

Something this school really needs

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Whenever my mind travels over the past events in my life, one incident stands out prominently to remind me of the narrow escape I once had from almost certain death. In the rubber estates of West Malaysia there are hundreds of snakes of which the cobra is the most dangerous and venomous. This snake has a preference for cool places along the numerous streams found in the estates, where it relaxes, especially in the afternoons. Those who catch fish from these streams have, therefore, to be on the look-out for cobras. All this I did not know until I came face to face with a cobra one day, while fishing with my brother. My brother and I were then spending our holidays in an estate where our father was employed. In the afternoons, my brother, who loves fishing, and I would go out to catch fish from the streams not very far from our father's house. Wherever the water was shallow, we got down into the streams and searched for holes where fish usually like to shelter. When we found one, we put our hands in and often caught some fish. Fishing in this way had its moments of excitement, for at times we also caught some water-snakes, which we found to be harmless. Then, one day, I came so close to death that I made up my mind never to catch fish again in that way. A cobra, about six feet long, was lying along the water's edge of one side of the stream in which we were fishing. Its tail was in the water, but it was concealed by the reeds and grasses along that stream. As I put my hand into the water, my searching fingers touched something tender. Thinking that it was a fish, I gripped it at once and tried to bring it out of the water. But it resisted violently, and to my consternation I discovered that it was a cobra. I relaxed my grip at once and rushed for safety. My brother, who was a few yards away, was too surprised to speak, but he soon saw the

cobra which was now rushing towards him with its hood fully opened. I picked up a stick hurriedly and threw it at the cobra. Surprisingly, the cobra now turned towards me, and I took to my heels. My brother then picked up a stick and ran after the cobra and managed to kill it just at the time when I was almost exhausted. If he had been a little late, I might have been killed by the cobra. That was indeed a very narrow escape, an escape I shall never forget.