

## Smores

By Leonard White

The members of Cub Scout Troop #7 were all sitting around the fire with wide eyes and slack jaws as they listened to Mark's dad. "We all heard the stick snap. It was loud and close. Which meant that that thing was only a few feet behind us."

Dillon made a whimpering noise as he crammed the last half of his s'more into his mouth. Jake glanced at him and snorted before shaking his head and turning back to Mr. Turner. From where I stood behind a tree I could see most of the boys glancing into the woods from time to time as the story continued. My own son sat on the other side of Mr. Turner, twisting his fingers together the way his mother did when she was nervous.

"We did our best to be quiet, but one of the others just couldn't keep from crying. He put his back against a tree and wiped his nose on his sleeve. I looked at him and whispered, 'We gotta move', but it was too late. I saw the great clawed hand wrap around the tree and grab his face."

One of the boys on the other side of the fire was bouncing both legs in anticipation while the twins had actually scooted together until each one looked like he was sitting in his brother's lap.

The sudden crack of a limb in the woods was so perfect that I jumped right along with the boys before looking down to be sure that I hadn't just peed on my own shoe. I didn't know whose father had done it but I was a little jealous of how well he had gotten us. A few of the boys even stood up as if they were going to run. The men were patting shoulders in an effort to keep their charges in line and I chuckled away the twinge of fear I felt. I always wondered if the mothers were this mean to the brownies when they went camping.

As I zipped up and prepared to head back to the fire I felt a cold chill run up my spine. Normally, a chill from taking a whiz in the woods hits me when I start and not after I finish but whatever. I shifted my pants a bit and started to step around the tree when I realized that someone was behind me.

Maybe it was the story, but I spun around expecting to see a monster. Nothing was there of course but I looked around at the moonlit trees anyway. That was when a cold and clammy hand clapped over my mouth. The voice was soft and smooth, hissed out so close that I could almost feel the lips brush my ear even though I didn't feel the hot breath of the words.

"Hello Scoutmaster."

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I had them. After that stick had broken, the boys were almost wetting themselves with fear. I hadn't been a scout and this was the first time I had ever told ghost stories around a fire but now I saw the appeal.

Oh my god this was fun.

My son had told them I was a writer, so it wasn't all that surprising when the scoutmaster had asked me if I would like to tell a scary story. I stood up and looked around, seeing anticipation in the eyes of the young and the old before I realized that this was something I had never done before. I had never seen the effect my words would have. I had never seen people anxious to know what was going through my head. This was fantastic.

"He made a squeaking sound as his body slid around the tree, but we turned and ran for our lives as we listened to him scream for help. The word came out twice. Each scream higher than the other

before it stopped. From there on the only sound the three of us heard was our own breathing as we staggered through the woods."

I looked up to see the scoutmaster stagger back into the light of the fire. I had assumed he had left to go take a leak but it looked like he had gone and tied one on. I was knocked out of my storytelling as I watched him stumble from the tree line.

"You ok?" I didn't want to change topics but he was kind of swaying where he stopped between two of the boys. He took a couple of unsteady steps forward and fell into the fire.

The boys stared in morbid fascination as all of the fathers jumped up to help. We had him out of the flames in no more than a second but I knew it was going to be bad. Even for the seconds that he went in he would be lucky to survive.

"I'll get my phone," the tall skinny father of the twins said as he headed towards his tent. I just hoped Brett would have a signal this far into the forest.

I had stayed back from the body. Alive or not, I couldn't help so I just kept clear. Two of the fathers were trying to help the scoutmaster while two more were trying to calm the boys. That was when I heard the strangled sound from the tents to my left.

Brett was twisted at the waist. It would have looked like he was being dipped by a shorter dance partner if it wasn't for his kicking feet and the arm that smacked feebly at the back of the person holding him. A second or two later, he stopped flailing and began twitching. Another moment and he stopped moving.

The short man dropped Brett on the ground before he straightened up and began making his way to the fire. He walked with slow, calm steps to stand just behind the still cowering twins as he looked at me with a blood soaked smile. Cold settled around the group, almost as if it had started snowing when he arrived. The children and their fathers shivered as they became aware of our guest and turned to look at him.

"I hope you don't mind if my sons and I join your camping trip. They have always wanted to attend scouts but the meetings are usually too early for us."

His eyes twitched, just a little, and I turned my head to see that two pale boys were standing outside the circle of scouts. They both wore matching smiles that made me think of my own son as he got ready to cut a piece of pie. While every pair of eyes was locked on our blood soaked intruder we had been surrounded.

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This was my last camp out with this troop. My birthday was next week and then I would move up in the scouts. I had been sitting beside Mr. Turner for the story and he was good. I couldn't help but feel like we were being watched by some monster as he described camping as a kid but I knew monsters weren't real.

Then Mr. Travers staggered into the fire. Tim and Tom's dad went for his phone and got eaten, and three vampires attacked us.

I should have run. I knew that I wasn't going to be able to do anything but I didn't know if any of the others read the horror comics. They might not know how to protect themselves. I was the oldest; I had to try to look out for the others. That was my job. So I stood up and went for a burning stick and I am sure that is all that saved me. One of the little vamps went through the spot I had just been sitting and tackled Dillon.

It took no more than a few moments but the entire camp scattered. The big one lunged over the fire and jammed his hand through Mr. Turner's chest. He squeezed the blood out of his heart into his mouth as he headed after another adult. The little monsters were hitting the kids so I ran. The idea of fighting back with fire was stupid when these things were that fast.

I ran through the woods, small limbs and dying leaves slapped at me as I went. I hadn't noticed it before but it seemed like there were nothing but briars between the trees. They scratched my arms and pulled at my clothes as I ran. If I could get to the creek I would be safe, vampires couldn't cross running water on foot.

The creek was close and the screams were further away. I was breathing hard and had sharp pains stabbing my side. I knew there was blood on my arms from the briars. I had managed to get this far without smacking into a tree but that was when I hit a giant wild rose bush. I planted one hand on the side of a tree to keep from falling face first but still got slapped in lips by the thorns.

I cursed. It hurt and I was tired. I was trying to keep from crying when I felt someone grab my collar and hoist me into the air.

"You are far too young to use such language."

I looked at him in the dark. The moon was bright enough to show the slick dark stains on his chin and cheeks. I was hanging from his hand like a kitten when you pick it up by the extra fur on the back of its neck. I was helpless as the monster smiled at me. His mouth didn't have just one set of sharp fangs. He looked more like a shark.

"You are the last one and I think my boys should slow down and take their time. However, I don't want them hearing such language." He reached up and forced my mouth open, putting his fingers in and pinching my tongue. "You remind me of some of those "squeeze and talk" toys. They are annoying until you pull out the noise maker."

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