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World's Worst Employee

The summer of 2017 was one for the books. I worked my dream job as a High Ropes and Program Specialist at Warner Camp-- a church camp I'd grown up going to. It was a great opportunity to share my testimony of faith with middle and high schoolers and I met many lifelong friends. The only problem was after a certain incident involving a tornado, my boss seemed to think I was the World's worst employee. It was then that I realized that it is possible to have the time of my life and make the best of any situation, even when people are rooting against you.

...ADO! There's a tornado touched down at camp. I repeat a tornado has touched down at camp.

CODE RED!

My radio blurted as I stepped out of the shower, after a long day at work. The rickety old windows of Lakeview, the early 20th century Army barrack where staff stayed for the summer, seemed to be failing as I could feel a strong breeze while it was closed.

Had I heard the radio right? Had another employee really just called a Code Red? If what I heard was real, why hadn't my boss, Kay, responded? Maybe I heard it wrong-- I had only heard the last part of the message.

I got dressed and ran outside to find the rest of the staff. My friends Hannah and Mycah were standing in the driveway.

“Sophie look,” yelled Hannah. “There’s a tornado!”

I followed the direction of Hannah’s point, and sure enough, a funnel cloud was twirling and quickly lowering down to touch the lake-- less than 500 yards away. The wind was picking up. It was like I was living a scene in the movie, “Twister”

“That’s the second one we’ve seen, there’s one on the other side of camp by the train tracks,” yelled Mycah, over the wind. “I’ll radio Kay again.”

“Mycah to Kay. I just saw another tornado over the lake. Should we take cover?”

Kay responded immediately.

“Kay to Mycah. There is NO tornado. You need to calm down and stop spreading chaos throughout the camp!”

There was an annoying edge to her voice. You see, the entire summer Kay had been on the verge of exploding-- trying to control every aspect of our working and personal life and she was failing miserably as a leader.

The three of us watched the tornado splash the water and then rise back up about ten feet.

“Hannah to Kay. I’ve seen both the tornadoes. I promise you that Mycah is not making this up.

Sophie to Kay. I see them too. Look over the lake!”

“Kay to all Summer Staff. There are NO TORNADOES in the area. Stop spreading rumors.”

Could she be serious?

“I’ll text her the videos I took. I really think that she needs to sound the sirens so that everyone’s safe,” said Hannah.

Just as she was hitting send, the guys on Summer Staff rolled up the driveway. They weren’t in their typical carefree moods as the car came to a halt. They piled out of the car in record speed. One of them told us to get to The Cube, our basement in the center of camp, as quickly as we could.

While we sprinted to shelter, we explained to the rest of the group that Kay thought we were lying about the tornado. We could see another, smaller cloud, spiralling just across the street.

“I’ll take care of this,” said Conor, who was one of the favorites of us Summer Staff, as others texted videos of tornadoes to the boss.

“Conor to Kay. All Summer Staff are safe in The Cube. Should somebody sound the alarm?”

“Kay to Conor and the rest of Summer Staff. THERE IS NO TORNADO! I am watching the doppler right now. You guys are over exaggerating. There is no need to be in The Cube right now.”

Everyone was silent. We couldn’t put our anger into words. We had acted exactly as we’d been trained, yet our boss was convinced that we were lying to her. After a solid five minutes of icy silence we all started to watch footage of the tornado that had shot on their phones, while the storm raged on outside. It was so dark that it looked late when in reality it was only early evening.

Being a weekend, there weren’t any youth camps going on, but the few guests staying in the camp’s RV park had gathered in the bathrooms.

Hannah, Mycah, and I were still smoldering. Sitting in the basement doing nothing was making it worse. Despite the weather, we left the group, got in Hannah's car and left.

Across the railroad tracks, a funnel cloud with a blue tarp that belonged to the camp trapped in it, was blocking us from turning down the road, so we had to go the opposite direction which took us farther out of town.

We drove.

We yelled at the top of our lungs. Anger coursed through our veins. We couldn't believe how much our boss didn't trust us. The more we thought about it, the worse we got. There was nothing we could do. Every incident in which we'd been mistreated came bubbling to the surface. I cried tears of frustration.

We ended up on a beach in South Haven. The storm had died down enough so that there was only mild winds. We sat by the sand, gazing across the never ending lake. There was nothing more that could be said or done. The only thing to do was sit, accepting defeat-- it's was one of the most sickening pits I'd ever had in my stomach.

It was deep into the night when we finally decided to go back. Next to the Warner Camp sign, a news reporter stood in front of a camera; later we would watch it on TV. It told all about the multiple tornadoes in the area.

Hannah and Mycah went to bed. I thought I'd do the same, but instead I grabbed my notebook and Bible and walked to a quiet pavilion. I prayed that I could find some sort of good in the situation. It was my turn to lead devotions the next day at our morning at our staff meeting; being a Christian camp we started off every morning

learning something about the Bible. I already had my lesson planned, but I felt like God was telling me to throw it out and write something about trust. It seemed appropriate because in order to be successful the rest of summer, I believed Kay needed to trust her employees.

I stayed up the majority of the rest of the night. Reading scripture, and rewriting my devotion. Finally I had the what I needed to say in order, so I went back to Lakeview to catch a couple hours of sleep before the meeting.

Somehow, the entire staff got the time of the meeting confused. Kay was the only one to show up. She told me that we'd still do the devotion. I was very nervous, but I mustered the courage and presented what I had. To my disappointment, she didn't seem to engage at all. She just sat while I spoke. We didn't even pray at the end of it, as we typically did. She seemed in a hurry to get the day started. There was nothing more disheartening than to have my work, which I'd prayed long about and worked hard on, be totally disregarded.

I ended up getting reprimanded several times about the "tornado incident", was in trouble for violating the dress code even though I was wearing Warner Camp apparel, and was in sticky situations with Kay the rest of summer. Despite it all, I had the best summer of my life. I didn't let someone who hated me get in the way of my purpose of serving God and serving others while having fun at camp.