

FRIENDS IN THE SWAMP

By

JAMES AUSTIN MCCORMICK

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jimbostories@hotmail.com

FADE IN

EXT. EVENING - CABIN

SUZY (10), cute with pig tails, glances nervously into the distance.

Her GRANDPA, calm and composed as he sits in his rocker, smiles.

GRANDPA

Don't worry Suzy. That wind ain't nothing to be scared of, just folks talking is all.

SUZY

But there's no one there.

GRANDPA

No-one you can see.

He leans forward, patting her hand.

GRANDPA

But I can see them. Now that my time's almost come.

The girl gasps.

SUZY

You mean spooks?

The old man chuckles.

GRANDPA

Well, I guess that's as good a name as any to call them. But don't be afraid none. They're my friends.

SUZY

How come you're friends with spooks Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Well, this is a real strange place. They call it a 'swamp' but it ain't really, not any more. They filled in all the marshes and bogs a long time ago.

He sighs, looking out into the past.

(CONTINUED)

GRANDPA (CON'T)

But there was a time when lots of folks died out here, sucked into the earth. You know Suzy, I been alone ever since your Grandma died. I got into the habit of sitting out here on the porch in the evening, listening. You'd be surprised what you hear, crickets chirping, bullfrogs barking at each other, snakes rustling through the lime grass.

He reaches for a clay pipe and clamps it between his teeth. He makes no attempt to light it.

GRANDPA (CON'T)

But when I started to get sick, I began hearing the whispers in the breeze. I couldn't understand what they were saying at first but then I realized they were talking to each other. Talking to me too.

SUZY

Who Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Those poor souls I just mentioned, the ones who died here. There are so many voices, all folks with a story to tell, some happy, some not so much. Life can be hard. But you never mind about that, my girl. You're too young to think of such things.

He takes some matches from his pocket and lights his pipe.

GRANDPA (CON'T)

Always enjoyed a good pipe. My pa said it was the secret of happiness.

He breaks into a fit of coughing.

GRANDPA (CON'T)

Got a feeling this will be my last one.

He places a hand on Suzy's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

GRANDPA (CON'T)

I just wanted to say goodbye. Your father and me, well, we've kind of grown apart over the years but me and you've always been good friends, haven't we Suzy?

SUZY

Real good friends, Grandpa.

The old man smiles.

SUZY

Aren't we going to be able to see each other anymore?

The old man shakes his head.

GRANDPA

Afraid not.

He takes a leisurely puff on his pipe.

GRANDPA (CON'T)

At least not until it's nearly your time, when you're old and sick like me. But that,thankfully young lady, is long, long way off yet.

He takes the pipe from his teeth and waves the stem at the distance.

GRANDPA (CON'T)

But you should be running back to your folks now. You don't want them knowing you've been seeing your crazy old grandpa again.

The girl kisses him on the cheek.

SUZY

Okay Grandpa.

GRANDPA

You're a good girl, Suzy.

He reaches into a pocket and hands her a letter.

GRANDPA (CON'T)

I wrote out my wishes. I want them to bury me in the swamp. And no matter how much he disagrees, that damn fool of a father isn't to give

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRANDPA (CON'T) (cont'd)
me a Christian send off. Otherwise
I won't be able to join my friends
out here. Probably best if you give
this straight to Al Holland.

SUZY
Mr Holland, the lawyer?

GRANDPA
That's him. You can trust him.

Tears are showing in his eyes.

GRANDPA
You have yourself a good life now,
you hear?

The girl steps of the porch.

SUZY
Goodbye Grandpa.

GRANDPA
Goodbye Suzy.

Suzy gives him a little wave and sets off on her journey.

The old man watches her.

We hear the winds blow. The old man nods, listening.

GRANDPA (CON'T)
I sure can trust her. Like I said,
she's a good girl.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVENING - CABIN

Two brothers, BOY 1 (14) and BOY 2 (10), hide behind a tree.

They're watching an OLD WOMAN sat on the porch steps of an
old cabin. She mutters continuously.

BOY 1
Who is that old lady?

BOY 2
No idea, but she's crazy, talking
to herself like that.

(CONTINUED)

BOY 1
Maybe she ain't crazy.

BOY 2
What do you mean?

BOY 1
Maybe she ain't talking to herself.
Maybe she's talking to ...

He grins.

BOY 1
Spooks.

BOY 2
Quit it.

BOY 1
What?

BOY 2
Quit trying to scare me.

Boy 1 laughs. He's succeeded in getting under the skin of his younger brother.

The Old Woman stops her muttering and looks over at them.

BOY 1
She's seen us.

BOY 2
Let's get out of here.

He races off.

His brother sighs and with a shake of his head races after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

He catches up with him.

BOY 1
Why are you running?

Boy 2 stops, hands on his knees, panting.

(CONTINUED)

BOY 2
Maybe she's a witch.

BOY 1
A witch?

BOY 2
Yeah, and maybe she was talking to
spooks.

Boy 1 gives a derisive snort.

BOY 1
So, you believe in spooks?

BOY 2
Maybe.

Boy 1 lays a hand on his brother's shoulder.

BOY 1
Well, I guess it ain't your fault.
You're only ten. But when you get
older, you'll realize, there ain't
no such things as spooks.

FADE OUT