Survived in the woods by faith

(Grandad’s story)

The story happened to me 3 years ago, I was 74 then. Me and my wife lived in a lonely detached house in the woods. There were no neighbours and, apart from silence, the only sounds to be heard were bird singing and the rustle of leaves.

That October was rather cold and windy with rains pouring every night. Neither the days were sunny, so it was unpleasant to go out. That is why we avoided going for a walk and even [gathering firewood](https://context.reverso.net/%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4/%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9-%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9/gathering+firewood)- we used newspapers instead.

One morning we woke up and were pleasantly surprised, for the weather was quite different from what we were used to. The sun was shining brightly and no clouds could be seen in the sky. “Why not go pick up mushrooms? The needed forest is near- just across the river. It won’t take much time and will be good for my heath”, I said to myself and went outside. (at that time I had no idea of how much trouble I was going to be in)

Our house was just a little part of the whole beauty of glorious nature surrounding us. To the left of the building there was a leafy wood, to the right- a pine forest, and a crystal clear river flowed in between them. I needed to go to the pine forest on the right, therefore I was to cross the river by boat.

As I was in a boat, it was hard to enjoy the atmosphere of unity with nature, because the current was too strong and I had to strive for the boat not to capsize. At that moment I regretted not wearing any coat over my sweater, however I managed to get to the opposite bank being in quite good mood.

The forest was wonderful, like in a fairy tale, it was warm and quiet. I started looking for mushrooms and there were a lot of them, which made me happy. I was trying to pick up more and more going deeper and deeper into the wood. I was almost hypnotized. By the time I pulled myself together, I found myself in a strange place, it was some kind of the edge of the forest, though I had no idea of where I was.

Obviously, I got lost.

As I lived in similar surroundings for all my life and started to walk in woods since 8 years old, I wasn’t scared at all. When you are a nature lover, like me, you always know what to do in that situations. But after various attempts to find the way, I began panicking.

I tried different ways being guided by the trees, the moss, ant farms, the sun at last-in a word, I tried everything I knew. Still, no way out. I was terrified of never coming back. The night fell.

I didn’t know what to do. I blamed myself for not taking the cell phone, for not being attentive as I moved through the wood, for not remembering the way.

Being a deeply religious person, I began to speak to God. To be honest, I didn’t do it really often. It always seemed to me that He had lots of requests from other people who were in situations even more scary and difficult than the one I was in. I mean orphans, refugees, widows and very poor people. Clearly, their lives are much more severe than mine and fate is not fair to them. That is why usually I do not ask the Lord for me, I ask for them.

But now I was in trouble. The night was silent and warm and the stars were shining above the trees. They reminded me of the souls of long- gone people. My mother told me a legend about them. She used to remind me that God takes people away and then puts their souls in the sky, so we see the stars at night in order to remember or the ones we loved.

The stars made me relaxed and calmed me down. I felt like I was a part of the huge universe, I knew that He cared about me. I knelt down and began to pray. I asked the God to help me, asked for his advice and protection. I was praying for some time when I saw the light, it was some slight light in the trees.

It seemed to me that the light was moving, like it was heading to me. I did not stop praying. Somehow I fell asleep. I had no dreams that night and slept like a baby. It was rather strange, for I suffered from insomnia. The next thing I remembered was waking up on the clearing where I had been praying at night.

The only difference between the night and that day was that I wasn’t afraid anymore. I wasn’t scared at all. There was some feeling inside me that I was certainly going to find the way out.

I prayed thanking the Lord for the peace I felt. Then, I had breakfast eating some berries I found in the area and drinking water I had prudently taken with me. After that, I went on searching for my way home.

I have already walked a few kilometres when I saw something that scared me to death. It was a wolf with her pups quickly moving my way.

Everybody knows that wild animals can be really dangerous, needless to say that wild animals with their babies can be twice as dangerous as usual animals are.

I was horrified. My heart started pumping fast, I went blank… It appeared to me I was going to faint. However, I didn’t. I tried to find a solution and to do it fast. In a couple of seconds I found myself lying on the grass covered with the sweater I had been wearing. I started praying. The sound of my heart beating was pounding in my ears. I did my best not to scream.

Instead of it I prayed and prayed and prayed. I thought it were the last moments of my life. Fortunately, they weren’t. The wolf did nothing to me, except for sniffing me lying motionlessly on the ground.

I could not believe in what had happened. I just couldn’t. Was it luck? No. I was absolutely sure it was a miracle. Only with His help I managed to survive the meeting.

When I got over it, I kept going. Soon after I came out of the forest and found a village. It turned out I had never been there before. I saw a little girl playing with her cat and came to her. After the questions about the village I was from she pointed the way with her hand. Now I knew exactly where to go, so I went.

In a couple of hours I was at the right side of the forest. I was able to find the rest of the way.

I came to the river, the exactly same river I had crossed before going into the forest for picking up mushrooms. Stop, the mushrooms! Where are they? I did not have an answer to the question. I might have lost them when I was facing the wolves or while being in the village. Actually, it wasn’t important for me. The only important thing was being alive after all the obstacles.

Now I was safe and only half an hour separated me from being at home with my wife. The wife. Oh, dear! She must be terrified worrying about me. I didn’t even tell her where I was going to! Who could imagine I would get lost in the woods I know, literally, for about 20 years! It seemed funny to me.

I was moving along the coastline trying to find the boat I had tied before. My attempts failed. Suddenly, I realized that it was really windy in the morning, so the boat could have sailed away.

A part of me hoped to find the boat somewhere near, but the other part knew that I would not be able to do it. In two seconds I found myself in the water. I began to pray. I prayed for the strength to cross the river.

The water was bitterly cold. I was out of breath with my teeth chatter. My arms wouldn’t move. I continued praying. I believed I would be home that evening.

It was hard to swim, the current was moving fast. I swam, but it seemed to me that I could not move forward. Still I was praying. The river appeared to be a bit wider than I had remembered. I started to worry. And then I saw the opposite bank.

It made me so happy I started to swim much faster avoiding the pain in the lungs and a cramp in my leg. The prayer continued to sound in my head like a song on the radio. Eventually, I was on the ground.

I thanked God for everything that had happened.