

NIGHT OF THE TREES



Be very careful where you camp—
you never know who's lurking at night.

Sean and Brooke, a young couple, decided to try the adventure of camping.

Of course, they did what most people do when they start out. They went to the store and camping aisle, buying everything they didn't need, and forgetting things they'd probably be sorry about later.

They bought the essentials: a tent, sleeping bags, a plastic egg holder, a snakebite kit, and combination salt- and pepper-shaker, and more.

After trying to get all their gear packed into a compact car, they eventually headed out to a local campground about a half-hour away, showing up about two hours later than check in. Luckily, they were able to get the last site available.

"I can't believe it took us another hour of driving around this campsite to find our actual site!" said Sean.

"Well, if you'd bothered to grab a site map this wouldn't have happened. Oh well, let's unpack while it's still light out," Brooke replied.

Sean and Brooke unloaded their car and spent another two hours finding the best place for their tent, figuring out how to set up the tent, and trying to get dinner going.

"Brooke, did you see where I put the matches for the fire?"

"No, I was in charge of the food."

"Well, that worked out great. If I can't find them, I'll just walk to the camp store and get a fire log and some matches. I saw those there when we checked in.

"OK," said Brooke, "but it's getting dark already and I haven't seen the flashlight.

"I have the flashlight," said Sean "But when I packed it, the switch turned on and I'm not sure how much charge is left. "

An old man strolled over. "You folks gonna be walking around in the dark, best avoid Section E now."

"What's so bad about Section E after dark?" Sean asked.

"Well, the name's Jay, and I have a good blaze going already and a fresh pot of coffee. Come on over and I'll tell you."

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So the three headed over to Jay's campfire.

"Many years back, Section E was actually a prison camp," said Jay. "One day, a prisoner snuck out in the dead of night and got lost. He was in his prison stripes, and his legs were shackled, but he was smart enough to bring a lantern.

"But soon, his lantern went dark. So he trudged along until the underbrush and trees became too much for him to manage, since the shackles were getting caught on everything. He decided to stop and wait until morning.

"Then he heard a noise. It was massive and extremely heavy-sounding, sliding and pushing through the soil, coming from a distance, slowly but determinedly. It started to become a wet sound, like something actually being pulled from the soil and pushed forward, in a footstep kind of pattern.

"The prisoner decided to climb up in a tree for safety. He tied his lantern to a branch, and listened.

"Then it started getting closer and CLOSER!

"The next morning, the prison guards found the lantern, a few tatters of clothing and the ankle shackles dangling in the branches. But the prisoner was never found.

"From that point forward, other prisoners started disappearing from camp—even fellows that weren't trying to escape. The story was that some sort of moving tree or group of trees came in the middle of the night and took them. After losing ten prisoners, the state had seen enough and was beginning to think the warden was crazy telling tales of prisoner-munching-trees. The camp was soon disbanded and the warden retired."

"How do you know all this?, asked Sean.

"I was the warden of that prison," replied Jay.

All was quiet for awhile. "Wow," said Brooke. "There's no moon and the wind is still. Kind of gives me the creeps." Sean and Brooke headed back to their campsite and decided to head over to the bathroom before going to sleep.

"Brooke, do you remember where the bathroom is?"

"Yes, it's straight down this path about 5 minutes."

They reached the bathrooms, and Sean set the flashlight on a post. When they were done, they started heading back to their campsite.

About half way back, the light in the flashlight suddenly flickered.

"Sean!", Brooke whispered. "Shouldn't we be near our site by now?"



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"Yeah. Well... I don't know. Great! Now the flashlight is dead. I can't see anything! Let's just keep walking straight, very slowly, keeping our feet on the dirt path, and I'll try the flashlight again in a minute. Sometimes the batteries get a little charge back after awhile."

They started to walk slowly when suddenly, Sean hit his knee. "Ow! I just hit something. Wait a minute—it feels like a sign. Let me try the flashlight again."

Sean turned on the flashlight, and it flickered slightly, illuminating the sign. The sign read Section E.

Panicked, Sean and Brooke started to run. The flashlight went dark once again.

"Brooke, STOP!! I think we better try to figure out where we are. We've been running over leaves and pine cones and I don't think we're on the trail anymore."

They stood in silence for a few moments.
In the distance, they heard a heavy thumping sound.

"Sean---where are we?" Brooke asked in a very scared voice.
She sat down, and suddenly screamed. She had sat down on an old metal lantern, the kind the dead prisoner had used when he escaped.

Sean grabbed Brooke by the arm and they started running.

The sound of a large, wet heavy object started getting nearer.

Sean and Brooke were in full flight, racing through brush and bushes. The sound got larger-- huge and heavy-- and sounded like it was right behind them.

There were two long screams, followed by silence.

The next morning, Jay was up for his morning coffee and noticed that Sean and Brooke weren't at their site. He proceeded to have breakfast, and go horse riding. When he came back later that day, Sean and Brooke still hadn't returned.

They were never seen again. All that was found was one tennis show, an old lantern—and the still-standing sign that said Section E.

