

**ALONE BY THE FIRE**

written by

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**EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT**

A lush campsite in an open, wooded area. A few TENTS, spaced out from each other for privacy.

At the campfire sits a group of SIX BOY SCOUTS (all 8-10). They are staring intently at a bearded man in his 40s -- RUSSELL.

Russell leans forward, the flames from the campfire casting a warm orange glow onto his face.

RUSSELL

Have any of you heard the Death-  
Seeker's Poem?

The boys share nervous looks, now completely freaked out. They shake their heads in unison.

RUSSELL

I guess I'll have to tell it to  
you then.

The boys look less than pleased about this.

Russell clears his throat, then begins the poem:

RUSSELL

Alone I sat, warm by the fire,  
nothing left in my soul, not even  
desire. A soul I had not seen in  
ages and ages. Not a man, nor a  
child, nor a witch, nor sages.  
Then, at last, hands rested on my  
shoulders. They were like ice,  
with the weight of boulders. "Is  
it time?" I asked, alone and  
afraid. The figure spoke not a  
word, just clinched tighter its  
grip. I knew it was death -- into  
its hands I would slip. I arose,  
giving one last look at the fire.  
I walked side-by-side with death,  
nothing left in my soul... not  
even desire...

One of the younger boys, MATT, raises his hand to ask a question.

MATT

Did that really happen?

RUSSELL

Oh, yes.

(MORE)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

It's a known fact that if you're sitting alone by a campfire and feel ice-cold hands on your shoulders, it's death. If you stand and go with him, he'll take to the beyond. But most people say if you don't go with him, just seeing his face is enough to drive you insane.

One of the boys, TREVOR, adjusts his glasses. He looks over his shoulder, expecting something -- or someone -- to be there.

Russell LAUGHS. Amused by their reactions.

RUSSELL

I had you boys going, didn't I?

The boys look relieved. A couple look confused. A couple are furious.

TREVOR

It's not real?

Russell shakes his head.

ARTHUR, one of the older boys, puts a hand on Trevor's shoulder to calm him.

ARTHUR

It's just a story. He was messing with us. He thought it'd be funny to scare us.

The boys GROAN.

Trevor's eyes focus behind Arthur -- to the tree line. What looks like a DARK FIGURE stands near a tree. Motionless.

Trevor points his finger in the direction of the figure.

TREVOR

I see it! It's over there! Look!

All eyes turn --

The coast is clear. Just trees swaying in the wind.

RUSSELL

There's nothing there, Trevor. I was just trying to get a rise out of you, that's all.

(MORE)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
My scout leader use to tell us all  
kinds of stories before bed to  
freak us out.

Arthur crosses his arms, trying to play it cool.

ARTHUR  
I want to be in Gary's group.

RUSSELL  
Ha ha ha. Very funny.

Trevor keeps his eyes fixed on the tree line. He's frozen in  
terror. He knows he saw something.

TREVOR  
Something was over there... I saw  
it...

MATT  
Yeah, right.

ARTHUR  
Let it go, Trevor.

TREVOR  
I did!

Russell sighs, getting to his feet. He brushes the dirt off his  
pants, then starts toward the tree line.

RUSSELL  
Since this is my fault, I'll go  
check it out, okay? I'll prove  
there's nothing there. Stay put.

The boys huddle close together, watching Russell head toward  
the tree line.

Trevor elbows his way to the front of the group, adjusting his  
glasses to get a better look.

#### **AT THE TREE LINE**

Russell casually strolls toward the spot Trevor was pointing  
at. He stops, peering into the darkness. He checks behind a few  
trees, taking a step into the thick wooded area.

He sees nothing.

RUSSELL  
There's nothing here. You can  
relax now.

Russell is about to turn and leave when he looks down --

FOOT PRINTS.

Deep in the dirt. They're MASSIVE, thin. Almost skeletal. Slightly crooked. Whatever made them wasn't human.

Russell bends down to examine the prints. He puts his hand in the middle of it for comparison -- his hand looks like a child's compared to the scale of the MONSTROUS FOOT.

CHILDREN'S SCREAMS!

Coming from the campfire.

Russell straightens, turns. SPRINTS toward the campfire --

ALL THE BOYS ARE GONE.

Russell stops. Confused. Looking around, trying to figure out where they could have gone in such a short span of time.

**EXT. CAMPSITE - MOMENTS LATER**

Russell tears the camp apart, looking for the boys.

-- Checks the car... Nothing...

-- Checks the tents... Flipping blankets and sleeping bags. Nothing...

-- Check the perimeter of the campsite... No sign of them anywhere...

Russell brings his hands to his mouth, PLEADING into the night air --

RUSSELL

BOYS! This isn't funny! I'm sorry  
I scared you. You win. Get out  
here now!

Nothing.

Calm, quiet, still night air. A few crickets chirping loudly in the distance.

**EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

Flashlight in hand, Russell RUNS the path, stepping over rocks and overturned trees. He shines the light in every direction.

Panic is now overtaking him. Russell's breathing is eradicate. He SPEEDS UP.

**EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER**

Russell searches on the opposite side of the campsite he was just at. He checks behind every tree, every large rock. Every fox den. Any place a child could hide.

**EXT. CAMPSITE - DAWN**

It's much later now. The sun is just barely beginning to peak over the trees, bathing the area with a small sliver of light.

Russell sits at the campfire. Alone. Dejected. Terrified. He stares absentmindedly into the dying fire -- only a single, small BURNING EMBER remaining.

Suddenly, Russell sits up straight. He can't shake the feeling that he's being watched. He tries to move, but can't.

It's like he's glued to the spot.

Before he can turn around, A MASSIVE BLACK HAND -- MOLDY, DARK FLESH, EXPOSED BONE -- LAYS ON RUSSELL'S SHOULDER.

Russell almost collapses under the weight, instantly trembling with fear.

Russell remains still, trying not to hyperventilate.

Finally, he slowly turns his head to see the owner of the hand.

Whatever he sees sends him off the deep end. His eyes GLAZE OVER, his jaw drops.

Russell SCREAMS...

The sound of INCOMPREHENSIBLE FEAR.

SMASH TO BLACK.