Too Far Gone

By **in-Field Contributor**

A photo essay by Adventure Photographer, Andy Best

It's three o'clock in the morning. My pillow is frozen to the side of the camper. Moonlight pours through the vent above the bed, spilling across the blankets half covering a shivering little body. Slow puffs of frozen breath stretch like small clouds above our heads. "Damn it, the propane is out…", I think to myself. A slow rumbling sound turns to slow heaves from the floor below. Our pup Sequoia is obviously sick and is about to explode. In two moves I blast out of bed and practically cartwheel across our small table and on top of the dog. I moved shoes and her bed just in time for her to dispatch last nights dinner and a small helping of sticks she decided to gobble up. There was just enough room in the corner in-between her bed and the door for the warm goo, now slowly freezing. Shivering now I take a small towel and clean up the mess, wrap Sequoia in a blanket, tuck in the family, and throw on my clothes to begin a long night of troubleshooting our heating situation.

Stepping out of the camper into the full moon light, the rocks and dirt fuzed together like cement. My nose hairs instantly freeze. It instantly reminded me of being a kid running around blowing bubbles in zero degree temps, watching the globe grow then slowly freeze and shatter like glass. Sprinkling like glitter all the way to the ground. I often drift into past memories during stressful times like these. It helps me cope with the situation at hand, taking me back to simpler less stressful times. My headlamp fires up illuminating two propane tanks and with a couple knocks and a sigh of relief I'm glad to learn that it is the propane. After switching the tanks and crawling back into the camper, I notice in my absence, Sequoia had to relieve herself once more. However, this time in my daughter's shoe. I toss the little shoes out the door, "I'll take care of that tomorrow", I mumble. A quick flip of the switch and the furnace fires. The heat rushes through the camper thawing everything in an instance. Too wound up to sleep I snag my phone from under my half frozen pillow and start to work early into the morning. This is real life on the road…

Why would anyone subject themselves to the constant unknown? Or decide to permanently reside in what is essentially a box sitting on the back of a truck? And with two children, a wife, and 65 lb. dog?

Someone that is ready to be incredibly uncomfortable, that's who. Oh, but it's worth it. Let me explain.

My philosophy about life is quite miss understood, but the freedom and value of experiences is what I seek. I'm addicted to the wonder that awaits me out here. I yearn for those crisp cool mornings in the mountains where only the warmth of the sunrise can heat the soul. As the scent of fresh pine pours through the windows of the camper. All while taking in the delicate sounds of little morning birds leaving a smile on my face that lasts the whole day. Meanwhile an unfolded map lay out on the picnic table, a notebook propped open right next to it with a blank page displayed. The day has yet to be planned and just like that the adventure starts.

I feel that living this way is closer to the way humans used to live, nomadic. Discovering the way one day at a time. I've chosen this way, for now, to give myself and my family a different way to look at the world. To exist outside the snow globe, as I like to describe. One might feel like a ghost walking

amongst the living watching others hustle and bustle in a herd getting from one timed function to another. As stoplights control the flow of humans building up like water behind a dam, the light goes green and the dam breaks. The human mass spill over and into the nearby stores in clusters. It’s a beating heart of everything the same, and one that I don’t feel I fit in with.

Traveling with children is not glamorous. It is difficult! Once again however, real life on the road is worth it. To expand their vocabulary and desires by way of exploration and experience. I'm lucky, as a photographer and filmmaker, that my work takes me all over the world. With this freedom comes the ability to bring my family when the project allows. This saves me massive amounts of time away from my children. I'm a huge part of my two daughters and my wife's lives, for that and this lifestyle I am grateful.

Yes, but Andy! Can’t you achieve this and live in a permanent home? I mean, what does living a mobile lifestyle actually achieve for you if it’s so tough?! To that I say a few things. First, anything in life that is worth pursuing requires a gigantic amount of work. Secondly, to exist in one place to study my surroundings (ie: light, angles, less known locations) and to truly experience it’s wonder, shows through in my stories and my imagery. And most important, to be able to share all these places and make unbelievable memories with my family is beyond irreplaceable.

To sum this journey up so far is pretty easy, life on the road is extremely difficult, it's a ton of work, but to quote one of my favorites, Michelangelo, "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it's too low and we reach it." Therefore to go against the grain of the expected and pursue a lifelong dream in the arts as a nomadic photographer / filmmaker, all the while creating unforgettable memories with my family, has been both one of hardest yet rewarding endeavors of my life.

Check out Andy's work Here

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