

TIM SHOEMAKER

EVERY HIDDEN THING

A HIGH WATER NOVEL



TIM SHOEMAKER

EVERY HIDDEN THING

A HIGH WATER™ NOVEL



FOCUS
ON THE FAMILY®

A Focus on the Family Resource
Published by Tyndale House Publishers

Every Hidden Thing

© 2022 Tim Shoemaker. All rights reserved.

A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

Focus on the Family and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks, and *High Water* is a trademark, of Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

Tyndale and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of Focus on the Family.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*,[®] *NIV*.[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.zondervan.com) *NIV* and *New International Version* are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.[®]

Cover design by Michael Harrigan

The author is represented by the Cyle Young Hartline Literary Agency.

The characters and events in this story are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is coincidental.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

ISBN 978-1-64607-060-2

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 23 22
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my daughters-in-law—

Laura, Sarah, and Beth.

*A writer's deepest loves can be found
between the lines of their stories.*

You will always be there.

For God will bring
every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.

—

ECCLESIASTES 12:14

CHAPTER 1

Rockport, Massachusetts
Monday, May 2, 11:35 p.m.

PARKER BUCKMAN TOLD HIMSELF that he wasn't afraid of the dark. Technically, it was just the things he couldn't see *because* of the dark that had him on edge.

Imagined things, mostly. Impossible things. Like that creep, Clayton Kingman, bent on revenge, suddenly crawling through Parker's window. Or the skull of the giant alligator Goliath somehow dropping to the floor and growing the rest of its body back, reforming muscle and bone and a nearly bulletproof hide until its full fifteen-foot length was restored right there in his bedroom. Just waiting to snap at Parker if he swung his legs off the bed.

Ridiculous, Parker thought. Ghosts from his past. He'd left those things far behind.

Clayton Kingman had earned himself a lifetime membership at the Everglades Correctional Institution, just outside of Miami.

Locked up in prison, he would never threaten Parker again. And Goliath was dead. The gator stick Parker had used to kill the beast—thrusting it right down its throat—was propped in the corner of his bedroom as a good reminder of that. And if he needed actual proof, the gator's skull sitting on the bookshelf provided that.

Parker had faced this uneasy feeling before, but it felt stronger tonight. He resisted the urge to turn on his bedroom light. *I am not afraid of the dark.* He cracked open his second story window instead, filling his lungs with damp, salty air. The rhythmic sound of waves battering the rocky shore of the nearby Headlands was always a comfort. If the massive swells couldn't get past the rocks—not in high tide or hurricane—the ghosts from his past couldn't reach him here either. The pounding surf was one more reminder that he didn't live in swampy southern Florida anymore. He was over 1,500 miles north—in the town of Rockport, Massachusetts.

He was safe here, right? What was it with all the spooky thoughts?

His phone vibrated next to his bed, the screen casting a pale glow on his bedroom wall.

Who'd be texting me now?

It had to be Jelly. Angelica Malnatti—the best friend he'd had to leave behind in Everglades City. Maybe her dad finally got the transfer, and she wanted Parker to be the first to know. *But why would she be telling me now?* It had to be close to midnight.

He snatched up his phone and stared at the name on the display: *Devin Catsakis*. Instantly Parker wished he hadn't given this guy his number.

You awake?

He pecked out a quick reply.

No.

Ha ha! Make sure your ringer is off so I don't wake your parents when I call in 5, 4, 3 . . .

Parker had barely toggled the ringer off before the thing vibrated in his hand. He answered before the second buzz.

"Something crazy is going on here, Parker," Devin whispered. He sounded out of breath. "Somebody—no, make that *something*—just came out of our neighbors' house. The one they rent out."

"That doesn't sound so cra—"

"He's holding some kind of green light, like a humongous glow stick. It's probably radioactive or something. Maybe some kind of laser."

Radioactive? Now he was really regretting giving out his number. Because Devin Catsakis wasn't living in the real world. That's what Ella Houston said, anyway. Devin was a huge sci-fi fan, but he was totally convinced that a lot of the crazy things he read about actually existed. Parallel universes. Time travel. Aliens. He'd talked Parker's head off about how those things were absolutely real.

"I'm trying to record a video, but it's so stinkin' dark that I can't get a decent shot of him."

"He's still at your neighbors'? Well, call the police or something."

Devin was breathing heavy—like he needed a hit from his inhaler. "Can't do that. He's on the move now."

"Wait . . . are you *following* him?"

"Just until I get a good shot—and you get out here. You've got to see this."

Sneaking out in the middle of the night—to chase a burglar carrying some kind of light saber? "Don't be stupid," Parker said. "You need to go home. Where are you?"

"Rowe Avenue. Almost to Parker's Pit."

The long-abandoned granite quarry on the edge of town. Filled with water, it was a favorite place for Parker to go—and not just because of its name. But at night—in *the dark*? He wouldn't be caught dead there. “Devin, get *out* of there. If you get in trouble, nobody will even hear you cry for help.”

“This thing is like a big shadow. A shadow-man. I think the green light is his energy source.”

Parker suspected that Devin wanted all these crazy theories to be true so bad that he might stretch the truth.

“Devin—go home.”

“Not until I catch a decent image of this Shadow-man. C'mon. Hop on your bike. I'm going to show you this thing is for real.”

“You're insane if you think I'd sneak out of the house. Not a chance.” It would totally mess up all the trust he'd built with his parents.

“What if this is some sort of paranormal sighting I'm looking at—can you imagine what that would be worth if I could capture it on my phone?”

“As in a ghost?” Parker didn't really want to burst the guy's bubble, but come *on*. “No such thing.”

“Listen, Parker.” Devin's voice sounded muffled, like he had his hand cupped over the phone to keep from being heard. “Get your tail out here and I'll prove it to you.”

If he was still living in Florida, and it was Jelly—or even Wilson—on the phone, would he do it? Would he sneak out? He'd be tempted, for sure. How could he leave Jelly out there, alone? But this wasn't Jelly—and she wouldn't do a stupid thing like this anyway. Would anybody? *What if Devin was making this all up?*

Likely this whole thing was some kind of dumb stunt Devin

was pulling. His friend Ella had said something about that, too. That Devin was always doing goofy things to get people to buy into his theories.

“Are you coming?” Devin whispered. “This is your chance to see a real ghost—or maybe an alien.”

“Nice try,” Parker said. “Not going to happen.”

Suddenly Devin sucked in his breath. “He just turned and looked my way—but I can’t even see a face. Maybe he doesn’t *have* a face.” Devin started talking faster. “This is the second time he’s done that. Stopped to look my way. Like he’s making sure I’m keeping up.”

Devin actually sounded scared. *Was this all part of the act? What did he mean when he said the guy had no face?* “Are you out of your mind? Turn around. It’s a trap. Run!”

“I need to record this first.”

If even half of what Devin said was true, he was getting in way over his head.

“I’m calling the police,” Parker said. “Exactly where are you?”

“I’m off Rowe now, on the road running alongside the quarry. But no police—I don’t want to scare this thing away.”

“Does he *look* scared?”

Devin gave a quick laugh. “No—but he should be. He doesn’t know who he’s messing with.”

Devin is crazier than I thought! Parker stared out his window. The fog was thick tonight. No stars visible. No moon. The patio light below him was just a brighter smudge. Was the quarry fog-bound like this, too? How close would Devin have to get just to see this Shadow-man? Too close.

“I’m making the call,” Parker said. He had to, right?

“No—don’t,” Devin said. “They’ll tell my parents and I’ll get

grounded for life. They don't know I snuck out. Come on, promise me—no cops.”

There was no way he was going to promise that.

“Parker, the thing climbed out on Humpback Rock now.” The little peninsula jutting out from the south side of the quarry. Devin was talking so fast—and so soft—that Parker could barely make out what he was saying. “Some kind of ritual, I think. He's raising the energy source over his head with both hands and—”

“That's it,” Parker said. “Leave now—or I call 9-1-1.”

“Holy donuts, Parker—the thing just did a Peter Pan right off the edge of Humpback!”

“Into the water?”

“It disappeared below the surface. I can see a big green glow in the water!”

For several seconds the only things Parker heard were wind and scuffling noises. “Devin—what's going on? You okay?”

“This is *incredible*.” Devin was back—and even more out of breath. “I'm standing at the edge of Humpback Rock—right where Shadow-man was ten seconds ago. He's gone, Parker. *Gone*.”

“What? You got closer?”

“I still see the green light—way down deep in the water. It's getting fainter.”

“Get *out* of there.”

“And I didn't even get any footage of this thing.” Devin groaned. “Who's going to believe me?”

Nobody. Parker wasn't sure he believed a word of it himself.

“The light is completely gone now. There aren't even any bubbles. Parker—I wish you'd been here. The thing vanished—poof—just totally disappeared.”

“Well, it’s time for you to disappear, too.” Maybe he was home right now—and this whole thing was a hoax.

“I gotta know what this was. An alien being? Some paranormal presence?”

Or his imagination—seeing the very things in the dark that he obsessed over. Parker knew a little of what that was about. “If it dropped into the water, and you see no bubbles, whatever it was is dead now. Go home.”

“Dead? Parker, you don’t know a thing about this kind of stuff. These things don’t die.”

“Thanks for that mind-picture, Devin.” That was going to make it a whole lot easier for him to sleep tonight. “I’m hanging up now. Promise me you’re going home—right now—or I promise you I’m calling the police.”

“Yeah, yeah. I’ll leave. No need for cops. You and Ella save me a seat at the lunch table tomorrow. I want to see her face when she hears about this.”

Devin disconnected, just like that. He’d make a big deal of the whole thing at school tomorrow. Parker was sure of it. He’d point to Parker as his star witness, but what had Parker seen? Nothing. And that was about how much of Devin’s story that he believed, too.

Still, a little part of him wondered if Devin was actually hanging out at Parker’s Pit at this moment. Some of the rocks there were covered with moss. And they’d be drenched in mist from the fog. Not to mention how dark it would be. Crawling around the rim of the quarry would be stupid-dangerous—even without this supposed Shadow-man. Not that the drop to the water was high at Parker’s Pit, but this early in May, the water would be knock-the-wind-out-of-you freezing.

He pecked out a quick text and reread it. If Devin truly *was* at

the quarry, he'd need to know Parker was ready to call the police. And if it was all a hoax? Devin would just think Parker was buying the whole thing—which would make tomorrow more interesting, for sure.

Do what you promised—or I'll do what I warned you I'd do. No more stalling. Do it now.

Parker smiled. The text sounded strong—like Parker was actually going to phone the police. If Devin really was by Parker's Pit, maybe this would get him moving. He sent it—and stared out the window again.

He'd never seen the fog thicker. Denser. Parker raised the window higher and reached outside with his gimpy arm. The darkness hovered closer to the freaky side of the spectrum. Nobody in his right mind would go out on a night like this. Even the man-in-the-moon wasn't showing his face. Parker could barely see the scars crisscrossing his forearm. He opened and closed his fist. Was sure he could feel the weight of the fog. The presence. Like it was some creature rising from the sea and creeping ashore to do some unholy task. The uneasy feeling gained mass. Size.

Get a grip, Parker. Where was all that coming from? He shook off the dark thoughts.

It wasn't two minutes later before Parker's phone vibrated with an incoming.

Ok, ok. Could have sworn I heard bubbles coming up. Spooky. You'll get the full report tomorrow. Don't worry, by the time you get this text I'll already be on the move.

Good. If he was trying to bamboozle Parker about this Shadow-man thing, his little scam was over for the night. And if he really had gone out to the quarry, he was on his way home now. Either way, Devin wasn't in any danger.

And neither was Parker. He swiped on the flashlight app and checked his room. Goliath's skull was still on the shelf where it belonged. Nobody was climbing through his open window. Dad and Mom were just down the hall in their bedroom. And most importantly, God was always with him, right?

Which all boiled down to one thing. He was safe here. *Safe*. The things he couldn't see in the dark were all about his imagination—like Devin's Shadow-man with the green light.

He sat on the edge of his bed and stared at the fog again. Yes, he was safe. That was logical—and he got that. But somewhere between his head and his heart there was a disconnect. Because here, in the darkness of his own room . . . for the first time since he'd moved to Rockport, Parker didn't feel safe at all.