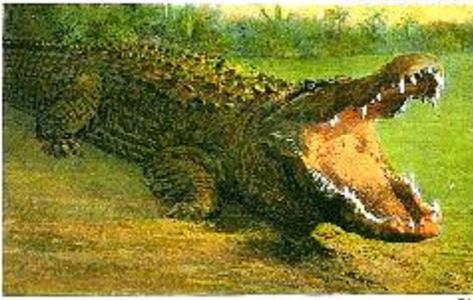


alligators everywhere



Written by bubba

1:13am



We've been driving for hours. I've got the Lombardo kids in the back of the jeep as well as another guy I don't know so well. I feel bad for him. He seems to be absorbing much of the social battery that young boys dish out incessantly. We're outside of town, in more of a rural setting. I don't see any signs of others. Playing hide and seek in the dark seems like a good way to help these kids burn off their nervous energy. I pull off to the side of the road and drop off everyone except the kid that's getting picked on, figuring I'll keep him with me and try to build his spirits a bit. The others I tell we'll be back in minutes to find them.

As soon as the others are gone, the day starts to brighten, which has me thinking that the sun is rising. I learn that the boy I've kept with me is committed to growing a certain type of plant. He shows them to me and I notice that they are growing from no soil and no water. They literally are standing on 8-10 feet of roots that look as if they have had all the earth dug from around them. *It's true*, he tells me. *They'll all die soon*. He seems sad so I park the car, deciding we should walk and talk about his fears.

He tells me more about the plants, why they're so important to him (more). I see a river and suggest we follow it, asking if he thinks it could help his plants. He does, and we walk. I ask, *is this fresh water or salt?* *Fresh*, he tells me, but I taste it with my fingers and believe it to be salty. We reach a point where several mouths of smaller rivers converge. It's shallow, so much so that we can walk out onto a sandbar and watch the water rush in several different directions. It feels peaceful.

Suddenly I notice that there are alligators in the water, close too, less than fifteen feet away. I try not to make my panic obvious and suggest we get back to the others. When we turn around, I see that we inadvertently had passed dozens of alligators on our way out to the sandbar. They're everywhere. I quickly scan the exit options, not seeing any clear way for us to get back to our car.

Panic hits me like a typhoon. I remember the peaceful feeling of looking out at the water and how good it felt to hold this boy's hand when he was upset just minutes earlier. In an instant, I have transitioned from casual and happy to being panicked about eminent, painful death; I believe being eaten by alligators would be the worst way to die. My breathing and heart rate accelerate. The boy is gone. I think Ava, Rhonda, Mom, Kim, Dad, Grandma (I wake)

*I think this dream is about the anxiety I have towards advancing work responsibilities that I really want less of. I am constantly fearful of reaching a point of no return, where changing course would be a fatal blow for me and those who I support.*

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