You're It

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. LAKE FRONT - DAY

A beautiful spot in the middle of nowhere. The nearest neighbors clear across the bay.

An aluminum run-around boat bobs gently at water's edge, moored to a small jetty. It rocks from side to side with a metallic and repetitive clunk in the wind.

At the end of the jetty a small boat house leads to a sloping front lawn, and a winding pathway leads to an impressive looking house.

In the front yard a big old tire swing sways to and fro in the breeze.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE

The house is two-story timber clad, nestled amongst giant redwoods with a perfect view of the lake.

Bicycles and other toys scattered up the path lead the way to a double-fronted solid oak door.

Beyond it the sound of children's squeals and laughter.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

JEREMY, 12, handsome pin-up boy looks, runs through the house, takes the stairs to the second story landing.

JEREMY Ready or not, here I come!

He tears down the hallway, makes a beeline for a

BEDROOM

COLIN, 8, shy, small for his age, lies wedged up against the wall under the bed. He lies rigid in a frozen pose.

Jeremy scans the room, places his index finger to his chin.

JEREMY Hmm, I wonder where Colin could be?

Under the bed, Colin stifles a giggle.

Jeremy pounces on the floor, drags Colin out by the ankles, pulls him to his feet, looks him in the eye.

JEREMY Jeez, Col. I've told you before. Hiding under the bed is amateur hour, kid's stuff. I mean, c'mon... It's second only to putting a blanket over your head and thinking I can't see you.

Both kids race out of the room, squealing as they go. Down the stairs and back into the

LOUNGE ROOM

JEREMY Okay, now get ready to watch the master at work. Because... (game-show host voice) Nowwww, you're it!

Jeremy tickles Colin, ties a blind-fold over his eyes, positions him so he faces the wall. He spins him around a few times. Colin's getting dizzy, he wobbles.

> COLIN Why're you doing that?

JEREMY Kid, you should always add another stratagem to your repertoire. Keeps the enemy off-guard.

Colin's getting dizzier -

COLIN But I'm not the enemy, and besides that's against the rules.

- dizzier by the minute. Jeremy turns him around twice more for good measure, clearly enjoying it.

COLIN You're not playing fair. I'm gonna' tell. Mom... !

JEREMY No. Don't bother Mom.

COLIN

Why?

JEREMY Cause I said so, that's why.

KITCHEN

MOM, 40, sings along to a love ballad on the radio. She's not looking her best, her eyes are red ringed, hair greasy and she stares off into space with a far away look.

On the table a cigarette burns in a dirty stuffed-full ashtray, along with a half empty bottle of vodka and a Bakelite rotary phone. Mom looks longingly at it as though willing it to ring.

LOUNGE ROOM

Jeremy grabs Colin by the shoulders, steadies him.

JEREMY It's not about playing fair. You know what Dad says, you gotta be a man. You're acting like a little whiny kid -

Mom's voice from the kitchen.

MOM (0.S.) (snapping) Boys. Play nice please or when your father gets home, I swear...

COLIN

- But I am a little kid.

JEREMY See, you're acting like a little whiny pussy now. (to Mom) Yes, Mom!

COLIN

(pouts) Am not. Am not.

JEREMY

Are too. When Dad comes home we're having a special Hide And Seek tournament. It's gonna be at night time. We're going to turn all the lights out and everything. (MORE) JEREMY (CONT'D) After that Dad said if I get really good we can play the game outside. Imagine all the places you could hide out there in the dark.

Jeremy pulls the blindfold away from Colin's eyes just in time to see Colin's mouth gape open, his eyes bug. Jeremy pulls the blindfold back down over his eyes again.

JEREMY

You've gotta wait till you're bigger, or till you get better at the game. Anyway, it'd be too scary for you.

Colin shakes his head.

COLIN I'm not scared.

JEREMY

Well, we'll see, won't we. Meantime I'm going to teach you how to play properly. Now, start counting. And no cheating.

COLIN One... two... three, four...

Jeremy slips his shoes off, pads silently away from Colin in his socked feet, takes the stairs two at a time. Colin's counting speeds up.

COLIN Five, six, seven...

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS:

- A laundry hamper labelled HALLOWEEN COSTUMES. In the top a garish green monster mask, ghoul's eyes, purple mouth, warts. The mask suddenly moves. A hand appears, ta-da, whips it off, reveals Jeremy. Colin screams, stumbles backwards.

- Colin roams around the dining room, looking under chairs, pulling out cushions, jumping on the sofa. Bored, he peers under the dining table. Sees nothing.

- Jeremy jumps out from beneath that same dining table - tada! Colin squeals with shock, falls on his butt.

- Jeremy pulls chairs out from the dining table demonstrates lying ramrod straight along a row of chairs, concealed by an overhanging table cloth.

- A wardrobe, hanging suits, trousers, and dresses. Colin stands in front of it very still. He reaches his hand forward, his eyes go wide, sweeps his hand along the jangling wire hangers, reaches in back. Nothing. A sigh of relief.

About to close the wardrobe door when -

- A rustle from the top shelf, hat boxes topple onto Colin's head - Jeremy leaps down onto the floor a huge grin on his face. Colin screams. Both boys fall about with laughter.

- Something catches Jeremy's eye, photographs have spilled out of one of the boxes - eight by tens, black and white.

He picks one up, examines it, drops it like a hot cake. His father and a beautiful blonde, both naked in bed, startled 'caught in the act' expressions on their faces.

COLIN

What is that?

JEREMY

Nothing.

Jeremy stuffs the photos back in the box, hoists it back onto the high shelf, hustles Colin out of the room.

> JEREMY The secret is also not to breathe.

COLIN What? That's just stupid.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dark, only the light from the moon. Jeremy and Colin lie in bunk beds. Colin's drifting off to sleep, his eyelids flutter, close. Jeremy switches the bedside lamp on.

> JEREMY You know, if you want we could explore all the outside hiding places before Dad gets home, that way you might just qualify to play.

Colin's eyes pop open.

JEREMY What do you say?

COLIN

Okay.

Great. No time like the present.

Jeremy yanks the covers off Colin, shoves a flashlight in his hand, puts another in his own waistband. Colin reaches for his clothes.

JEREMY Just your shoes will do.

HALLWAY

In their pyjamas, the boys creep along to the top of the

STAIRS

Look down. The light's on in the kitchen. Elsewhere in the house, darkness. Mom can be heard on the phone, voice raised.

MOM (O.S.) I loved you, you bastard! But you had to go and wreck everything, didn't you... (sound of a glass as it smashes into the wall) When are you coming home?

Her voice builds in intensity, gets more shrill. In the

KITCHEN

Mom's even more of a mess than before. Vodka bottle's been drained, shattered glass all over the floor. Bare foot she steps on a shard of glass. Blood drips onto the lino'.

MOM What do you mean I'll wake the boys. It's you that is irresponsible here... You, who left me on my own!

The phone cord snakes over the table lip drops to the floor circles the perimeter of the room. We follow its trail to see it's been cut. Yet Mom sits with the receiver to her ear, screaming into the mouth-piece.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

The boys move quickly past the kitchen door.

COLIN What's wrong with her?

JEREMY Nothing. Grown up stuff.

Jeremy grabs Colin's hand, they creep out the front door. Despite best efforts the heavy doors close with a thunk.

EXT. LAKE FRONT - NIGHT

Wind whistles through tall reeds and bulrushes surrounding the perimeter of the lake. Alive with the sounds of the night, crickets, frogs. A waxing moon casts light over the lake, creating ripples over the water, silver, perfect.

Jeremy slinks around in the dark on the front lawn.

JEREMY (whispers) Colin, where are you?

He waves his flashlight around frantically.

JEREMY Stop hiding, come out. I'm not playing. Get out here, now.

Colin appears behind the boat shed, tears roll down his cheeks.

JEREMY What's the matter?

He gestures to an area behind him with one finger, his bottom lip wobbles, he beckons Jeremy to follow.

REAR OF BOAT SHED

A black Buick Classic car is parked.

COLIN

Look...

JEREMY

Dad's car...

Colin puts his face up to the driver's side window, presses the hub of his flashlight against the glass.

JEREMY Can't see in like that, silly.

Jeremy tries the door. It opens with a squeak.

On the front seat, a briefcase, papers spill out of it. A suit jacket, cut to shreds and flecked with blood lies across the backseat, along with travelling salesmen paraphernalia - torn and ripped fabric swatches, a shattered cell phone.

COLIN Dad's home already?

JEREMY Yeah. Maybe. You stay here, I'm gonna' have a look inside the shed.

BOAT SHED

Fishing equipment - poles and nets, wet weather gear, tools. An old canoe hangs on the back wall. Rusted fishing knives lie on a counter top, congealed goop sticking to the blades. Jeremy holds a hand up to his nose, grimaces.

His nose leads him to a tarp on the floor, he rips one corner up, reveals a big brown stain. Quickly covers it up again.

He shines the flashlight over the back wall - dark red spatter speckles the walls, dirty streaks where someone's tried to clean the stains off.

Colin creeps up behind him, taps him on the back. Jeremy jumps, reels around.

JEREMY Shit! You scared me half to death.

Brings his flashlight back down to his side.

Colin looks at him disapprovingly.

COLIN

Don't swear.

JEREMY Colin, go back to the house -

COLIN Why? I don't want to. This is fun.

JEREMY Colin, go back to the house. Now. Mom appears out of the shadows.

JEREMY

Colin, hide!

COLIN

Why?

MOM Hello, my darlings...

Colin looks from Mom to Jeremy and back again, doesn't understand what's going on. Suddenly it gels that something's not quite right. He scoots out the door, runs.

Mom has a sinister smile on her face, not at all like Mom.

MOM It's okay, I can find him later. Easy. But you, you're the chip off the ol' block. Whip smart, clever, not to mention blessed with devastating good looks.

INTERCUT: MOM AND JEREMY WITH COLIN

Colin heads for the house, the light from kitchen window winks in the near distance. The sanctuary of the wide open front door so close.

MOM You're going to be a real heartbreaker, just like your dear ol' dad.

Mom takes a few steps forward. Jeremy backs up against the shed door. A quick duck and weave and he's outside and clambering up the slope. Mom follows at a leisurely pace.

MOM (calling after him) There's also the simple fact that -

Jeremy falls over, trembles with fear. He looks back at Mom.

JEREMY I won't tell, Ma. Promise.

MOM - At some point I always knew you'd cotton on, give the game away. You're a stickler for the rules. JEREMY I won't tell, Ma. Honest.

MOM What won't you tell? (angry) Ha, you don't even know what it is you're supposed to be keeping a secret about do you? And you swear now, but I'm on to you. All men are the same. They say they're loyal, they make promises, they take vows, but they never keep them -

JEREMY No, Ma, really. I won't tell a soul. I promise.

MOM

I tried to play fair with your father but he decided to make up things up as he went along. So I did a little hide and seek of my own. You just can't go breaking rules higgledy-piggledy. Grounds for disqualification that.

An even more unhinged look flashes across Mom's face - this is not his mom, this is someone else, someone he's only ever seen in his nightmares.

Mom snaps out of her reverie.

Colin stops suddenly, in front of him the front door to the house stands wide open, welcoming.

Jeremy's words echo back to him.

JEREMY (V.O.) Imagine all the places you could hide in the dark... don't be a whiny pussy...

Colin looks around, spots the tire swing.

MOM I managed to catch your father with the element of surprise. Always an underrated tactic. Anyway...

She sighs, a casual wave of her hand as if it's all inconsequential, no matter.

MOM Did you find him? I know you spotted his car. Do you want me to give you a clue?

She nods her head in the direction of the lake.

MOM Funny isn't it? Sometimes you just don't see things even when they're staring you right in the face. Go on...

Colin climbs inside the tire swing, coils his body to the shape of it. Holds his breath, stays very still.

Jeremy walks down the slope to the water's edge. Mom follows.

JEREMY What did you do, Mom?

At the end of the pier the little runaround lists to one side. The wind has picked up.

MOM

In you go then. Think it's best.

Jeremy wades into the water up to his knees, then further in till it's up to his neck. He shivers, treads water.

A nervous glance inside the boat hull. Burlap sacks, four of them tied with string. Liquid seeps from their undersides, a rusty pink color that settles around the drain plug.

> MOM What's behind door number one?

Jeremy looks panicked.

MOM Go on, open one...

JEREMY

No.

MOM Oh, c'mon, think of it as just another game. I know! It's a luckydip.

JEREMY No. I'm getting out. Jeremy swims around to one side of the boat, pyjama pants dragging him down.

MOM Not before I say so, you're not.

His foot snags on something - a chain, attached to a heavy duty plastic bag under the water.

A hard metallic object weighs the bag down just below water level. The answer to the incessant clunking sound.

Jeremy dares to look down at it, peers closer...

MOM

That's it. Have a look.

He reaches in, cradles the bag under one arm. It's heavy, he lifts it to the surface. Mom waves the flashlight over it.

Lifeless eyes stare up at him through plastic, tufts of hair move with the swell of water inside the bag. Jeremy gasps, recoils. His father's severed head floats inside the bag.

He screams, hurls it back into the water, pushes himself away from the boat, climbs up on the jetty platform. He runs, stumbles, but Mom catches him as he falls onto the shoreline.

> MOM Here's what I'm going to do. You get a head start. No pun intended. And, a nice little handicap, on me. What do you say to a count of onehundred?

Jeremy crab-crawls up the lawn, away from his mother.

Mom keeps her eyes trained on him, she laughs, turns, faces away from him, ties a blindfold around her eyes.

MOM Oh c'mon kiddo. Fair play. It's your turn, now. You're it!

Jeremy screams, gets to his feet. He runs, fast as his feet can carry him toward the house.

MOM (O.S.) One... Two... Three...

FADE OUT.