

## THE GHOST MINE

### CHAPTER ONE

Nevada, a U.S. state known for its ghost towns and abandoned mines, had been on the radar of best friends Jamie and Rudy since their high school days. Now, having graduated college, the trip they had been talking about and planning for years was about to become a reality. Being from a small town in Pennsylvania the idea for this adventure had been a fantasy for the boys since ninth grade. A plan had been made that after graduating college they would reunite and use Jamie's dad's camper to drive to Nevada and fulfil their dream of exploring the abandoned mines and ghost towns in the state. Graduating with journalism degrees they thought this trip would be helpful in stimulating their imaginations and creativity. What they did not know was that this trip would send the boys into an adventure that they could never imagine.

After meticulous planning, the boys loaded the camper with the supplies they needed, said goodbye to their families, and left on the greatest adventure of their lifetime. While driving on the interstate, a new-found source of freedom enveloped them. Released from parental grip, they were cast into young adults, able to make their own decisions and plot their own futures. This was first realized when the flashing lights and siren of a state trooper behind them beckoned them to pull over, a taillight on the camper was burnt out. The officer was not pleasant, issuing them a ticket and requesting to search the truck. Jamie and Rudy had talked about issues they might be facing on this trip, especially with the police, as Rudy was black.

The young men were told to exit the truck, as a K-9 unit was on the way and the police officer was going to do a preliminary search while waiting. His behaviour was deplorable, leaving a huge mess to be cleaned up after the inspection. The police dog arrived, and after finding no indication of contraband, the police left leaving the boys with a feeling that their dignity had been violated by the people who were supposed to protect them. They got back on the road, stopping at the next service centre to reorganize the mess the police had left, and to have a quiet lunch at one of the picnic tables under the shade of the maple trees that dotted the property. Rudy and Jamie talked of this unfortunate incident while enjoying sandwiches and chips, realizing they were on their own. Aside from a major incident, their parents would not be there for them. They decided to keep driving another three hours and stop early at a KOA campground just inside the state line. They would rest and reorganize, starting out with a fresh attitude after the stresses of this day had caught up with them.

Before long, the young men found themselves pulling into the campground enjoying the thought of relaxing their minds and souls, hoping peace and safety would be with them. The boys' early night was punctuated by a restful sleep, and dreams of where this trip would take them. They let their imaginations run wild as life's adventures became the new reality. Calm prevailed as the night sky shone bright with its full moon and millions of shining stars. The boys slept peacefully in the safety of their camper, a new day on the horizon, launching them deeper into this new way of life they had chosen.

## CHAPTER TWO

Rudy woke with a start, the pounding rain hitting the camper, thunder and lightning dominating the morning sky. Jamie opened his eyes, his senses taking in the outside activity. Worry crossed his mind, as these violent thunderstorms sometimes spawned tornadoes or straight-line winds that could take down large trees causing destruction and sometimes death to unsuspecting campers. He prayed for the storm to end. Rudy was also apprehensive. They sat in silence waiting for the storm to pass, and as suddenly as it began it ended, the thunder now in the distance. A calm swept over the truck as the stressful situation subsided, allowing the boys to continue their thoughts of the journey upon which they had embarked.

Today their trip would take them across Ohio and into Indiana, where they would spend the night at a college friend's house. A stop would have to be made at an auto parts store to pick up a bulb for their burnt-out taillight so as not to repeat yesterday's incident. After breakfast, and in high spirits, they left the park and were soon on the interstate heading west towards Ohio. They crossed the state line, found the bulb they needed, and Rudy changed it in the parking lot of a Walmart store, taking this worry off their minds. After filling the camper with gas, they drove across rolling farmland. The fields contained various grains, corn, soybeans, and hay, already being cut for feed for the animals that lived on the area's farms.

After driving a couple of hundred miles, they decided to stop and eat lunch, not at a rest area but at a fast-food restaurant. Their desire for this food was a leftover from their college days. A Burger King was found, and their cravings were satisfied with a hamburger and French fries. A brief time later, a major slowdown in traffic led them to an overturned tractor trailer carrying chickens. The cages were laying on the ground smashed, and chickens were running everywhere. The state police were trying to lead this chaos to a positive ending. As the boys passed this scene they roared with laughter, an event they would soon not forget.

The rest of the day was uneventful, and they soon found themselves at their friend's house, a one-hundred-acre dairy farm that had been in the family for three generations. Steve, their friend, was overjoyed to see them, giving them a gracious welcome and introducing them to his parents. The plan was to help Steve and his dad do the milking, have dinner, and then go into town for beer and a few games of pool, a popular pastime the boys enjoyed at college. Dinner was a large farm style affair consisting of roast beef, potatoes, fresh vegetables, and hot homemade bread. This was followed up with fresh-baked apple pie, served with vanilla ice cream for dessert. This would prove to be the best meal the boys would eat on their entire journey. They decided after this large dinner they would forgo their trip into town and enjoy the quiet of the porch. They told Steve about their planned adventure and reminisced about their college life. The evening was pleasant and soon it was after midnight, prompting the boys to call it a night. Minutes later they were sleeping, peaceful dreams capturing the quiet of the moment.

## CHAPTER THREE

Rudy and Jamie woke early, their goal today was to drive across Indiana and Illinois and stop somewhere in Missouri for the night. They had breakfast with Steve, bid their farewells and were on their way. Travelling on the interstate in Indiana was like driving in Ohio, there was a lot of farmland and wide-open spaces. A silence overtook the campers as the sameness of the landscape and the hum of the truck's engine lulled them into a state of drowsiness. They decided to stop for lunch at a rest area and eat what Steve's mother had made for them just for this occasion. While eating, a small dog approached, obviously very hungry as he immediately assumed a begging position, his owner nowhere to be seen. The boys figured he was either lost or had been abandoned. The thought of leaving him at the rest area alone was disturbing, so they decided to make him a travelling companion, naming him Banjo.

Banjo was overjoyed to be rescued, jumping into the truck with no persuasion, settling into what would become his chair, and immediately going to sleep exhausted from his ordeal of being alone and lost. The decision to rescue Banjo was the right one, providing a new home for the dog, and a companion to break up the boredom of the long drive. A stop was made to pick up needed supplies for the dog, a leash, bowl, toy, and food was purchased. They made their way into Missouri, continuing to drive, deciding to stop when they reached Nebraska. The dog proved to be a good travelling companion, causing no unforeseen problems.

Since it was late, the boys decided to stop and stay in a Walmart parking lot, a service provided by the store at no cost. It was after midnight when they arrived. Pulling into the parking lot a car came speeding by them, almost crashing into their truck. Proceeding further into the parking lot they observed a car with its door open, and a figure not moving in the front seat. They felt it was their duty to stop and render aid if needed. A terrible surprise awaited them, the man had been shot and looked like he was clinging to life.

The police were called, and after what seemed an eternity they arrived with an ambulance. Unfortunately the man died, having a bullet wound to his chest. The boys were devastated by this unpleasant chain of events, never expecting to come upon a scene like this. The police surmised it was a robbery, involving drugs. The boys moved to the far end of the parking lot, hoping to get some rest. However, the image of the deceased man laying in his car haunted their thoughts, their young minds troubled by this experience. It made them realize they were now adults, facing the same world as their parents. A troubled sleep followed, the boys awakening to the daylight when employees arrived to start their workday, oblivious to the events that happened in the parking lot the night before. It was an episode that would never be forgotten by these young travellers.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Rudy and Jamie were exhausted, not sleeping well because of the previous night's events. They ate a light breakfast, fed the dog, and took him for a walk. They were soon back on the highway travelling west towards Wyoming. They had decided to drive to Salt Lake City, Utah, find a campground and spend the night. The drive had been quiet until Jamie glanced in his mirror and saw what looked like a wave of motorcycles approaching at a high rate of speed. The bikers soon caught up with them and the boys realized they were Hells Angels, over a hundred in total. They

slowed as they passed the truck, the cyclists looking menacingly at the boys. Suddenly about twenty of the bikes veered in front of the truck, almost causing a collision.

The bikes slowed down causing the truck to do the same. The boys were now surrounded on three sides, the bikers no longer looking at them, only focusing straight ahead. Jamie and Rudy were terrified, not knowing what was going to happen next. After what seemed like an eternity, the bikers sped off knowing they had succeeded in scaring these travellers half to death. With hearts pounding in their chests, the boys exited at the next rest area to calm down, realizing how vulnerable they had been to a different outcome. They walked Banjo and joked about how they would reflect on this event in their journals.

Leaving the rest area, they continued on their adventure and soon found themselves in Wyoming. A most unusual variety of rolling hills and a semi desert landscape greeted them. This state is known for its large cattle ranches and horse farms, going back to the days of settlement. In certain areas it is wide open and treeless. At one time it was Indigenous land, which the natives did not easily or readily surrender. The boys decided to stop in a small town off the interstate, fill up with gas, find a park and eat lunch. Pulling into a locally-owned station, they noticed a small building beside it which housed the station owner's collection of Indigenous artifacts.

Deciding it was of interest, and after paying a small fee, Rudy and Jamie entered the building. It was a fascinating collection of over a thousand pieces, with a good explanation of the artifacts and their dates of origin. The boys were thrilled they had happened upon this exhibit of American history. They ate lunch and continued their journey, driving through a landscape that they had seen only in pictures, making them feel as if they were on another planet. The mood in the truck was happy; they sang songs to the radio that even Banjo joined in on. Tomorrow they would reach their destination, Virginia City, Nevada. A town still alive from its silver mining days, it was surrounded by ghost towns and abandoned mines that beckoned the boys to adventure.

With night coming on they were approaching their campground outside Salt Lake City. Arriving at dusk, they settled into a spot where they could view the beautiful sunset this region was known for. They walked Banjo, ate a hearty dinner, and played cards till their eye lids became heavy. Retiring to bed, the pair were excited about what tomorrow would bring. The real adventure was about to begin.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The boys left early, eager to reach their destination, Virginia City, Nevada in the early afternoon. This city had been established by the prospectors who flooded the area seeking their fortunes, prospecting the substantial amounts of silver that had been discovered here. Resuming their journey, the boys soon found themselves at the Nevada Welcome Center, where they had decided to stop for an early lunch and to walk Banjo. However, the dog had plans of his own. As soon as the door of the truck was opened, he jumped out and did not stop running until he was out of sight, disappearing into the wooded area behind the plaza. Jamie and Rudy were baffled, not understanding why he had done this. They knew he was gone, now just a memory from their past. They ate lunch hoping for his return, but he never came back.

The pair left the plaza with heavy hearts, already missing Banjo as they continued to Virginia City, arriving in the afternoon as planned. Once a boom town for the silver mining industry, it was now a small tourist town promoting the past of Nevada's rich history. Original buildings from the era dotted the main street as the boys walked the wooden sidewalk exploring the past culture of the people that called this area home. They ate an early dinner in the old saloon and played the slot machines that had been brought in for the tourist's enjoyment.

Rudy and Jamie had made reservations at a private campground outside of town where they would stay for the duration of the trip. After a short drive they arrived, a non-descript place void of shade, in a desert setting. They realized now how lucky they had been to plan this trip early in the year and not during the summer, as the heat then would be unbearable. They chose a site and prepared for their stay, leaving their departure date open. The awning on the truck proved to be a good cover from the sun, and with a picnic table placed under it they had a pleasant place to sit outside and enjoy the fresh air. The boys were happy with this arrangement and would enjoy dinners outdoors during this endeavor. They had rented a jeep but were not able to take possession of it until tomorrow, when the previous renters were to return it. This jeep would make it easier to get into areas where the terrain was known to be rough, allowing them to explore more secluded mine sites, and small abandoned ghost towns.

The evening was pleasant, the quiet of the desert and the sky with its millions of shining stars brought a calmness and peace to their souls they had not experienced before. Excitement mounted as the thought of exploring things from the past awaited them. Little did they know that some things are better left alone, and adventures can sometimes turn out to be not as expected. The boys retired to their bunks, looking forward to what tomorrow would bring, their dreams a prophecy of events that were to come.

## CHAPTER SIX

The boys awoke to the sound of the cell phone ringing, it was the car rental company saying their jeep was ready to be picked up. Rousing themselves awake they had a light breakfast and were on their way, eager to start exploring. The plan was to pick up the jeep, drop the truck off at the campground, and drive to their first ghost town. There they would find a suitable campsite, and with the camping supplies they had brought with them they would tent camp for the night. All ghost towns had some sort of legend, and the town they had selected had experienced an unspoken tragedy, the loss of twenty townspeople killed during a mine cave in, their bodies never recovered. Soon after this accident, the remaining residents left, not wanting to continue to work the mine where such a catastrophe had unfolded. It was said the mournful souls of the dead miners could be heard, crying out for help. The town, called Silver Springs, was also said to be haunted, the restless souls of the dead left searching for their loved ones on moonlit nights.

The site was an hour's drive from Virginia City over rough terrain, being accessible only by vehicles with four-wheel drive and large tires, keeping this ghost town available to only the most devoted explorers. The boys packed their jeep and set out on their adventure, anxious to get to their destination. For the first half of the trip the road was good, but the turn off from the main road was challenging, being an old wagon trail used to transport supplies during its history as a

mining town. They now understood why it was said that few people visited. After what seemed an eternity, old buildings came into view, a general store, a saloon, a barber shop, and abandoned houses. It was a surreal setting in a desert landscape, not to be duplicated by the hand of man, a process that took nature over a hundred years to create.

The old mine sat abandoned near the edge of town, sealed up with a wooden barrier. Trapped in time, twenty skeletons interred inside being its only friend. After surveying the area, the boys decided on a camping spot close to the old mine, hoping to hear the cries of the dead that legend described. After their camp was set up, they would hike the area around the town, but leave the exploration of the town and mine for tomorrow. Their tent went up, and their meager supplies were unpacked, including wood they had brought for a campfire.

Jamie and Rudy set out for their walk, but soon ran into a problem they were not expecting. There were rattle snakes that inhabited the area, making their hike slow and treacherous. Getting bit out here meant certain death, as help was far away. On the lighter side they saw a roadrunner, a bird native to the area, and unusual looking lizards. They found the spring that the town was named after, still providing fresh water, a testament to nature's resilience to stand up to such adverse conditions. They returned to camp, had dinner of cold fried chicken and salads purchased in Virginia City and kept in a cooler they had packed in with them. After darkness came, they lit their campfire, enjoyed s'mores and drank the fresh spring water nature had provided them. They retired to their tent, tired from their long day, not expecting their sleep to be interrupted by sheer terror, which would make them believers of the legend of Silver Springs.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Jamie woke with a start, a sense of terror gripping him. He woke Rudy and told him to be quiet. The mournful cries of the dead pierced the stillness of the night, the boys lay in silence as absolute terror gripped them. The legend of Silver Springs, which the boys had written off as fantasy and superstition, was now their reality. After a short while the cries stopped, leaving the silence of the night seem even more threatening. They turned the lantern on in the tent, hoping the light would alleviate of the anxiety they were feeling.

Then it started again, an inhumane wailing, the souls of the dead miners crying out for help, never finding the peace they sought from their sudden deaths. The boys felt trapped, now wishing they had never embarked on such a crazy adventure. The cries were intermittent, but kept the boys awake till the first signs of light beckoned them to go outside. The silence and isolation no longer embraced, replaced by a feeling of dread and escape from this paranormal hell. The ghost town beckoned, now an extension of the mine, drawing the boys like a magnet to explore the buildings of the miner's past.

An uneasy silence gripped the adventure seekers as they thought about their next move. They decided on staying an extra night, a moonlit night that was said to bring out the spirits of the dead to roam the town of Silver Springs. A daylight investigation was in order first, exploring both the mine and the town. They had agreed to stand tall against this paranormal activity. Being journalists, they felt they had a duty to bring truth to this tragedy.

They made their way to the mine first; the wood had been stripped away from the entrance allowing them easy entry. They had brought headlamps and powerful flashlights for this venture. Entering the mine, they felt a sense of profound sadness, the spirits of the dead dominating the atmosphere making it feel like a tomb. Their thoughts of sharing this environment with the spirits was unnerving. They followed the mine for a short distance until they encountered a wall of rock. They felt this was where the cave-in had occurred. Behind this wall of rock were the skeletons of the miners, a tragedy of their own making. The boys were silent wondering about the chaos this had brought to the people of Silver Springs, the sadness of the families that had lost loved ones in this tragedy. They turned and made their way back to the entrance, the light of the day healing their spirit as they exited this tomb of the dead.

The pair made their way into town to explore the empty buildings that once brought life to this isolated community. The buildings, stripped of their furnishings and their identities, now lay in ruin. As they explored the buildings, they marvelled at the thought that these structures once held hope and promise to the people that lived here, and that a tragedy would destroy those hopes and the town would be abandoned. Finding nothing of interest, they decided to return to camp to get some sleep and ready themselves for their night-time adventure; confronting the spirits that inhabited these buildings, searching for their loved ones they would never find. Much-needed rest was in order to prepare them for an experience they would not soon forget, giving them an insight into a spiritual world they would someday join, a destiny for all humans when their time came.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

After a short nap, the boys awoke to the realization that their night-time adventure to the ghost town was only hours away. Eating canned tuna, beans, and bread for dinner, their food supplies were exhausted, meaning they would have to leave tomorrow. They built a fire using the rest of the wood they brought, planning to investigate the town after midnight. The moon shone brightly giving the town an eerie glow, the silence overwhelming the boys' imaginations of what they would encounter. The clock struck midnight as the boys readied themselves to find the truth, making their way into the town.

Upon arriving, the first thing they noticed were orbs of light everywhere, usually signalling paranormal energy. Dark shadows moved about as the boys shone powerful lights in and around the buildings. Jamie and Rudy were scared but did not let this overwhelming fear control their behavior. The slamming of the saloon doors caught their attention. Moving closer they could see the outline of a man, dressed in mining gear, standing by the building. The pair entered the saloon, apprehensive at what they would find. Suddenly, a loud crash caused the boys to run out of the building, fear gripping their souls.

The town was alive with paranormal activity; ghostly shadows everywhere, the stench of death overtaking the senses. The boys had seen enough, they decided to make their exit and return to camp, an overwhelming fear suddenly taking charge of their lives. They retired to their only refuge away from this horror, their tent. The night passed, sleeping was not possible. The boys waited for the un-earthly cries from the mine, which never came. Daylight could not come soon

enough as they planned their exit from this hell in the desert, anxious to get back to their truck and some sense of normality.

The appearance of light drove the boys into action. The camp was quickly packed up and the boys left, knowing that their tale would be nothing but a delightful story to the people they told it to. They soon found themselves back at the main road, a sense of relief that they were returning to reality, this experience more like a nightmare that would not soon be forgotten. They reached their campsite without incident, and were soon in the comfort of the truck, an uneasy sleep taking over their tired souls.

The rest of their vacation was just that, a vacation; the remainder of their time here was spent visiting tourist sites, not ghost towns. The boys left Nevada with memories that would never be forgotten, their belief in the supernatural now a fact. A book was written of their adventure, fiction to the readers, but truth to the boys who experienced it, and to the souls of the dead who would never stop searching for the peace they deserved; a mirage in the desert, not ready to give up its secrets in its eternal search for answers, creating a mystery that will never be solved.