

SECRETS OF
BEARHAVEN



BOOK ONE

K. E. ROCHA



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Summary: When Spencer Plain's uncle pulls him out of school, and they find themselves being chased by a strange car, Spencer does not know what is going on—but soon he is rescued from the woods by a bear, and taken to Bearhaven, a secret refuge his parents created, filled with bears who can talk, where, desperate to find his parents, he and a bear cub named Kate decide to take matters into their own hands.

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1

Rooooaaaaarr!

Spencer Plain raced through the forest, his heart pounding. He dodged trees and skidded across patches of slick moss, trying desperately not to fall. Now was *not* the time to fall.

There was a bear behind him.

Spencer had taken one look at the bear, heard that ferocious roar, and set off running as fast as he could, but the huge animal was gaining on him. The ground was shaking and the thundering growls were getting closer.

With his eyes locked on an opening in the trees ahead, Spencer stumbled on a gnarled root and nearly lost his balance. *Keep running*, he told himself fiercely.

He had a feeling that if his uncle Mark were there, he'd be yelling at Spencer to *stop* running. But Uncle Mark couldn't tell Spencer to stop running, because Uncle Mark had left Spencer to the bears. Literally.

Crack!

A sharp sound echoed through the forest. A branch? A whole tree? He didn't dare look back to see what the beast had pulverized in its pursuit.

Spencer had never run so fast in his life, but he wasn't superhuman. He wasn't even fast enough to steal a base on his school's baseball team! His legs couldn't keep this up forever.

The path narrowed, and the opening in the trees that Spencer had been running toward was suddenly hidden behind more trees. Spencer started to panic.

Do bears eat humans? He searched his brain as he forced his body forward, his lungs burning. *Do bears eat humans?* Why couldn't he remember?

Spencer knew about bears. When he was little, his parents had told him ursine facts instead of bedtime stories, and sometimes he'd still recite those facts to himself when he couldn't fall asleep. He knew that black bears have forty-two teeth, that sun bears have the longest claws, and that brown bears can snatch jumping salmon right out of the air with their mouths. *But do bears . . . eat . . . humans . . . ?*

Spencer started to gasp for breath as he sensed the animal's massive body just behind him. And that's when he fell.

And kept falling.

He tumbled down a steep hill, kicking dirt up into his eyes and knocking against rocks and roots. He slid on his belly, awkwardly grasping for anything he might hold on to as he flew past, until finally the hill flattened and Spencer bumped to a stop.

He lay flat on his back, catching his breath and listening for signs of the bear. He didn't hear anything besides the sound of his own heavy breathing.

His whole body hurt. His parents had told him that if he ever took a bad fall, he should lie still and make sure nothing was broken. Now that he thought of it, wasn't that what you

were supposed to do when you saw a bear in the wild—go totally still? He didn't think Mom and Dad had ever told him that, but then again he didn't think they'd ever told him to run for his life, either. "I should've just played dead," Spencer muttered as he assessed the pain in his body. "It would have been easier."

Spencer had gotten away. That's what mattered, he reminded himself. But just as he started to sit up, a huge black mass flew through the air and landed beside him with a ground-shaking crash.

The bear was back.

Snorting, it thrust its broad tan muzzle into Spencer's face. Terrified and frantic to get away, Spencer tried to get to his feet, but a massive paw landed heavily on his shoulder. He was trapped.

"Spencer Plain," the bear growled. "We have been expecting you."