



Mountain Rampage

Scott Graham

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Description and dialogue balance to bring both the rounded characters and the Rocky Mountain setting alive in this tale of danger, death, and intrigue.

Chuck Bender, newly married archaeologist, has just three more days of teaching a group of college students in a summer field-study course at the abandoned Cordero Mine in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. He has enjoyed spending time with his new wife, Janelle, and his step-daughters until a few fateful steps lead him on a perilous journey of death and intrigue. *Mountain Rampage*, the second book in the National Park Mystery series, by Scott Graham, is a wonderfully climactic narrative of those three days and the trouble they bring.

Chuck is worrying about his youngest stepdaughter's illness when one of the students falls through some weakened boards and nearly tumbles sixty feet to his death down a vertical shaft in the mine. Next, the police come around asking Clarence, Chuck's brother-in-law, why his knife was found in a pool of blood outside the dormitories. Soon after, Chuck finds a woman dying in the woods and witnesses her last breath. And that's just the first day. After stumbling upon a poacher's gruesome dump site, his mission to find out the identity of the poacher and what secrets the mine really holds leads to a thrilling conclusion filled with danger and conspiracy.

With description well balanced with dialogue, Graham not only paints the setting but artfully brings the characters alive. The peripheral details of the small clouds of dirt kicked up by footfalls, as well as the frustration of Janelle when Chuck becomes needlessly jealous of the handsome ER doctor, keep the pages turning as much as the unfolding drama of the plot does. With the exception of the prologue and the epilogue, the third-party narrative follows only Chuck and his thoughts throughout the story. While this means there is little foreshadowing of upcoming events, the tension holds strong in the thrill of the action.

There are more than a few moments that evoke a gasp and a held breath. The thrill of danger, combined with the everyday tasks of life that must go on, gives *Mountain Rampage* balance and realism. Scott Graham has created a nicely satisfying and suspenseful adventure.

SHANNAN SPITZ (Summer 2015)

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