



## The Ritual

*By Adam Nevill*

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### **The Ritual** By Adam Nevill

When four old University friends set off into the Scandinavian wilderness of the Arctic Circle, they aim to briefly escape the problems of their lives and reconnect with one another. But when Luke, the only man still single and living a precarious existence, finds he has little left in common with his well-heeled friends, tensions rise. With limited experience between them, a shortcut meant to ease their hike turns into a nightmare scenario that could cost them their lives. Lost, hungry, and surrounded by forest untouched for millennia, Luke figures things couldn't possibly get any worse. But then they stumble across an old habitation. Ancient artefacts decorate the walls and there are bones scattered upon the dry floors. The residue of old rites and pagan sacrifice for something that still exists in the forest. Something responsible for the bestial presence that follows their every step. As the four friends stagger in the direction of salvation, they learn that death doesn't come easy among these ancient trees . . .

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## **The Ritual** By Adam Nevill Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“A mind-twisting journey into the dark backwoods of terror. Deeply disturbing and absolutely riveting.”  
*?Jonathan Maberry*

“A book which preys on our most basic, instinctive fears, then amplifies them ten-fold. A desperate, intense descent into the depths of somewhere unimaginably ancient and unspeakably evil.” *?David Moody*

“‘And on the second day things did not get better.’ This suitably foreboding opening sentence sets the stage for a dark and mesmerizing horror debut that riffs on Algernon Blackwood's classic story 'The Wendigo.' Hutch, Luke, Dom, and Phil set off on a camping trip in the forests of Sweden, only to find the woods hostile to their explorations. Tensions arise when it becomes clear that two of the party aren't physically up to the challenges of navigating the rough terrain, and fears set in with the discovery of an eviscerated 'thing' hanging higher up in a tree than any animal would place it. Nevill makes the natural world deeply menacing, using the power of suggestion rather than explicit images to create a growing claustrophobic feeling as the difficult journey to return to some semblance of civilization embeds the quartet only further in the grasp of primal evil.” *?Publishers Weekly – Starred Review*

“A spine-tingling tale of one man's survival in a truly horrific realm.” *?Suspense Magazine*

### About the Author

**Adam Nevill** (aka Adam L. G. Nevill) was born in Birmingham, England, in 1969 and grew up in England and New Zealand. He is the author of the supernatural horror novels *Banquet for the Damned*, *Apartment 16*, *The Ritual*, *Last Days*, *House of Small Shadows*, *No One Gets Out Alive*, and *Lost Girl*. In 2012, 2013 and 2015 his novels were the winners of **The August Derleth Award for Best Horror Novel**. *The Ritual* and *Last Days* were also awarded **Best in Category: Horror**, by **R.U.S.A.** Adam lives in Devon, England, and can be contacted through [adamlgneville.com](http://adamlgneville.com).

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### **Ritual, The**

I

BENEATH THE REMAINS

PROLOGUE

And on the second day things did not get better. The rain fell hard and cold, the white sun never broke through the low grey cloud, and they were lost. But it was the dead thing they found hanging from a tree that changed the trip beyond recognition. All four of them saw it at the same time.

Right after they clambered over another fallen tree to stumble into more of the scratching bracken, they came across it. Breathing hard, damp with sweat and rain, speechless with fatigue, they came to a halt. Bent from the weight of the rucksacks, bedding and wet tents, they stood under it. Looked up.

Above them, beyond the reach of a man standing upright, the dead thing sagged. Between the limbs of a spruce tree it was displayed, but in such a tattered state they could not tell what it had once been.

From the large rib cage drooped the gut, wet and blue in the light seeping through the canopy of leaves. The pelt was spread out across surrounding branches, holed but stretched taut in places. A ragged hem about a crumpled centre suggested the skin had been torn from the back in one quick ripping motion. And at first no

head could be seen in the mess of blood and flesh. Until, in the violent red and yellow suddenness of hung meat, the bony grin of a jaw bone was picked out by them all. Just above it was an eye, big as a snooker ball but glazed and dull. Around it a long skull in profile.

Hutch turned to face the others. He always led the group as it staggered through the forest looking for the new trail. It was his idea to come through here. His face was pale and he did not speak. Somehow the shock of this sight made him look younger. Vulnerable, because this mutilated statement up above their heads was the only thing on the camping holiday he did not have an answer for. Didn't have a clue about.

Phil couldn't keep the tremor from his voice. 'What is it?'

No one answered him.

'Why?' Dom said. 'Why would you put it up there?'

The sound of these voices reassured three of them enough to start talking over each other. Sometimes answering questions. Sometimes just voicing new ideas. Only Luke said nothing. But as the others talked they moved away from the thing in the tree more quickly than they had approached it. And soon they were all silent again, but their feet made more noise than at any other time during the hike of the last two days.

Because there was no smell coming from the corpse. It was a fresh kill.

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