

# **Test of Courage**

**Haley Vinson**

**High Noon Books**  
Novato, California

## CHAPTER 1

### The Search Is On!

“There’s a search! Six-year-old boy. He’s been missing since morning on Mount Asher. A bad storm on the way. Get here as soon as you can. We’ll meet at the main parking lot on Mount Asher at six.”

“Right, David,” Trent said. Then he hung up the phone. It was finally time for his first search! He’d been waiting for this chance. Now it wasn’t practice any more—this was for real.

Trent pulled on a warm jacket. There was no way to tell when he would get home again. It was a big mountain.

He went to get his pack. It hung on the wall, all set to go. *Better check it again*, Trent thought.

Sleeping bag

Pack tent

Mess kit and packs of dried food

Water bottle

Matches in waterproof box  
Waterproof clothing bag and extra clothes  
Climbing ropes  
Handheld GPS  
Flashlight and extra batteries  
Knife  
Rescue horn  
First-aid kit  
Emergency kit

All the things he'd need. Trent hurried outside with the pack. He had less than an hour until he had to meet his Search and Rescue group on the mountain.

His dark blue truck sat in front of his house. Trent threw his pack into the back. His boots, jacket, and helmet were already there. He started the engine. He was glad he'd filled up on gas on the way home from work. He could see Mount Asher up ahead. It was high, dark, and green. *Huge*, thought Trent. *It must be covered with a million trees! And one little boy up there—somewhere—all alone.*

Trent thought about all the times he had gone camping with his mother and father and his sister, Kayla. He waited for a minute thinking about his sister. It always made him so sad. Then he thought about their camping trips on the mountain. They had always had such a

good time! They had spent many nights on the side of a mountain. *I was only five or six when we first went camping, thought Trent. I would have been scared to death if I had been lost. That poor little kid.*

Trent looked at his watch. There were not many hours of daylight left. He could see dark storm clouds at the top of the mountain. Suddenly he felt it coming—the old feeling. He started to shake. No, he couldn't let it stop him. Not now. He'd trained so hard to be ready for a search. The group was waiting for him. They must not find out his secret. Trent drove faster. He was getting closer to the mountain. And the sky got darker.

## CHAPTER 2

### Race Against the Cold

Trent drove into the parking lot on Mount Asher. The sky was very dark. The storm would hit any time. Suddenly he heard thunder. For a moment, he felt like turning around. He could go back down the mountain. Away from the storm. Then he saw his friends David and Tara waving at him. They were getting out of their cars and trucks. Trent waved and stopped next to David's truck.

"Hey, Trent, glad you could make it," Tara said.

"How's it going, man? What a night for your first search!" David said. "Better get your gear ready. We'll be heading out soon."

"Right," Trent said. He looked up at the sky. He felt a few drops of rain on his face. He heard more thunder, and quickly started taking what he needed for the rescue out of his truck. If only the storm would move away from the mountain!

“Attention, everybody! Gather around.” A tall man in a dark green jacket was talking through a bullhorn. He stood in the middle of the parking lot. This was Jeremy Wu, the Field Leader. Trent liked Jeremy. He really knew what he was doing and he was a great leader for the team. Other members of Search and Rescue were standing around him. Trent, David, and Tara went to join them.

“Thanks for coming out tonight,” Jeremy said. “I know it’s going to be rough. A night search in a storm is hard. But you’re ready. You’ve shown it in training. I know we can count on you. The police crew searched all day for the boy. No luck. So they called us. It’s too bad they waited till almost dark. With an earlier start, we’d have him by now.”

“The boy’s name is Noah Scott. Black hair, blue eyes. And he’s pretty big for six. First reported missing at nine this morning. Walked away from his parents’ camp right over there.” Jeremy pointed to a group of tall, thin trees.

“Noah has no food with him. No jacket on either. Just pants and a T-shirt. This could be trouble. It’s been getting colder all afternoon. Let’s hope this storm passes. If it doesn’t, things look bad for Noah. Hypothermia could set in fast.”

Hypothermia. Trent shook a little as he

heard the word. He'd learned about hypothermia in his first search training class. It is called the silent killer. The body gets colder and colder—then, death. Hypothermic people usually never know what is happening to them.

Cold, wind, and rain. Deadly when all together. Noah had to be found, and fast. They were all here on this mountain. The team was trained in first-aid for hypothermia—they knew how to get the body's temperature up as fast as possible. If only they could find Noah in time . . .

“OK now. Get set to move out. Remember to keep close together in your line as you search.” Jeremy's voice sounded funny through the bullhorn. “Keep calling Noah's name. Use your rescue horns too. And talk to each other. It's easy to get lost in that darkness. Noah has been missing nine hours now. So every minute counts. He is in great danger. We don't want him to die up there on the mountain.” Trent started to shake at the thought of the young boy dying. He would do whatever he could to make sure that didn't happen. He had to. For Kayla.