



Blair Witch: The Secret Confession of Rustin Parr

By D.A. Stern

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IN MAY 1941, A HERMIT NAMED RUSTIN PARR TOLD POLICE HE MURDERED SEVEN CHILDREN IN BURKITTSVILLE, MARYLAND. BUT THE NIGHT BEFORE HE WAS HANGED, PARR TOLD HIS PRIEST AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT STORY.

NOW -- NEARLY SIXTY YEARS LATER -- THE DETAILS OF RUSTIN PARR'S FINAL CONFESSION CAN BE REVEALED.

It was the most shocking crime imaginable: the kidnapping and brutal murder of seven innocent children. The particulars of Rustin Parr's crime made the case even more horrifying: the ritual nature of the killings, the strange symbols carved into the children's bodies, Parr's revelation that voices in his head told him to commit his foul deeds. Some whispered that Parr's crime was just the latest in a series of murders attributed to Maryland's infamous Blair Witch. But when Parr went to the gallows, all agreed that justice had been served; evil had been put to rest. All, that is, but one man.

Dominick Cazale was the priest who heard Parr's confession. He heard Rustin, a man who before the killings was generally acknowledged as the gentlest of souls, talk about the bodies found in his basement, and about Kyle Brody, the eleven-year-old sole "survivor" of the killings. What Parr told Cazale that night was a shockingly different account of what happened to those seven children. Yet the words that passed between the two men remained a mystery..until now.

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Editorial Review

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Chapter Eleven

It didn't take me more than ten minutes to know I was in trouble.

As I said before, I'm a city boy. Set me down at nine in the morning in Miami or Baltimore -- or any big metropolis, for that matter -- and by lunchtime I'll not only have found the best lasagna in a twenty-mile radius, I'll be on my second helping.

I can speak the language, is what I'm saying. But in the great wide open...

Well, maybe Davy Crockett could navigate without a compass or find an old Indian path by looking at the way the grass bent in the wind, but the only way I could get around was by paying close attention to the big blue splotches of paint splattered on the trees along the trail.

My usual routine was, pick up the trail at Black Rock Road and follow it into the forest for maybe fifteen minutes. That's how long it took to come to my little hideaway -- a patch of grass on a gentle rise, with a nice view of the town below. I'd sit, unpack my lunch, and eat, hoping for a little wildlife to come along: a deer, a rabbit, even a squirrel would do. I'd share a little of my meal, then pack up and head back to my car.

Only this afternoon, as I walked down the rise, it didn't level off. It just kept going down. The trees got a little taller, the undergrowth a little thicker, and at some point, the blue splotches of paint vanished.

And then I came to a stream. In the half dozen times I'd been out in these woods, I had never seen a stream before.

"This is not good," I recall telling myself.

I hiked back up the hill, following the exact route I'd taken down, looking for those blue splotches of paint. Only when I got to the top, nothing was even remotely familiar about the terrain.

I took a deep breath.

Panic, I knew, was not an appropriate response. It wasn't that big a forest: I'd seen maps. All I had to do was get my bearings, and I'd be fine.

My biggest problem was that I was equipped for a picnic, not a hike.

I had no water in my knapsack. The first time I had told him I was going out in the forest, Burt Atkins had marched me into the general store (which, it turned out, he owned as well), and pulled a canteen down from the shelf

"Buy it," he said.

I checked the price and told him that on a cleric's wages, a canteen was not an option at this time.

"I'll buy it for you, then," he said, and pulled out a wad of bills from his pocket.

I refused: the sin of false pride, in retrospect.

But now that I thought of that canteen, and the water that I didn't have, I remembered something else about water that John Flynn had told me once while we were hiking: "If you get lost, find running water and follow it. The towns in these hills grew up around the streams and rivers: they'll lead you back to people."

So I hiked back down the hill and started following the stream.

Going back to the stream also had one immediate plus: it gave me a ready source of drinking water. Which I took advantage of more than once as the hours passed and the shadows lengthened and the forest around me showed no signs of petering out.

Flynn had shown me a map of the Black Hills, and I wouldn't have thought I could've hiked for so long and not come to the edge of them. Still, not the end of the world. It was summer, warm enough even at night that, even if worse came to worst and I had to sleep out in the woods, I would be nothing more than a little sore when I made my way back to civilization, as I surely would the next day.

I undid my Roman collar, unbuttoned my shirt, and set off again.

My stomach was the part of me most upset at the thought of not returning home: it had been hours since lunch, and I had little hope in my ability to find anything remotely edible in the wild.

But just as I was getting ready to give up and seek shelter for the night (and I would have been asleep in minutes, my body exhausted from a full day's worth of hiking), the stream took a sharp bend to the left, the undergrowth suddenly cleared, and there, before me, I saw a man.

He was squatting down on a huge, flat rock that jutted out into the stream, his back to me, his head bobbing slowly up and down.

At that moment I realized that the constant hum and whirl of the forest -- the buzz of the insects, the chatter of the animals, the crackle of the leaves and brush underfoot -- had somehow stopped. And the only noise I was hearing came from the man before me, a kind of repetitive chanting. Though I strained, I could not make out a word of what the man was saying, nor could I tell whether he was even speaking English.

I watched for a moment, unsure whether to interrupt what he was doing or continue lurking. He shifted position now, so that I saw him in profile.

I was too far away to see his face, but I could see now that he had long hair, almost down to his shoulders (and remember, this was 1939, a time when long hair on men was virtually unknown), a full beard, and something -- a pouch, or a purse of some sort -- hanging from a cord around his neck.

He reached down into that pouch now and pulled something out. A handful of sticks, I saw, with some string wrapped around them. He took the sticks and the string and began tying -- or untying, I couldn't tell which at this distance -- them together. When he finished, he leaned over the rock and threw them into the water.

Just then, a shadow passed across the rock -- a bird of some kind flying over, I couldn't quite tell from where. The man started.

His sudden movement, after such a long period of inactivity, startled me as well. I took a step backward.

Behind me, something growled.

I turned. The biggest German shepherd I'd ever seen in my life was a foot away, staring directly at me.

I like dogs, I really do. But this one looked ready to make a meal out of me.

Then it barked once and took a step toward me.

"Easy, Ranger."

I turned my head again, gradually this time (I did not want the dog to misinterpret any movement I made), and saw the man making his way down from the rock.

"Don't worry, Ranger's bark is worse than his bite," the man said as he reached us. "Especially if he thinks I'm in trouble."

"Believe me," I said, "I'm no trouble."

"Well, then. That's good." He held out his hand and smiled at me. "I'm Rustin. Rustin Parr."

High on the list of questions all the newspaper reporters and book writers and television people always wanted to ask me was if I could tell Parr was a killer when I met him. I never answered a one of them, not until I spoke to that Carrazco fellow, and even then, I couldn't bring myself to tell the whole truth about Rustin.

And I out-and-out lied to him about the Brody family.

But I think I'm getting ahead of myself.

I will say this now about Rustin Parr; from the very moment we shook hands, I knew I had nothing to fear from him. He had a simple, guileless manner, a ready smile, and such an obvious affection for his dog that I instinctively liked him.

A few days after the incident in the woods, when I told Burt Atkins about meeting Parr (when, in fact, I walked into the general store to finally buy that canteen), he asked me how Rustin was doing. They hadn't seen him around town for so long, he explained, that people were afraid he might have died.

I was in a good mood that day, which is why I didn't ask Burt the question which immediately popped into my head: Why hadn't anyone simply gone out into the woods to check how he was?

Instead, I told him that Rustin seemed fine.

"Good." He smiled. "I worry about that boy sometimes."

Atkins's attitude toward Parr, I found out, pretty much mirrored the entire town's; they didn't like him hanging around, but at the same time they wanted to make sure he was all right. I heard a rumor that the Parr family had once been important in Burkittsville, which might have explained that.

Whoever and however important his kin had been in town, Parr and the people of Burkittsville interacted hardly at all. It wasn't that he was retarded, or stupid, or bad-tempered (accusations which all made their way into the press over the years); he just didn't see much sense in a lot of the rules society expected people to abide by. Society, in turn, wanted nothing to do with him.

The people of Burkittsville, of course, did find a use for Parr later.

Scapegoat.

"You like to fish, Mr. Cazale?" Parr asked. He picked up a flat stone from the ground and threw it sidearm into the water, where it sank.

I shook my head. "Never done it, not even once."

"Really? That's what most people come out here to do." He found another flat stone and threw it. This one skipped twice before sinking. "So what brings you out to this part of the woods?"

"Well, to be quite honest, I'm lost."

"Well that explains it, I guess."

The dog barked.

"All right, boy, all right." Parr walked past me and ruffled the fur on the dog's head. "We'll get going. He wants dinner. That dog is spoiled rotten. Eats twice a day, and canned dog food. What do you think about that? A whole forest full of food, and he likes the canned stuff best. Takes all kinds, I guess."

He looked to me. "Are you hungry as well, Mr. Cazale? Would you like to come back home and eat with us?"

I smiled. "That's the best offer I've had all day, Mr. Parr."

"Good. Follow me, then."

As he turned, the pouch I'd glimpsed earlier swung out from behind his back, where it had been dangling, and I got my first good look at it.

It was made from an animal's paw: the claws -- several inches long -- were still attached. They looked sharp, they looked dangerous. Whatever kind of animal the paw had once belonged to -- a bear, or a wolf, or some other large animal -- would have been a formidable opponent.

"What do you do, Mr. Cazale?" Parr called over his shoulder. He was leading us straight into the heart of the underbrush at a brisk walk: a man, clearly, who didn't need blue paint to find his way through the forest.

"Actually, it's Father Cazale. I'm a priest."

"You don't say. A priest."

"That's right. What about yourself, Mr. Parr? What do you do?"

"Oh, whatever it takes, you know. Some odd jobs in town to make some money, a little gardening, do a little fi...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carla Spiegel:

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that book is very important usually. The book Blair Witch: The Secret Confession of Rustin Parr was making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The guide Blair Witch: The Secret Confession of Rustin Parr is not only giving you considerably more new information but also for being your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship with all the book Blair Witch: The Secret Confession of Rustin Parr. You never feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

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