

The background of the cover is a deep blue with a pattern of dark, vertical, slightly curved lines that resemble tree trunks or reeds. A bright, circular light source, possibly the moon or a distant light, is visible in the center, creating a strong glow and casting long, dark shadows of the vertical lines across the scene. At the bottom, a dark silhouette of a boy stands on a low, dark horizon line, looking towards the light.

The Adventures of the Missing Boy

G. Blair Gaddis



Sam is angry. He decides to go on a hike with his dog, Buddy, into the forested mountains without telling anyone. He does not return. 'Missing Boy' signs are posted throughout the state. Sam is gone. But Sam is in the same place...nearly 250 years in the past. Sam embarks on an epic adventure encountering pirates and Indians along the way. Every turn brings more danger and his dream of returning home seems impossible.

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OF THE
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By

G. Blair Gaddis

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CHAPTER 2

FORBIDDEN ROCK

Sam slowly opened his eyes. He was lying in the small hollowed out cave at the foot of the rock. Water was slowly dripping from the ledge that sheltered the cave and he could see early morning light through the mist in the trees. The rain had stopped.

“Oh boy, does my head ever hurt,” murmured Sam, “what happened?” His whole body was sore, especially his ankle. He started to get up when he remembered something his grandpa had told him: “If you ever fall or get hurt when you’re alone, check yourself out before you move.”

“Okay, Grandpa, let’s see if I’m in one piece.” Sam groaned as he moved his head from side to side, wiggled the fingers on each hand, and then his toes, finally raising his arms and legs. Nothing seemed to be broken, but he still hurt. That’s when he noticed a bad burn on his ankle. His sock was torn and his shoe was burned on that side.

“Dumb me,” thought Sam, “I forgot to bring any first aid stuff. And I’m gonna have a hard time explaining this shoe to my mom.”

He stood up very carefully. He didn’t feel great, but he figured he could hike back to the parking lot. He knew he was going to be in big trouble for this little adventure, which was the worst yet as far as breaking the rules went.

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"Guess I'll be grounded until I'm eighteen. No way can I explain staying out all night. Well, Buddy, we better get home. Buddy? BUDDY!"

Sam felt around the floor of the small cave for his pack and flashlight. He managed to find the strap of his backpack and pulled it out of the pile of leaves, but he couldn't find his dad's new flashlight. He thought, "I have to find that flashlight so I can look for Buddy." He felt along the back wall of the cave until his hand touched something furry; he jerked back thinking it might be some kind of animal. Then he realized it was Buddy and he wasn't moving!

"Oh my gosh, Buddy, are you okay?" In a panic he felt along the dog's chest trying to find a heartbeat. Then Buddy gave a weak groan and thumped his tail once. "Oh, Buddy, please, please be okay," Sam cried fearfully. Buddy's tail gave another thump. He tried to struggle to his feet but couldn't make it. "Come on, Buddy, you can do this." Finally, Buddy slowly got to his feet and a relieved Sam gave him a big hug, and led him to the front of the small cave. "Wait here, Buddy, I'm going back up on that rock to see if I can find Dad's flashlight, otherwise we'll be in big trouble - well, more trouble than we already are."

He stepped out of the small cave and turned toward the face of the rock. He noticed the hand and footholds in the rock were gone. "That's weird," he thought as he struggled to pull himself to the top of the crevice, digging with his toes and fingers. The sun had broken through the mist, and he looked down into the crack. A glint of metal caught his eye. It was the ring from the end of the flashlight embedded in

the rock. A wave of cold fear went through him. There was no way he was going to go back into that crevice. He scrambled down the face of the rock, grabbed his pack and said to Buddy, "Let's get out of here, this place is creepy." He turned toward the path and it was gone!

A forest of giant trees surrounded him! The trees were taller than any he had ever seen in these woods - or anyplace else - and smaller trees and shrubs crowded into the spaces between them. It looked like a solid green wall.

"None of this was here yesterday! This can't be happening! I must have really banged my head and this is some kind of shock thing," reasoned Sam.

"Let's not panic, Buddy!" But Sam was scared. He'd been told that if he ever got lost in the woods to stay put and someone would find him. "I wonder if that's really true," thought Sam as he dropped his pack and sank slowly to the ground.

Back at the parking lot a search party was forming in the early morning light. Men were sipping hot coffee and eating donuts. Sam's dad was there with Shep. The sheriff didn't want Jim to bring the dog because they were using search dogs and he thought a strange dog would distract them. Jim promised to keep Shep back from the others. He told the sheriff that Shep would have been the last one to see Sam and Buddy and she might know exactly where to look.

The sheriff reluctantly agreed. He and Jim had been friends since they were kids, and he desperately wanted to

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find Jim's son, but he doubted that Sam was still in the woods. He and Jim made out flyers the night before that were being posted on every store window in town and faxed to all of the law enforcement offices in the state. Steve was afraid Sam might have run into some shady characters; he thought Sam could be tied up in the trunk of a car and heading out of state this very minute.

Jim didn't buy that story, but he did work on the flyers with Steve. He brought a recent photo of Sam, taken at one of his last baseball games. Sam and Mike were smiling at the camera, arms over each other's shoulders. Steve scanned the photo into his computer, then cut Mike out and enlarged Sam's face. He typed 'MISSING BOY' across the bottom of the page.

Jim took over and typed in the statistics: 14 years old, 5 feet 2 inches tall and 150 pounds. He wasn't too sure about the height or weight, but he wasn't going to ask his wife; she was upset enough. Jim continued to type in the description of Sam: red hair, brown eyes, and freckles. Jim thought of all the things he could say about his son: that he liked sports, was a good ball player, and was on the soccer team. He really loved the outdoors. He did okay in school, at least in math and science, but he wasn't too good in social studies. That was always a sore point during the school year. Sam would grumble, "Dad, I can't remember all those dates and names, and who cares who fought who anyway?"

"Well, I care," Jim would snap back, "and I don't want to see any D's or F's on your report card." With that, Sam would grab his book and go sulking to his room.

Jim began to think of the many arguments he had with Sam lately over grades, attitude and laziness. He thought, "Maybe I was too tough on him. It's probably just an age thing. I wish I hadn't yelled at him last night."

It was Shep straining at her leash that brought Jim's attention back to the men in the parking lot. The dog handlers had started off with the sheriff and the search party spread out behind them. Jim stayed back so Shep wouldn't be distracted, but Shep was focused upon moving ahead and she knew exactly where she was going.

When they came to the path Sam took, Shep charged right up the twisting trail while the main group continued along the river. Jim never noticed this trail before and he knew the forest as well as the farm on which he was raised.

As they climbed higher past the musty smelling cave and along the narrow rocky path, he could not picture Sam going this way alone.

Shep turned onto the small animal path and dashed through the undergrowth. Jim heard her bark excitedly and then he heard her howl. Suddenly, he was afraid. "She found them and it's bad!" He bent down and crawled through the low-growing tree branches and saw Shep standing by what looked like a small cave at the foot of a rock. Shep turned toward the rock and let out a spine-tingling cry that gave Jim goose bumps! When he looked up he felt like howling, "Forbidden Rock! It's real!"

All those stories were true! There was a rock, and it looked nothing like any rock he had ever seen. It was

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terrifying! The air around the rock was cold, and there was a strange almost sickening smell. Instinctively, Jim stepped back. "There's no way Sam would go near this thing," he thought. "He even refused to go into a cave on one of our last hiking trips saying it was too scary." At the time Jim worried that Sam might be too 'chicken' and it could be one of the reasons he was the target of the school bullies.

Shep stubbornly refused to leave the small cave at the base of the rock. She sniffed through the leaves and started to whine. Jim spotted a water bottle lying near the dog. It could have belonged to any hiker, but it was the same brand they had at home. He tasted the water and it was fresh. He walked around the perimeter of the rock checking for footprints, but the rain had washed away all signs of activity.

He reluctantly climbed onto the rock and pulled himself up to the edge of the crevice. He took out his flashlight and saw a glint of silver. He realized it was a flashlight ring. He tried to move it with his walking stick but it was firmly embedded in the rock. He could see it was new metal and it looked much like the ring on his other flashlight - but how could it be embedded in the rock?

Jim sat back stunned. He remembered all the stories about Forbidden Rock, how people came to the rock and disappeared, but everyone knew those were just old folk tales. His dad had told him and his brother that there was no such thing as a mysterious rock and not to waste their time looking for it. Could the stories be true? If they were true, where was Sam?



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