a map and compass and set off looking for adventure. The forest was beautiful but very quiet, so he was surprised when he saw someone stood on the path in front of him.





As he got closer, he could see a person dressed in a long black cloak holding a long shiny staff, with a jewel at the top. "Hello," said Samuel.

The figure looked at Samuel for a while and then smiled and replied. "Hello, I'm the Wandering Wizard and I'm always around to give directions... or maybe grant the odd wish here and there."

"A wish?" gasped Samuel. "Yes please," and before he knew it, he wished for the one thing he really wanted. "I wish I had a friend to camp with."

The wizard smiled and raised his staff. He whispered some mysterious words and suddenly disappeared. In his place stood a boy. Samuel's mouth dropped open in surprise. This wasn't just any boy; this was a boy that looked identical to Samuel.





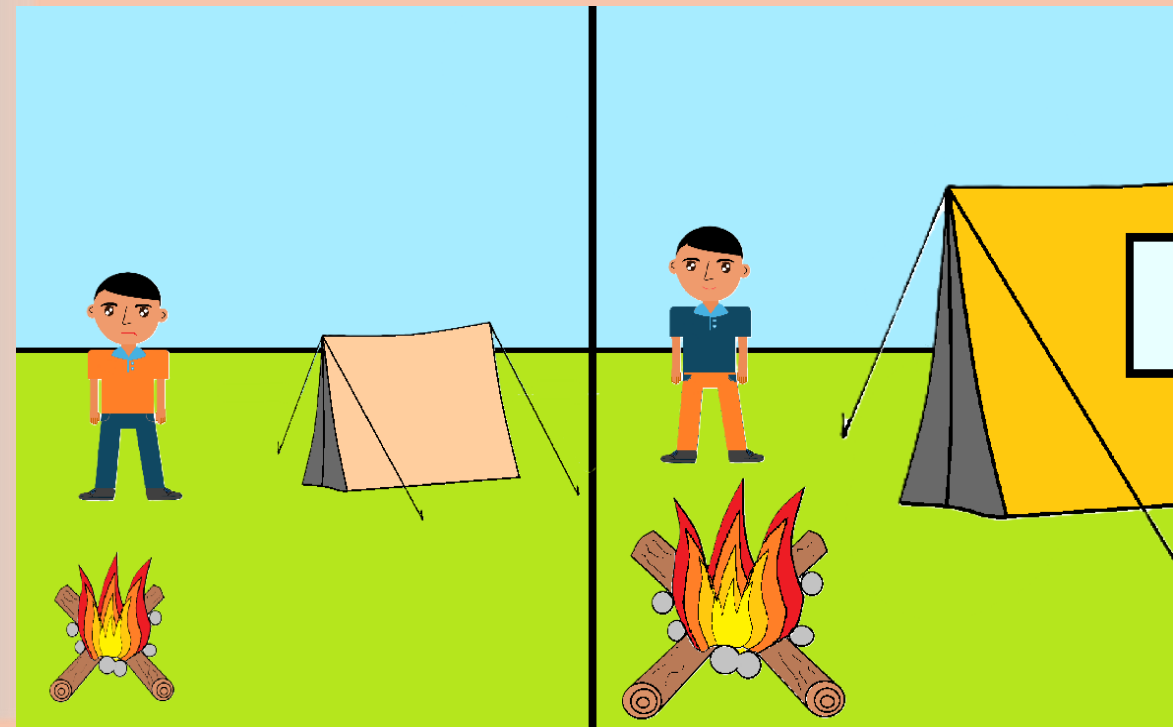
This seemed a bit creepy, but Samuel was so pleased to have a friend he didn't think about their similarities for too long.

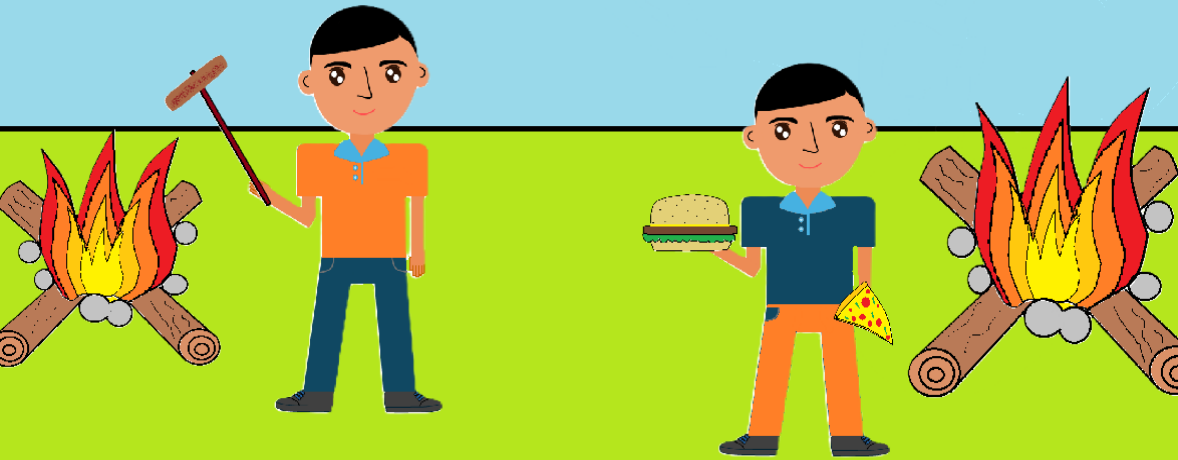
"I have a camp nearby," he told the boy.
"Would you like to camp with me?"

"Yes," said the boy. "My name's Nathaniel and I'd love to camp with you."

The two boys set off to Samuel's campsite.

When they arrived, Nathaniel unzipped his bag and a tent popped out. Samuel watched Nathaniel put his tent up. It was very bright with a window, and it was much better than Samuel's tatty old tent. Once he'd finished, he disappeared into the forest and came back with lots of wood. He made a campfire next to Samuel's. It was huge and looked like it would burn long into the night.

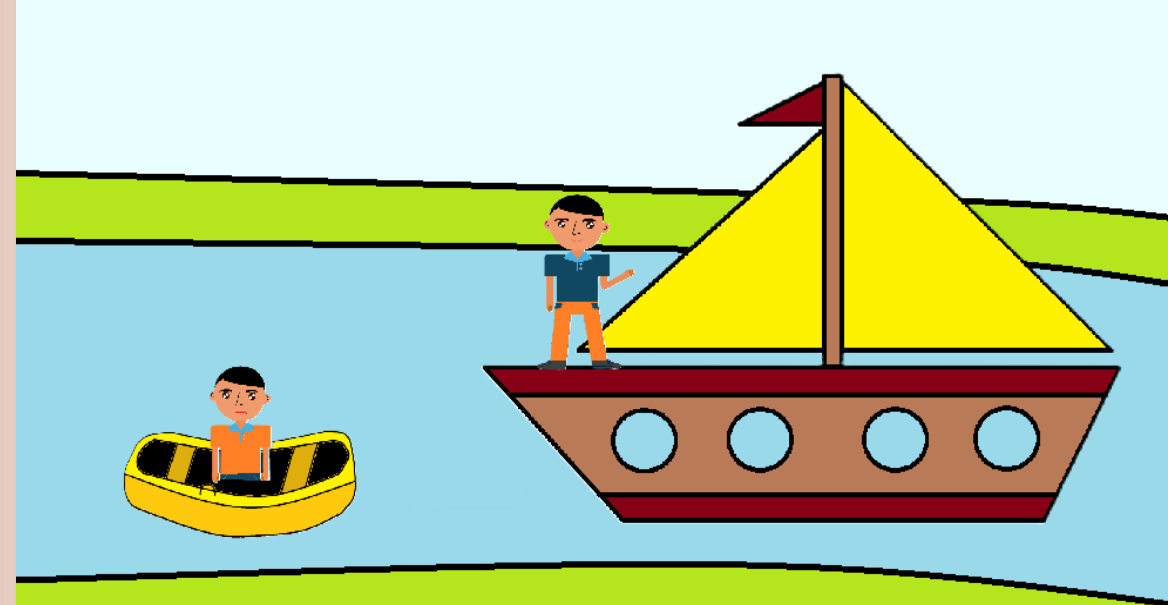


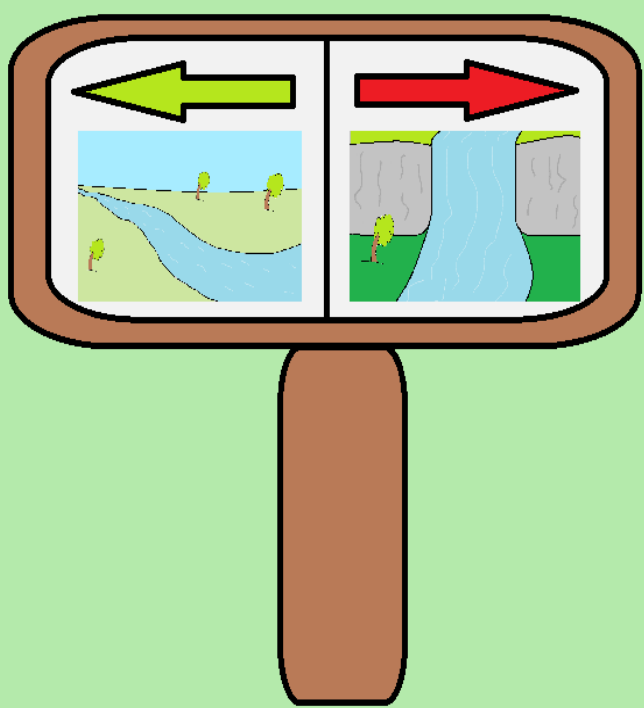


Samuel thought it'd be nice if they cooked together but Nathaniel had other ideas. While Samuel cooked a sausage on a stick, Nathaniel cooked a whole feast which he enjoyed all by himself.

Nathaniel yawned and said he was going to bed, so he'd be ready for an adventure the next morning.

When Samuel woke up, he peered outside. Nathaniel's bright tent was still next to his, and his campfire was still smouldering away nice and warm. The two boys decided to go on a trip on the river, and Samuel got his blow-up dinghy from his tent. Once they got to the river it was clear that Nathaniel had a far better boat than Samuel could ever dream of.





They set off and Samuel really struggled to keep up with Nathaniel's big boat. Before long they came to a fork in the river, and there was a clear sign. If they went left the river would lead to a pleasant village where they could stop for lunch. If they went right, they'd face a waterfall that was steep and unpleasant.

Samuel steered his dinghy left and watched in horror as Nathaniel went right. He screamed for Nathaniel to stop but Nathaniel wasn't listening. Samuel watched him disappear around a bend not caring about the danger.

He never did see Nathaniel again, although he hoped he was okay. He was also secretly pleased to be on his own again. There was no need to compete anymore, especially with himself.



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