

MISSING PIECES

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RED ROCK MYSTERIES

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JERRY B. JENKINS • CHRIS FABRY

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CHAPTER 1

✧ Ashley ✧

This story is about a *dead* girl, a dead dog, a dead mom, and lots of dead mailboxes, so if you don't like dead things, stop reading right now.

For as long as I can remember, my mother has bought a new jigsaw puzzle every few months. She says it helps our family work together on at least one thing. The newest was a picture of a waterfall, nice and peaceful, unlike our lives the past few weeks.

When you first start a puzzle, it's hard to imagine getting finished. But piece by piece it comes together, kind of like life. Well,

some people's lives. I don't know if our lives will ever fit together. I can't imagine what the picture would look like in the end.

But with all the dead things in this story, I think you'll be surprised how much life came from it.



CHAPTER 2

☺ Bryce ☺

As we set up the tent in our backyard late Wednesday afternoon, I couldn't get my mind off Ashley's doctor's appointment the next day. Ashley was having an EEG the next morning, and I was supposed to help her stay up. EEG stands for electro-something-or-other, but whatever it is, it scares her.

Sam grilled burgers and hot dogs on our back deck. (If you're wondering why I call him Sam instead of Dad, it's a long story. My real father was killed in a plane crash. Sam is our stepdad. I've called him Dad like twice, but Sam feels right to me.)

Dylan, our little brother, kept eating watermelon. Later he ran to

the bathroom and stayed there most of the evening. He's a funny little kid, and we all like having him around until he gets annoying.

We made a small campfire in a pit toward the back of the yard and roasted marshmallows, made s'mores, and watched the sun go down. Leigh, our older stepsister, showed up with her boyfriend, Randy. She was excited about her driver's test next week. We joked about telling people to stay off the road.

"Leigh's a good driver," Mom said, looking her in the eye. "She'll be fine."

"Does that mean she can drive me to dance practice next week?" Ashley said.

Mom dipped her head and looked over the top of her glasses. "We'll talk about that."

Dylan came outside crying because he couldn't camp out with Ashley and me. I told Mom we'd watch him until he fell asleep and then carry him inside. She tucked him in to his Scooby Doo sleeping bag.

"Don't let the monsters get you," Randy said before he and Leigh went inside.

"Ooh, good one, Randy," I said, a cold wind whipping the tent flap.

A coyote yipped in the distance, and I glanced at the red rocks rising behind us. The air turned nippy as a crow flew overhead and cawed.

I was glad I didn't have to have stuff stuck to my head the next day like Ashley, but being her twin, I felt bad for her.