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## A Wilderness Canoe Trip Goes Downhill: College Admission Essay Sample

This morning, day seventeen, my blueish lips burned in the freezing wind and my soaked hair clung to my face. In what seemed like moments, however, I was in the canoe, watching the sun begin to rise above the calm Canadian river. Cicadas serenaded us and the rain had finally stopped. Today was beginning to look up after yesterday's exhausting six hours of walking our canoes through a turbulent river.

I looked at the canoe to my right and noticed Olivia, one of the other girls, mouthing something. Confused, I looked at my boat partner and trip guide, Dana, but she wasn't paying attention. Glancing at Olivia, I then realized she was mouthing, "Where are the fire irons?"

*There's no way I forgot the fire irons. We're miles down the river already!* Fire irons, although simple, are an important campsite tool. The two metal rods are the only thing protecting our pots, full of food, from being engulfed by flames. Desperate, I turned to check, only to see they were nowhere. *How could I have let this happen!?* Dana was unaware of the unfolding catastrophe. I turned to Olivia for help.

"Uh...Dana? Where are the fire irons?" Olivia asked.

"Whadya mean?" We had paddled seven kilometers with the current and now, with eighteen days left, we had no fire irons. *What could we do? There's no way we could continue without hot food. This was all my fault, I had let everyone down.*

Dana searched the boat, then sighed. "I guess we're gonna have to go back for them." Seven kilometers upstream then back, in addition to yesterday's difficulties, sounded impossible. But Dana had already begun to spin the boat around.

The next two hours were excruciating. But this was *my* mistake, and *I* had to be the one to fix it. I threw my entire body into each stroke, pulling with my core and holding myself down with my legs. It was silent except for our wheezing breaths and the occasional paddle hitting the boat. The shore flew by, undisturbed. My hands blistered and bubbled from the heat of the paddle. When we arrived, I saw the irons lying right by the river. My throat burned as I tried to catch my breath without throwing up. I had no choice but to sprint or we wouldn't have made it to the next campsite before dark. The trip back, with the gracious current, was slightly less grueling. When we returned, the entire group was relaxing on shore. But, of course, there was no time for a

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break for Dana and me.

My mistake had set the entire group back nearly two hours and left not only me, but also Dana, sore and sweaty. I was ashamed that I had single-handedly ruined the group's day. But I *knew* how important it had been to go back. I also realized that I wasn't the only one making mistakes: Grace had dropped a bag of tinder into the river the previous day, Mathilda had forgotten to put up a tent's rainfly during a storm, leaving the three unfortunate occupants of that tent soaked, and Olivia had lost the sriracha sauce. On the other hand, we all had learned from our mistakes: Grace had learned to hold onto tinder more tightly, Mathilda had learned to double check her tents, and Olivia didn't have any sriracha left to lose. And every morning, I made sure to check for the fire irons and all other equipment without fail.

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