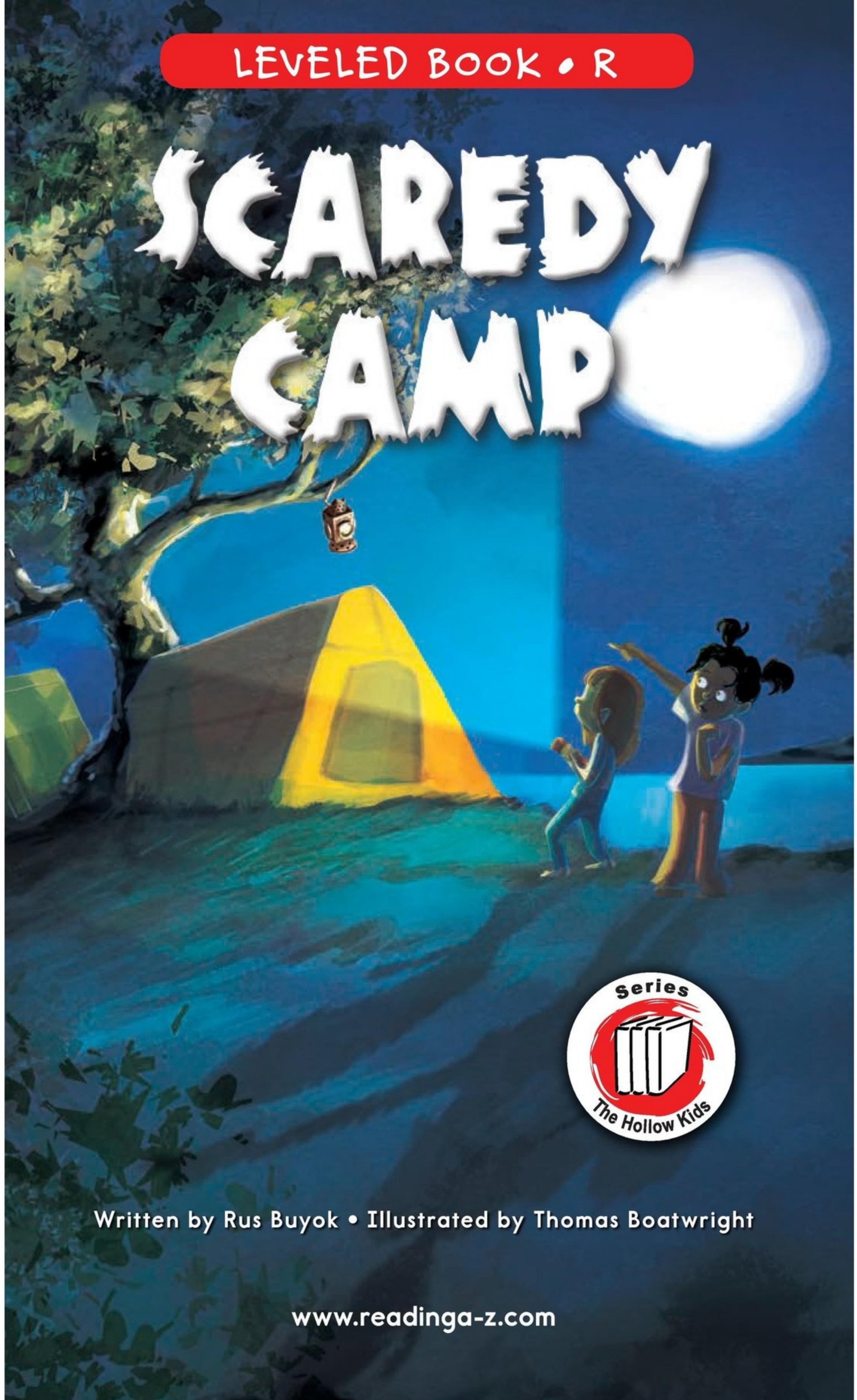


LEVELED Book • R

# SCAREDY CAMP



Written by Rus Buyok • Illustrated by Thomas Boatwright

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Sarah and I are drifting off to sleep when we hear something scraping against the tent.

“Did you hear that?” Sarah whispers. I nod, and we wait to see if it will repeat. Rain patters against the nylon, and I can hear it striking the surface of the nearby lake.

The downpour started as soon as we arrived at the campsite just outside town, so Sarah and I have barely left the tent. She’d promised me a weekend of fishing, campfires, and s’mores. That turned into endless rounds of Go Fish while her dad fished for trout in a rain slicker.

The rain continues, sounding like white noise on the radio, but the scraping doesn’t return.

“It was probably a leaf or something falling off the branches overhead,” I say, but Sarah doesn’t look convinced. She huddles deeper into her sleeping bag and closes her eyes.

I do the same, allowing the rainfall to lull me into **slumber**.

I wake to Sarah shaking my shoulder, her eyes wide in **terror**. “I heard it again,” she says. “Something is definitely outside.”



“It’s probably just your dad checking up on us or going to the bathroom,” I grumble, rubbing my eyes.

“Why would he be scraping against the tent?”

“Mr. Martinez, is that you?” I call out. After a moment, Sarah’s dad unzips the door of his tent next to ours and then unzips our door. He holds up a bright lantern and shoves his hooded head inside.

“Everything okay in here?” he asks.

“We’re okay,” Sarah says, “but we heard something outside scraping against the tent.”

“I’m sure it was just a **voracious** bear looking for an easy feast,” he says, smiling.

“Not funny, Dad.”

“It was a perfectly adequate dad joke,” he says, “but I’ll take a look around.”





We both thank him, and he zips up our tent. We follow the lantern and the sound of his squishing footsteps as he **inspects** the campsite.

“I don’t see any bears or anything else lurking out here, ladies,” he says, poking his head back into our tent. “I’m going back to bed before I catch my death. You girls sleep tight and holler if you need anything.”

We thank him again, and I hunker down into my bag, hoping this will be the end of it. Just as I'm about to drift off into dreamland, Sarah shines a flashlight into my face and hisses, "Qynn, wake up! Someone's outside."



"Seriously, Sarah, I was just about to finally zonk out," I say with a groan. She shushes me and then I hear it—footsteps squishing through the muck outside, too many to be just one person or animal.

Sarah whimpers, and suddenly the footsteps fall silent. She desperately grasps the flashlight under her face as if she were telling a ghost story. Then something strikes the side of the tent, and we both jump. Something else knocks into the opposite side, and we crawl into the center of the space, wrapping our arms around each other. The tent walls start to shake **violently**, as if we were sitting in the middle of a tornado. Outside, we hear laughter. We both scream.



Just as quickly as the shaking of the tent began, it ends, leaving us clinging to each other, listening to the rain patter.

“I’m terrified,” Sarah says.

I clear my throat, trying to act as though I’m not **petrified**, and say, “Probably just the wind.”



The tent door opens, and we scream as Sarah’s dad shoves his head inside. “Why are you screaming?”

“Something just made the tent shake like crazy,” Sarah squeals.



“Hmmm,” her dad begins, “I didn’t hear anything, but I was sound asleep before you started **screeching**. Since the rain stopped, it was most likely the last **gasp** of the storm.”

He leaves, and we listen to him squishing around the campsite. He doesn’t find anything and returns to his tent.

Sarah sighs and says, “I don’t think I’ll be sleeping anymore tonight.”



“Well, if we’re not going back to sleep, we can take a look around for ourselves,” I say as I start pulling on my shoes.

Sarah shoots me an expression of surprise and fright. “Nope, not happening—I’m going to sit right here with the flashlight until the Sun rises.”

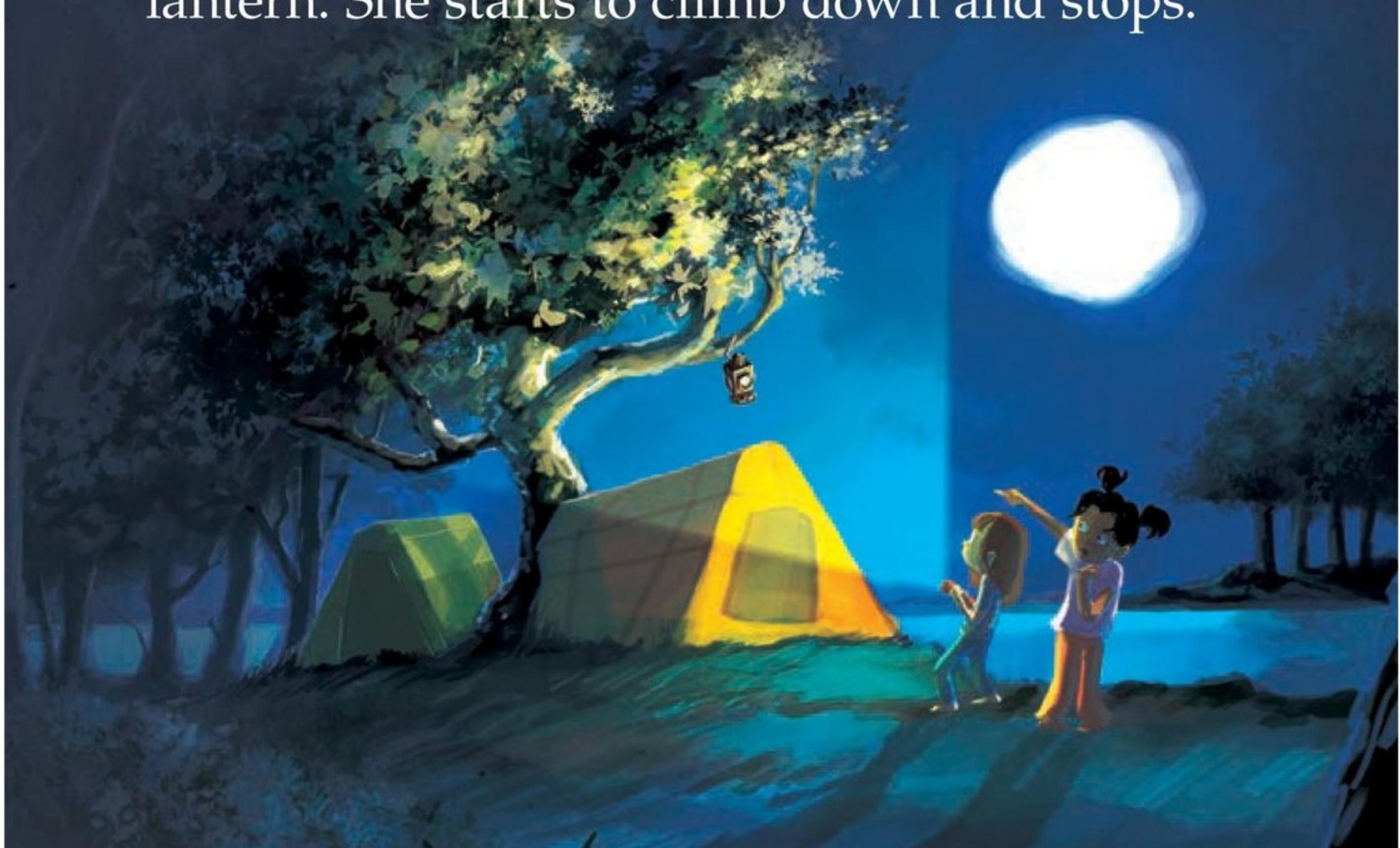
“I’ll have to look around outside, in the dark, I guess,” I say, unzipping the tent flap. Sarah whimpers as I step out into the darkness. The clouds have already started to part, exposing a bright Moon. I stand outside the tent for a minute as my eyes adjust to the darkness.

My shoes make little sucking and squishing noises as I walk. Behind me, Sarah's flashlight beam bounces around the campsite as she climbs from the tent.

I turn around to help Sarah just as her light flashes across something in the tree overhead.

"Sarah, shine the flashlight up there," I whisper, pointing above our tent. The bright beam reveals an old-looking lantern suspended from the branch. It wasn't there when we arrived at the campsite.

Without a word, Sarah hands me the flashlight, scrambles up the tree, and grabs the lantern. She starts to climb down and stops.





“Qynn, look,” she says, jabbing her finger at the tent. I raise the light and shine it on the top of our tent. It’s covered in small, streaked, muddy handprints, as if children were pawing at our tent or trying to climb on top of it.



Sarah climbs down the tree, and we inspect our find. It's a very old oil lantern with thick glass on the sides, but it **sloshes** as though still filled with fuel.

"I want to go home," Sarah whines.

"Morning isn't far away," I say, trying to calm her as much as myself. "Let's play some Go Fish until the Sun comes up."

Sarah gives me a sad nod, and we climb into the tent. Just as I'm zipping up the flap, I think I see the figure of a child standing in the shallow water near the shore.



## Glossary

<b>gasp</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a sudden breath, especially because of surprise or pain (p. 10)
<b>hunker</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to lower oneself to the ground or move deeper into something; to stay in one place for some time (p. 7)
<b>inspects</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	checks closely (p. 6)
<b>lull</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to cause another to become sleepy or fall asleep (p. 4)
<b>lurking</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	waiting or moving around in hiding (p. 6)
<b>petrified</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	scared or terrified to the point where one cannot move (p. 9)
<b>screeching</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	making a loud and very high-pitched cry or sound (p. 10)
<b>sloshes</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	moves in water or another liquid in a noisy way (p. 14)
<b>slumber</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	sleep (p. 4)
<b>terror</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	intense fear (p. 4)
<b>violently</b> ( <i>adv.</i> )	in a manner that uses or involves great physical force, often in a way that is meant to harm, damage, or kill (p. 8)
<b>voracious</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having a desire to eat large amounts of food (p. 5)

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Level R Leveled Book  
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