



WWW.AMERICANCHILLERS.COM



The alarm clock rang, jolting me awake. I slapped at it in the darkness until it stopped, then I fell back onto my pillow.

It was five a.m.

Although my bedroom door was closed, there was a thin band of light coming from beneath it. Mom and Dad were already up and moving about, getting ready for the day, packing our gear.

And I'm exhausted, I thought. I can't believe I'm getting up this early.

Oh, don't get me wrong. It was the first day of our camping vacation, and I had been excited for months. Every summer, we go somewhere fun. Last

year, we went to Disneyland. The year before that, we went to California, where my cousins live. That's where my brother, Reese, fell and broke his arm.

But this year, we were staying in our home state of Montana. I remember the day Mom and Dad asked me about their idea. They'd been talking in the kitchen, then they came to my room and stood at the door. I was on my bed, reading a book, and I put it down and looked at them.

"Beth, what do you think about going on a camping trip this summer?" Mom asked.

"That would be cool!" I exclaimed. "Like . . . in a tent?"

Dad nodded. "Yes," he said. "We'll take two tents, and we'll use them for the whole week."

"And cook food over a fire?" I asked.

Mom and Dad nodded, smiling.

"That would be so much fun!" I exclaimed. "Have you asked Reese?"

"Not yet," Dad said. "But you know *him*. He loves the outdoors. I'm sure he'll be thrilled."

"Where are we going to go?" I asked.

"We haven't decided yet," Mom replied. "We wanted to make sure that you and your brother would want to do it."

"Are you kidding?!?" I exclaimed as I sat up

and placed my feet on the floor. “Camping would be great!”

“Usually, we stay in hotels,” Dad said, “but we thought it might be fun to explore the wilderness for a change. You know . . . do something different. Go for some hikes and do some exploring. I think it’ll be fun, and we’ll learn a lot about nature.”

From that day forward, all I could think about was our upcoming camping trip. We looked through catalogs and went to sporting good stores to buy equipment. I got a new pair of hiking boots and a new windbreaker, along with a rain parka.

Then, one day, Mom and Dad decided where we were going to go: Glacier National Park.

Glacier National Park! I couldn’t believe it! Glacier National Park is world famous! We live in Great Falls, Montana, which is about one hundred thirty miles away from the park . . . but we’ve never been there. Glacier National Park is huge: it has more than seven hundred miles of trails and is home to mountain goats, cougars, grizzly bears, and lots of other animals.

It also has twenty-seven glaciers, but they’re melting fast. Dad says he read in the news that in thirty or forty years, all the glaciers in the park will probably have melted away.

I was really excited to camp at Glacier, but I was a little nervous . . . and maybe even a little scared.

Cougars? I thought. *Grizzly bears?*

While I thought it might be cool to see them, I wouldn't want to see them up close!

I needn't have worried. Cougars and grizzly bears were going to be the *least* of our troubles. Our troubles were going to be much bigger than that.

Several *tons* bigger, as a matter of fact.



After a few minutes of lying in bed and listening to the sounds of my mom and dad scurrying around the house, I sat up. My bedroom door opened, and light flooded in. The dark silhouette of my mom appeared.

“Rise and shine,” she said as I raised my arm to cover my eyes from the harsh light that swamped my room.

I smiled thinly. “I’m awake,” I replied.

“We’ll be leaving at six,” Mom said. “Double-check your gear, and make sure you have everything you need.” She walked away, and I could hear shuffling around the house as she and Dad continued

getting ready for our trip.

Too cool, I thought as I scrambled out of bed. I didn't think this day was ever going to get here.

After wolfing down a quick bowl of cereal, I went back to my room. I had made a list of all the things to take, but most of the stuff was already packed. I only needed to get things like toothpaste and soap.

Our plan was this: we would drive from our home in Great Falls to Glacier National Park. Dad said the trip would take us a couple of hours. From there, we would drive deep into the park to a place called Kintla Lake Campground. Kintla Lake Campground is located way up in the northwest corner in an area known as North Fork. Dad showed me the brochure. The campground was small; there were only about a dozen campsites, and the camping area was on the shores of Kintla Lake. Dad said that because it is so remote, there probably won't be too many other campers. But not far away was a small community called Polebridge, so if we needed supplies, we could go there.

At Kintla Lake Campground, we would set up our tents, and it would be our 'home base' for the

entire week. From there, we would hike, fish, and explore. With so many miles of hiking trails, there would be plenty of things to do and plenty of things to see. Maybe even a grizzly bear.

So, you can imagine how excited I was. I was ready for seven whole days of adventure.

Our seven-day adventure, however, wasn't going to be anything like we thought. Sure, it would be filled with a lot of adventure.

But it would also be filled with something else:
Terror.

3

The trip from Great Falls to Glacier was boring. We drove our van, which has a lot of room inside. Even with all our camping gear, I could still recline in my seat and stretch out. I fell asleep for a little while, but I woke up when Reese started poking me in the ribs. We got into an argument, but he was the one who started it. He always starts arguments. I never do. Anyway, he got into trouble for calling me a boogerhead, and Mom made him leave me alone. Then, I fell asleep again.

I was awakened by bright sunlight coming through the van window. I sat up and used my arm to

shade my face. Outside, the van moved along a paved road. Trees and mountains rose into a perfect, blue sky. There were no other cars around.

Reese had fallen asleep in his seat. At some point, he'd eaten a chocolate bar, and he had a dab of brown goo around the edges of his mouth. He looked silly.

Mom was in the front passenger seat, and she turned. "Have a nice nap?" she asked.

"Yeah," I said with a yawn. "Where are we?"

"We're in the park already," Mom explained.

Holy cow, I thought. I've slept nearly the entire trip!

"So, how far are we from Kintla Lake Campground?" I asked.

"We still have a little ways to go," Dad replied. "We'll have to travel some bumpy roads to get there, so get ready."

While Reese slept, I turned and looked out the window. Everything was so scenic and beautiful, and I thought about all the things we would do over the next seven days. I had a new digital camera that was a birthday gift from Mom and Dad, so I planned to take a lot of pictures.

Soon, we were on a rugged, dirt road. The van bounced all around, waking Reese. When he first woke up, he looked silly. He was groggy, and he still had chocolate goo around his mouth. He didn't know it, though, and I wasn't going to tell him.

"Where . . . where are we?" he stammered as he balled his fists and rubbed his eyes.

"We're almost home," I teased. "They don't allow goofy boys at the park, so we had to take you back."

Reese didn't say anything. Instead, he stuck his tongue out at me.

Typical Reese, I thought, turning to look out my window.

At that very moment, I saw something at the edge of the forest. At first, I couldn't believe it.

I *wouldn't* believe it.

I was looking at a *monster!*



At first, I thought I was looking at a rock formation. As we bounced along the road, the trees were set back a little, and there were some big rocks and boulders nestled along the edge of the forest. Behind and above the trees, larger, jagged mountains loomed.

But a certain large boulder (at least, that's what I *thought* it was, at first) looked out of place.

Like it didn't belong.

And then I could make out a mouth.

And eyes.

I could see two long tusks, like a bull elephant, and enormous ears. The thing was covered with thick,

reddish-brown fur that was matted and dirty.

And its legs were gigantic, the size of tree trunks! They, too, looked like elephant legs, except they appeared to have claws like that of a bear. But it was no elephant, that was for sure. And besides: what would an elephant be doing in Montana?

Suddenly, we went around a bend in the road, and I could no longer see the creature.

“Did . . . did anyone else see that?!?” I blurted.

“See what?” Mom asked.

“Dad, stop!” I said. “I saw something back there!”

“What?” Dad asked.

“I don’t know!” I said. “But it looked like an elephant . . . except it was bigger and uglier!”

This brought a round of laughter from everyone: Mom, Dad, and Reese.

“No, really!” I pleaded. “There was some big animal back there! I saw it with my own eyes!”

“There aren’t any animals in the park that big,” Mom said. “Maybe it was a moose.”

“I know a moose when I see one,” I said, and it was true. We have moose in Montana, and I see them once in a while.

I turned all the way around in my seat, straining against the seatbelt. I was hoping to get another glimpse of whatever it was . . . but we were too far away, and there were too many trees.

Maybe it was just my imagination, I thought. Maybe it was nothing. After all . . . I just woke up. Maybe I'm still sleepy.

And that's what I told myself. I told myself that I had imagined the strange creature at the edge of the forest. I told myself that Mom was right: there aren't any animals that big in Glacier National Park. In fact, there aren't animals that big *anywhere* in America . . . except in zoos and circuses.

I wouldn't be telling myself that for long. Soon, we'd know the truth . . . and our camping trip to Glacier National Park was going to turn into a fight for our lives!

5

When we reached Kintla Lake Campground, I'd forgotten all about the thing I'd spotted in the trees. I'd convinced myself it was just my imagination, and I didn't think any more of it.

As I tumbled out of the van, I couldn't believe how beautiful everything was. The lake was clear and blue, and mountain peaks jutted into a sky that was just as blue as the lake. Green trees grew thick, and the air was clean and smelled of sticky pine.

And Dad was right: the campground was remote. In fact, there were no other campers around anywhere.

“Where is everybody?” Reese asked as he climbed from the van.

“Oh, more campers will come along, I’m sure,” Dad replied. “But this is one of the smaller campgrounds, so there probably won’t be too many people around. Besides . . . we’re a long way from anywhere, except Polebridge. Come on, guys . . . let’s unload our gear and set up camp.”

It took a few hours of hard work to get our camp set up. We had two tents: Mom and Dad had a bigger one you could stand up in, while Reese and I had a smaller, two-person tent that gave us just enough room for our two sleeping bags. While we set it up, Reese and I talked about wild animals.

“I hope we see a cougar!” he exclaimed.

I shook my head. “I doubt it,” I said. “They’re too clever, and they stay away from people if they can.”

“I think it would be cool to have one as a pet,” he said.

“You’re crazy!” I said. But I had to admit: it would be great to see a cougar . . . from a long way away, of course.

“And there are bears around, too,” Reese said.

“Grizzly bears and black bears.”

That was another thing we had to remember. There was a chance we might come across a bear, and we had to know what to do. Dad had told us how to act and what to do. Two of the most important things, he said, was to stick together when we were hiking and make noise. Bears don't like humans, and they'll stay away if they can. By making noise, it alerts the bears that there are people around, and they can stay away.

There were other things we had to do, too. Bears have really good noses and can smell food from great distances. Dad said we'd keep our food in the van so the bears wouldn't be able to get it, and that we couldn't leave any scraps lying around the campsite . . . or anywhere else, for that matter. He told us to be sure to pick up after ourselves, and that it was important to leave our campsite even cleaner than we'd found it, so other people could enjoy it.

There were other rules, of course, but we'd been talking about our trip for weeks, and I was sure I was prepared.

In fact, I *knew* I was prepared.
For everything.

But nothing could have prepared me for what I would discover only a few hundred feet from our campsite

We hope you enjoyed this
preview! To order this
book, call toll-free:
1-888-420-4244
or visit
www.americanchillers.com

WWW.AMERICANCHILLERS.COM