**No Place to Go**

# **Unit 12**

Brian came in from cleaning the garage. It was the last chore he had to complete on his work list that Saturday morning. To Brian, it seemed the only reason he was in his family was to work. Every Saturday, while his friends were out playing and having a good time, he was stuck at home completing a chore list. At least that was the way he viewed his situation. He really didn’t know what his friends were doing, but he was sure it didn’t involve cleaning out their parents’ garage.

Brian was growing tired of it. He had been thinking for a very long time how to change his situation. He was being taken for granted, and it just had to stop. He had been toying with the idea of running away to prove his point, so he just up and decided that now was as good a time as any. Things were never going to change if he didn’t make them change. He thought he knew just how to accomplish it!

He had been preparing a **cache** of supplies in his bedroom closet for just such an occasion. There was a hidden area in his closet that was not visible even when the door was wide open. In it, he stowed his backpack, sleeping bag, tarp, rope, lantern, matches, hatchet, hiking boots, and clothes for the outdoors. Along with these items, he also had a small collapsible fishing pole, a book on edible plants, and a compass. As far as he was concerned, he had everything he needed except for the necessary perishables. For those he would need money.

He knew right where to go for that, too. His parents kept a jar in their room in which they threw any loose change and dollar bills they acquired through purchases with cash. They didn’t often shop with cash, but Brian knew there was enough money in the jar for his needs. Brian easily justified his need to **embezzle** the money. His parents owed him for all the work he did around the house, didn’t they?

Once he had acquired the cash he needed and had packed up his supplies, Brian was ready to get started on his **quest** -- his mission to convince his parents of their unfairness. Brian changed into his outdoors clothes, stuffed the cash in his pocket, and strapped his loaded backpack onto his back. A smug look formed on his face as he realized his adventure was not so much for himself, as for his parents. They needed to realize how they were taking him for granted and figure out a way to rectify the situation.

Flush with cash and feeling confident in himself, Brian decided to stop at the local convenience store to pick up a few supplies. He knew he didn’t need much, since he was planning on eating off the land. He figured he would just buy a few snacks as a treat or reward for his decisiveness. As he was strolling **leisurely** through the aisles trying to decide what to buy, Br. Darvish, the owner, noticed him and his get-up.

“Looks like you guys must be preparing for a camping trip,” Mr. Darvish observed.

“No, just me,” Brian replied.

Mr. Darvish, who knew Brian’s parents well, grew worried. He hoped Brian was just being a **braggart** when he said he was going alone. He knew Brian’s family well enough to know that they would not allow him to go off camping all by himself.

Brian noticed the look of concern on Mr. Darvish’s face and realized he had made a mistake.

“You know I was only kidding, right? Actually, I’m just practicing carrying a pack for a future hiking trip,” Brian blurted as he smiled at Mr. Darvish.

“I figured it had to be something like that,” Mr. Darvish replied.

Just to be extra safe, Brian headed back toward his house in case Mr. Darvish decided to watch which direction he headed. Once he was out of sight of the store, he corrected his path and headed toward the local woods without passing near the store again.

 When Brian reached the exact spot he had planned on, he stood still and looked all around. Satisfied that it would provide him the **seclusion** he was seeking—far away from all of his parents’ orders and chores--he began setting up his campsite. He collected some pine boughs to use as a mattress, which he cut off with his hatchet. He then tied up the tarp over the boughs in the form of a lean-to. Next, he set up a fire pit by scraping of the leaves and needles on the ground and placing stones around the area in a circle.

He decided he could gather firewood while he was fishing in the nearby stream. Rumor had it that this particular stream stayed cold enough throughout the year to **abound** with trout just sitting there waiting to take your bait. Brian rigged up his fishing pole, cast his bait into a promising looking hole, and began gathering firewood.

Brian hauled load after load of firewood back to his campsite while intermittently checking his fishing pole. When he had gathered what he felt was enough wood, and since he had yet to catch a fish, he decided to check out his plant book. He was looking over some common edible plants when he notice his bobber jumping up and down. He dropped the book and ran to his pole. When he reeled his line in, he was **despondent** to realize that all he had caught was a stick that must have been floating downstream and that his bait was completely gone. He was glad that no one was with him. He didn’t want to talk to anyone.

Brian re-baited his hook and retrieved his plant book. He continued his attempt to locate or catch some food, but by the time that dusk settled, he still had not been successful in catching his dinner. He was beginning to believe that this **nomadic** life—traveling on his own from one place to another--that he’d envisioned might not be as enjoyable as he had pictured. The darkness was closing in, so Brian determined that he had better at least start his fire.

The wood was stacked just right. The kindling was dry and in the center of the firewood with some newspaper intertwined throughout. Brian struck a match on the matchbox and let it burn a bit so he would have a large flame to ignite the paper. Just then the rain started falling. The first few drops rapidly became a steady shower. The match flame went out, and the rains soaked the wood. Brian grabbed his lantern and his bag of snacks and jumped under the tarp lean-to.

When Brian tried to light the lantern, he realized the mantles had gone to ash and were unlightable. He grabbed his flashlight, pushed the on button, and instantly found out that the batteries were dead. If that weren’t bad enough, the wind began to blow in gusts strong enough to blow the tarp out of the branches. Could anything else go wrong?

All of these **random** incidents—the fish not biting, the rainstorm, the wind-- were beginning to make Brian **lethargic**. He wanted to give up and go to sleep. He just didn’t care about his mission anymore. His desire to teach his parents a lesson was waning quite rapidly. He didn’t have the energy to fight through all of these obstacles.

Brian grabbed a pack of Twinkies, two pieces of beef jerky, and a bottle of water. He put them inside his shirt, slid into his sleeping bag, laid down on the edge of the blown-down tarp, and rolled himself up like a cocoon. Even though he was ready to call it quits, he knew he couldn’t at the moment, and he did not want to end up with some **malady** or virus that might cause him to be unable to leave when he decided to.

The dim dawn light made its way through the tarp and into Brian’s closed eyes. He awoke with a start in a state of confusion as to where he was and what he was doing. The previous night’s episode slowly crept into his consciousness **piecemeal**. First, he remembered the rain, then the unsuccessful fishing, and finally his thoughts returned to the purpose for this mission. He considered why he was mad—because he had to help with the chores? He couldn’t help thinking about his warm bed at home that his mom washed and made for him, the roof over his head that his dad worked hard to pay for, the food on the table prepared nightly by one of his parents with no complaints. What had he been thinking? His chores around the house were minor compared to what his parents did.

Brian had never moved so fast in his life. He packed everything, checked to make sure he had not left anything, and sprinted home. When he burst through the front door, he let out a **heartrending** moan when he realized the house was empty. He was completely disheartened. He rushed from room to room looking for his parents.

When he skidded to a stop in the kitchen, he noticed a note lying on the table. He read it once very rapidly and then again for **clarification**. Both his parents were out looking for him. By the time written on the note, they had to have been out all night searching. What had he done? What worry had he caused?

All of a sudden, his innocent quest did not seem so innocent or smart. Brian covered his face and began to sob. Through his tears, he saw someone enter the kitchen, heard an audible sigh, and felt his mother’s arms around him. Next, he felt his father’s arms going around both of them. Brian could not look up. He was too ashamed. His heart was in **turmoil** over the unnecessary pain he had caused.

He knew his parents should be mad at him, but he didn’t think he could handle one of their famous **rants** right now. His mom could give a lecture that covered every mistake he’d ever made. No one was saying anything, though. His father often clammed up when he was extremely mad. The longer they stood in silence the more it seemed to **reinforce** his fear that he’d screwed up beyond repair or forgiveness.

 Brian could not stand the silence any longer. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have left. I’ve learned my lesson. I was just questioning my **status** in the family. I felt like a servant instead of a son. I felt taken for granted,” Brian blurted out.

In the quietest, most **mellow** voice, his mother just whispered, “We love you, Brian, and that will never change.”

--Ronald Powers

**UNIT 11 VOCABULARY**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WORD** | **DEFINITION in your own words from context clues** | **MEMORY TRIGGER** |
| cache |  |  |
| embezzle |  |  |
| quest |  |  |
| leisurely |  |  |
| braggart |  |  |
| seclusion |  |  |
| abound |  |  |
| despondent |  |  |
| nomadic |  |  |
| random |  |  |
| lethargic |  |  |
| malady |  |  |
| piecemeal |  |  |
| heartrending |  |  |
| clarification |  |  |
| turmoil |  |  |
| rant |  |  |
| reinforce |  |  |
| status |  |  |
| mellow |  |  |