

Caddie Woodlawn's Nighttime Adventure

(Note: There will be use of the term Indian. Although we know this term is offensive, it was appropriate for this timeline.)

The forest is my favorite place to be. The wind in my wild bright red hair, the leaves crunching under my bare feet. The fresh smell of dirt and mud filling my nose. If you're ever wondering where I might be its best you look in the forest by my house first. It just so happens to be where I am right now, crouched next to a huge blackberry bush stuffing my face with sweet plump berries. I missed lunch because my brothers and I were too busy floating rafts down the Menomonie River.

Just then I heard footsteps, close by the sound of it. Still crouched behind the bush, I peeked over the edge. But all I saw was the forest around me. I couldn't hear the footsteps anymore either. It was probably one of my brothers. They're always playing tricks on me. I got up and grabbed the basket my mother wanted me to fill with the berries, but paused when I was about to leave. Something doesn't feel right. I got a prickly sensation on the back of my neck like someone was watching me. I turn around towards the direction of the house and run straight into a tree. Wait no, trees aren't warm or soft. I take a step back and look up. My basket full of berries falls to the muddy forest floor. Towering over me is a man, with pitch black hair and clothes made of animal skins. There's a dog by his side as well; German Shorthair by the looks of it. The man is holding a bow in one hand and a quiver full of arrows across his broad shoulders. I also notice his feet are bare, just like mine.

I looked back up at him to see that he was just standing there watching me. Not in a bad way, but like he was curious. I stuck my hand out and said, "Hi! My name is Caroline Augusta Woodlawn, But you can call me Caddie." The man shook my hand and said in broken English, "Hello. My name is John. I'm the chief of the friendly local Indian tribe." I smiled at John and said, "My father's name is John too! How silly." John smiled "My apologies for running into you and spilling your berries." I looked down at the mess of smashed berries on the forest floor, now being eaten up by John's dog and sighed. "It's alright. I will just have to tell my mother the berries were eaten by the deer." John looked at me and said "Or you could come to my camp, and I could get you more berries. Since it's my fault you spilled them." "Yes! That would be wonderful!" I told him with a huge smile on my face. John smiled, "Follow me." John started walking deeper into the forest, the dog following close behind. I followed them.

After about a minute of walking in silence I couldn't take it. "Are you always this quiet?" I asked John. Because I really don't like silence. John looked at me and started laughing. "Well, what do you want to talk about Caddie?" "How about we get to know each other?" I said. "Why were you in the forest earlier?" As I hopped over a fallen tree he replied, "I was hunting. My tribe needs to gather food for winter." "Oh. Now it's your turn to ask me a question." John thought for a second then asked, "How old are you Caddie Woodlawn?" "I am eleven." I replied.

“How much further is your camp? I need to get home in time for supper.” John pointed further ahead of us but it took me a minute to see what he was pointing at. Then I realized he was pointing at his camp. As we got closer John’s dog started playfully barking as children ran out to meet it. John and I walked through the trees into a clearing filled with colorful tepees. Children were running around, some men looked like they were just getting back from hunting, and women sat around fires preparing food. Wonderful smells filled my nose, some kind of cooked meat. Deer maybe? “It’s amazing!” I gasped. John smiled down at me, “Come, I will show you my home.”

We walked through the camp to a little tepee, more colorful than the rest. “Welcome to my humble abode.” John opened one of the flaps and gestured for me to go inside. I stepped into the tepee and looked around. On the left side of the small tepee there was a small cot covered in animal skins. At the end of the cot is a pile of animal pelt clothes. Across from the bed was a large chest, the size of a pig. In the back was a shelf with a large assortment of spices, and a bowl of berries twice the size of my head. Which also means three times the size of my old basket, now discarded and forgotten in the forest.

John squeezed past me and opened the large chest. I tried to see what was in the chest but John was too big for me to see around him. He shut the chest and turned around with a basket in his hands. “You may take as many berries as you need.” John said as he handed me the wicker basket. I took the basket from his large hands and turned around to fill it with berries. After I was done filling the basket, John handed me a necklace made of colorful tiny glass beads. “It’s beautiful!” I said as I put the string of beads into the basket. “I should be leaving now. My mother wanted me home for supper.”

During supper I told all seven of my siblings, and my parents, about John. They were fascinated to hear about the Indian camp, not scared like our neighbors. My mother even made a pie from the berries! After dinner when I was helping my mother wash dishes, I heard my father and brothers talking about an Indian massacre that happened in Minnesota a few years back. I also heard my father say our neighbors are on edge because of it. They thought the Indians were going to attack them. After my encounter with John I know he wouldn’t attack us. I thought to myself as I finished drying the plates and stacking them in one of the wooden cupboards my father built for my mother. “Why don’t you go off to bed Caddie?” My mother said as she was drying her hands on a towel. I sighed and grumbled “alright.” to my mother. I didn’t argue with her because I don’t want to give her more reason to make me stay inside and do girly things. I trudged up the stairs to my bedroom, hopped in my bed and fell right asleep. I guess I was more tired than I thought.

The next week was wonderful! Every morning after my mother made me help clean up breakfast and do the dishes, I went to John’s camp. I got to see lots of new things! On Monday John’s friend Aanya taught me how to make beads and string bracelets that all the Indians were wearing. Tuesday John took me hunting with him, and he shot a turkey with his bow. On Wednesday by the time I got to the camp the turkey was done drying so John let me try a piece of dried turkey. It was a lot better than my dad’s. Thursday I went to the Menomonie river with

Molly D.

John and we went spear fishing. I caught two fish! On Friday John left me in charge of his dog while he went hunting. We played fetch with a stick for a long time. I really like that dog. John doesn't even have a name for him, so I call him Fido. It means "I am faithful."

On Saturday I stay home because my mother wants me to help with chores. As much as I would rather visit John, mother lets me get away with being outside doing boyish things, and I suppose one day of cleaning wouldn't hurt that much. My mother had me go down into the cellar and count all the food we had. So we knew what we needed to get before winter. That took up half the day. The rest of the day my mother and I washed, dried, and folded clothes. We also made supper, and washed the dishes afterward. Just as I finished putting the dishes in the cabinet, there was a knock on the door. I hear my father answer it. Walking out of the kitchen and into the parlor, I peeked around the wall and saw one of our neighbors, Mr. William at the door with a distressed look on his face. "I've heard that the Indians are going to attack us soon. I don't know what too do!" Mr Williams said to my father. Although I knew my father did not think the Indians were going to attack, he offered our home as a gathering place to keep all their neighbors safe. "Go tell the other neighbors that our house is open to anyone seeking safety." My father told Mr William. Then he shut the door, and I scurried back into the kitchen and pretended I was still putting dishes away.

Two hours later after I helped my mother help the neighbors settle in, I was sent to bed. But I couldn't sleep from all the worried and exasperated voices downstairs. I tossed and turned under my thick quilt but did not fall asleep. So, as quietly as possible, I crept down the hallway and sat at the top of the stairs. I looked between the railing down at the men gathered in a circle in our parlor. "I'm not going to just sit here waiting for the Indians to slaughter us!" One man said to the group. "What else are we supposed to do?" Someone asked. "I saw *we* surprise *them*!" Someone Whispered back. "Gather weapons, we leave at first light."

I Panicked! John and his people would never ambush us! I ran back to my room, put on my coat, snuck down the stairs and out the door. I realized I might not make it to John in time if I walked, so I ran to the barn and jumped on my pa's horse. The horse galloped through the dark forest, the moon our only light. I guided the horse to John's camp to warn him about the attack. I got to the camp and tied my horse to a tree inside the camp. I walked through all the sleeping tepees. It was weird being here when it was quiet. As I neared John's home I realized there was a bright fire beside it. That was weird, I thought. It was the middle of the night. But I got closer and realized John was sitting beside the fire. He looked up at the sound of my footsteps, surprise showing on his face. "What are you doing here so late?" I tried to catch my breath then managed to get out "My Neighbors, they're planning, an attack-" "Calm down Caddie. It will be alright." I finally caught my breath and told John about the attack and her neighbors. The whole time I talked John just listened, never batting an eye. "Why don't you look more scared?" I asked John. "Because you came here just in time. Now we have time to talk to your father and everything will be alright." John smiled at me. I took a deep breath realizing John was right. I sat down on the ground next to John, and noticed he was cooking meat and rice over the fire. "That smells really good." I told John as he was taking it off the fire. "Good thing there's enough for both of

us.” John said as he scooped it into two bowls. We ate the food and cleaned the dishes, then John whistled for Fido. “Are you ready to go back?” John asked. “ Yes! Let's go.” I exclaimed! We walked through the camp untied my horse, and sped off into the forest with Fido running right next to us.

We got to my house and I told John to wait outside. I did not want all the men inside to freak out because an Indian was here. I went inside and found my father in the kitchen. He was surprised to see me awake because it was the middle of the night. But I explained about hearing the men talk about attacking, he was surprised to hear that. He had no idea they were planning to attack. I also told him about riding to tell John and bringing him back. My father looked at me and smiled. “You always want to do the right thing, Caddie.” We walked outside and John confirmed with my father that he was not attacking. But John decided it was best if he moved his tribe further away. People have been really on edge lately because of the Civil war ending and President Lincon being assassinated 5 days after. Even though I didn't want John to go, it made sense why he had too. “Can you watch over my dog for me while I'm away?” John asked. “Yes! I would love to!” I squealed. “Thanks for all you’ve done for me John. I really enjoyed spending time with you and your tribe.” I told him. “ It's been great to meet you Caroline Augusta Woodlawn.” John said and then he disappeared into the forest.

Works Cited

Historic Fort Snelling. "The US-Dakota War of 1862." 2004.

History.com. "Abraham Lincoln's assassination." 27 Oct. 2009.

Ryrie Brink, Carol. "Caddie Woodlawn." 1936, p. 275.

Zika, Jake. "The history of Caddie Woodlawn." Oct. 1997.