

Finding COOPER

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Scholastic Children's Books
Euston House, 24 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1DB, UK

www.scholastic.ca

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Finding Cooper / Stacey Matson.

Names: Matson, Stacey, author.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20190098228 | Canadiana (ebook)
20190098236 | ISBN 9781443163415

(softcover) | ISBN 9781443163422 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Cooper, D. B—Juvenile fiction.

Classification: LCC PS8626.A839 F55 2019 | DDC jC813/.6—dc23

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6 5 4 3 2 1 Printed in Canada 139 19 20 21 22 23

COOPER FILE

CHAPTER 1

CASE: 0023 / FILE: 0012

LOCATION: Kelowna, British Columbia

STATUS: Unsolved

With great regret I acknowledge that Case File 0023-0012, aka “The Lake Disturbance,” aka “Monster from the Deep,” remains unsolved. After spending the last two weeks of August in the Okanagan Valley, I, Agent Cooper Arcano, uncovered no solid evidence of the great lake creature commonly known as Ogopogo despite exhaustive research. I ensured that each afternoon included intense stakeouts of the lake from various beach access points around Kelowna and the surrounding area.

Special Agents Dawn Cooke-Arcano and Marco Arcano, aka the “Parental Unit,” were not helpful in lake observations, as they spent most afternoons asleep (Agent Marco Arcano) or involved in independent research that included prolific reading of romance novels (Agent Dawn Cooke-Arcano). However, their ability to drive a car was helpful in navigating Okanagan Lake.

There was one incident of note while driving to find our cabin. I have transcribed the dialogue as I remember it; however, it has been redacted for improper language use. The day was August 24; the time was 13:08.

AGENT DAWN: The GPS says you have to turn left.

AGENT MARCO: There is no left. There's a ██████ lake on the left.

AGENT DAWN: Well, the GPS says . . .

AGENT COOPER: Hey! I think I saw something!

AGENT MARCO: Was it a boat launch? Your mother seems to think that our car magically turns into a boat.

AGENT COOPER: There's something in the lake! I think I see Ogopogo in the lake!

AGENT COOPER: There! Guys! Do you see it? Look through the trees!

AGENT COOPER: See? There's a dark thing in the water. I think he's out there!

AGENT DAWN: That's nice, honey. Wouldn't that be exciting?

AGENT COOPER: Mom! Look! Did you see it? Dad! Can we stop for a second?

AGENT DAWN: Ha! Turn left! Like I said! Victory is mine!

AGENT COOPER: Dad! Stop!

AGENT MARCO: Buddy, there's nowhere to pull off.

AGENT COOPER: Pull way over onto the gravel.
Please?

AGENT DAWN: Honey, we can't. Your dad is too busy
being wrong.

AGENT COOPER: I can't see anything anymore.

That was the only possible sighting of Ogopogo. By the time we reached our final destination, the lake was calm. Further observation that day was hampered by the fact that the sun was setting, and that Dana Scully ran off without her leash, which required me to chase her along the shoreline for thirty minutes. Please note: This is not the original Agent Dana Scully from *The X-Files*. This is Dana Scully, newly rescued Canine Companion to Agent Cooper. She will eventually be trained to sniff out monsters but is currently working on coming when called and returning the ball during fetch, not just looking at it and barking.

END MISSIVE

The first thing I did when we got home from vacation was call my best friend, Ali.

"Dude! Did you find the Loch Ness?" he asked excitedly. Ali shares my love of unsolved mysteries, although he definitely doesn't have the same drive to solve them.

"You mean Ogopogo? No. I mean, I might have seen something, but Dad wouldn't stop to find out."

"Lame. Maybe next time."

"Yeah. Hopefully. How was soccer camp?" I asked. I didn't like soccer, but Ali loved it.

“Oh man. So awesome. I scored two goals for my cabin in the championship game. I was a soccer god.”

“Thor of the Field,” I announced in a deep voice.

“Oh, that reminds me of a joke. Why is Iron Man so good at soccer?” Ali asked.

“Uh . . .”

“Because he’s Iron Man!”

I laughed. “That’s so stupid.”

“I know. But you laughed. Oh, hey, do you remember Tristan? He’s coming to our school this year. Won’t that be awesome?”

Tristan Khoury was on Ali’s soccer team. I’d met him a couple of times at Ali’s games, but we didn’t hang out. He was okay, I guess, but all he talked about was soccer and video games. He was one of those guys that everyone likes. I didn’t get the appeal, but Ali would talk about how cool he was after practice and stuff. Tristan was okay, but I didn’t really want him to be at my school.

I paused for a second, then lied. “I don’t really remember him. Is he the guy who had the purple cleats?”

“Totally, that’s him. He’s hilarious! Oh man. This year is going to be the best.”

“For sure,” I mumbled, trying to sound like I meant it.

“Hey, how were your parents?” Ali’s voice dropped to a whisper, even though we were on the phone and only I could hear him.

I looked around. Dad was out in the garage and Mom was in the laundry room.

I lowered my voice too. “Lame. They argued about everything, and we weren’t ever allowed to eat out, even though the place we stayed was right next to the Burger Shack and it smelled like fries all the time.”

“Oh man. That sucks. You wanna sleep over? Last Saturday before school starts. I got a couple new comics. And my mom bought fries at the store today, so you don’t have to suffer any longer.”

“Definitely. Let me ask.” I covered the phone with my hand and shouted downstairs. “MOM! CAN I SLEEP OVER AT ALI’S?!”

There was no response. I turned back to the phone. “Hold on.” I ran downstairs two at a time. “Can I sleep over at Ali’s tonight?”

“We just got home.”

“So?”

“So . . . it’s just . . .” Mom stumbled for a reason. “Okay, fine. But we’ll be going straight to see Grandpa tomorrow when I pick you up, so don’t stay up all night. I don’t want to deal with a grumpy kid.”

“I won’t be grumpy,” I promised. If anyone was grumpy these days, it was Mom, but I didn’t say that part. “Thanks,” I added. She nodded and went back to unpacking and sorting dirty clothes.

“Ali? I’m in,” I said. “See you soon!”

That night I finally got some french fries that Mrs. Singh made, and we read through Ali’s new comics.

We love comics, but Ali definitely loves them more. We're even working on drawing our own series. It's about a superhero named the American Marmot, who has radioactive spit and a high-pitched whistle that can break eardrums. We worked on a new storyline where the American Marmot has to fight Ogoopoo, and Ali talked about all the things that happened at soccer camp. Every story had Tristan in it. I hoped Tristan knew that Ali was my best friend, and not his. We had been friends since kindergarten.

The best part of sleeping over at Ali's is that his parents let us sleep in front of the TV and watch full episodes of *The X-Files*. We love *The X-Files*, even though it was on a really long time ago. Plus, I'm not allowed to watch it at home because my parents think it's "too mature." So it's extra cool to get to watch it and not have my parents know.

The X-Files originally had *nine* seasons of unsolved mysteries. I know it's supposedly fiction, but where did they get their inspiration from? I bet at least ninety percent of their shows were based on real stories. Like they said at the beginning of the show, The Truth Is Out There. And Ali and I are pretty sure we are going to find it. I really want to be like Fox Mulder, one of the main characters (the other is Dana Scully, who I named my dog after, because even though she's super cool, Ali didn't want to be nicknamed Scully). Mulder and Scully are FBI agents who specialize in paranormal mysteries.

We watched the episode where Mulder and Scully investigate a lake monster called Big Blue. Then we made a comic where the American Marmot fights a lake monster named Logo Mess, who is covered in brand logos and is angry that she can't be ad-free like all the other lake monsters. We ended up staying up pretty late, so I was kind of exhausted when Mom came to pick me up the next morning.

When I got in the car, Mom looked at me and shook her head. "Look at those bags under your eyes. I told you to go to bed early. We have to get your school supplies today too."

I knew she would be the grumpy one, not me. I was actually in a pretty good mood. We hadn't seen Grandpa since before our vacation. I used to love seeing Grandpa. He was never big on talking, but every time I saw him he would give me an American dollar bill. He would make a big show of taking out his wallet and rifling through it until he pulled out the dollar. Then he would hand it to me and say, "In case of emergencies, Cooper." And I would nod and put it in my pocket. I kept all of them in a special lockbox he gave me for Christmas one year. Plus, he loved ice cream, so we always got ice cream when we went to Ladner to visit him. He and I both got cookies and cream every time.

These days, though, Grandpa was turning into a different person.