

# **The Creature in the Forest**

High Noon Books

*The Creature in the Forest*  
is a book in the  
“Scoop Doogan” series  
published by  
High Noon Books.

# **The Creature in the Forest**

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CHAPTER 1  
Scoop Gets a Call

Scoop Doogan, star reporter at the Big Bend Times, was talking on the phone. He hung up. He thought for a minute. Then he got up.

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He walked across the news room. He wanted to talk to Ann Milardo, editor of the Times.

“Ann, someone else saw the creature in Chimney Rock State Forest,” Scoop said.

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Ann looked up from her computer. It was Friday morning. She was busy with a story for Saturday’s paper.

She asked quickly, “Who told you? How do you know?”

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Scoop answered, “Debra Hill, a forest ranger just called. A camper saw the creature last night. The camper told Debra about it this morning. Debra called her boss. Then she called me.”

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“What did the camper say?” asked Ann.  
“He didn’t get a good look. But he said the creature was very tall. Maybe ten feet tall. And it walked funny. It took great big steps,” said Scoop.

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Ann said, “The creature has been seen three times now. Everyone says the same thing: very tall, walks funny.”

Ann was quiet. Then she said, “The Times should run a story on the creature. Do you want to write it?”

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“I sure do,” said Scoop. This was his kind of story. He could write about the creature. And he could solve the mystery too.

Ann said, “First drive out to the forest. See what you can find out. Then we’ll decide how long the story should be.”

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“I’ll go tomorrow morning. I’ll take Jake with me. He can learn what reporters do when they don’t have much to go on,” said Scoop.

Jake Malone was an intern at the Times. He was a student at the college in town. He wanted to be a reporter some day.

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“Jake’s a bright kid. He’s the best intern we’ve ever had,” said Ann.

Jake checked in with Scoop that afternoon.

“How’s everything at school? Got any plans for the weekend?” asked Scoop.

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“I’m OK. What’s up?” Jake said to Scoop.

“I want you to work with me on a story. I think you’ll learn a lot. And you might have some fun too,” said Scoop.

“A fun story? And you want me to work on it?” asked Jake.

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“That’s right. It might take all weekend. Are you OK with that?” Scoop said.

“OK with me. So, what’s the story?” asked Jake.

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“A creature in Chimney Rock State Forest. It’s been seen three times. Campers are finding out. They’re afraid. And the rangers are getting worried,” said Scoop.

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“Count me in, Scoop,” said Jake. He was excited about this story.

“I guess that means you’ll help me,” said Scoop smiling.

“I sure will,” said Jake.

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Jake had helped Scoop before. He knew he would learn a lot. And Scoop was fun to work with. The reporters at the Times all liked him. Jake felt lucky.

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“We’ll leave for the forest in the morning,” Scoop told Jake.

“I’m really glad you want me on this story,” said Jake.

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Scoop laughed. "Watch out, creature. Scoop and Jake of the Times are on the way. Your nights of scaring people are about to end."

Scoop handed Jake a pile of papers. "Now check all the facts marked in red. Then go home and get some sleep. We're going to have a busy weekend."

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## CHAPTER 2

### At the Forest

Scoop had a black sports car. It was an old car. He had worked on it for years. He loved to drive the car. And Jake loved to ride in it.

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Scoop and Jake were on the freeway. They were on their way to Chimney Rock State Forest.

Scoop was humming quietly. He hummed when he was thinking. He was thinking about the creature. After a while he started to talk.

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"The creature hasn't hurt anyone. It just scares people. We don't want to hurt it. And we don't want anyone else to hurt it either. We just want to find out what it is," said Scoop.

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Jake said, "It couldn't be a man. No one is ten feet tall. Maybe it's a bear."

"What about that funny walk? A bear doesn't walk that way," said Scoop.

"Maybe the creature isn't ten feet tall. People get scared. They make things up," said Jake.

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Scoop hummed. The miles went by fast. Scoop and Jake began to see rocky hills and more trees.

"I like the country. It's so quiet," said Scoop.

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Jake said, "Yes, it is quiet. But I like Big Bend too. And a reporter needs a city. You can be a ranger or farmer in the country. But you can't be a reporter."

"You're right, Jake. Most news happens in cities. The readers are there too," said Scoop. Scoop drove on.

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They saw a sign ahead:  
CHIMNEY ROCK STATE FOREST. NO HUNTING.  
FIRE DANGER: HIGH.

"So this is the home of the creature," Jake said.

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Scoop turned off the freeway. He pointed ahead, "See those trees? That's the real home of the creature. The forest is dark there even during the day."

Scoop drove up to the ranger station. He stopped the car. He and Jake got out and walked to the station.

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Ranger Debra Hill was sitting at her desk. A young man was with her.

Scoop said, "I'm Scoop Doogan. We talked on the phone. This is Jake Malone, an intern at the paper. We're here to talk about the creature."

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Ranger Hill shook their hands. Then she pointed to the young man and said, "This is Rick Adams. He works for me part time."

The young man nodded to Scoop and Jake

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Ranger Hill said to Scoop and Jake, "Nothing new has happened. A camper saw the creature Thursday night. No one has seen it since."

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“Is the camper still here?” asked Scoop.  
“I think he’s at the camp grounds. His name is Len Silver,” the ranger said.

She went on, “Poor man. He hasn’t left the camp grounds since Thursday night. He’s afraid to go back into the forest. I’m surprised he’s still here.”

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Scoop said, “We need to talk to Mr. Silver. I want to hear about the creature first hand. I want to know what it did. I want to know what it looked like. I want to know everything.”

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“Rick can take you to him,” said Ranger Hill.  
“Maybe we’ll see the creature,” said Jake.

“Not in the day time. The creature comes out at night,” said the ranger.

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Scoop, Jake, and Rick Adams left the ranger station. They climbed into Rick’s truck. Rick drove on a dirt road into the forest.

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## CHAPTER 3

### Len Tells His Story

Rick drove deep into the forest. The road was rocky. The forest was dark and quiet.

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Scoop said to Rick, "So you work part time." Rick said, "Yes. I lost my old job. I worked in a gas station. It closed in January. This is the only job I could find."

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Scoop nodded, "Not much work out here." Soon they came to an open place. There were tents there. Some were small. Others were large. There were campers and vans there too.

"Here we are. And there's Len Silver," said Rick.

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Rick, Scoop, and Jake got out of the truck. Rick walked over to one of the tents. An older man was sitting next to it.

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“Hi, Len. I’d like you to meet Scoop Doogan and Jake Malone. They’re from the Big Bend Times. They want to talk to you. They know you saw the creature the other night,” said Rick.

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Len shook his head. “I was so afraid. I didn’t get a very good look. I was too busy running away.”

“Where did you see this creature?” asked Scoop.

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“Deep in the woods. A little way up that trail,” answered Len. He pointed to a rocky trail. It led into the forest.

“Other people saw the creature there too,” said Rick.

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“Why were you in the woods at night?” Scoop asked Len.

“I couldn’t sleep. I’m not used to the sounds in the forest. I thought I’d take a walk,” said Len.

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“A walk? In the dark forest? Late at night?” Jake said. He knew he would never do that. He was from the city. To him, forests at night were scary places.

“There was a full moon on Thursday night. I could see the trail. And I didn’t want to go far,” said Len.

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“So what did you see?” Scoop asked. Len said, “I saw a shape ahead of me. It was very tall.”

“How tall?” asked Jake.

“At least ten feet tall. It was the shape of a man. But much taller,” said Len.

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“Could it have been a bear? You said you didn’t get a good look,” said Jake to Len.

Rick said, “It couldn’t be a bear.”

“How do you know? Have you seen the creature?” Scoop asked Rick.

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“I grew up in these parts. There are bears around. But no bear here is close to ten feet tall. Besides, I worked in a circus for a while. I know how bears move,” said Rick.

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“He’s right. The creature didn’t walk like a bear,” said Len.

“Tell us more,” said Scoop.

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Len went on, “It took big, long steps. It moved fast into the trees.”

Jake asked, “Why did you stay here after what you saw?”

“I like the forest. But I won’t go into the woods alone. Ever again.” said Len.

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Scoop, Jake, and Rick said goodbye to Len. They got into Rick’s truck. They started to drive.

Scoop said to Rick, “Tell us about working with the circus.”

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“I was a clown,” Rick said.

“That must have been fun,” said Jake.

“Yes. It was. But the circus closed. And I came back home,” said Rick.

“You must have felt bad about that,” said Jake.

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They pulled up to the ranger station. The three men got out of the truck. Rick walked ahead of Scoop and Jake.

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Scoop said to Jake, "We're going to stay here tonight. We need to see the creature if we can."

"OK with me," said Jake.

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"I'll call Ann. I'll tell her about our day. And I'll tell her we're staying," said Scoop.

Scoop finished his call. He said to Jake, "We'll spend the night here. But we need to go back tomorrow. Ann needs me on Monday morning."

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"So, what are we doing tonight?" asked Jake. Scoop did not say anything. He started to hum a little. He was thinking.

Then he said, "We'll wait until dark. Then we'll go into the forest. We'll go up to where Len saw the creature."

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“Then what?” asked Jake. He did not like the plan so far. But he wanted to help Scoop. And he wanted to solve the mystery.

“We’ll hide. We’ll wait until the creature shows up,” said Scoop.

“What if it doesn’t show up?” asked Jake.

“Oh, I think it will,” said Scoop.

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Ranger Hill came out of the ranger station. She said, “Are you two hungry?”

“Yes,” said Scoop and Jake.

“Then come on over to my place. It’s not far from here. Rick can come too. He’ll show you where it is,” said the ranger.

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Scoop said, “We may be up all night. We need to get some sleep after dinner. Is there a place we can use for a few hours?”

The ranger said, “There’s a shelter near the camp grounds. It’s close to the trail. I have two sleeping bags you can use.”

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“That’s great, Debra. Thanks,” said Scoop. “We’ll be rested and ready for the creature,” Jake said. He sounded brave. But he was not feeling brave at all.

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“I wonder what the creature will look like,”  
he said to Scoop and Ranger Hill.

“We’ll soon find out,” said Scoop.

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## CHAPTER 4

### Waiting for the Creature

Scoop and Jake ate dinner with Ranger Hill  
and Rick Adams. They talked about the creature.  
And they talked about camping.

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After dinner Rick drove Scoop and Jake to  
the camp grounds. He showed them the shelter.  
As he walked away, he said, “Good luck tonight.”

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Scoop and Jake slept for a few hours. When  
they woke up, it was dark. The forest was quiet.  
They could hear soft sounds from the camp  
grounds.

“It’s time to find the creature,” Scoop said.

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“I hope you have a flashlight,” said Jake.

“I do. But we won’t use it. We don’t want to scare the creature away,” said Scoop.

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The two walked up the trail. It was dark. But the moon helped them see the way. They tried to be quiet. They did not want the creature to hear them coming.

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“See those trees over there? We can hide behind them. From there we can see the trail. That’s where Len saw the creature.” said Scoop.

Scoop and Jake got behind the trees. They moved some rocks. Then they piled up leaves. They sat down. They were ready for a long wait.

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One hour passed. Two hours passed. “I’m getting tired,” said Jake quietly.

“Me too. But we can’t fall asleep. The creature might slip past us,” said Scoop.

“You’re right. We need to stay awake,” Jake said.

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The two waited and waited. An owl hooted. A bat flew from tree to tree. A mouse came close. Jake wanted to scare the mouse away. But he didn't want to scare the creature away. So he did nothing.

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Then Jake said, "There. In the trees. I see something moving."

"Where?" asked Scoop.

"On the other side of that rock," Jake pointed.

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Scoop looked hard. "I can see it. It does look ten feet tall."

"It's at least that tall," said Jake.

Jake thought, "I want to get out of here." But he didn't run. He wanted to be a reporter like Scoop. And Scoop wasn't running away.

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Jake asked, "What should we do?"

"Let's just watch for a while," Scoop said.

The creature took a few steps. Its legs were very long. It took big steps. It moved fast. But it stumbled too.

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“I think we can catch it. You can run faster than that creature,” said Scoop quietly.

Jake had been on the track team in high school. He still ran almost every day.

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Scoop went on, “When I yell, we’ll jump up. You run as fast as you can. When you reach the creature, grab its legs. I’ll be right behind you.”

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“I’m ready,” said Jake. He did not feel ready at all. But he did not want to wait any longer.

Then Scoop let out a yell. He and Jake jumped up. Both ran fast toward the creature.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Jake Loses a Race**

Scoop and Jake ran fast. Jake was ahead of Scoop. The creature saw them coming. It started to run too.

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Then Scoop tripped on a rock. He fell hard. He tried to get up. But he had hurt his ankle. He tried to stand. But his ankle hurt too much.

Scoop shouted, "Keep going! Don't wait for me."

Jake kept running. The creature ran faster. It ran into the dark woods. Jake was right behind.

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The creature ran through the trees. It stepped over rocks and branches. It ran through deep piles of leaves.

For a time Jake kept up with the creature. But the creature began taking bigger steps. It began to get ahead of Jake. Finally the creature disappeared in the woods.

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Jake stopped. He was tired. And the creature had gotten away.

Jake looked around. He thought he was lost. He shouted for Scoop. Scoop shouted back. Scoop's voice sounded far away.

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Jake found his way back to the trail. He saw Scoop. The reporter was sitting on a rock. He was rubbing his ankle. Jake walked slowly toward Scoop.

"I'm sorry I couldn't help you. My ankle really hurts," said Scoop.

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“The creature got away,” Jake said sadly.  
“Well, you tried hard,” said Scoop.

“I thought I was fast. But the creature was faster. Those long legs were too much for me,” said Jake.

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Scoop asked, “Did you get a good look at it?”

“No. I wasn’t close enough. And it never turned around to look at me,” said Jake.

“Too bad. The creature is still a mystery. And I don’t have much of a story,” said Scoop.

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It was nearly morning. Jake helped Scoop back to the camp grounds. They called Rick.

He picked them up. He drove them to the ranger station.

Scoop put ice on his ankle. That helped. Then he and Jake had breakfast with Ranger Hill.

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It was time to go back to Big Bend. Jake helped Scoop walk to the car. Ranger Hill walked with them.

“I’m sorry you didn’t catch the creature. You sure made a good try,” said the ranger.

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“We’re sorry too. Someone will catch that creature. I wanted to be the one to do it,” said Scoop.

The ranger said, “Drive carefully. And come back soon. This is a beautiful place. Most of the time it’s a quiet place too.”

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Scoop couldn’t drive. So Jake drove Scoop’s car. Jake loved to drive. And he really liked to drive the old sports car.

Scoop and Jake drove out of the forest. They headed back to the city. Scoop was quiet. He thought about his story. It wasn’t much of a story so far.

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They had gone about ten miles. Then Jake shouted, “Yes!”

He got off the freeway at the next exit. Scoop asked, “What’s going on? Why are you getting off the freeway?”

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“We have to go back to the forest,” Jake answered.

“Why?” Scoop asked.

“I just thought of something. I think I know who the creature is,” said Jake.

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“How about telling me? I’m the reporter. You’re the intern. You should tell me everything,” said Scoop.

“First I want to make sure I’m right. Then I’ll tell you everything,” said Jake.

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Scoop and Jake drove back to the forest. Jake was sure he was right. He and Scoop were about to solve the mystery.

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## CHAPTER 6

### Jake Solves the Mystery

Ranger Hill was surprised to see Scoop and Jake.

“I thought you two had to get back to the city,” she said.

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“We do. But Jake has an idea. He thinks he knows who the creature is. So we came back,” said Scoop.

“I remembered something. I should have thought of it sooner,” said Jake.

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“What did you remember?” the ranger asked Jake.

“I remembered something about clowns. Where’s Rick Adams?” asked Jake.

Ranger Hill pointed to a cabin near the ranger station, “He’s in that cabin. That’s where he stays.”

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“Let’s go over there. I have something to say to Rick Adams,” said Jake.

Scoop, Jake, and Ranger Hill walked toward the cabin. Scoop was smiling. He was proud of Jake.

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They reached the door of the cabin. Jake said, “Wait a minute. I want to look at those boards behind the cabin.”

“They’re just boards. They’ve been there for weeks,” said Ranger Hill.

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“Maybe they’re just boards. Maybe they’re not. Let’s take a look,” said Jake.

Scoop said to the ranger, “I’m sure Jake knows what he’s doing.”

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The three walked to the back of the cabin. Jake helped Scoop walk. Jake and the ranger bent down. Scoop stood next to them. They all looked closely at the boards.

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“See. They’re just plain boards,” said Ranger Hill.

“Not these two,” Jake said.

“He’s right. These two boards have straps on them,” Scoop said to the ranger.

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## The Creature in the Forest

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“Straps turn boards into stilts. Look closer. Here’s where a person’s feet would go,” said Jake.

“Why would anyone want stilts in a forest?” asked Ranger Hill.

“I think I know why. To look ten feet tall. To become the creature,” said Jake.

“Jake is right,” said Scoop.

**December 16, 2009**

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## The Creature in the Forest

High Noon Books

“Rick told us that he was with a circus. He was a clown,” Jake said.

“Yes. He told me that too,” said the ranger.

“I remembered a clown I saw years ago. He walked on stilts. And he walked funny. I also remembered how tall he was,” said Jake.

**December 17, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

High Noon Books

Scoop and Ranger Hill looked at each other. They knew that Jake had solved the mystery.

Jake went on, "So I thought the creature might be a man on stilts. And Rick Adams might be the man."

**December 18, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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"So that's why the creature was so tall. And that's why it took big steps. And that's why it walked so funny," said Scoop.

**December 19, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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"A circus clown would be good at walking on stilts. He could walk in a forest and not fall down," said Jake.

"And clowns like to fool people," said Scoop.

**December 20, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

High Noon Books

Scoop, Jake, and Ranger Hill walked to the front of the cabin. Rick was standing in the doorway. He said, "I know. I know. You found me out."

"You're the creature in the forest, right?" asked Jake.

Rick nodded.

**December 21, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

High Noon Books

“Why did you do it?” asked Ranger Hill.  
“It was just a trick. I want to be a clown again. I could practice walking on stilts. And I could have some fun. Besides, I didn’t hurt anyone,” said Rick.

**December 22, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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Scoop looked down at his ankle. He didn’t say anything. But he thought to himself, “Well, my ankle sure is hurting.”

**December 23, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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Ranger Hill said, “You scared people who came to the forest. Many won’t come back. I don’t like that. Forests are for people to use. They are beautiful, quiet places. People should feel good being in them.”

**December 24, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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Rick looked down. “I’m sorry. I just wanted to have some fun. Living here is too quiet for me. I really loved the circus.”

**December 25, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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“I don’t think you can keep your job, Rick. Scoop will write about you in the Big Bend Times. Everyone will know what you did. Besides, you aren’t happy here.”

**December 26, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

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Rick was quiet. Then he smiled.  
“Maybe Scoop’s story will help me get a circus job. That’s what I really want,” Rick said.

**December 27, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

High Noon Books

Scoop said to Rick, “You should start thinking about other jobs too. Not many people get jobs with the circus.”

Scoop turned to Jake, “The creature lives no more. Let’s get back to Big Bend. We have a story to write.”

**December 28, 2009**

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## **The Creature in the Forest**

High Noon Books

Scoop and Jake got into Scoop’s car. Jake drove. Scoop sat quietly. Then he began to hum. He was thinking about his story.

They drove for an hour. Then Jake said, “Can I ask you something?”  
“Sure,” Scoop answered.

**December 29, 2009**

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# The Creature in the Forest

High Noon Books

“You’re going to write about the stilts. You’re going to write about Rick Adams and the circus. You’re going to write about the creature scaring people in the forest,” said Jake.

“Yes. What’s your question?” said Scoop.

**December 30, 2009**

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# The Creature in the Forest

High Noon Books

“Are you going to write about a clown outrunning me?” asked Jake.

“Do you want me to leave that part out? I don’t know if I can do that,” said Scoop.

Jake looked at Scoop. Then they both started to laugh.

**December 31, 2009**

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