

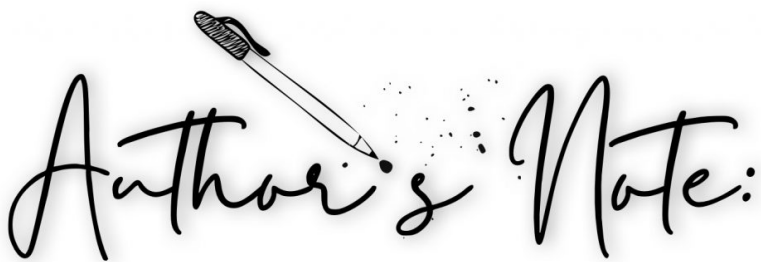
“How much farther?” Joe asked, leaning against a nearby rock.

He knew camping in the woods with Jane was a terrible idea. Between bugs, the threat of rain, and pine needles everywhere, Joe wanted to call it a day, but Jane wouldn't let him quit.

“A mile.” Jane glanced over the map, ignoring the bees. “Don't freak out, Joe, but there's a bear behind you. Just stand still, okay?”

When the bear reached him, the adrenaline-pumping sensation took over, and Joe cleared the last mile in record time.

“Hey, what took you so long?” Joe asked once she caught up.



Dear Reader, if you ever find yourself in the same situation as Joe, don't run. Take Jane's advice and despite the deep underlying urge, stand still. The bear is far more likely to leave you alone once he, or she, is done sniffing.

Also, would any story about a bear be complete, if I didn't state koalas aren't bears? They are cute and cuddly, but they aren't bears. Not that I advise you to run out and cuddle one should you be in Australia and find one hanging from the stop sign at the end of the road. They do have rather sharp claws. Our animal lover had a koala follow him around an animal sanctuary once, much to the distress of the people working. They'd never seen their docile little fluff ball behave so strangely, and when they tried to put the little fellow behind bars, he screamed and screamed until our little animal lover poked his head around the corner. During the staff's talk to enlighten visitors on the plight of the koala, little fluff ball quickly

descended the makeshift tree, and climbed up into the arms of our little animal lover. Taken aback the staff suggested everyone exit the pen immediately because, "Mate's never behaved like this before."

We didn't have the heart to tell her we get this type of animal attention everywhere we take this child, and it was the sole reason we had to make a blanket rule of no animals in the tent while camping. Not that it stopped roos and wallabies from lining up outside waiting for their friend to exit each morning. We've also managed to freak out two different zoos when we had animals follow us around.

Anyway, should you encounter a true bear, remember stand still until it moves on.

The Reluctant Author

