

It was a dark and stormy summer night. The hollow-eyed campers huddled around the dying campfire in a desperate attempt to shield their waning source of warmth, light and protection from the howling wind and impending storm. A white hot flash of lightning streaked the sky and the campers were able to count only to three before a deafening crack of thunder answered the flash. Time was running out and the horror was growing ever near.

Then the rain came, and it poured until everything was cold and damp and soaked, including the fire.

There went their source of warmth, light, and protection.

There were only four of them left now. Once there were twenty-four, not including the counsellors, which made twenty-six. But now there were four, and they were campers – young campers, ten-year-olds, who still wore shirts with flower appliqués and jeans with rhinestones on the back pockets. They had come to Wild Drama Camp (the *only* drama camp set completely in the wilderness! boasted the pamphlet) because they were all interested in theatre. And look where that had gotten them.

Clarisse was the blondest. She was also the shortest, and the most easily frightened. She sat on one end of the log, clutching Nina's waist.

Nina was the polar opposite of Clarisse: dark-haired and very tall. She was also the oldest. A week ago she was almost eleven, or was it a few days ago? She couldn't remember what day it was. So, maybe she was eleven already, or maybe she wouldn't be eleven for days and days.

Jacqueline, brown-haired and pale, sat as close to the fire as she could without actually sitting *in* it. She did not seem to have any tolerance for cold, which wasn't good considering the current weather conditions.

Marianne was Irish and was very proud of it, or she had been before the campers had begun to disappear. After that she had gone very quiet, and she seldom talked about anything anymore. The oddest thing about her was her hair. Even though it was drenched (just like everything else in the vicinity) it was still extremely red, extremely curly, and extremely bright. Her hair was nearly as visible as the sun had been, when it was still around, anyways.

"Wh-what will we do when she comes for us?" Clarisse said, breaking the ten-minute silence.

"We can't exactly run," Jacqueline said wryly. "She'll catch us in milliseconds."

"So what, we sit here and wait for our fate?" Nina said, staring into the coals.

"That sounds about right," Jacqueline said.

"I don't want to die," Marianne said in a very quiet voice.

"None of us *want* to die, Marianne," Nina said. "We just don't have a choice. She'll kill us."

She, the dreaded Tara – the camp leader-turned-killer, who stalked the grounds of the campsite killing everyone who remained. Nobody was entirely sure why she had gone on a killing rampage. Every camper remembered her as a perfectly nice woman, who had simply seemed to want a good time for her campers. But that was before the

disappearances began, and the counsellors had been the first to go. Once they were gone, it was only a matter of time before the others were killed, one by one.

She seemed to delight in trying new things. The counsellors, for instance, had both been found strangled, but the next campers had been found dead in different ways: poisoned, stabbed, slashed, beaten.

The four girls sat around the campfire, which had now gone completely out, and they reflected on which way they might die.

It was something like forever before the storm passed. (If anyone had had a watch, they might have found it to be ten minutes, but preteen girls have an oddly distorted sense of time.)

That was when they heard a stick snapping under someone's foot.

"She's here," Clarisse said under her breath, shaking in her wet clothes, holding Nina's waist even tighter. "We're all going to die, aren't we."

"Girls," came a whispery, hoarse voice.

"Oh God!" Clarisse shrieked. "Don't kill us, Tara! Please, we're just innocent little girls!" She screamed, fainting on Nina's lap.

The whisper came again: "Girls!"

Marianne squeaked and buried her head in her hands, as if she couldn't bear to look.

"Girls!" Tara said again.

The three remaining campers turned around to see the madwoman, expecting wild hair, wide eyes, and bloodied clothing. Instead Tara's hair was perfectly coiffed, her eyes stern, wearing a red ladybug raincoat that was most certainly not bloodstained, and not even remotely intimidating.

"Goodness, girls, where have you been?" Tara scolded. "We've been looking for you for nearly three days!" As she said this Clarisse pulled her head up blearily, getting her bearings.

"We've? Where's the rest of 'we'?" Jacqueline said.

"Right here," Tara said, gesturing. All twenty of the missing campers emerged from the shadows behind Tara, and the counsellors followed behind them, rounding them up as they usually did.

"Oh God, zombies!" Clarisse became suddenly alert. "They're going to eat our brains!"

"Clarisse, what are you talking about?" Tara asked. "We've been walking all over the campsite trying to find you."

"But we found bodies!" Clarisse gestured wildly.

"Oh dear," Tara said. "You didn't get the script?"

"They didn't get the script," sighed the counsellors.

"That's why you didn't show up for your cue!" Tara said.

"Could you please tell us what you're talking about?" Nina said.

Tara shook her head, as if disappointed. "Didn't you girls get the letter that had the script inside? Wild Drama Camp is filming a horror movie, *Camp of the Dead*. I play the crazed camp leader, and these campers play the girls who die. We lost you somewhere

along the twentieth death or so, and we called off filming to try and find you girls. Are you all right?"

Clarisse fainted again.