

# LEAP YEAR

Be Scared... Be *Very* Scared...



Daniel M. Warloch

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By Daniel M. Warloch



Strategic Book Group  
Durham, Connecticut

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## PREFACE

Jordan, James, and Thomas Waldron lived with their parents in the small village of Prenton, fifteen miles outside of Chester. Jordan was the eldest at twelve; James, known as Squirrel by his close friends because he tended to store odd objects in his coat pockets, was ten; and Thomas had just turned eight. Jordan tolerated his younger brothers most of the time; yet he would always keep a watchful eye over them while at school or when out playing with the small number of children who hung around their neighborhood.

One of James's Christmas presents had been a state of the art four-man tent from his Nana, but unfortunately, because of the continually cold weather, he hadn't had the chance to use it. Eventually, after James's constant badgering, his parents reluctantly agreed to allow them to sleep out in the back garden, providing Jordan promised to watch over his two younger brothers, which Jordan begrudgingly agreed to do.





## CHAPTER ONE

*February 28, 2008, 9:00 p.m.*  
*The Waldron's Back Garden*

“I’m warning you, Jordan. If you don’t let me come with you, I’ll tell Mum and Dad,” whispered James, staring at his older brother, who was hopping around on one foot in the small confines of their tent, struggling to slip on his jeans.

“This is my dare, not yours, and keep your voice down, will you? You’ll wake Thomas up,” ordered Jordan, glancing down at Thomas, who was beginning to stir.

“What’s all the whispering about?” asked a bleary-eyed Thomas, his head suddenly popping out from the top of his sleeping bag.

“Great, look what you’ve gone and done now, James. You’ve woken Tom up. Go back to sleep, both of you, before Mum and Dad come out to check what the fuss is all about,” snapped Jordan, stretched out on the floor of the tent with his back arched up, fighting

with the zip of his jeans.

“What dare are you talking about, Jordan? It’s not Billy Three Hats picking on you again, is it?” queried Thomas, suddenly becoming interested in the discussion.

“Yes, it is Billy, and he isn’t picking on me. Also, I’d make sure he doesn’t hear you calling him Billy Three Hats, or he will probably punch you on the nose for saying it,” hissed Jordan, safely tucking his cell phone inside the pocket of his jeans.

“Jordan, why do you call him Billy Th . . . Th . . . thing-a-ma-jig anyway?” stuttered James, shuffling around inside his sleeping bag, attempting to make himself more comfortable.

“Because sometimes, if you haven’t already noticed, he likes to wear a silly red bandana under his baseball cap, and then pulls the hood of his coat over his head,” muttered Jordan, who was now becoming annoyed with his little brother.

“A banana on his head?” roared James and Thomas, rolling around in fits of laughter on the floor of the tent.

“I said a bandana, you stupid idiots, not a banana. It’s like a large handkerchief that you have to tie in a knot to keep from falling off your head. And be quiet, both of you, as I don’t want Mum and Dad to find out what I’m up to,” snickered Jordan, imagining a banana balanced on top of Billy’s head.

Once the giggling had died down, Jordan zipped his jacket up to his chin, pulled his collar up, and when he

was satisfied that he had everything he needed for the long, cold night, began to carefully crawl on his hands and knees toward the front of the tent. Sweaters and thick blankets had been wedged down in between their sleeping bags, and there were at least a dozen fluff-coated hard-boiled sweets and empty crisp packets scattered around the floor. In addition to all of this clutter, there was also an assortment of children's paperback horror novels strewn about on the floor of the tent that they'd been reading earlier on in the evening.

"If James is going with you, I am too . . . Jordan, where are you going?" inquired Thomas, suddenly becoming excited with the prospect of an adventure in the dark with his two older brothers.

"Look, listen up, you two, and get this through your thick skulls, you are not coming with me, so button it and leave me alone," growled Jordan, gingerly unzipping the flaps of the tent, listening out for anyone who may have been coming out of the back door to investigate the racket they'd been making.

"MUM!" shouted James.

"What's up with you now?" called out their mother through the open kitchen window.

"Mum, Jordan's . . ." James abruptly stopped mid-sentence, because Jordan had quickly covered his mouth, preventing him from giving the game away.

"If you don't behave yourselves, I won't be taking you Ten Pin Bowling tomorrow," shouted their mother.

“And what’s Jordan up to?”

“I was only being silly Mum, frightening James and Thomas with a ghost story. I’ve stopped now,” lied Jordan, removing his hand from James’s slavering wet lips, wiping away the dribble from the palm of his hand down the front of his jacket. James wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and blew a raspberry at Jordan.

A faint smile slipped across Jordan’s face.

“Goodnight, and I don’t want to hear another word from either of you for the rest of the night; if I do, you can all come back in the house. Do you understand?” their Mum threatened, as she carried on washing the dishes from supper.

“Yes, Mum, and goodnight,” echoed the three boys.

A cheeky smile passed between them as they listened to the mournful gusting wind playing with the sides of the tent.

“Well, are we going or not?” whispered James, scrambling out of his sleeping bag, grabbing ahold of his crumpled-up jeans, which he’d been using as a pillow, examining the dozens of creases. “Never mind; no one’s going to see them.” Chuckling to himself under his breath, he puffed a cloud of moisture before him.

“Come on then, Jordan, where are we going?” asked Thomas, his voice muffled as he was struggling to pull two sweaters over his head at the same time.

“The dare is for me to sleep in the old lodge by the

main gate to Thorngarth Hall, from ten tonight until sunrise tomorrow,” confessed Jordan, studying their terrified looking faces. “So . . . do you both still want to come along with me, or are you now having cold feet, as Dad would say?”

“Cool,” answered Thomas, the look of fear plastered all over his innocent looking face. Thomas was a suspicious little boy, so he thought it might be a good idea to rub the nose of his favorite teddy bear for luck, as he was scared.

“Oh boy . . . now that is one mean dare, Jordan,” stated James, wondering whether it may have been best if he stayed within the safety and warmth of the tent.

“Come on, James, I can’t imagine anything awful happening to us if we stick together,” remarked Thomas, trying to sound brave. “And if we put on enough socks, we won’t have cold feet . . . will we?” His witticism brought out further fits of laughter, resulting in them quickly burying their heads in the blankets and sleeping bags for fear of their parents hearing them.

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