

THE LOCAL LEGEND OF IRON RIVER

THE LIAM AND BOO SERIES

BOOK ONE



WILLIAM MIERZEJEWSKI

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CHAPTER 1

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WAS IT ALL A DREAM?

Fog lifted over the lake as the water cooled from a hot summer day. The fog lifts over the lake almost as a shroud that hides the mysteries of the old mansion across from Liam's family lake house. No one knew its mystery. The full moon would soon rise over the trees into the low-hanging clouds.

Very few people ever truly knew the owner of the mansion. Maybe just a glimpse of him from time to time but only during the day. They saw him taking care of his property and burning old trash and such. Seems odd that someone of his wealth wouldn't simply hire someone to take care of a rather large estate and its surrounding grounds. There was never any movement on the property at night. All the windows and shades were closed, and the house was always fully dark. The only way anyone could see the estate at night was by the moonlight reflecting off the house and the water.

Oftentimes, people would hear the howls of wolves but figured it came from the Ottawa National Forest just down the road. Liam remembers the first time he heard the sounds at night. The lake house would get rather warm during the day, but many nights were very cool. Unlike back home in Chicago, here, they usually left all the windows open at night. The sounds of highway traffic and airplanes from the big city were replaced by the sounds of night creatures. The sounds of the frogs in the grass and the loons on the water mixed with that crisp fresh lake breeze was the perfect recipe for a relaxing night's sleep.

The first night Liam heard the sounds was the night of the sturgeon moon. He remembers hearing the horrific sound of howls coming from outside his bedroom window. It was enough to stir him from his restful

sleep. He turned over to see the moon rising over the trees in the woods across from his window. He was able to see it very well from the vantage point of his upper bunk bed. His sister, Boo, was fast asleep alongside their childhood dog, a golden doodle named Lady, in the lower bunk. Lady let out a short noise of suspicion and walked down just below the window. The only continuous light in their bedroom came from a small night-light shaped like a baseball in the far corner. The only other light coming in and out of their bedroom was moonlight coming off the clouds from the bright moon overhead.

Liam's parents always tried to help him with his terrific fear of the dark. Mixed with his fear of the dark were several occurrences of horrific night terrors. As he looked down from the moon and down to the ground, he saw something moving just beyond the tree line. At first, he thought maybe it was the wind, but this movement seemed to be very concentrated around the trees and bushes. This movement continued at a rather fast pace. As the movement went from one side of the trees to another, he could hear other forest creatures scurry for safety. Suddenly, the movement stopped. From there, Liam saw large exhales of breath being released into the cool night air. Then he saw two yellow eyes look in his general direction that seemed to be at least ten feet above the ground! Lady let out a slight whimper and ran back onto the bed. The look of those eyes sent a chill down Liam's spine. Liam felt like he was experiencing a type of paralysis for a moment. He couldn't move. Fear gripped him to his core. He tried to regain his conscious movement. The next moment, he came down from his bunk bed and ran into his parents' room to wake up his dad.

Liam's dad, Will, was always his hero and protector. Will worked as a firefighter back home, so Liam always went to him when he was scared. His dad wasn't happy that Liam woke him up. Liam pulled him by the hand over to his window and told him the story with tears in his eyes. Liam had never been so scared in his life. His night terrors didn't come close to this real nightmare. Will looked outside Liam's window for a brief moment, shook his head, and let out a deep breath of disappointment. He assured Liam that the howls were probably the gray wolves that lived in the national forest. He reminded Liam that there hadn't been a sighting of a gray wolf outside the national forest in some time. He also assured Liam that maybe it was a nightmare, or his eyes were seeing things and his imagination got the best of him. He walked Liam back to bed, tucked him underneath his

covers, kissed him good night, and closed the door. Liam didn't sleep another minute that night. He kept his eyes locked out his bedroom window and out toward those woods. Liam knew what he saw, and he saw it when he was just ten years old.

CHAPTER 2

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NOT A SIGN BUT A STARE

The following morning, Liam woke up with his sister and had breakfast with the family. Breakfast at the lake house was always a full spread complete with eggs, sausage, and usually pancakes or French toast. Later that morning, Liam went with his dad to take their dog, Lady, for a walk. It was a beautiful summer morning.

The skies were clear, the sun was shining, and a cool lakeside breeze felt soothing when it passed along Liam's face. Their walks were usually quiet, pleasant, and peaceful. The walking trail stretched for about a half mile down a curvy two-lane road. On one side of the road were the lake and several lake houses of all sizes, styles, and types of construction. The other side of the road was a section of woods that stretched several miles. At the end of the curvy two-lane road was the beginning of a horse ranch. They walked Lady along the ranch to see the horses and shortly afterward headed back to the house. Liam's father asked, "Did you sleep well last night after our talk?"

Of course Liam lied and said, "Yeah, Dad, I'm fine." Little did Will know Liam didn't sleep another wink.

As they walked along the side of the forestry side of the road, Liam kept his eyes focused on the woods. He looked this way and that way to see if there were any signs of what he saw the night before. To his astonishment, not a sign. No dead animals, large broken branches, or claw marks on the trees. At least that's all I could see from along the street.

The lake house was owned by Liam's grandparents, Tina and Daniel. Liam's grandmother grew up vacationing at a lake house in Minnesota with her family. Liam's grandparents, his mother, and his Uncle Ryan had very fond memories of those summer trips. The majority of those trips were

spent fishing, biking, kayaking, playing water games, having campfires, and making s'mores. During a semiannual family reunion, Liam's grandparents were reunited with an aunt and uncle they hadn't seen in several years. During their conversations, the aunt and uncle mentioned that they owned a lake house in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in Iron River. The couple was looking to sell the place but sadly couldn't find an interested buyer to purchase it. They were willing to sell it fully furnished and well below the appraised price.

After one trip, Liam's grandparents fell in love with the property and soon after purchased the lake house. It was a lovely lake house complete with two bedrooms, two full bathrooms, a great room that housed the living room, a dining room, and kitchen. The great room's southern wall had very large trapezoid-shaped windows and two sliding glass doors that led to a beautiful deck that faced Sunset Valley Lake. Fifty feet from the end of the deck was a separate cabin and utility shed that housed all of the summer fun essentials. Along the western part of the property, Liam's grandparents placed their fifth-wheel trailer to house extra guests during holiday weekends.

Liam's grandparents would open the lake house just before Memorial Day weekend, and keep it open just before Halloween. Tina and Liam's great-grandfather, Steven, got to enjoy the lake house from time to time. Steven was retired business owner, and Tina was a teacher in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. She enjoyed her summers off from work. Liam's grandfather was a mechanic. He worked hard to provide for and raise his family, and he spent his vacation time and holiday weekends at the lake house.

As for the immediate family, Liam was the oldest to his baby sister, Boo, who was two years younger than he. They live in Chicago, which is quite a far drive from Upper Peninsula, Michigan. His family was very fortunate. Liam's father, Will, worked full time as a firefighter, and his mom, Annie, worked part time as a local librarian. Since her work was part time and the need for inner-city librarians in the summer was extremely low, Annie was able to spend several weeks at the lake house every year. She even volunteered at the Iron River Library to assist with their summer reading and activities program. Liam's father had the misfortune to drive the ten-hour round trip usually by himself. He would make the trip once every few weeks when he was able to string a few days off from work.

The night of Liam's encounter was fortunately their last night for the summer season at the lake house. Because of the parents' work schedule, Liam and Boo wouldn't be able to come back to Iron River until Columbus Day weekend in October. The last day was spent doing laundry, packing bags, and helping the grandparents clean up the house. Annie asked her parents if they didn't mind dropping off their dog, Lady, on their way home. She mentioned to her parents that Will had a surprise for the kids and the dog wouldn't be allowed to attend. Of course, they accepted.

As per usual, before they left for Chicago, the family drove over to the park on the other side of the lake to have a picnic lunch. The plan was to have their lunch, play at the playground for a bit, drive into town for fuel, and hit the road. On the way over to the park, they drove past the previously mentioned old mansion. As they drove past, they saw the older man doing yard work and burning old timber in a large firepit alongside his house. Will being courteous waved to the man. The old man didn't reciprocate the courtesy. All he did was stare at the family, especially at Liam. He just gave Liam a cold blank stare almost like Liam was intruding on his privacy. Liam's mom and dad both looked at each other confused.

Will asked Annie, "What the hell was that all about?"

Annie simply shrugged her shoulders and said, "I don't know, and I don't want to know considering that guy's backstory."

Will curiously looked back at Annie and said, "What backstory?"

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