

**CONSENSUS**

By

Richard F. Russell

[Wordmstr007@gmail.com](mailto:Wordmstr007@gmail.com)

910-285-3321

Copyright © 2014

FADE IN:

EXT WOODS DAY

A small clearing in a deep woods. Sitting on rocks, backpacks on, 5 boys, ABBOT, KYLE, RICK, DAVID, JAMAL And 5 girls, AMY, HEATHER, MARCY, RACHEL, TANYA, all 12-13. Quiet as the sun heads for the horizon.

RICK  
Is she really...

KYLE  
We checked three times. She's really dead.

AMY  
Don't say that.

KYLE  
It's true.

AMY  
No one wants to hear it.

KYLE  
That won't--

HEATHER  
Leave it alone, Kyle. We all know.

KYLE  
I'm just saying.

Heather's glare stops Kyle.

MARCY  
We need to get out of here.

KYLE  
How do you propose to do that?

RACHEL  
We have to take her with us. We can't just leave her.

KYLE

You can carry her?

DAVID

Stop it, Kyle. You're not helping.

KYLE

I just--

David's glare stops Kyle.

ABBOT

This is a problem. We know how to solve problems.

TANYA

Abbot's right. Who should facilitate?

ABBOT

Marcy. She's the best facilitator.

RICK

Jamal is good too.

MARCY

Jamal can do it.

HEATHER

I think Marcy should do it.

ABBOT

What's the rule when we can't agree?

KYLE

We don't have time to vote. It'll be dark before long.

ABBOT

We need consensus.

HEATHER

We should vote.

DAVID

We need buy in from everyone.

RACHEL

Just vote. I vote for Marcy.

RICK

All those who want Marcy, raise  
your hands.

The girls vote for Marcy along with Abbot.

RICK

That's it. Marcy will facilitate.

Marcy stands and moves to the center of the circle.

MARCY

We start by listing what we know.

KYLE

I know it's getting cold.

MARCY

Thank you, Kyle. What else do we  
know?

DAVID

We know Ms. Johnstone's dead.

JAMAL

We know it will be dark soon.

RACHEL

We know we're miles from the van.

RICK

We know we don't have water.

HEATHER

And no food.

ABBOT

No flashlights.

AMY

We don't have any tents or  
blankets.

RICK

We know we're lost.

HEATHER

And no one's looking for us.

KYLE

We don't know that.

HEATHER

Figure it out. We aren't supposed to be home till tomorrow night. Duh.

KYLE

Wasn't Ms. Johnstone supposed to call someone? She had a phone.

HEATHER

Which was smashed when she fell. It was for emergencies. No one knows we're lost.

MARCY

Arguing won't get us anywhere. I think it's safe to assume no one has started looking for us. What else do we know?

DAVID

We know that if we don't have water, we'll die in hours.

AMY

That's not true. Not in the mountains. We can last at least a day.

KYLE

I think David's right.

RICK

Amy's right. At least a day. But I think we can find water. Remember those creeks we crossed?

JAMAL

We can't drink that water. It's polluted. The whole country is polluted. We studied it.

HEATHER

Abbot's right. The water is polluted.

RICK

We can drink it as long as we boil it first.

KYLE

How're we gonna build a fire? Rub two sticks?

RICK

If we have to.

MARCY

All right, all right. We know we need water, and there's some around. We'd like to boil it, but that takes a fire.

KYLE

And a pot. Who has a pot?

DAVID

There's one in the van.

KYLE

Which way is that?

They go quiet for a moment.

MARCY

I'll recap. We can have fire and water if we find the van.

HEATHER

And food.

MARCY

So the solution is to find the van.

RICK

In the dark without flashlights.

JAMAL

We can do it. We can use the stars or the sun.

RICK

Do you know how to navigate by stars? Does anyone?

JAMAL

I know the sun sets in the east.

ABBOT

In the west, the sun sets in the west.

JAMAL

That's not how I remember it.

TANYA

I think Jamal is right. East.

RICK

West. Don't you people know anything?

MARCY

We don't determine the merits of an idea until all ideas have been exhausted. Can anyone think of a way to find the van?

RACHEL

Didn't it have a keyless entry? Can't we just press the button and find it when the horn beeps?

KYLE

Have any idea how close you have to be for that to work?

RACHEL

At least a mile.

MARCY

Not now, Kyle. We need ideas.

JAMAL

We could set off a flare so someone could find us.

MARCY

Good, Jamal. Who else?

AMY

When the moon comes out, we can find the van because the light will reflect off the windshield.

DAVID

If there's a bear around, it will smell the food, and we can follow it to the van.

RICK

Or maybe smell us and think we're food.

RACHEL

Stop it, Rick. Marcy make him stop.

MARCY

Let's play fair. No criticism of ideas. Who else?

TANYA

We could put the phone back together and call someone.

MARCY

Good. More, we need more.

JAMAL

We could use a GPS device to figure out where we are.

KYLE

We don't--

Marcy stops Kyle with a finger.

ABBOT

We could follow our tracks back to the van.

RACHEL

This won't find the van, but we could build a big fire people would see for miles.

MARCY

Very good. What else can we do?



HEATHER

We can use a mirror to flash  
pilots as they fly over.

DAVID

We can find a road and follow it  
back to the van.

KYLE

We can climb a tall tree and look  
for it.

RICK

It's getting dark fast. How far  
can you see?

MARCY

I think we have some really good  
ideas, but if we don't figure out  
which one to use, we may not get  
out of here tonight.

KYLE

I say we pick a direction and  
start walking.

RACHEL

That's not the process, and you  
know it.

KYLE

Beats sitting here in the dark.

AMY

Shut up, Kyle.

KYLE

I can say what I think. Tell her,  
Marcy.

MARCY

We're going to take turns.  
Everyone must choose their  
favorite idea and explain why.  
We'll discuss each idea for five  
minutes and either add it to the  
'keep' list or place it in the  
parking lot. Who wants to begin?

JAMAL

I'll start. I think we should build a fire. It will signal people, keep us warm, boil water, and keep wild animals away. With a fire, we can build torches and walk out.

MARCY

Discussion?

TANYA

I like that idea a lot. We should build a fire.

KYLE

With what? We have no matches, no wood. If we do manage to start a fire, we still have no water. And who knows how to build a torch?

RICK

We'd still have to go out in the dark and gather wood.

HEATHER

We all know how to start a fire. We rub sticks.

KYLE

Hah! Try it.

AMY

A fire would be wonderful.

KYLE

Is no one listening?

DAVID

I feel we should stop the discussion and get wood before night comes.

MARCY

We can't do that, David. You know the rules. We have to determine the best idea first. Now, is there any more discussion about Jamal's idea?

EXT WOODS DUSK

Half-light of coming night, and kids are still in a circle. Closer as the cold grips them. But no fire.

MARCY

Is there any more discussion about Heather's idea to use the keyless entry to make the van beep?

KYLE

We've got to stop talking about dumb ideas and do something.

JAMAL

If you don't stop bitching, I'm gonna do something.

KYLE

Yeah, well, bring it on.

Both boys stand and square off.

MARCY

Stop, stop it right now! If you both don't sit down, I'm sending you to the chill-out room.

They boys sit.

AMY

Can we take a break? My brain hurts.

DAVID

That's dehydration. One of the first signs. We need water.

JAMAL

Not poison water.

DAVID

Pretty soon, she'll start  
hallucinating.

RICK

She's not dehydrated. And we  
don't need a break. We need to  
decide.

MARCY

We all know the process ensures  
the best decision. But I'm with  
Amy. We're taking a five minute  
recess. During recess I want  
everyone to think about their  
favorite solution. This time, I  
want you to think of reasons why  
it won't work.

They go silent for a moment.

KYLE

I don't think--

MARCY

Quiet time, Kyle. No talk.

Amy begins to cry quietly, and Tanya wraps an arm around  
her shoulders.

Kyle and Rick whisper together.

Several others move closer as a coyote HOWL splits the  
night.

HEATHER

What was that?

RICK

Coyote...or wolf.

MARCY

It doesn't matter. This is time  
out. Please don't talk.

Silence again and whispers and tears and fear.

RICK  
(standing)  
Kyle and I are quitting the  
process.

MARCY  
You can't. You know the rules

RICK  
They're dumb rules. We've been at  
this for hours, and we're getting  
colder and thirstier.

MARCY  
I expected this from Kyle but not  
from you, Rick.

RICK  
Anyone who wants to can come with  
us.

HEATHER  
I don't think it's smart to split  
up.

DAVID  
Or walk around in the dark. If  
you trip you could break a bone.

TANYA  
And snakes, don't snakes come out  
at night.

KYLE  
It's too cold for snakes.

HEATHER  
What about bears?

RICK  
When was the last time you heard  
of a bear attacking someone?

MARCY  
If you go, don't expect us to save  
you.

RICK  
We're not looking for help.

JAMAL  
I'll go with you.

RICK  
Anyone else?

No takers.

RICK  
When we find the van, we'll honk  
the horn and flash the lights.  
Follow the sound.

KYLE  
Let's go.

With a wave, Rick, Kyle, and Jamal move off into the  
deepening dark.

TANYA  
I think we should build a fire.

MARCY  
Excuse me, Tanya, but we have one  
more minute of quiet time.

They fall quiet.

EXT WOODS     DAWN

Morning gray finds the group asleep, huddled together,  
sharing heat.

Out of the mist stumbles Rick. On his back, Kyle, one side  
of his head bloody. Blood stains both Kyle and Rick. Rick  
reaches the group and trips, spilling Kyle who doesn't  
move. The noise wakes Marcy and David.

MARCY  
Rick?

She moves to him as David goes to Kyle.

DAVID  
Oh my god.

MARCY  
Rick, what happened? Where's  
Jamal?

RICK

Kyle fell and hit his head. I could feel the blood, so I carried him. I lost Jamal somehow.

DAVID

He's breathing, but he looks awful.

MARCY

We decided to build a fire, but no one knew how.

RICK

We found water. It's not far, and it tastes fine. It's not far.

DAVID

We have to do something for Kyle.

MARCY

Wake everyone. We have to figure out the best thing to do for Kyle and Jamal.

RICK

We don't have time for the process.

David begins to wake the others.

MARCY

If you had stayed with us last night--

RICK

If we had started before it got dark--

They wake slowly, stiff and cold.

MARCY

Everyone up. Everyone awake. We need ideas. Kyle is hurt, and Jamal is lost. We have to work out a solution. Since Jamal is gone, I'll facilitate. Who wants to start?

HEATHER

I'm thirsty.

AMY

And hungry.

MARCY

Not now. We have a crisis. Who has an idea?

TANYA

I think we should boil water and clean his wound.

MARCY

Very good. Next.

DAVID

He needs a doctor. Let's find Ms. Johnstone's phone and call 911.

MARCY

Excellent. Next.

Rick turns his face to the ground.

FADE OUT.