

THE
LAST CHANCE
DETECTIVES™



LEGEND OF THE
DESERT BIGFOOT

JAKE THOENE & LUKE THOENE

THE LAST CHANCE DETECTIVES

Canyon Quest

Mystery Lights of Navajo Mesa

Legend of the Desert Bigfoot

Escape from Fire Lake

Terror from Outer Space



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DETECTIVES

Legend of the Desert Bigfoot

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

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Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 5001 Centennial Blvd., #50742, Colorado Springs, CO 80908.

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Cover design by Mike Harrigan

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

ISBN 978-1-64607-052-7

Printed in the United States of America

27 26 25 24 23 22 21
7 6 5 4 3 2 1



LEGEND OF THE DESERT BIGFOOT



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Based on the story and characters created by
Robert Vernon and the screenplay by Jake Thoene, Luke Thoene,
Brock Thoene, and Bodie Thoene

FOCUS
ON THE FAMILY[®]

A Focus on the Family Resource
Published by Tyndale House Publishers

Chapter 1

Ambrosia, Arizona—1994

THE FULL ORB OF A SILVERY MOON glimmered above the dusty, rugged desert landscape. Swirling winds spun through the dry creek bed, whistling a ghostly tune over the entrance to an old mine. On a lonely hill above the shaft, bits of gravel scoured the dry planks of Silas Varner's shack. In a fenced yard camouflaged by tumbleweeds and pieces of junk stood an alert-looking Border collie. His ears pricked at an unfamiliar sound, and the ruff of his neck stood erect as he barked.

Sand disturbed by the tramp of heavy footsteps scraped across the flat, red paving stones that led up to the cabin door. In the moonlight, the lighter fur of the dog's shoulders stood out against his dark coat as he bristled and snarled.

Beneath the rusty tin roof, surrounded by the messy clutter of the cabin, was an old, craggy-faced man. On his hands and knees, Silas Varner, prospector and desert rat, pushed aside a table and pine chairs to reveal the outline of a loose board in the floor. With the handle of a stewing spoon, he pried up the plank. Setting it aside, he stared into the hole beneath.

Sniffing, he wiped his nose on his shirtsleeve before retrieving an ironbound strongbox from the opening. On the lid, carved deep in the oak panel between the shackles, were the initials *S V*. He lifted the chest out of its hiding place and set it carefully on the floor.

The miner listened intently, hearing nothing but the howl of the wind and the barking of the dog. Silas licked his chapped lips. A bead of sweat rolled down his cheek as he extracted an iron key from his pocket and inserted it into the aging lock. It resisted at first, then opened, and Silas removed the padlock from the hasp and raised the lid. Glancing furtively around him, he scooped several light-gray canvas pouches from the box and dumped them onto the table.

Sifting the contents of one bag onto a sheet of tin, the eyes of the old miner sparkled like the gold dust that made a small glittering mound next to a scale and a set of brass weights. Silas grinned with deep pleasure as he adjusted the beam of the scale till it was perfectly still.

Deftly wielding a pair of tweezers despite the clumsiness of his calloused fingers, the prospector carefully moved grains of gold dust from pouch to pan balance, weighing

his treasure. He added a brass weight to the right-hand pan, more gold to the left pan, then yet another weight to the right. He looked up with annoyance at the noise made by the dog, muttered to himself, then yelled for the animal to keep still. The prospector noted the weight of the gold dust, then in his cramped handwriting, he patiently recorded the amount in the column of a faded green ledger.

The dog continued to bark, protesting a disturbing presence. It was anxious for the human to come out. Its warning was urgent.

“Jake!” Silas shouted again at the collie. “Pipe down out there!” But instead of subsiding, Jake’s barks intensified, taking on a shrill note of panic.

The plaid-shirted miner jumped up from his work, spilling a half-full cup of cold coffee. The bitter, dark brown fluid dribbled across the columns of weights and values, blotting the ink and angering the man. With a crash, Silas threw open the cabin door to yell into the darkness, “*Jake!* I said quiet! Don’t make me come over there.”

The dog seemed to understand the command and was silent. The dog’s owner peered around the yard but saw nothing out of place. Silas was about to reenter the shack when Jake resumed his yapping once more.

The prospector shook his head with irritation and limped out into the moonlit space. “All right,” Silas announced to the collie. “Looks like you need to be taught a lesson.” He continued muttering to himself as he hobbled painfully over to the collie’s wire compound.

As he reached the gate, Silas retrieved a leather muzzle from a post. Jake tried to slip past the man, but the miner grabbed the animal around the neck. "Hold still! Think you're smart, huh?" He slipped the muzzle over Jake's nose and buckled it in place. "Well, I'm gonna fix that." The dog's barks were reduced to anxious whines.

Silas pushed the dog away roughly. "There," he said. "That'll teach ya." At that moment there was a crash from the deep shadows beside the cabin. The miner spun around, raising his hand to shield his eyes from the glare of the cabin lights. "Who's there?" he demanded as he emerged from the dog pen. "I said, who's there?"

No answer came, except another clatter of metal. A moment later a garbage can bounced into the light, its top spinning crazily into view. Silas reached behind him and picked up a stick that was leaning against the fence. It was not a stout club, more of a walking stick really, but he brandished it like a spear, waving it in front of him. "Whoever's there better come out," he warned.

Taking a step forward, Silas was greeted by a frightening roar, and then a huge, impossibly hairy shape emerged from the dark. Startled, Silas retreated suddenly, tripped, and fell heavily to the ground. The miner clutched at his side in pain. He had just time enough to scream in terror at the approaching form before the lights and shadows danced around in front of his eyes and he blacked out.