

*A troubled young man, Cauley, finds he has a special ability that allows him to communicate with a crow named Sawtok. That relationship helps him to plot and execute revenge on his perceived enemies.*

## **The Crows of Mingo Creek**

By Van Voorhis

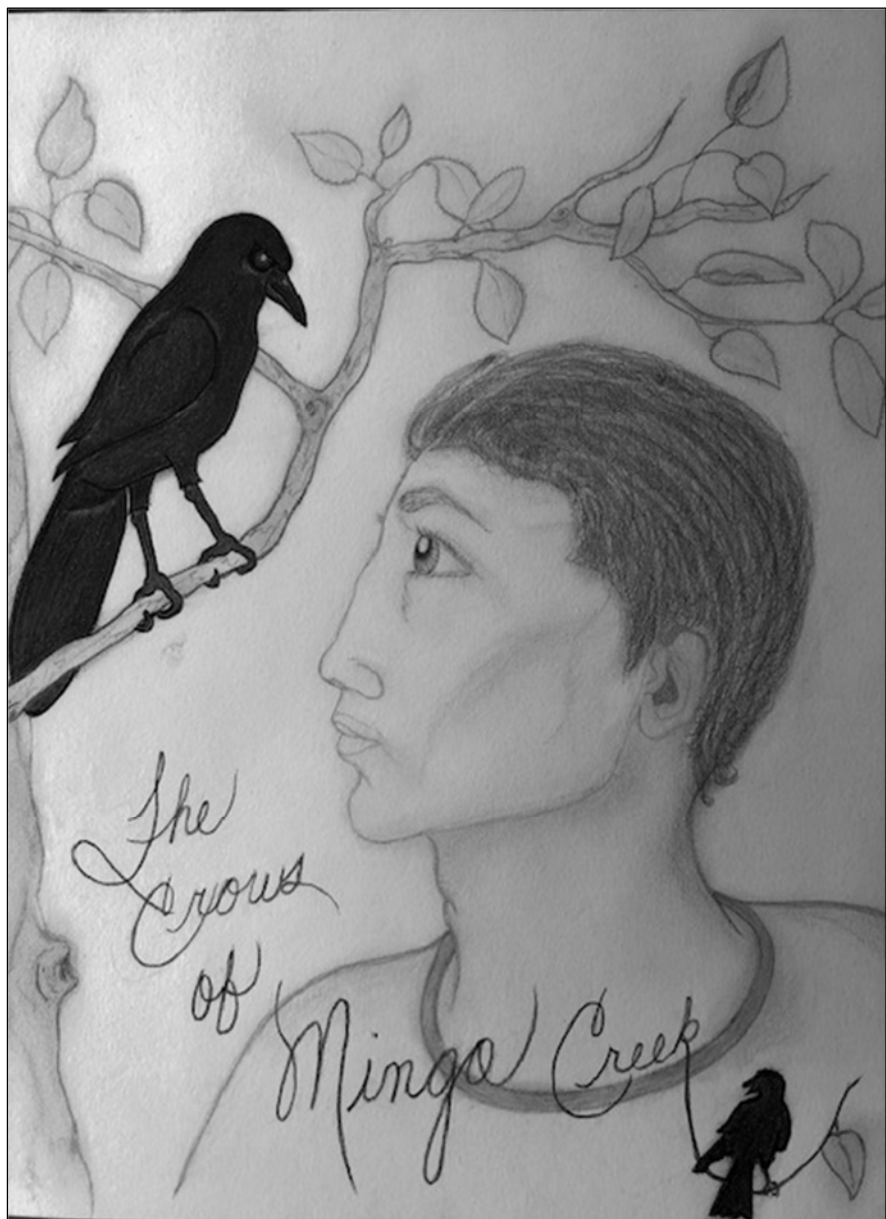
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**VAN VOORHIS**



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# Chapter 1

## SEVERAL YEARS AGO

Cauley Christian looked around the school parking lot warily. He didn't see any signs of the tough guys, including the worst of all, Buddy Woods. Slowly he stepped out of the side entrance of the school, careful not to set off the security alarm. The alarm was kind of a joke because all the kids knew how to get around it, in or out. Stonebrook High School was not very secure.

He could see his ancient Toyota pickup parked in the shade, near the end of the student parking. Hopefully he could make it across to it without anyone showing up. He had left study hall early and no one else seemed to be outside yet. Miss Dennison, the study hall monitor, knew that he did this regularly, but didn't care because she was aware of how much he got picked on by Big Buddy and his boys. She felt it didn't hurt to cut Cauley some slack. He was such a skinny little guy with no confidence but at the same time he showed a very special intelligence, even if at times it was misguided.

Once out the door, Cauley broke into an awkward run. He wasn't blessed with much coordination and always the last pick for any game or sport, that is right after his only friend. That would be L.B. as he called him. To everyone else in school it was "Liar Billy". Billy was much more athletic but besides the propensity to lie he also has a rather strong body odor making him almost as unappealing a pick as Cauley.

He made it to his truck without being yelled at or stopped and quickly opened the door. With a sigh of relief, he locked and turned the key. What a way to live he thought. Every school day was like this. He lived in fear that he could be caught alone without a teacher, the janitor or the school security officer around to protect him. Maybe that's why he and L.B. became friends, survival of those lowest on the food chain.

Speaking of L.B., Cauley promised he would swing around the front of the school and do a quick stop and let him jump in. They could pull an escape together. Hopefully, Big Buddy wouldn't have L.B. on the ground, pounding the daylights out of him for not having money or just for sport. L.B. was strong but a total coward with zero confidence, not that Cauley Christian had any backbone to speak of.

The old Toyota came around the front of the building just as his only friend stepped off the sidewalk. Cauley slammed on the brakes, L.B. jumped in and they made their escape. They had made it once again but as they both looked back toward the school, there was Buddy. He had a large smile on his face as he slowly raised a big fat arm and gave them the middle finger salute.

The two friends sat back in the seat and turned up the stereo. What a pair they made. Cauley, the deviously intelligent scrawny wimp who had not had a growth spurt yet and his sidekick Liar Billy, who came by the nickname deservedly. L.B. would lie about anything, even when the truth would better serve his purpose. He however, had grown early and was quite a physical specimen. Not large but a very muscled body. Cauley always felt if he could instill some aggression in the boy, that he would be a match for any of the tough guys including big fat Buddy. The lying frustrated Cauley but it wasn't like he had much choice. No one else even really tried to be his friend, except maybe that girl, Carlee,

There was definitely something about her. Carlee Trent was not only beautiful, popular and nice, but she actually talked to him. They seemed to be exact opposites, she had everything he lacked but he didn't hate her like almost everyone in that school or, for that matter, in the whole town.

The two boys stopped briefly at the small convenience store and bought a pack of cigarettes, illegally of course, for three dollars over actual price. They knew the old woman who ran the cash register and

could, like most other youngsters, buy just about anything for a price. The old clerk just smiled, showing the few teeth remaining in her mouth and put the extra cash in her pocket. Obviously, there were no cameras in the store or they were turned off when she worked. Beer was a little tougher to purchase and could only happen when no other customer was in the store. It was an additional ten spot on top of the listed price. Cauley and LB hadn't been able to pull that one off yet but they knew that Big Buddy and his boys did it almost every Friday.

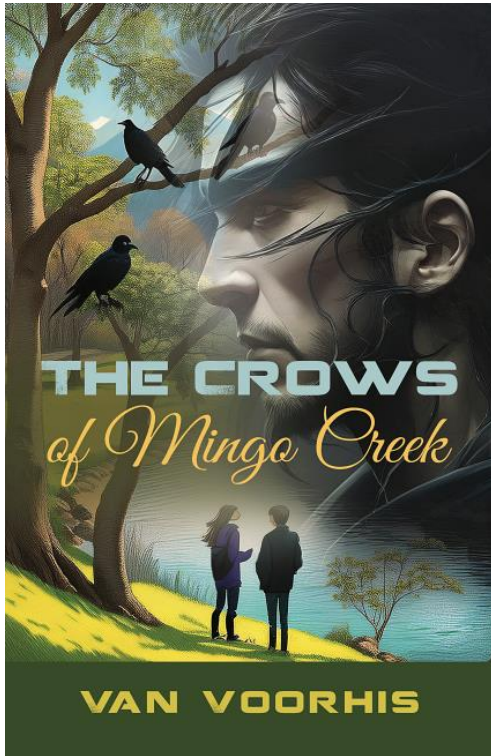
They lit up their smokes in the truck and cruised Main Street in their small town of Leesport. Of course, not much was going on. A few people were hanging out at the McDonalds and farther up the street the pizza shop was just opening. The parking lots at both bars along Main were full and Cauley noticed his dad's work truck in its usual spot at Carl's Tavern. He would roll in the house, tipsy, just before dinner at 6:00 PM . He often wondered when his adoptive father actually worked or why he needed a work truck. On the other hand, his mother seemed to work all the time, cleaning other folks' houses. Add this to the things Cauley hated about his life.

Thinking of food, Cauley turned on to LB's street and dropped him at his home. LB lived there with just his mom. She was really good looking. A sore spot for LB as the older boys teased him about having sex with her. She was hardly ever home before seven o'clock. At least Cauley's mom looked like a mom and was a good cook, so dinner would be great and the old man was a happy drunk, not mean. Maybe his life wasn't as bad as some, but he still hated it.



The author grew up close to Mingo Creek Park and has enjoyed many hours walking, biking and just hanging out there over the years. He and his wife currently spend a lot of their time in the Florida Keys. If a reader would happen to find themselves at the Looe Key Tiki Bar on Ramrod Key, he would gladly discuss this or any of his other novels over a cocktail.





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