



Title: SLEEPAWAY

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Locale: Pocono Mountains, PA

Genre: Horror

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Logline: A troubled teenage boy, attending a special camp to turn his life around, discovers the staff is out to kill all the campers.

Comments Summary: SLEEPAWAY has well developed characters, however more suspense and excitement will make this horror really stand out.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Work
Premise		X		
Storyline		X		
Characterization	X			
Dialogue		X		
Structure		X		
Writing		X		
Originality		X		

Recommendation: ☐ Recommend ☒ Consider ☐ Pass

SYNOPSIS/STORY:

SLEEPAWAY opens with reveille, waking up campers at an undisclosed camp site. A BLOODCURDLING SCREAM. A male camper runs away and approaches a road sign, SMACKING into it. The sign reads: WELCOME TO CAMP HOPE! A hooded SHADOWY FIGURE jumps him and HACKS away at the camper's chest with an AXE.

One year later, the story moves to a different camp in the Poconos Mountains in Pennsylvania. TROY JACOBS, 17, is dropped off at Camp Shangri-La by his estranged parents.

The group of 25 campers meets at the campfire site. Troy is accompanied by JESS COLLINS, 17. Happy-go-lucky counselor DEREK, 23, introduces Camp Director BOB, 50s, a tall man. Bob preaches to the campers about being brought to this place because of bad or awkward behavior. Derek caps off the evening with a scary story about a male camper torturing and killing animals, and vanishing into thin air.

Troy opens up in a group therapy session with Derek. Troy feels like his parents wish he was someone else and wants to regain their trust. Bob reassures Troy and encourages him to write a letter to his parents. Troy writes a letter and drops the envelope into the outgoing mailbox.

At the mess hall, Troy, Jess, Clark and VERONICA see Derek about some missing female campers. Derek assures them that Bob and counselor HOLT are looking for them and a call was placed with the police. Derek adds that the police can't do anything until 24 hours pass. Derek puts the word out to all the campers to look for the missing camp girls.

Troy and Jess return to Cabin Row to discover a bloody massacre. Troy and Jess see a hooded figure setting some campers on fire. Clark arrives and attacks the hooded figure. Clark stabs him with a hot poker. Clark removes the figure's hood. It's Holt! Clark informs Troy and Jess that three female campers are dead. Suddenly, Counselors Derek, JADE and BLAIRE chase other campers with a shotgun, axe and a crossbow.

Troy heads Bob's cabin to find a phone. Instead, Troy discovers the letter he wrote to his parents that was never sent.

Troy and Jess find themselves by the lake battling Derek. Jess' hair gets caught in a boat's propeller and she drowns. Troy, going to save her, gets bopped on the head and passes out.

The parents show up. Troy survives his bout with his father and Derek. Troy then becomes the lone survivor and leaves on his own.

COMMENTS:

SLEEPAWAY opens with a great teaser setting a dangerous, creepy slasher-like tone. Derek taking away Troy's cell phone and other campers' cell phones is a fantastic horror device. Derek's sharing of the scary Adam story helps to establish the tone.

Troy noticing how some parents are really going to miss their child is a wonderful detail. The parents showing up at the end thinking they're going to see their children packed nicely in caskets is a sweet, morbid touch. These evil parents are denied that privilege.

The main characters are very strong. Troy is a low-key likable character who really misses his little brother. The one special item he places by his bedside is a figurine his brother, ELI, made for him. Jess and Clark are good like-minded pals that gravitate to Troy.

The counselors are developed well. Blaire and Jade don't want any part of their girls's problems. Blaire makes risky advances on a young Clark that would be bad judgement in the real world. Blaire has no concern of being fired.

The dialogue is right on with the teenagers. Each camper has their own distinct voice. The banter is fun when Troy and Clark confront Eddie. The deep conversations Troy has with Jess and Clark bring humanity to these characters, making them three dimensional. Troy's song is a nice touch.

There are some great visual deaths that take place. Jason dying by arrows on the archery board is awesome. The fireworks explosion is also very good.

The pacing is very good. However, the pacing slows at the point there's a montage. Montages are fine if they have something to add such as a feeling or information. The only piece of information that may be important here is Blaire coming onto Clark. Montages should be more like bullet points. Less is definitely more here.

Once the story is established in the different camp, a camper's life isn't taken until the middle. Perhaps a camper could go missing a bit earlier to create more mystery and suspense.

Flashbacks should not have to be explained. Simply placing slug lines like BEGIN FLASHBACK and/or END FLASHBACK should be enough description. It is done later in the story.

On page 71, Clark's eyes dart around, etc. These few sentences are a bit awkward of Clark finding the 'impulse' tattoo. Some re-wording and clarity would benefit this section. You don't want to cause a reader to re-read or lose focus.

Troy searches for a phone at Bob's cabin. One of these campers may think of looking for where the staff keeps all 25 cell phones. It could be a simple throwaway line.

The knowledge of Jess' fear of swimming makes her death more understandable. It doesn't help her overcome anything. She predictably fails in the lake. As a suggestion perhaps Troy does help Jess survive, but it appears he gets knocked unconscious. Troy makes it through and both Troy and Jess may show up together to confront the parents. They then run away together. Another suggestion is to save Aiden as he reminds Troy of his brother.

None of the characters have a chance to survive attempting to use any of their experience or skills. Clark might have been able to use himself as bait to lure Blaire. This is just another suggestion if a few more campers would either survive or last longer. Maybe the campers use something they learn while staying at the camp. For example: a camper gets good at throwing knives or archery.

Is it on purpose that Troy doesn't get complete revenge and go after Bob and Blaire? Is this to leave room for a sequel? The feeling in the end is kind of a downer. Troy survives by killing Derek and his parents, but is left to face the world alone. It's another choice, but the ending could be more of a triumph. Jess was very likable. Readers and potential viewers will be rooting for characters they relate to. Troy and Jess could kill the remaining staff and face the world together.

FINAL STATEMENT:

There is a good foundation to build on. Horror is such a popular genre. This is why deaths should be as unique as possible. More thrilling deaths like the archery board and the fireworks will raise the bar, making this story stand out and be more memorable. Feeling like a slasher film, events need to start happening sooner. That could simply be more mystery, suspense, a missing camper. The ending could use a bit more magic. Troy is a caring, young man who made a horrible mistake in life. He's trying to do the right thing. He could have something more uplifting or triumphant. If Troy is a character people are rooting for, he could have a bigger, more hopeful or triumphant ending. The characters are the reason this story is to be considered. Take SLEEPAWAY to another level!