

STEP 5

Tell Your Spouse to Read This Endorsement

➔ Every fall for the past sixteen years, my husband has embarked on what is officially christened in our household “the Camping Trip.” His friends from college, now middle-aged men spread out across three neighboring states, all tussling with their own mortgages and mortality, commune somewhere in the woods for a week-end, packing sleeping bags that probably haven’t hit dirt all year and flasks of small-batch rye. They build a fire and then... Christ, I have no idea. I once stupidly asked my husband, “What do you talk about for three days? What do you do?” obviously wanting to revel in some

juicy details about someone combining too much weed with Adderall and confessing to his sexless marriage. Instead, grinning like a jerk, he told me “this really funny story” about how it started raining pretty hard once, so they stayed up all night building a “tarp city” and digging trenches to keep the water out. I smiled back and mentally filed under: *nerd anecdotes*.

The trip varies every year. Once, they drove ten hours straight—at night—to go white-water rafting in West Virginia. Another trip, they backpacked three hours into the Catskills and set up camp seemingly in the middle of nowhere.

What does remain annoyingly consistent is the ill-timed nature of the trip. Three days after 9/11, my husband left his then-girlfriend, a transplant of the rube variety who had only recently moved to New York from Utah, in a still-smoldering city for Raquette Lake, near the Adirondacks. I had assumed, since, you know, the world was trying to put itself back together, that he would reschedule, or, rather, cancel. But he didn’t.

I know it sounds like I resent the Camping Trip, but I’m actually envious. Recently, my college friends—women I shared underwear with, for God’s sake—exchanged about sixty-two texts only to come to the depressing conclusion that we couldn’t possibly make time for a reunion this year. Someone actually suggested 2019. In Tucson. None of my husband’s friends are what you would necessarily call mountain jocks (see: “tarp city”), but every year they unhesitatingly spend a weekend together without a proper shower, accomplishing a goal that requires some physicality, giving the proverbial finger to the kids, wives, and pressing careers—a combination that inexplicably speeds up the male-bonding process and keeps these otherwise fragile relationships intact, or at least from fading away completely. It’s not as if my husband comes through the door transformed from all those weepy bear hugs I imagine take place. He comes back to us in a state I can only describe as a little better. I’ll take that. —C. R.

