



The Troop

By Nick Cutter

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WINNER OF THE JAMES HERBERT AWARD FOR HORROR WRITING

“*The Troop* scared the hell out of me, and I couldn’t put it down. This is old-school horror at its best.” —Stephen King

Once a year, Scoutmaster Tim Riggs leads a troop of boys into the Canadian wilderness for a weekend camping trip—a tradition as comforting and reliable as a good ghost story around a roaring bonfire. But when an unexpected intruder stumbles upon their campsite—shockingly thin, disturbingly pale, and voraciously hungry—Tim and the boys are exposed to something far more frightening than any tale of terror. The human carrier of a bioengineered nightmare. A horror that spreads faster than fear. A harrowing struggle for survival with no escape from the elements, the infected...or each other. Part *Lord of the Flies*, part *28 Days Later*—and all-consuming—this tightly written edge-of-your-seat thriller takes you deep into the heart of darkness, where fear feeds on sanity...and terror hungers for more.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*The Troop* scared the hell out of me, and I couldn't put it down. This is old-school horror at its best."
(Stephen King)

"Lean and crisp and over-the-top....Disquieting, disturbing." (SCOTT SMITH, New York Times bestselling author)

"Nick Cutter brings a bone-chilling spin to a classic horror scenario in *The Troop*. It's *Lord of the Flies* meets *Night of the Creeps*, and I enjoyed it immensely." (Mira Grant, New York Times bestselling author)

"A grim microcosm of terror and desperation...haunting." (Christopher Golden, New York Times bestselling author)

"Nick Cutter pulls out all the stops in *The Troop*. This is a brilliant and deeply disturbing novel that you absolutely cannot put down. Highly recommended." (JONATHAN MABERRY, New York Times bestselling author)

About the Author

Nick Cutter is a pseudonym for an acclaimed author of novels and short stories. He lives in Toronto, Canada.

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The Troop



1

EAT EAT EAT EAT

The boat skipped over the waves, the drone of its motor trailing across the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The moon was a bone fishhook in the clear October sky.

The man was wet from the spray that kicked over the gunwale. The outline of his body was visible under his drenched clothes. He easily could have been mistaken for a scarecrow left carelessly unattended in a farmer's field, stuffing torn out by scavenging animals.

He'd stolen the boat from a dock at North Point, at the farthest tip of Prince Edward Island, reaching the dock in a truck he'd hotwired in a diner parking lot.

Christ, he was hungry. He'd eaten so much at that roadside diner that he'd ruptured his stomach lining—the contents of his guts were right now leaking through the split tissue, into the crevices between his organs. He wasn't aware of that fact, though, and wouldn't care much anyway in his current state. It'd felt so good to fill the empty space inside of him . . . but it was like dumping dirt down a bottomless hole: you could throw shovelful after shovelful, yet it made not the slightest difference.

Fifty miles back, he'd stopped at the side of the road, having spotted a raccoon carcass in the ditch. Torn open, spine gleaming through its fur. It had taken great effort to not jam the transmission collar into park, go crawling into the ditch, and . . .

He hadn't done that. He was still human, after all.

The hunger pangs would stop, he assured himself. His stomach could only hold so much—wasn't that, like, a scientific fact? But this was unlike anything he'd ever known.

Images zipped through his head, slideshow style: his favorite foods lovingly presented, glistening and overplumped and too perfect, ripped from the glossy pages of *Bon Appétit*—a leering parody of food, freakishly sexual, hyperstylized, and lewd.

He saw cherries spilling from a wedge of flaky pie, each one nursed to a giddy plumpness, looking like a mess of avulsed bloodshot eyeballs dolloped with a towering cone of whipped cream . . .

Flash.

A porterhouse thick as a dictionary, shank bone winking from fat-marbled meat charred to crackly doneness, a pat of herbed butter melting otop; the meat almost sighs as the knife hacks through it, cooked flesh parting with the deference of smoothly oiled doors . . .

Flash.

Flash.

Flash.

What wouldn't he eat now? He yearned for that raccoon. If it were here now, he'd rip the hardened rags of sinew off its tattered fur; he'd crush its skull and sift through the splinters for its brain, which would be as delicious as the nut-meat of a walnut.

Why hadn't he just eaten the fucking thing?

Would they come for him? He figured so. He was their failure—a human blooper reel—but also the keeper of their secret. And he was so, so toxic. At least, that's what he overheard them say.

He didn't wish to hurt anyone. The possibility that he may already have done so left him heartsick. What was it that Edgerton had said?

If this gets out, it'll make Typhoid Mary look like Mary Poppins.

He was not an evil man. He'd simply been trapped and had done what any man in his position might do: he'd run. And they were coming for him. Would they try to capture him, return him to Edgerton? He wondered if they'd dare do that now.

He wasn't going back. He'd hide and stay hidden.

He doubled over, nearly spilling over the side, hunger pangs gnawing into his gut. He blinked stinging tears

out of his eyes and saw a dot of light dancing on the horizon.

An island? A fire?

Users Review

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Maria Lamotte:

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Amy Smith:

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