

# Crater Lake

Jennifer Killick



Is it a thriller, a sci-fi, a drama, a friendship story or a comedy? Lady-chuckles and Snortlemen, would you believe it if I said *Crater Lake* had it all?

Are you sitting comfortably, then I'll begin...

An excitable Year 6 group takes a school trip to Crater Lake – an adventure centre on the shores of an old, now water-filled crater. It soon turns into the overnighter of a fright-time. The chills begin before they even arrive at the entrance gates when they find a half-dead man in the road. But that's not going to spoil our adventurers' fun. The trip must go on!

Things only get more creepy on arrival. The centre organiser, Digger, turns out not to be a jolly, hand-clappy outward-bound type but surly and distracted. In fact, the whole place seems unprepared for a group of rowdy school children. Killing the holiday vibe instantly is a tomato-soup dinner followed by orders to go to bed. Reluctantly, the kids head into their dormitories to sleep. No fun, no adventure, no activities. At least, not yet. Things quickly go from weird to the WHAT THE? as children begin waking

in the night, their eyes “buggy”. A group of wide-awake friends who have stayed up for a midnight feast must fight time and tiredness to work out what’s going on at Crater Lake.

*It’s a spine-chilling mystery. The only thing they know for sure is.... they mustn’t go to sleep.*

This is a proper thriller. There’s problem-solving, forest chases, heart-thumping jump scares – and extra-terrestrial goings-on, *naturellement*. But the stand-out theme of this story is camaraderie. It’s a classic Killick theme and one that always delights. The focus in *Crater Lake* is on the relationship between misunderstood Lance and his fragile best friend, Chetan, though there are plenty of other brilliant characters to get to know. As our heroes bicker with each other over past issues, present difficulties and the future of humankind, we witness a breaking down of old grudges and a building of new, stronger bonds.

*Crater Lake* expertly weaves thrill, theatre and friendship, and flows so darned easily you’d think Jennifer had plucked the words from the wind. Crater Lake activity centre – its look, location and eeriness – is so easy to visualise it gave this reader the goose-bumps, and the players are all so convincing you’d know exactly who was who if they popped round for tea. The story itself is wickedly clever – combining a little of what you know with a lot of what you don’t. And it’s perfect for sci-fi lovers or anyone who likes a scoff-in-one-sitting page-turner.

So, Crater Lake is undeniably readable and original. But why, exactly, is this story on SNORT? Determined aliens are running amok, kids’ lives are at risk, and there’s blood and horror-film metamorphosis...

Where’s the funny?

In short: it’s in the dialogue. Jennifer Killick has an instinct for sharp, funny banter and *Crater Lake* showcases her skill once again. The children tease, share jokes and observations. Their wit is quick but age-appropriate; the sentences colloquial, and packed full of hilarity. Every conversation fizzles like a sprinkling of popping candy, making *Crater Lake* a ha-ha book that deserves a loud snort of approval. Although the cover doesn’t scream comedy, the entrails certainly do.

The end of the world may well be nigh, but it’s frightfully funny.

Publisher: Firefly Press, Reviewer: Rachel

Full disclosure: Thanks to Firefly Press for providing a review copy.