

HAUNTED WATERS

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JERRY B. JENKINS • CHRIS FABRY

RED ROCK MYSTERIES

Thanks to the sets of twins who consulted with us on this series,
especially Alex and Angela Wood.

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He didn't want to kill them. He just wanted the evidence back. If they made it to the police with the picture, he was dead. Back in jail.

If only those annoying kids hadn't forced this. Twins. A boy and a girl. And their little brother and dad. Now they would all have to pay.

He could see the fright in the kids' eyes when he pulled beside their Land Cruiser. The boy held a cell phone to his ear.

He rammed his vehicle into theirs and sent them swerving. The dad got the Cruiser under control and sped up.

He matched their speed and pulled beside them again as they

approached a lake. This was it. He would take care of the problem right here. He turned and forced them off the road.

The Land Cruiser hit a patch of snowy grass. Taillights flashed, but it was too late. The SUV flew into the air and plunged into the lake. Water engulfed the vehicle and it slowly rolled to one side like a sunning sea lion, then sank.

He slowed to watch frigid bubbles rise. No one could survive this. Some mother would cry tonight.

He clicked his radio as he drove away. "The situation's under control."

PART

1





CHAPTER 1

✧ Ashley ✧

I didn't want to move to Colorado. I didn't want my dad to die or my mom to ever get married again either. And I sure didn't want her to get religious all of a sudden. But all those things happened to my brother and me, so I guess you'll just have to get used to it like we did.

My name is Ashley Timberline, and my younger brother (by 57 seconds—but he's still younger) is Bryce. We're almost 14, if 217 days is almost. Our last name used to be Bishop, but our new dad adopted us, so now we've got his name. Good thing Mom didn't name me Fern or Tabby. Imagine that with my new last name. Mom

said we didn't *have* to take the new name, but I would have felt bad hurting our stepfather's feelings.

My youngest brother, Dylan, who is four, was born before our real dad died. He's a pain, but he's a lot cuter than Bryce, and I can get him to do stuff just by offering him a couple of Smarties.

We also got a big sister thrown in with our new dad. Leigh's 16 and learning to drive. She has a boyfriend named Randy, but Bryce and I call him The Creep. He's actually kind of cute, with hair he never combs and big muscles. But we give her a hard time about him anyway.

Randy played on the varsity football team in the fall and now varsity baseball this spring. He's always getting his name in the paper, and once there was a picture of him making a big tackle. I wrote "The Creep takes down his opponent" underneath it, and Leigh got mad. Not as mad as the time Bryce dipped her hairbrush in the fish tank, but mad enough to tell her dad. He came in and sat on my bed and grinned for about five minutes, then left.

The hardest thing we've ever done is move from Illinois. When we drove away from our little house, it seemed like we left every friend we'd ever had. The new people were already moving in, which was sad. We'd written our names in the cement by the driveway. Half of Dylan's car collection is still buried in the backyard. The cheap swing set my mom bought at a garage sale is still under that big, leafy tree.

My friend Carolyn said she was jealous of me getting to move out west, making a new start. I would have traded places with her in a second. There were enough new things going on without having to move 1,000 miles. Mom said "the Lord" was guiding her even back then before she knew him. But whoever the Lord was, he wasn't doing anything but making me cry myself to sleep in the backseat of our Ford Taurus Wagon.

I stopped sobbing when we hit the Illinois/Iowa state line and snorted myself to sleep. I woke up long enough to eat in Missouri, then cried again after dessert—a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup Blizzard. Bryce didn’t sleep at all and said I didn’t miss much on the drive, except a guy hitchhiking near Salina, Kansas. Bryce said the guy had a beard longer than we were tall and he was sitting by a dead deer with a banjo. (The guy had the banjo, not the deer.)

When we got to Colorado, the first thing Dylan did was throw up. That made me think things were going to be really yucky here, but Mom said it was only the altitude—living so far above sea level where the air is thinner. Less oxygen for some reason. If you ever come here, you might throw up too.

A year later Mom fell in love with The Cowboy, as we called Sam back then. They were married, and we moved to his place. Then Mom became a Christian, and not because of our new dad, because he wasn’t—and isn’t—one. Bryce and I thought Mom was just going through a holy phase, but when it stuck, we got interested too. Finally, Bryce and I became Christians.

I thought I’d always been one, but that’s another story.



CHAPTER 2

☺ Bryce ☺

My cell phone vibrated with only a few minutes left in my last-period class. I pulled it out and hid it under my desk, because you're not supposed to use cell phones during class. I looked at my sister Ashley a few rows from me. We have first and last periods together—band and English.

The screen on the front read “Bryce’s Phone,” showed the time as 2:14, and had a little envelope telling me I had a text message. I coughed as I punched the Read button so the teacher wouldn’t hear the beep, then scrolled through the message.

Bryce,

**Surprise for you and Ashley. Come home as fast
as you can. Also, move snow shovel from porch.
Somebody'll get hurt.**

See you soon.

Sam

Sam is my new father. Ashley and I haven't felt right about calling him Dad since our real one died. Sam said if we never call him Dad, it would be okay, but if we wanted to it was all right too.

Those last six minutes dragged so slowly I could hardly stand it. Giving a kid English during last period ought to be a crime, punishable by torture if you have gym right before it.

Mrs. Ferguson went on and on about how important next week was for us. "As you know, you have the day off tomorrow and then the CATs begin Monday. Make sure you take advantage of the long weekend."

We'd been hearing about the Colorado Aptitude Tests for a whole year, since the last time we had taken them, so this was not news.

"Get plenty of sleep Sunday night," she continued. "Try not to do anything that would sap your energy. We want you all bright-eyed Monday."

Ashley rolled her eyes at me.

I held up the little beanie cat that had been passed around the room to motivate us and grabbed it around the neck.

Ashley looked like she was fighting a smile.

I glanced at the clock again. I think when the sun gets high in the sky, it loses some kind of gravity pull and everything slows down. Whatever, the seconds t-i-c-k-e-d by in agony until the bell finally

rang. I tossed the cat to Mrs. Ferguson, and it landed on her desk next to her big, yellow thesaurus.

“Have a nice weekend, Bryce,” she purred.

“You too, Mrs. Ferguson.”

Ashley followed as I raced into the halls of Red Rock Middle School. I threw my books in my locker. CATs kept teachers from giving us homework—that’s about the only good thing about them. I slammed my locker and saw Aaron Heckler at the end of the hall.