

Troop Leader Dave

It's Friday afternoon, and I'm loading up the last of the camping gear for this weekend's troop camping trip. We have always gone to the lake every year, but this year, we have decided to go to Shell Island, about 50 miles off the coast. The only way to the island is by ferry, which will drop us off Friday afternoon and will pick us back up Sunday. My troop will be roughing it this weekend without the modern luxuries we have grown so accustomed to.

As I'm loading the last of the gear, one of my boys comes up with his pack and a giant smile on his face. "Hi Liam, are you ready for the camping trip bud," I asked. "Yes, Troop Leader Dave. I've been looking forward to this for weeks." Liam replied. Liam is thirteen years old and is sort of the runt of the group, but he has been with us for about a year now and is very interested in learning survival skills. He is a small kid for his age but does very well in scouts. This kid knows his stuff, but unfortunately, the other scouts don't seem to take to him very well. They tend to tease him,, and in turn, he is very quiet and standoffish.

Kevin, who is fourteen, is the next one to show up. He is a reserved kid also but none of the other kids seem to talk to him much. He is a tall kid with longish brown hair. I know he doesn't really want to be here, and the only reason he is here is that his parents are making him. Kevin doesn't participate much and could care less about badges. He has only been with us for about a month, so I'm hoping he will come around. "Hey Kev, are you packed and ready to go," I asked. Kevin just rolled his eyes and started to walk to the bus. "Hey Kevin, no phones dude," I said. He just took his earbuds out and handed his phone to his mother, and went up onto the bus. "Whatever," he muttered.

Over the next few minutes, the remaining troop members all showed up one by one. Randall, his brother Richard, and Clay are all boys that have been with the scouts for about 3 years now. Randall is the only kid I sometimes have problems with just because he is the bigger of all the kids. He kind of throws his weight around, but they're all good kids and work hard in scouts.

Once all the boys are on and all packed, I start up the bus and head to the bay as the kids start singing camp songs. This is going to be a good camping trip.

Liam

I'm really excited about the camping trip. I just wish Randall wasn't coming. I joined right after last year's camping trip, so this is my first one. I have been practicing my fire starting skills and putting up a tent. I'm planning on getting every badge I can get this weekend. "We're here, baby, are you ready?" my mother asks. I look up to see Troop Leader Dave Loading the bus with gear. "Uh...yeah, Mom I'm ready" I reply. I get my gear out of the trunk and my mom comes around the car and gives me a big kiss and hug. "Please be careful and listen to everything your troop leader tells you ok?" She asks. "I will Mom," I tell her. "I love you, honey," She says as she again gives me a big hug. "I love you too Mom" I'm so glad I'm the first one here so that none of the other guys would see this, especially Randall. He would tease me about it all weekend.

"Hi Liam, are you ready for the camping trip bud" Troop Leader Dave asked. "Yes, Troop Leader Dave. I've been looking forward to this for weeks," I replied as I entered the bus. I was reading through my survival guide when Kevin came on the bus. Kevin is a quiet kid that definitely doesn't want to be here. "Hey Kevin," I said as he walked by. He didn't reply, just kept walking to the back of the bus.

Randall and the rest of the guys entered the bus next. Most of the other guys leave me alone for the most part, that is until Randall starts teasing me. They then sometimes get involved or at the least laugh him on. I sure hope he lays off me this weekend. "Out of the way snot," Randall said as he walked by and smacked me in the forehead. "Ouch" I muttered under my breath. John, Richard, and Clay laughed as they all walked by shaking their heads.

Once Troop Leader Dave entered the bus he told everyone to quiet down as he started the bus and headed out. Once all the kids started singing along I started back into my survival guided. When I looked back at Kevin I noted he had earbuds in his ears, even though Troop Leader Dave said no cell phones?

Kevin

"Come on Mom," I said. "For the last time Kevin, you are going and that is final." His mom said. "And if you pull any more stunts, Son, I don't even know. You need to straighten up before your father decides to ship you off." She added. "Whatever Mom," I said as I put my earbuds in and let the music

take me away from this crap of a weekend. As we pulled up I got out of the car and grabbed my bag and headed over to Dave. This guy is a putz.

"Hey Kev, are you packed and ready to go" Troop Leader Dave asked. I just rolled my eyes and started to the back of the bus. "Hey Kevin, no phones dude," He said. I took my earbuds out and handed my phone to my mother and went up onto the bus. "Whatever" I muttered. Little did this guy know I had two cell phones. I knew he would make me get rid of my cell so I used my dummy phone for his benefit, what a putz.

"Hey Kevin," Liam said. I just walked by shaking my head. This guy tries way too hard. As I got to the back of the bus, that punk Randall came on to the bus. Of course, he was followed by his entourage of jerks. If that asshat starts shit with me this weekend I'm going to break his nose.

"Quiet down guys" Troop Leader Dave said as he started the bus and headed out. The Nature Patrol started to sing their stupid songs so I put in my earbuds and got back into my music. "This is going to be one long and excruciating weekend," I muttered as I let the music take me away.

Liam

"What's up dork," Randall said as he slides beside me on the bus seat. "Come on Randall," I said, "Cut me some slack, please." He reached down and snatched my survival guide out of my hands and threw it to his brother Richard. "You don't need this dork," he said, "Dave will take care of you, whiney baby." "Give it back," I said as I tried to reach for my book. Randall smacked my hand and said, "What, you going to cry?" Richard and Clay started laughing. Then out of nowhere Kevin comes up and snatches my book out of Richard's hand. "Leave the kid alone Randall," Kevin says. Randall stands up to face Kevin. He is a couple of inches taller than Kevin, but Kevin doesn't flinch. "What are you gonna do about it, freak?" Randall asks in a real threatening tone. "Just leave him alone," Kevin repeats.

"Guys, settle down back there, we are almost at the docks" Troop Leader Dave calls out without turning around. "If you get in my way again freak I will fuck you up, got it?" Randall says as he shoulder past Kevin back to his seat. "Here kid, you can't let those guys push you around or they will never stop," Kevin says as he hands me my book back. "What can I do?" I asked, "They are bigger than me." He just turned around and went back to his seat and put his earbuds back in. I wonder what his story is? That is

the most I've heard him talk since he joined troops.

A little while later we pull up to the docks. "Ok, guys we're here," Troop Leader Dave announced. "Let's head to the boat." We all filed off the bus and headed for the boat to start our weekend camping trip to Shell Island. It's a small island mainly occupied by forest with a short sandy beach skirting the border. I've never been here before and Troop Leader Dave said it's uninhabited except for the wildlife. Once on the boat, we head out to open water to start our trip. I'm excited about this. I love camping.

Troop Leader Dave

"Okay guy, we are almost there," I said as all the boys were trying their hardest to see the island coming up in the distance. After a few more minutes of the ever-growing island coming into view, we docked on the island. "Okay Dave, you guys going to be alright?" Fred the boat captain asked. "Sure thing Fred, I have the satellite phone if we need anything," I replied holding up the phone. "Okay well you boys have fun," he said, "I'll be back Sunday to pick you all up." With that, he was off, headed back to the mainland.

"Alright guys, let's grab our gear and start the hike to our campground," I said as the kids all grabbed up their packs and sprinted towards the woods. "Hey slow down guys this isn't race," I laughed. "Yeah, besides this terrain can be dangerous if we're not careful," Liam added calling out to the others. "This terrain can be kind of dangerous," Randall mocked in a baby tone. "Come on Randall, ease up on the kid," I said, "This is supposed to be fun." Randall looked back to me and said, "Sorry Troop Leader Dave, I was just goofing around."

I looked back to see Kevin trailing behind all of us so I hung back to let him catch up. "Hey look Kev, I know the outdoors isn't your thing but I think you will like it if you give it a chance," I told him. "Whatever," he replied. "You know that is the only word I think you know son," I replied with a chuckle. "Whatever, and I'm not your son," he said as he sped up to get ahead of me. Yeah, this is going to be a long weekend.

Once we made it to the campsite I told all the kids to start setting up their tents before we do anything else while we have plenty of daylight left. All the kids started putting up their tents and were done in record time. I could see Kevin struggling to get up and I started to go over to help but I noticed

Liam heading that way. Who knows maybe Liam can help Kevin have a good time this weekend. If not he is going to bring everyone's mood down.

Kevin

God, I hate this stupid tent," I mumbled as I threw it all down in frustration. "Need a hand?" Liam asked as he walked up with that big grin of his oozing off his face. "Uh...yeah if you don't mind, I hate this thing," I replied. "No problem," he said as he picked up the poles and started to assemble the tent. "I don't mind helping you out this weekend," he said, "My dad has been taking me camping since I was little so I know my way around this kind of stuff." We finished setting up my tent and headed over to where Dave was getting everything ready for the campfire. "Okay guys, I need everyone to search around the immediate area for some good firewood." Dave said, "Anything small enough to break apart will be good." He had a few bigger logs he was setting up. So I went out into the woods with Liam to help him find some smaller stuff.

With Randall and the jerk brigade headed in the other direction laughing and being generally obnoxious. Liam and I trudged through the woods in search of "the almighty firewood". "So what's your deal?" I asked Liam. "What do you mean," he asked. "I mean you obviously don't like the goon troop back there and they definitely have no love lost for you except to entertain themselves at your expense. So again I ask...what's your deal?" Liam stayed quiet for a short time as we continued to pick up sticks for the fire.

After a brief period of quiet gathering, Liam finally spoke up. "My dad use to take me camping all the time, he would always teach me these neat survival tricks," he said as he picked up another small twig. "Did you know there is a certain kind of tree bark that you can eat that will give you nutrients to keep from starving? Well, if you had to," he added. "So that's great and all but what does that have to do with you torturing yourself by being the butt of these guys' jokes?" I questioned. "My dad died a couple of years ago...in a car wreck," he said. "He was heading home from work and we were planning on loading up and heading to the woods for a camping weekend. Another car ran a red light and smashed into his side. He died on impact is what they told us." he said as he started to slightly tear up. "Like that's supposed to make us feel better." He huffed, threw a stick as far as he could then picked up his pile, and headed back to camp. I retrieved my pile of sticks and followed Liam back to camp. It was a quiet walk back.

Troop Leader Dave

"Hello? Oh hey, Fred" Dave said on the other end of the line. "Dave, apparently there is a storm coming in tonight that is supposed to get pretty rough. I don't think you and the boys need to camp outside during this. The winds are supposed to get pretty strong." Fred told me, "I have a small cabin about a mile north of your planned campsite. Head up there before the storm comes in to be safe," Fred finished. "No problem Fred and thanks for the heads up," I replied. We said our goodbyes and I hung up the satellite phone. I am really glad I have this thing because there are no cell towers on this island I mused in my head.

"Okay guys, break it all down and pack it up, we have a bad storm on the way and Fred has a cabin about a mile north of here," I told the boys. "Aw," they said in unison. "I know guys but better safe than sorry" I added.

We made the mile trek in a decent time and found the cabin without a hitch. "Now I know this isn't the great outdoors," I said as we walked into the cabin. "It's not the Hilton either" Clay yelled out to a barrage of snickers. "Yeah yeah okay" I jested, "but we are here now so let's make the best of it."

As we were looking around the small cabin and getting settled in Liam exclaims "There is a fireplace, we can roast marshmallows!" Randall steps forward towards Liam and says "No shit, dork." Before I even have time to say anything to Randall, Kevin shoots forward and punches Randall right in the face. Randall immediately hits the floor and is out. "Kevin!" I exclaim as I grab the boy to stop him from what I could only imagine was going to be his finishing move. "Stop this now!" I yelled. Kevin went back to his corner to calm down while I tended to Randall.

Liam

Wow, Kevin stood up for me! "Thanks, Kevin," I told him. "Yeah, no problem that ass had it coming," Kevin said as he rubbed his hand. "Yeah, but you will probably get in trouble, right? I asked. "It won't be the first time or the worst thing I have ever done," he stated matter of factly. "Well, thanks anyway," I said. "Listen that kid is an asshole...and, well...I'm sorry about your dad," Kevin said. "Hey

check this out" I replied and showed him my survival guide my dad gave me. " My dad gave this to me a week before we went on our camping trip...the one before, well you know," I shrugged. "Yeah," he said somewhat reserved. "He even wrote me a note on the inside cover," he told me as he opened up the book.

The note read...

Liam, I am so proud of the man you are becoming. You have a strong will and a good heart. Do not ever let people change the person you are. I want you to strive for greatness, and son, if anyone can it is you. Know that I am always here for you and I love you son.

, Love Dad

Kevin looked up to see me and I saw real empathy within him. "You hang on to that book Liam," he said as he put his hand on my should before he stood up and walked over to where Troop Leader Dave and Randall were at.

Kevin

I walked over to Dave and Randall and said "I want to apologize for hitting you, Randall. While you definitely deserved it...I shouldn't have done it." Dave nodded his head for a minute and said "While I don't condone violence...Randall you were out of line I will not put up with it, do you understand?" He asked. "Yes Troop Leader Dave" Randall replied. "Now Kevin, we do not fight in this troop, do I make myself clear." Dave looked back at me as he asked. "yes," I told him "but Liam? he is off-limits to you," I said to Randall while I looked him right in the eyes. "Ye-yeah, no problem" he stuttered as he swapped out the bloody wad of tissue from his nose to replace it with a clean one. "Oh and sorry about your nose," I told him as I turned to walk away.

The rest of the night carried on uneventful except for the brewing storm of course. It came in quick and strong with the winds whipping against the cabin and the rain pouring. The thunder and lightning came crashing down. Well at least the generator is up and running so we have lights, I thought

to myself. "CLUNK" "Of course," Dave says as all the power in the small cabin goes out. "Okay guys, remain calm, the generator has gone out," he said as he was rummaging through his pack and pulled out a flashlight. "You all stay here while I go out back and check on the generator," he added as he started for the door. "Maybe you shouldn't go out there," Randall and Richard said in unison. "It will be alright boys, I have been wet before," he laughed as he went out the door into the stormy night.

We all went through our packs to retrieve our flashlights. With all of us armed with light we sat quiet waiting for Dave to get the lights back on. After about a half-hour of Dave being gone, I finally stood up and said, "Maybe one of us needs to go out and check on Dave?" "How about you Rocky Balboa?" Randall said staring out the window at the rain. "Yeah, why don't you go out there?" Richard added. I slowly stood up and said, "You know what Randall I will." Liam jumped up and said, "I'm coming too." "You sure?" I asked him "Yeah" he replied. "Besides, if anyone can, it's me right?" He shrugged.

Liam and I made our way around to the back of the cabin to the small shed with the generator. "Troop Leader Dave?" Liam called out, but we didn't get a response. We could barely hear anything over the rushing winds. As we get closer to the entry of the shed Liam stops suddenly with a stone look on his face. "What is it Liam," I asked. Liam pointed to a puddle of red right past the entrance of the shed. I walked past Liam to see a puddle of what I can only assume is paint or blood. "Dave!," I yelled over and over again to no avail.

Randall

"Guys, should we wait here or go after Kevin and Liam?" Clay asks. "Look I'm not going anywhere," I said. "Yeah, I'm staying here till Troop Leader Dave gets back," Richard added. "Look, guys, we just need to wait, Troop Leader Dave will get the power back on and be back any minute now so just relax," I told them. "Okay" Clay reluctantly agreed.

Suddenly there was a bang against the side of the cabin and a shadowy figure was visible in the side window. Richard screamed as Clay ran for the door. He opened the door and ran out. "What should we do," Richard asked as we heard a scream coming from outside. "Let's go, Rich," I said as I ran for the door. There is nowhere to hide in this little cabin. As Richard and I made our way outside we saw Clay laying face down on the ground not ten yards from the door. A puddle of blood was oozing from under his body as the rain did its best to wash it away.



Richard ran for the woodline ahead. "Richard" I called out but he was out of sight now in the dark. I looked back at Clay who is not moving and started to make my way over to him and bent down to check to see if he was alive when I heard another scream from the woods. "Richard!!!" I screamed as I jumped up and ran to the last location I saw him running in. "Richard!" I screamed again to no avail. I ran and ran until my legs gave out and I crashed to the forest floor in tears for my brother that I couldn't find.

Liam

"Okay, so let's go back to the cabin and let the guys know what is going on," Kevin said with a quiver in his voice. We sprinted back through the rain to the entry of the cabin. "Holy shit!!!" Kevin screamed as we ran up on a body that looked like Clay in the middle of a pool of blood. "What the hell" Kevin exclaimed. "I don't know what to do," he said as he started to freak out. "Let's go in the cabin and check it out, Kevin," I told him. We entered the cabin to see an empty room. "What do we do Liam?" Kevin asked. "Where is Troop Leader Dave's Phone?" I asked Kevin. He started searching through Troop Leader Dave's Pack and found the satellite phone. "I got it," he said holding up the phone. "Do I just call 911?" Kevin asked. "Try it," I said. "It is just beeping...It's not working." He said as he tossed the phone to me. "RING RING RING" I looked at Kevin as the phone continuously rang. "Well answer it," Kevin shouted.

"Hello?" I asked. "Hello!!! Dave can you hear me?" the voice on the other end answered. "This is Liam, um, we need help," I said. "Where is Dave?" the voice said. "I don't know, we can't find him but one of our scouts is hurt or worse we need help, please," I said into the phone. "This is Fred, I'm calling the port authorities and I'm on my way now to the island. You all get to the dock so that I can get you back to the mainland. I will be there in about a half-hour," Fred relayed on the satellite phone. "Okay Mr. Fred, we are on our way now," I told him. "Boys, be careful," Fred told us.

Kevin and I packed up our gear and headed out into the forest. Luckily Troop Leader Dave marked our path during travel and with the rain letting up we shouldn't have a problem finding the trail. "Wait" I exclaimed, "I almost forgot my survival guide." I ran over to the table and grabbed my book and we headed out the door.

Once we were out in the woods things got really scary. We didn't run as we were only two miles

out so we took our time to be safe. That is until we started to hear it. "What is that?" I asked. "Someone else is out here," Kevin said as he gestured for me to be quiet. All of sudden the sky light up from the bolt of lightning and we could make out a dark figure about twenty yards away. "Run," Kevin whispered to me as we both started to sprint through the woods with the dark shadow right on our heels.

We made it about half a mile and were running down a small decline in the forest when my foot caught a root and I went head over heel down the hill. As soon as I came to a stop I was grabbed from behind, This is it I thought, the end. Whoever had me had a firm grip and my mouth was covered so that I could barely make a sound.

"Liam" Kevin shouted. I tried to move. I tried to make a sound. But the figure had me tight. I'm stuck is all I could think. Then I saw it. The dark shadow creeping up into the area. All of a sudden a stick breaks and Kevin spins around to see the dark figure not 30 feet from him. Kevin turns and runs and is out of sight within seconds. The shadow looks around for what seems like forever before running in a completely different direction.

After a few minutes, that seemed like hours, the grip is finally released on me. I turn to see Randall. "What?" I start to yell. "Shhh," He said, "He could still be out there." I composed myself and quietly asked, "who,". "The shadow man," Randall said. "Randall we have to get to the dock," I told him. "Captain Fred is waiting for us and has already called the port authorities." Randall looks around warily then said, "My brother is dead, I found his body in the woods". "I'm so sorry about Richard," I replied. "So is Clay" Randall continued. "I know, me and Kevin found his body by the cabin," I regretfully stated. "We need to get to the dock Randall," I said. He agreed and we took off for the dock, following the trail that Troop Leader Dave left.

"What happened to Troop Leader Dave?" Randall asked as we were making our way through the brush. "I'm not sure, Kevin and I found a lot of blood at the generator shed but that was it." I said, "We immediately ran back for the cabin." I added. "Well we just need to get back to the dock and get the hell out of here," Randall stated as the sky lit up with lightning again.

Through the woods with the lighting of the sky, we saw him, the shadow man. "Run," Randall yelled as we sprinted through the woods as fast as we could to get to the relative safety of the dock and away from the threat of the shadow man behind us. As fast as we ran so did the shadow man. He grabbed my shoulder and I yelped in fright. After that he had me and I couldn't go anywhere as Randall ran out of sight. I'm going to die is all that kept going through my head. The shadow man shoved me to the ground and all of a sudden I hear the crack of something breaking above me. "Run Liam!?" Randall

screams as I stood up and ran for everything I had. I ran as fast as I could until I just couldn't run any longer. I come to a stop and asked Randall, "Did we lose him?" but Randall wasn't with me. I turned and yelled "Randall!" but nothing. All of a sudden I heard the bloodcurdling scream of Randall as I resumed my run and tears flowed down my face.

Kevin

I have run and run until I can no longer run, so I stopped. I didn't know what happened to Liam. One minute he was running beside me the next he was gone. I could see the dock. Fred's boat was already there. I had to stop and catch my breath. What happened to everyone else? I headed down to the dock but I didn't see any police. Fred said he called the port authorities. Where are they?

I got to the dock and found Fred on the end. "Come on boy," he says as I ran past him and on to the safety of the boat. "Where is everyone else?" he asks. "I don't know" I replied, "Clay is dead I think and Dave is missing. I don't know about the others." "Okay son, it will be okay, I have contacted the authorities so they will be here soon." he said, "Let's get you out of here for now." Fred started up the boat and headed out to the sea towards the mainland. I put my head in my hands and started to cry. Fred didn't say anything or ask any further questions. He was just content steering his ship onward.

As I tried to compose myself thinking of everyone left back at that island I begin to look around and asked Fred, "Where are the police? You called them right?" Through my peripheral vision, I saw a brown book laying on the table. It looks like Liam's survival guide book. I pick it up and open the front cover.

It read...

"Liam, I am so proud of the man you are becoming. You have a strong will and a good heart. Do not ever let people change the person you are. I want you to strive for greatness, and son, if anyone can it is you. Know that I am always here for you and I love you son.

, Love Dad"