

The Stars And The Moon

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The Stars And The Moon

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Summary

Life Lesson Number One- Never go hiking in the middle of the night

Life Lesson Number Two- If you do, take your partner, so at least you can die together.

Notes

DISCLAIMER- I do not own Bon Jovi. I do not personally know the members. These events did not happen in real life and I am not making any profit from these works. These have been written for pure entertainment only.

The flashlight flickered. The gleam of bright, reassuring light went dark, bathing them in total, complete darkness, before it reappeared, allowing them to see the trail ahead yet again.

Richie frowned. To be honest, he hadn't expected this to take so long. Google maps had lied. What had promised to be a brief, maybe twenty minutes walk was slowly ticking away to forty minutes, and they probably weren't any closer to the spot than they'd been previously, trekking through logs and damp leaves, tripping and face-planting more than once when a foot would be caught up a previously unseen rock that stuck out from the dirt like a hand. They were both dirty, and smelt gross, and Richie was sure there was something in his hair, but whenever he checked, the search would turn up to have been in vain. Shining the light, squinting his eyes to see better, Richie let out a sigh. "Maybe we should turn back." He spoke, suddenly and clearly in the eerie silence. They could've gone ahead of time, gotten to the spot before the sun had set, but there was no time for regrets. "We might be lost." Richie added, sheepishly, with growing discomfort beginning to ride up in his chest. It was in the middle of night, and they were *lost*.

Having been lagging behind, Jon appeared, and gazed at Richie intently. One upon a time, those eyes had startled Richie, with the seemingly supernatural power they had, being able to pierce through whoever or whatever they looked into. Now, that brightness had dimmed, mellowed, leaving Richie in a calm sea of blue, quiet and gentle. "I'm sure we're not *that* far away." Jon replied, as he hitched up the backpack that he'd offered to carry. He took out his phone, and poked at it for a little while, looking dubiously at the phone, like it was a confusing stranger. "I saved the map, and we should only be a few minutes from there. Five, maybe six." Jon tucked the phone back into a pocket inside the inner part of the jacket he was wearing, and offered his hand.

Richie could remember when they were younger, and when Jon hated to do these things, begrudgingly going along, only agreeing because Richie had wanted to do so and because somebody else had probably cajoled him into doing it. Now, not quite old but far from young, or, at least, that's what Richie had been telling himself, there were times when Jon seemed more excited for these little trips than Richie was, in spite of the fact that he was the one to always bring it up.

The flashlight flickered, and Richie smacked it.

"You sure?" Richie asked. It could be five minutes, could be six, could be until daylight, when they'd stumble upon the promised destination and stare at it because what was the point? By then, there'd be no more stars, and that was the reason they were going, anyways, because of the stars, pulled in by the fact that many people had left 'reviews' saying that it was a nice spot to see the stars and well, Richie couldn't ignore *that* opportunity. Jon nodded, "Sure, why not?"

Richie took the offered hand. Why not? They only had so many years left before hiking in the middle of the night became beyond them, when a lot of things would be beyond them. Richie wondered briefly how the idea of not being able to perform, or, rather, jump around like he was twenty again, in front of a crowd of thousands while singing his heart out anymore

would affect Jon, but pushed the thought away. Plenty of singers that were older than Jon, older than Richie, David, Tico, all of them, were still going strong.

They started walking again. Richie felt that curious little itch on His scalp again, and stopped, running his hand through his hair, again, in an attempt to find the culprit, but finding none. Jon crossed his arms and regarded Richie closely. "You think it's a bug?"

Richie nearly laughed, except bugs were terrifying, and the idea of one being on him, much less *in his hair*, made him feel faint. "Probably something else. We've fallen into alot of stuff, could be anything." That was a an understatement, but what was the harm in a little white lie?

Jon shrugged. They rejoined hands again and started walking, the flashlight bouncing around, going from the ground to the bushes, then back again. Low, overhanging trees dangled their branches and their leaves in faces, forcing them to duck, emerging with even more leaves caught in their hair. Jon gave Richie a sympathetic look and reached up to pull a couple out, dragging his fingers through Richie's hair in a gesture that felt nice, and comforting, relieving some of the worry. And then his fingers stilled, and he pulled his hand back so that it was between Richie and him...and holding a *spider*.

Richie shrieked. That's what Jon said, anyways, but Richie would hold strong and insist it was nothing more than a surprised yell, and that was only because there was a spider that looked suspiciously like a black widow *very* close to both of them. Did black widows live in New Jersey? Had the world gone mad? Richie didn't know, only wanted to get away as fast as humanly possible, which meant that he stumbled back far enough so that his back hit one of the trees that lined the edges of the trail.

Jon stared at it. "Huh." He said, sounding both interested and unimpressed, lifting it so that he could inspect its legs, which were dancing around wildly. Richie couldn't see it all that well, but he was *sure* there had been a red mark somewhere on that thing, and wanted Jon to get rid of it. "Jon, you're going to get bit! Kill it!" He yelled, very aware that if anybody was camping nearby, that unfortunate soul would get an earful of one very panicked rock star. Jon smiled. "Oh, c'mon, it's probably harmless. And Black Widows aren't even all that common around here, Rich. Even if they were, this one is all black." Jon sounded way too calm. And how'd he know what Richie was thinking, anyways?

Without so much as a blink, Jon proceeded tossed it.

Richie blinked as it disappeared just as quickly as Jon had found it, probably landing somewhere, planning its revenge. "Why didn't you kill it?" He asked, looking back at Jon, who was wiping his hands on His dirtied jeans.

"Again, it was harmless." Jon replied. He didn't seem nearly as bothered as Richie was, so Richie dropped it.

If that thing had bit him, though, Jon wouldn't hear the end of it.

They should've turned back.

Richie felt Jon push closer to him, maybe seeking warmth in the sudden chill, maybe because just a minute ago, they'd heard a laugh that *didn't sound human*.

They were going to die. No doubt about it.

Richie shined the light, peering through the trees and bushes, at the trail both ahead and behind, now beginning to be a distinct feeling that they weren't alone. This was, by far, the dumbest thing they'd ever done and they'd done a lot of dumb things. They would die, and nobody would find the bodies. Richie could see the headlines -

Bon Jovi frontman, Jon Bon Jovi, and former guitarist, Richie Sambora, disappear. Intentional, or is there something else at play?

"I'm sure it was nothing." Richie said with much more confidence than he felt. He squeezed Jon's hand reassuringly, and motioned to behind them. "Let's just head back." There was no reply, and Richie looked back from the trail to Jon. Only to see that he was, quite clearly, staring at something, and so Richie looked, too, only to find himself looking at a man's figure, a vague shadow in the distance, holding something in his hand.

Oh, God.

Richie's first instinct was to grab Jon and run. He'd imagined themselves in this scenario once or twice before, in times of boredom, and that's what always happened. But now, he found himself stuck to the spot, frozen in place by fear. Jon seemed to be in the same position, his back straight and eyes never wavering.

The Man stepped forward, and Richie wanted to run, but he couldn't because it felt like a bucket of ice water had been poured onto him. They needed to run, but both felt like they were glued to the very spot, fear controlling every movement, fight or flight seeming to have disappeared, replaced by 'stay'.

Richie found it within himself to take a step back, pulling Jon with him, but that's all that he could muster. Jon had a weapon on him, a Swiss army knife, tucked into his pocket, but Richie wasn't sure if he could get away with grabbing it, and Jon didn't seem to remember that it was there, or was going through the same dilemma that Richie was.

"Hello?" A voice called out, and Richie could practically feel Jon's confusion. Or that was his.

"Are you guys okay? It's not a good time to be hiking, you know. Too many things on the ground, you're gonna fall more times than you can count." The Man continued, and Jon turned his head, minutely, toward Richie's, pitching his voice into a low whisper. "Do you want me to grab the knife?" He asked. Richie shook his head. *Not yet.*

The Man stepped forward again, possibly to make sure they weren't statues, and Richie hurried to stop him. "Ah- no. Wait, we *are* okay, just...lost."

There was a few tense seconds of silence, where every heartbeat seemed like the beat of a drum, and then- "Where were you guys headed?"

Richie struggled with whether or not to tell him. His mind went to the knife, and then Jon's phone, and the fact that if it just this one guy, they maybe could take him if it turned into a fight. But then again, it might not just be one guy, and also that neither Richie nor Jon were fighters. *We don't even know if this guy wants to kill us or not.* Richie thought. Jon had one of his hands on his hip, close to where the knife was, and Richie made his decision. *Please let it be the right one.*

"That place." Oh, that was very helpful. "The clearing. The place, it's supposed to be like ten, fifteen minutes away from the parking lot." When this was all over, Richie was going to leave a review of his own. Then again, it'd been their decision to come to a very popular camping spot neither of them were familiar with so late at night. "You know, the star place." Richie cringed at himself. Maybe Jon should take over the talking aspect of this whole mess.

The Man tilted his head. It occurred to Richie that they still couldn't see his face, and with that, he directed the flashlight towards the mystery man.

And saw a kindly, slight old man who'd seemed much bigger in the darkness, dressed in overalls and sounding much younger than his face suggested. It was like a reverse Rick Astley.

"I know that place. I used to go with my wife, Edith. Absolutely gorgeous..and the clearing isn't so bad itself."

Jon seemed to steel his nerve. "Is it very far?" He asked. The Man turned to Jon, startled, understandably. His face contorted into an expression of disbelief as he looked at each of them in surprise, realizing then who they were. Richie hoped he wouldn't mention it, that he'd just direct them on their way, and judging by Jon's expression, he hoped the same. The Man caught on, seemingly, because he only coughed and pointed to their right, at another trail that branched off the main one. "Go that way. It'll be there, only a minute's walk. The map lied to you, I'm sorry to say."

Jon seemed to deflate from the tense stance he'd taken on, and Richie smiled.

After thanking the man, Richie and Jon had gone on their way, looking over their shoulder, worried but not nearly as much as before. They headed down a small slope, tired, exhausted, more like, remaining Richie of performing and feeling like his arms were about to fall off, but in the end, to both scenarios, so real, one past and one present, it was worth it.

Having taken the backpack, Richie was too distracted on trying to find a more comfortable way to carry it to realize that they'd arrive until Jon said, "Oh, wow."

Richie looked up. They were standing in the middle of a clearing, and above, stars, bright and twinkling and seeming to be so close that Richie could just reach up and touch them. There was so many, yet spaced out evenly, painting the sky like little dots in in the wide expanse of black.

Jon rested his head atop Richie's shoulder, his hair tickling Richie's neck, their hands still clutched tight.

"Are you glad we kept going?" Jon asked.

Richie grinned. He pressed a kiss to Jon's forehead, "Definitely."

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