

The Hidden Lodge

A twig snapped in the distance. A bush rustled. Footsteps. Someone was coming! *Who could it be?* Frightened, we slipped silently out of the cabin. The smell of damp leaves filled the air. It was only in the half-light of the setting sun that I noticed how small the boy was. I hadn't even asked him his name, but I knew we were in danger- imminent danger. Trembling, we dug our bodies into the nearest shrub. Scratching and scraping, tearing and bruising, the thorn bush dug into our clothes and skin as we struggled further into the dark abyss of the thick, dense bushes.

My heart hammered in my chest as footsteps crunched closer. Sweat had formed on the boy's forehead and it was now trickling down the side of his red face. Any second now, we would be discovered. Every heart beat drew them a step closer to where we were concealed. Suddenly, to my horror, they began to search the bushes. I closed my eyes. A shriek of laughter called out in the distance and heavy footsteps echoed away. I tried to remember how I'd got myself caught up in this mess....

It had been a perfectly normal day. The egg yolk sun swam in a sea of clear blue; there wasn't a breath of wind so my friends and I had decided to head towards the woods. Laughter filled the air as we played our usual game of 'manhunt'. Feeling particularly pleased with my hiding place, I gazed around. Tangles of branches arched up above me, covering the sky. Although it was still the afternoon, the light had been suffocated from above. The eerie, gloom made me feel uneasy. It was quiet. Too quiet. Beneath my feet I noticed something peculiar. Breadcrumbs were scattered on the floor, which was littered with rotten leaves. *What could that be?* I wondered to myself.

Bemused, I followed the breadcrumbs- it was a trail! When I reached the end, I noticed an old, log cabin nestled between the bushes. Then a shadow darted across the forest floor. Intrigued, I ventured into the sharp, menacing bushes. That's how it happened. I'd slipped into the cabin, thinking it would be derelict and abandoned, but it wasn't. A pale, thin boy, who had a wild look in his eyes, nearly attacked me as I walked into the cabin. Within minutes, I understood what had happened: he'd been kidnapped. He'd only just finished telling me what had happened to him, when we heard the noise.

So, there we were, covered in cuts and scratches, face down in the earth, waiting motionless. Holding our breath, we listened intently to the noiseless forest. The silence was deafening. Twilight was closing in and it would soon be dark. I nudged the boy in the darkness and without a word we nodded in agreement. Cautiously, we squeezed back out through the bushes and in the opposite direction of the footsteps.

Frantically, we ran. With a sense of urgency, we plunged deeper into the forest, letting the shadows swallow us. Not once did we look back...just kept running, arms pumping, legs burning. As we ran, we slashed through the branches desperately searching for a way out.