



# READ-ALLOUD

Assign roles to your family and friends for this read-aloud from *I Survived the Eruption of Mount St. Helens, 1980*. Jess, Sam, and Eddie are on their way to Loomis Lake to see if they can find Skeleton Woman...

## CHARACTERS:

Narrator  
Jess

Sam  
Eddie

Mr. Rowan  
Dr. Morales

**Narrator:** Jess is driving up to the Rowans' fishing cabin on Loomis Lake with Sam and Eddie and their dad, Mr. Rowan. She's gripping her backpack tightly—it holds her dad's camera, which she and the twins need for an important mission. She turns to the boys.

**Jess:** We agree that Skeleton Woman is *not* real, right?

**Sam:** Yeah, she's totally made up.

**Eddie:** (*whispering*) So stop talking about Skeleton Woman! You're giving me the creeps. And shush so Dad doesn't hear!

**Narrator:** Mr. Rowan looks at them in the rearview mirror.

**Mr. Rowan:** You know that any time a kid says, "...so Dad doesn't hear," Dads immediately start listening, right?

**Sam:** It's nothing. We're just talking about that silly legend, Skeleton Woman.

**Narrator:** Mr. Rowan gets a twinkle in his eye.

**Mr. Rowan:** The witch with the rusted metal claws for fingers? The one who makes magic powders out of children's bones?

**Eddie:** How did you know that?!

**Jess:** Don't worry, Eddie, everyone knows that. It's just part of the legend.

**Sam:** Missy Samuels swears that Skeleton Woman lives in the broken-down shack in the woods near the lake.

**Eddie:** She also says those woods are cursed.

**Jess:** But don't worry, we don't believe her, Mr. Rowan.

**Mr. Rowan:** I knew you were smart kids.

**Narrator:** Mr. Rowan smiles and turns up the radio to sing along to his favorite disco tune. Sam leans over so only Jess and Eddie can hear him.

## READ-ALoud (CONTINUED)

**Sam:** Remember, all we have to do is go in the shack. Then Jess takes a picture to prove to Missy that we were there, and that Skeleton Woman doesn't exist.

**Eddie:** But what if Skeleton Woman *is* there?

**Sam:** Then Jess will take her picture. "Say *cheese*, Mrs. Skeleton Woman!"

**Narrator:** They burst out laughing for a moment, then quiet down again.

**Eddie:** You aren't scared, are you?

**Sam:** Nah.

**Jess:** No way.

**Narrator:** Jess feels guilty for lying as they pull into the parking lot at the lake. Mr. Rowan gathers his fishing supplies and heads toward the cabin before he turns back to Jess and the twins.

**Mr. Rowan:** Don't go far, you three.

**Jess:** We won't, Mr. Rowan. Promise.

**Narrator:** Once he's out of sight, Sam holds out his hand, palm up.

**Sam:** Ready to go find that shack? All for one...

**Narrator:** Jess and Eddie lay their hands on top of his.

**Jess/Eddie:** ...and one for all.

**Sam:** Watch out, Skeleton Woman, we're coming for you!

**Narrator:** They link arms and march toward the dark woods, where old trees soar so high it seems they're touching the sky...



**Sam:** There's the shack!

**Eddie:** Yikes. I don't want to go in there.

**Narrator:** The shack looks haunted.

Jess can practically hear a voice whispering, *Give me your bones...* But she gathers her courage and steps forward.

**Jess:** Remember, Skeleton Woman is not real. And we're going to prove it. Repeat after me—Skeleton Woman is not real.

**Sam/Eddie:** Skeleton Woman is not real.

**Narrator:** Together they walk up to the door. Jess takes out her camera and then gives the door a shove. It creaks open to reveal a table, chairs, and some boxes.

**Jess:** No baskets of bones.

**Sam:** No cauldrons of witches' brew, either.

## READ-ALOUD (CONTINUED)

**Eddie:** Still creepy. Hurry up and take the picture.

**Jess:** Okay, here goes—

**Narrator:** All of the sudden, a strange rumbling fills shack and it starts vibrating. The walls tremble; the floor rolls under their feet.

**Sam:** It's the curse!

**Eddie:** Let's get out of here!

**Narrator:** They dash out of the cabin and down the trail as fast as they can, right into the arms of Mr. Rowan.

**Sam:** Dad, it was the curse! The curse of Skeleton Woman!

**Narrator:** Mr. Rowan throws his head back and laughs.

**Mr. Rowan:** I'm sure she'd be happy to know you think she causes earthquakes.

**Jess:** An earthquake! Is that what that was?

**Narrator:** A man hurries up to them.

**Dr. Morales:** Hey! Are you all okay?

**Mr. Rowan:** We're all in one piece. You?

**Dr. Morales:** Fine, thanks. That was a pretty strong quake.

**Mr. Rowan:** Sure was. Do you live up here?

**Dr. Morales:** I'm here for work. I'm an earthquake scientist.

**Sam:** Whoa! You're in the right place today. That's lucky.

**Dr. Morales:** Actually, there have been at least fifty mild earthquakes here this past week. They're coming from directly under St. Helens. Unfortunately, I believe they're warning signs.

**Jess:** Warning signs? For what?

**Narrator:** Dr. Morales looks up at the mountain. Then he says something scarier than any story anyone has ever told about Skeleton Woman.

**Dr. Morales:** Warning signs that Mount St. Helens is about to erupt. ■