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## SPIRITUAL CROCODILES

*“Nonsense,” I said. “There are no crocodiles out there.”*

I always wanted to go to Africa and see the animals, and finally that opportunity came. . . .

We stopped at a water hole to watch the animals come to drink. It was very dry that season and there was not much water, really just muddy spots. When the elephants stepped into the soft mud the water would seep into the depression and the animals would drink from the elephant tracks.

The antelope, particularly, were very nervous. They would approach the mud hole, only to turn and run away in great fright. I could see there were no lions about and asked the guide why they didn’t drink. His answer, and this is the lesson, was “Crocodiles.”

I knew he must be joking and asked him seriously, “What is the problem?” The answer again: “Crocodiles.”

“Nonsense,” I said. “There are no crocodiles out there.” . . .

He could tell I did not believe him and determined, I suppose, to teach me a lesson. We drove to another location where the car was on an embankment above the muddy hole



where we could look down. “There,” he said. “See for yourself.”

I couldn’t see anything except the mud, a little water, and the nervous animals in the distance. Then all at once I saw it!—a large crocodile, settled in the mud, waiting for some unsuspecting animal to get thirsty enough to come for a drink. . . .

The guide was kinder to me than I deserved. My “know-it-all” challenge to his first statement, “crocodiles,” might have brought an invitation, “Well, go out and see for yourself!”

I could see for myself that there were no crocodiles. I was so sure of myself I think I might have walked out just to see what was there. Such an arrogant approach could have been fatal! But he was patient enough to teach me.

My young friends, I hope you’ll be wiser in talking to your guides than I

was on that occasion. That smart-aleck idea that I knew everything really wasn’t worthy of me, nor is it worthy of you. I’m not very proud of it, and I think I’d be ashamed to tell you about it except that telling you may help you.

Those ahead of you in life have probed about the water holes a bit and raise a voice of warning about crocodiles. Not just the big, gray lizards that can bite you to pieces, but *spiritual crocodiles*, infinitely more dangerous, and more deceptive and less visible, even, than those well-camouflaged reptiles of Africa.

These spiritual crocodiles can kill or mutilate your souls. They can destroy your peace of mind and the peace of mind of those who love you. Those are the ones to be warned against, and there is hardly a watering place in all of mortality now that is not infested with them. . . .

Fortunately there are guides enough in life to prevent these things from happening if we are willing to take counsel now and again. ■

*From “Spiritual Crocodiles,” Ensign, May 1976, 30–31.*