

The Mystery of Red Star Forest

Created by

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Episode 1: "Welcome To Southweed"

Audioplay by

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The Mystery of Red Star Forest, Ep. 1

<insert wind sounds and subtle spooky music>

RAMONA

Hello, and welcome to the mystery of the Red Star National Forest. My name is Ramona Miller. I am an investigative reporter from New Jersey.

<spooky music increases>

RAMONA

I have always been attracted to the weird and unusual, especially weird and unusual things in the forest.

<insert the sound of trees rustling>

RAMONA

That is why I have taken it upon myself to travel across the country to investigate and uncover the truth behind the mysterious goings on in the forests covering America and what monsters might lurk inside them.

<insert lightning sound>

RAMONA

And that brings us to Red Star Forest. Located just outside the town of Southweed, Wyoming, this forest is a popular hiking, biking, and skiing destination for tourists. But that's not all this mysterious woodlands is known for.

<insert spooky violin music>

RAMONA

For over 80 years, Red Star has been a hotspot for unexplainable and unsettlingly consistent disappearances. Every year, seven children will go missing while inside Red Star and are never seen again.

<insert eerie music>

RAMONA

And you might be thinking, sure, Ramona, kids go missing in the woods all the time. But what's strange about these disappearances is that there are only ever seven children that go missing. No more, no less. And it has been like this for as long as anyone can remember.

<insert spooky piano music>

RAMONA

What's really odd about these missing person cases is that it is always children. Never adults.

(MORE)

RAMONA (CONT'D)

Sure, other people go missing in the forest, including other children, but they are always found.

<increase piano music>

RAMONA

Yet, every single year, without fail, seven children will go missing in Red Star National Forest, and they will never be found. So, I'm going to Southweed, Wyoming, to figure out why. Once again, my name is Ramona Miller, and this is the mystery of Red Star Forest.

<podcast theme montage>

RAMONA

But before we can dive into the recent disappearances in Red Star, we need to go back to the very first reported missing persons case.

<insert ominous music sting>

RAMONA

In 1941, Suzy Blake, age seven, went for a walk in Red Star Forest with her mother, Rebecca Blake, at 2:30 in the afternoon. Suzy and Rebecca were local residents of Southweed and apparently took many hikes, as Suzy loved it. And according to Rebecca's report to the police, Suzy was walking beside her for the entire hike.

<insert walking sounds>

RAMONA

Halfway through their walk, Suzy mentioned that she was getting chilly, but as it was almost wintertime, Rebecca thought nothing of it. Not long after that, Suzy spotted a large stick in the distance and ran off to get it. Rebecca claimed that she only walked about ten feet away from her, running behind a tree and some bushes, as Suzy normally would do when playing. But that would be the last time Rebecca would ever see her little girl.

<insert music sting>

RAMONA

The police searched the forest for weeks. Many local residents of Southweed also pitched in with the search but to no avail. The only thing that anyone recovered of the little girl was her pink shoes that she had been wearing on the day of her disappearance. These shoes were discovered seven miles away from where Suzy went missing.

<insert spooky piano music>

RAMONA

But what's even stranger is that the shoes were in pristine condition. According to Rebecca, they looked brand new, even cleaner than they were when Suzy was wearing them.

<insert ominous music sting>

RAMONA

Unfortunately, after several more months of searching, people began to give up, and the police declared that Suzy likely died of an animal attack, ending any further investigation.

<insert sad music>

RAMONA

Not long after the news, Rebecca tragically took her own life about nine months after the incident. She left a note before hanging herself in her house, explaining how she was unable to cope with the loss of her daughter and could no longer bare living.

<insert sound of a woman being hanged>

RAMONA

Suzy's father, James, was overseas fighting in World War II at the time and didn't find out about his family's death until two years later when he returned home to find his wife's rotting corpse hanging in their kitchen.

<insert creaking door sounds and crying sounds>

RAMONA

After that, more missing person cases began piling up around Red Star Forest as more and more children began disappearing in the woods.

<insert spooky forest sounds>

RAMONA

However, most children who went missing were usually discovered. But every year, seven unlucky children have been stolen by the forest.

<insert lighting sound>

RAMONA

The longest reported missing persons case in Red Star was back in 1967 when 28-year-old Jason Ruby got lost in the woods and was missing in the forest for seven days before park rangers found him.

<insert creepy violin music>

RAMONA

When questioned by authorities on how he got so lost, Jason reported that he, himself, was not sure. Jason reported that he was walking by himself on the main hiking trail when he got lost, a trail that he apparently had walked many times before. Meaning that Jason was not new to this hike. He knew where to go. And even if he didn't, the trail he took was a straight path that takes you from one side of the forest to the other, with plenty of maps lining the path to guide you.

<insert walking sounds>

RAMONA

According to Jason, right before he disappeared, he started to get incredibly cold, which was odd because he was taking this hike during the middle of the spring. Jason told the authorities that as he was walking, he heard what sounded like a little girl crying.

<insert sound of crying girl>

RAMONA

Jason thought he heard the girl behind a tree, but when he stepped off the path to investigate, there was nothing there. Moreover, when Jason turned around to return to the trail, it had mysteriously disappeared.

<insert creepy violin music>

RAMONA

Jason claims that he was wandering through the forest, trying to find his way out, but could never find the trail. It was only when the park ranger found him sleeping up in a tree one week later that Jason escaped the forest.

<violin music softens>

RAMONA

When asked why Jason was sleeping in a tree, he claimed that it was so he wouldn't be found. But found by what? We may never know, for seven months after his discovery, Jason would take his own life, leaving no explanation as to why or what really happened in the forest.

<insert car pulling up and doors opening sound>

RAMONA

But now that I am in Southweed, we can really start getting to the bottom of this mystery. I started my search by asking one of the park rangers his thoughts on these disappearances.

<insert office sounds>

RAMONA

Can you introduce your name and profession, please?

JACK

Yeah, sure. Hi, I'm Jack Dawson. I'm a park ranger at Red Star National Forest and a local resident of Southweed.

<insert pen clicking sound>

RAMONA

So Jack, how long have you lived in Southweed?

JACK

About ten years now. I moved here back in 2013. It was always my dream to live in Wyoming. It's a great state. Lots of nice people.

RAMONA

Do you think the people in Southweed are especially nice?

JACK

Yeah, I guess. Everyone around here is real neighborly. Southweed's a pretty small town, so we have a tight knit community out here. But it's great. The restaurants are good. Stores are clean. It's real charming. That's why I moved here.

RAMONA

And what about tourists? Do you get a lot of those out here?

JACK

Oh yeah. Red Star is a big draw for tourists. We mostly get them during the winter and the summer. Either for skiing or camping, mostly.

RAMONA

And out of all the people who visit Red Star, would you say you get a lot of families? Young children, perhaps?

JACK

Sure. Plenty of parents take their kids here for a taste of nature.

RAMONA

But Red Star is well known for having children disappear inside it. Wouldn't parents be put off by that?

JACK

No actually. Most don't mind.

RAMONA

Really? That's shocking.

JACK

Yeah, I was surprised by it, too. I mean, we only lose seven kids a year, and hundreds of families come through this area. Most parents probably just think if they keep an eye on their kids, then they'll be fine. And most of the time, they're right.

RAMONA

Except for the seven times they aren't.

JACK

Yeah.

<insert spooky music sting>

RAMONA

How many kids have gone missing in Red Star, would you say?

JACK

Well, you know, it's kind of hard to say. The police have been tracking them for over 80 years now, so there's probably hundreds. Of course, kids could have been going missing in this forest before they started keeping track, so really, it could be thousands.

<insert ominous piano music>

RAMONA

Do you personally believe that 7 children have been disappearing in the forest before Suzy Blake was reported missing?

JACK

Sure. I see no reason not to think that. Just cause no one was reporting it doesn't mean it couldn't have been happening. So yeah, I think people were going missing way longer than 80 years.

<insert intense music sting>

RAMONA

My interview with Jack proved to be very interesting. Next, I went to speak to the head of the Southweed police department, Sherif Shelly Lockwood.

<insert police headquarters sounds>

RAMONA

Hi, Sherif Lockwood. Thank you again for allowing me to speak with you.

SHELLY

Please, call me Shelly. And it's my pleasure.

RAMONA

So, what can you tell me about the disappearances going on in Red Star Forest?

SHELLY

Well, in my personal opinion, they are some of the strangest disappearances I have ever seen. It's only ever kids who go missing in the woods, and there are only 7 each year, which, if you ask me, is anything but normal.

RAMONA

Do you know how many disappearances have been recorded?

SHELLY

Till now? Oh, I'd say a little over 560 since the first case in 1941.

RAMONA

Do you think it could be someone in particular who is doing this?

SHELLY

Well, it's hard to say. Sure, someone could be kidnapping or killing the kids, but so far, there is no evidence to prove that.

RAMONA

Do you think it could be a resident in town?

SHELLY

Well, like I said, there is no evidence to prove anyone responsible for the disappearances. It could be kidnapping, it could be an animal attack. Heck, some people have even blamed it on witchcraft or a curse. I honestly couldn't tell you what it could be.

RAMONA

So you have never found any remains of the children?

SHELLY

The only thing we find from the missing kids is their shoes. Only ever the shoes they were wearing when they went missing. And they are always in great condition.

RAMONA

Really? I thought that was only the case for Suzy Blake?

SHELLY

No, it's like that with all the kids. We never find them, but we always find their shoes. Sometimes, though, we don't find the shoes until weeks or even months after the kid disappears. Yet the shoes are always in great condition.

RAMONA

Even after being out in the forest for so long?

SHELLY

Yeah, it's really weird. I honestly have no explanation for it. And as far as I know, it's always been like that.

RAMONA

And what is the common age of the kids that disappeared?

SHELLY

Usually between the ages of five and twelve. Any kid over the age of thirteen who disappeared was always found. It's the younger ones that you have to look out for.

<insert creepy piano music>

RAMONA

How many kids have you personally been involved in investigating?

SHELLY

105.

RAMONA

105?

SHELLY

Yeah. I've been working here for 15 years now. I remember every kid that has gone missing. I don't know how to explain what's happening. I just feel so bad for the poor parents of these kids. I can't imagine what it's like. Losing a kid and then getting no closer.

<insert spooky violin sounds>

RAMONA

That is an excellent question. What must it be like for the parents of these kids? A question that I am determined to find out.

<insert wind sound effect>

RAMONA

I reached out to the parents of Joey Robbins, one of the most recent disappearances. And fortunately, they were willing to speak with me.

<insert the sound of tea cups>

RAMONA

Thank you again for taking the time to talk to me, Mr. and Mrs. Robbins.

MRS. ROBBINS

Of course, dear.

RAMONA

So, can you tell me about Joey?

MRS. ROBBINS

Oh yes. He was a lovely boy. He was only seven when we lost him.

MR. ROBBINS

We don't know that we really lost him, Margret.

MRS. ROBBINS

Pardon my husband. He still has hope that Joey is still out there.

MR. ROBBINS

That's because he is. They never found a body.

<insert sound of chair squeaking>

RAMONA

So, when exactly did Joey disappear?

MRS. ROBBINS

We lost him back in 2011. Over ten years ago, now.

RAMONA

Can you tell me how he disappeared?

MRS. ROBBINS

Well, my husband, Dave, was walking with him that day. It was Father's Day, so the boys wanted to go out for a hike.

MR. ROBBINS

Listen, Margret wasn't there, so don't be asking her. I'm telling you, Joey was right next to me when he disappeared. I always kept an eye on him when we were hiking.

<insert creepy forest sounds>

MR. ROBBINS

We took one of the more narrow paths towards the end when we were heading home. I told Joey to stay behind me so I could make sure there weren't any slippery rocks. The boy had... has a tendency to just go running without looking. I didn't want him to get hurt.

RAMONA

Then what happened?

MR. ROBBINS

Well, as we were heading downhill, Joey starts telling me he's getting cold. I say, it's just the wind, and we'll be home soon. Before I know it, I turn around to look at him, and he's gone.

<insert music sting>

MR. ROBBINS

I start calling out to him, going back up the trail for him. Heck, I ran all through the forest trying to find him, but he had just vanished.

RAMONA

And no one was ever able to find anything?

MRS. ROBBINS

Just his shoes. We still have them.

RAMONA

And what condition were they found in?

MRS. ROBBINS

Oh, they were spotless. Practically brand new.

<insert music sting>

RAMONA

And Mr. Robbins, you believe that Joey is still out there?

MR. ROBBINS

I know he is.

RAMONA

What makes you so sure?

MR. ROBBINS

Because I know my Joey. He's a good boy. I know he's still out there somewhere. And one of these days, I'm gonna find him.

<insert soft piano music>

RAMONA

So, what is really causing these mysterious disappearances within Red Star National Forest? Is it kidnapping? Animal attacks? Or something more supernatural? For now, the answer is still unclear. But I intend to continue my investigation into the town of Southwee, Wyoming, and the treacherous forest that surrounds it.

<insert creepy forest sounds and ominous music>

RAMONA

But if you're a parent planning on taking a trip to the quiet town of Southweed, make sure to keep an eye on your kids. Because you never know if they might be the next seven victims to disappear. I'm Ramona Miller, and this has been the mystery of Red Star Forest.

<insert podcast outro montage here>