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Shadow Forest

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group. These are letters written by family members that outline the impact my behavior has had on them. In my case, these are written by my mother and father. Nothing helps one gain emotional comfort with others like bawling your eyes out in front of them while your mistakes are laid bare.

For a few weeks life stabilizes in the woods. A routine emerges that starts every day with a breakfast of oatmeal, then either packing up camp and hiking or spending the day journaling and carving my spoon out of juniper wood. After the group comes together to cook a dinner consisting of rice, or quinoa, and various vegetables we pack all our food away in a large canvas sack. This sack is attached to a rope, and we hoist it about 30 feet into the tall ponderosa branches in a process we call "bear hang."

Soon, however, change is afoot. Our group is merging with another group that is down to two people, and a couple of the girls I've been spending this time with are on their way out. *Seeing as much of this process is about getting me out of my comfort zone, this is probably a good opportunity for growth. But right now I'm just upset and anxious at the idea of change.* It's a good thing there's a licensed therapist on staff for precisely this reason.

While it takes some time, I start to accept the fluidity of life out here. The butterscotch scent of the ponderosa pines is inescapable, and it starts to grant a comfortable familiarity to my new home in the woods. As new people come and old friends leave, I sense a palpable shift in my demeanor. Where I used to feel anxiety, I catch myself feeling confident. Where nerves used to

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