

PERFECT PLAN

THE DAVENPORT SERIES: BOOK 1

" IF YOU LIKE ADVENTURE,
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ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF ANIMALS,
THIS IS PURE ENTERTAINMENT!"



BRETT DIFFLEY



When Reed Davenport leaves his privately-owned sanctuary after chasing poachers, he returns to the US to deal with an oil spill caused by the collision of two vessels in a hurricane. But, this is nothing compared to what he finds in the containers of the sinking freighter; children kidnapped for the slave trade market. The discovery puts him on a trail full of intrigue and suspense.

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PROLOGUE

The brown bear cub followed his two siblings in a spirited gait more typical of a puppy than a half-grown bear.

The sun's early morning rays were just seeping through the trees into the tranquil valley, chasing the chill away. Water from the earlier rain made his fur wet and flat as he pushed through the saturated foliage.

Another irritating drop of water flipped into the cubs' face, making him blink and shake at the same time. It also made him bump into the back of his sister again, who made a shrewd grunt of disapproval. But it was getting more difficult to stay focused. He was getting tired, and more importantly, hungry. He lifted his nose into the air again. There were so many intriguing smells and each invoked a tempting curiosity. But his mom had been very clear, there would be no wondering off again, and this morning was no exception.

She'd awakened early, acting skittish, and they'd been moving ever since, not even stopping to drink from the nearby stream. To make things worse, his mischievous lack of focus had forced him to the rear because she didn't want him continually running into *her* backside, but he followed like he was told. This wasn't a time to disobey her. She seemed in a strange mood as she set this blistering pace. Was she scared? It was possible, but he'd never seen her scared of anything. He'd even seen her attack a bear that was twice her size without any apparent thought for her own safety.

It happened in a small meadow that had the biggest, juiciest berries he'd ever seen. He'd just gotten his first mouthful when the bear appeared, snarling and charging at him. He quickly turned to run, but was too slow, and a huge paw sent him spinning to the ground. When he looked up, the angry beast

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stood over him, raging and showing his big teeth. He was so terrified he didn't realize he'd been screaming the whole time, but his mom noticed. That's when she went berserk. She was a blur of speed as she flew by and hit the big animal.

She let out a bloodcurdling roar as the impact sent the big beast reeling backwards. They wrestled, before posturing and snarling at each other. Then his mom charged again, and this time he ran for his life. It was a lesson learned, and the angriest he'd ever seen her...with his later scolding being a close second.

Now, he looked beyond his brother and sister to see his mom. Why were they in such a big hurry? And when were we going to eat for goodness sake? He watched her pause to stick her nose up in the air again, so he followed suit. Nothing! And then she was off again, even quickening her pace. That's when he got another smell, and his nostrils flared with temptation. It was berries! And they were close by. He paused. The aroma made his mouth water, and the urge to eat overwhelming. So he detoured into a clearing along the hill they were climbing. He approached the bush. The berries were huge! He began gorging himself, but stopped when an unfamiliar scent was carried in the breeze. Curiosity made him turn towards it. Was this what his mom feared? The thought of her made him realize he'd been left behind. It also made him feel fearful, so he turned to leave.

That's when it happened. A thud snapped his body sideways, just before a thunderous bang rolled down the valley. Confusion and panic set in. He screamed, snapping at the pain in his hind-quarters, tasting his own blood. After trying to rise, he cried out again. He couldn't stand! Wait—his mother was charging into the clearing to get him! But as he watched, she jerked sideways followed by another loud boom. When she rose, her neck flowed red from a huge hole in her neck. She staggered towards him again with a defiant look, but was lifted off the ground again, tumbling backwards. He stared in disbelief

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when she quit moving. His siblings arrived and fell to the same fate. He cried out in anguish and pain, but even that was cut off by a final crack of thunder.

An eerie quiet fell over the valley and all its inhabitants. Another predator had invaded their home, and this one was merciless.



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