

Goosebumps SLAPPY WORLD

NIGHT OF THE SQUAWKER

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“Is that a snake?”

I hiccupped and jumped back. The sticks and twigs I was carrying fell from my hands.

Denzel laughed. “It’s not a snake, Coop. It’s a weed.”

I squinted down at it. “Well, why does it look so much like a snake?” I demanded.

“Maybe it’s a snakeweed,” my friend replied.

“You’re making that up,” I muttered. He’s always making things up.

Denzel snickered. “I won’t tell anyone that Cooper Klavan is afraid of weeds.”

I gave him a shove. “I’m not afraid of weeds. I’m afraid of snakes.”

He laughed again. “And weeds that look like snakes.”

“I’m afraid of big bugs, too,” I said. “Bugs that make a loud buzzing sound in your ear.”

Denzel made an annoying buzzing sound in my ear. Sometimes he isn’t as funny as he thinks he is. He shifted the firewood in his arms. “How much wood do we need?”

“Enough for a very big fire,” I said.

I bent down and started to pick up the sticks and twigs I’d dropped.

"We should have brought a wheelbarrow or something," Denzel said. "We can't carry enough wood to keep a fire going all night."

The sun was already lowering behind the trees. Long purple shadows stretched over the ground. A cool breeze made the leaves shiver.

"We'll make a bunch of trips," I said. "We can't let the fire go out."

I picked up a stubby log and added it to the pile of wood in my arms. "Hey—" I cried out when I heard a sound nearby. Soft thuds in the dirt.

Denzel heard it, too. He squinted into the shadows of the trees, holding his breath. We both froze for a few seconds.

"What was that?" I whispered.

Denzel shrugged. "Maybe a raccoon."

I waited for my heart to stop pounding in my chest. "Whatever it was, it stopped," I said. "Let's go to the camp and get the fire started. Then we can come back for more firewood."

"Sounds like a plan," Denzel said. He pointed. "Hey, Coop—there are ants crawling around on that log. You're not afraid of ants, are you?"

"No," I said. "Not unless they start to buzz in my ears."

Denzel groaned. "We're going to need a lot more firewood."

I frowned at him. "Tell me something I *don't* know. The fire has to be big and really tall."

"And we can't let it go out, right?" Denzel said.

"We can't let it go out," I replied. "It's our only chance of keeping the zombies away."