



Proudly Presents

THE CODE

WRITTEN BY LELAND FAULKNER

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ISBN 978-1-942109-63-1

My younger brother, Cory, and I always lived by one thing and one thing only: The Code. The Code consisted of the following:

- 100% trust
- Never telling on the other
- And always keeping our secrets

Oh, and I was the only one who could make the rules! I think that last one is written down somewhere in the *Perks of Being an Older Brother Handbook*.

My family moved to the mountains of Montana, when I was seven and Cory was four. We lived so far outside the city limits we didn't even have what you would call neighbors, so Cory and I were always close. We loved living in the mountains. And why wouldn't we? We had everything two young boys could want. We had about thirty acres of densely covered woods—*perfect* for hide-and-seek and kick-butt games of war! Whenever Cory and I played war, I was always the U.S., and Cory was either from Vietnam, Japan, Korea, or some Middle Eastern country. If we were playing *Cowboys and Indians*, however, I was always the Indian! What can I say? Sure, the Cowboy got to wear a cool hat, but the Indian got to wear war paint *and* shoot a bow and arrow! So what if the tip had a plastic, suction cup! Oh, and unlike history, when we acted out the Wild West, the Indians always won! This meant I got to tie my brother up with rope... *and* terrorize him with man-eating insects—at least until it was time for dinner.

About two years after we moved into our two-story cabin, my mother decided she wanted to add flower boxes in front of the windows on the second floor. So Dad bought a twenty-foot ladder. Now, for two young boys looking for adventure, he might as well have said, "*Merry Christmas, boys! See what kind of mischief you can get into with this!*"

Of course, the first time we got it out of the detached garage, both Mom *and* Dad told us that the ladder was off limits. They said that ladders were dangerous, and we would surely break an arm, a leg, or worse, our necks! So, the ladder was not to be used—

period. Well, the way Cory and I saw it that was *their* Code, not ours.

Dad worked a lot of overtime, and Mom liked to take long afternoon naps. As far as we were concerned, it was the perfect set up. We had about a good hour or so on any given weekday after school to pretend we were firefighters, forest rangers, or mountain climbers. We would take the ladder—a two-man job at the time—out of the garage, climb the twenty or so rungs up the ladder and be Kings of the Mountain!

Now, living in the mountains, we weren't allowed to have pets. Mom firmly believed a bear or a wolf would eat them. So, Cory and I had what we called *adopted* pets. We had quite a menagerie of wildlife enter our backyard. Of course, they couldn't really be *pets* unless they were *named*. So Cory *named* them! Oh, yeah, Cory was the Official Pet-Name-Giver! He named every squirrel, every raccoon; he even named every deer! If the deer had antlers, he was given the name, Bambi. If the deer *didn't* have antlers, it was named Faline. Skunks were always named Flower, and all rabbits were called Thumper! Cory's favorite movie, in case you haven't guessed, was Walt Disney's animated classic, *Bambi*.

On the rooftop, Cory and I would talk about anything and everything: school, dreams, and girls. Well, *I* would talk about girls, and Cory would just smile and listen like he knew what I was talking about. But sometimes we wouldn't say anything. We wouldn't say anything at all. We didn't need to. The scenery said it for us. From our rooftop, we could see as far as a million miles away...

As we grew older, Cory and I still made our bi-monthly treks to the rooftop, but we each were beginning to develop our own interests. Cory got involved in comic books, while I discovered the intergalactic world of video games. Now, if you were to ask our parents, they would tell you Cory and I shared everything. It's true. We did share everything—everything, that is, except comic