



Every Picture Tells a Story

Going Over the Edge

by Philippe Widling

My wife and I chose to visit Sheep River Provincial Park in beautiful Kananaskis Country for a picnic one Sunday last summer. It's a popular family destination – ideal for fishermen, hikers and kayakers in the summer, and skiers and snowshoers in the winter.

We stopped at the Sheep River Falls picnic area on the south side of the road, which provides all the necessary amenities, river access, and some nice viewpoints over the falls. It was a beautiful, warm and sunny day, and families were out in force. Kids were playing in the cool emerald water, while a few teenagers were jumping off one of the cliffs downstream. It was nice to sit on the rocks overlooking the falls, relax, and just take in the general activity and playful ambiance.

But a brief five minutes later, my thoughts of relaxation were overtaken by the urge to grab my camera and scour the landscape through the viewfinder. I couldn't bear the thought of missing that perfect moment-in-time that was just waiting to be snapped. I guess that's the curse – and blessing – of being a nature photographer.

In no time, everything was set up and I began capturing images in the challenging mid-day sun. As a general rule, the middle of a sunny day is not the best time to capture great shots, but hey, rules are made to be broken.

However, I quickly became dissatisfied with the mid-day landscapes I was getting – I am accustomed to the beautiful light of early morning or sunset – so I decided to change subject matter to flowers and a couple of friendly butterflies floating nearby. Unfortunately, that didn't work for me either, so I resigned myself to the fact

that it was time to forget the photography and join everyone else in simply enjoying the idyllic day. I packed up my gear, sat down and casually looked upstream ... only to jump right back up.

Coming around a distant bend were a couple of kayakers. With enthusiastic anticipation, I quickly began setting up my gear for the second time. If there was even a chance of these guys going over the falls, I wanted to be ready.

I quickly selected an appropriate lens, adjusted the settings to ensure the action would be suitably frozen, plugged in the wired remote, made sure the camera was level, and in less than two minutes I was good to go. I needed a full view of the action to be able to correctly anticipate the exact moment they would go over the top, so with my finger poised over the remote, I stood back from the camera and watched the kayakers approach.

The moment came and went in a split second, and my photographic itch had been scratched instantaneously. I packed up my gear again and sat down. Now I could relax.

Completely satisfied, I casually glanced at my wife, who hadn't stirred from her spot during this whole series of events. She raised her head from her book and gave me a knowing, silent smile. She always has a book handy. She's used to me "running around" with my camera in tow. I guess that's the curse – and blessing – of being a nature photographer's wife.

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