

Creature

T H E H E I G H T S



Chapter 1



Tate Moore was a nature camp leader. He was leading eight teenage boys on a camping trip at Bear Lake. Most of the teens had never camped before. But they'd done a great job hiking and setting up the campsite.

Everyone had a task. Some campers set up tents. A few others helped make a big campfire. Two boys even cooked dinner.

After dinner everyone told scary stories. It had been a long day. Tate and all the campers fell asleep after they put out the campfire.

It was after two in the morning when Tate left his tent to use the bathroom. He was only twenty yards away. Then something hit him from behind. Tate fell to the ground. He screamed. But no one heard him. His mouth was full of dirt. Whatever attacked him was big and strong.

Tate Moore struggled. But it was no use. He was carried deep into the woods.

Sunrise was at six thirty. Even though it was early, the teens got up. They were excited. Today there would be hiking, rock climbing, and fishing.

But the teens knew something was wrong. Tate's tent was empty. They called his name. But there was no answer. They searched the area. Then one of the campers saw Tate's flashlight. There was some blood next to it. The boys got Tate's cell phone. They called the police. The police came quickly. So did two forest rangers.

Officers searched the campsite. They found nothing besides the flashlight and blood. Police and forest rangers continued their search for two days. Nothing turned up. Someone—or something—had made off with Tate Moore. And no one knew who—or *what*—it was!

Chapter 2



Two weeks had passed since Tate Moore disappeared. The police were puzzled. They'd ruled out a bear. Bears didn't drag their prey. They killed prey right where it fell. Mountain lions were extinct in these parts. And there were no other animals in the area that could attack a grown man.

The next day the phone rang at the Rockdale Heights Police Department. Officer Pitt picked it up.

“This is Liv Cutts,” a woman said. “My husband, Sam, is missing.”

“How long has he been gone?” asked Officer Pitt.

“Since yesterday,” Liv replied. “He went fishing at Bear Lake. But he never came home.”

Officer Pitt froze. He knew about Tate Moore. The officer told Liv he would begin searching for Sam. Then he went to talk to the chief.

“We have another missing person at Bear Lake,” Officer Pitt said.

“Oh no! What happened?” Chief Vega asked.

“Sam Cutts is missing,” the officer

said. “His wife just called. He went fishing yesterday and never came home.”

“Let’s hope it’s not the same thing that got Tate Moore. It will be a big problem if it is,” Chief Vega said.

The chief called Max Winn. Max was the head forest ranger. And he’d led the search for Tate.

The two men decided to search the lake for Sam. Other officers and rangers helped too. Everyone got to the lake before noon. Sam Cutts’s truck was parked next to a trail. The trail led to the lake.

There was a lot of ground to cover. The twelve-member search party split up. The two groups would meet back at Sam’s truck. Max Winn

led a group into the woods. Chief Vega led a group around the lake.

Chief Vega and his men found nothing. Walking back to the truck, they ran into Max.

“We didn’t find anything. How about you guys?” the chief asked.

Max nodded. He took out his phone. He showed the chief a photo. The chief winced. Max asked everyone to follow him. They walked a mile.

Chief Vega stared down at a ripped shirt. Beside it was a bloody human hand! It had been torn off at the wrist. The bones were crushed. The photo was awful. This was worse.

“There’s blood everywhere,” Max said. “But there’s no body. Whatever did this is long gone.”