

A misty forest path with evergreen trees and ferns. The path is narrow and appears to be made of dirt or small stones, winding through a dense forest. The trees are mostly evergreens, and the ground is covered with fallen leaves and ferns. The atmosphere is misty and somewhat somber.

# DISAPPEARANCE

# AT RAINBOW FALLS

One morning last summer, a young woman went for a run in a busy Ontario park. She hasn't been heard from since

**BY KATE BARKER**



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CHRISTINA C.

Long gone: A poster of Christina Calayca at a gas station in Schreiber, Ontario, near Rainbow Falls Provincial Park. Opposite: Rainbow Falls Trail.



IT  
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BEAUTIFUL

AUGUST

WEEKEND

**AT RAINBOW FALLS PROVINCIAL**

Park, two hours east of Thunder Bay, Ontario. During the daytime, the mercury teased toward 23°, cooling down to 15 at night. The perennial fog that so often shrouds the shores of Lake Superior, just one kilometre to the south, had lifted, so hikers who visited the park's lookout weren't disappointed for a change—they could actually see the big lake spreading out below them, instead of the usual white haze.

The small park was typically busy for a long weekend, with about three-quarters of its 97 sites booked. Most of the campers were locals from the nearby mill and rail-

way towns of Rosspoint, Terrace Bay and Schreiber, but some of the visitors were from much farther away, staying in the park while they attended Terrace Bay's Dragfest, an annual celebration for car enthusiasts that attracts 10,000 people. There were also a few campers who were stopping temporarily as they travelled along the Trans-Canada Highway, which runs right through the park.

Because Rainbow Falls is located so far away from southern Ontario, very few people from that region actually choose the park as a destination. Some years, in fact, Rainbow Falls doesn't get a single visitor from Toronto, but on this weekend, a quartet of inexperienced campers had made the 15-hour trip just to visit the park. They had picked Rainbow Falls by chance. A different weekend, a different choice, and they might have ended up in another northern park, or camping some-

where close to home, or not camping at all. They were young—kids really—out on an any-old-trip-will-do weekend, the kind you take when you just want to go *some-where*, or do *something*, to break up the steady day-to-day of your life. They would take their holiday, and then they would go home, and their lives would roll along just as they always had.

But that's not how it happened.

On Monday, August 6, 2007, one of the campers, 20-year-old Christina Calayca, got up early and decided to go for a jog. She's been missing ever since.

**THIS** is what we know. At about noon on Sunday, August 5, a green Honda CR-V pulled up to the gates of Rainbow Falls Provincial Park. Inside were Christina Calayca, her first cousin Faith Castulo, 20, and two mutual friends from an organization called Youth for Christ—Edward (Eddy) Migue, 20, and Joe Benedict (J.B.) Reyes, 19. The foursome had initially planned on taking Eddy's '92 Toyota

Scenes from the park: Rainbow Falls and the swimming hole below. Opposite: Campsite 88, where Christina and her friends set up their tent.



Corolla, but it was such a beater that Christina's mom, Elizabeth Rutledge, had insisted they drive her car instead. They checked into campsite 72, but when they discovered it was on the main park road, they arranged to switch to a more private spot—campsite 88.

They'd left Toronto at about 10 a.m. the day before, and had stopped only a few times along the way—to nap in the car near Sault Ste. Marie, to do some sightseeing around Neys Park, and to get groceries in Schreiber. Oh, and there was that slight delay when they ran out of gas somewhere near Wawa and a guy named Ian stopped to help them out.

It was supposed to be Christina's vacation. The five-foot-two, 125-pound resident of Toronto's Cabbagetown area had been going non-stop, working nine-hour days at St. Bernadette's Daycare since graduating the previous year from community college with her Early Childhood Education certificate. It was a steady paycheck for work she loved. It also meant that her mother could quit all the odd jobs she had been holding down—such as working in a retirement home and as a cashier at Wal-

## **RAINBOW FALLS PROVINCIAL PARK IS A SMALL, DRIVE-UP-AND-PITCH-YOUR-TENT KIND OF PLACE, CATERING MAINLY TO LOCALS WHO WANT A BIT OF FRESH AIR**

Mart—and concentrate solely on her home-based financial advisor business. Christina was giving her mother half her salary. Christina was also a leader in Youth for Christ—organizing one of its upcoming conferences—and put in endless volunteer hours with an affiliated youth ministry. And she had just finished throwing her mother's 50th birthday party on July 28—a big to-do for her large, tightly knit Filipino family. Christina was tired and needed a break. She was excited about getting away for a while.

It was a spur-of-the-moment decision to head to Rainbow Falls, Eddy Migue says. None of them had been this far north before, where red granite looms like slabs of raw sirloin on either side of the Trans-

Canada. They had barely even breathed the air an hour north of Toronto. Any camping they had done had been near places like Peterborough, where there are cottages, not camps, and deer crossings, not moose. This was another country to them. Originally they had planned to go to Montreal, but that didn't work out—a hotel would cost too much, and staying at a friend's seemed like an imposition. So they decided to go camping instead. They searched Ontario Parks on the Internet, typed in 'falls' and opted to head to the third hit listed, some 1,500 kilometres away.

**WHEN** you think of classic places to visit along Lake Superior's legendary northern shore, you think of Pukaskwa National

The last night: Christina (right) with cousin Faith Castulo. Right: The final photo of Christina (with Eddy Migue) taken at 12:08 a.m., August 6, 2007.



## BY 9:30 A.M., CHRISTINA HAD BEEN GONE FOR ABOUT THREE HOURS. STILL, NOBODY WAS WORRIED. CHRISTINA LIKED TO BE BY HERSELF OCCASIONALLY, THEY SAID

Park near Marathon, with its 60-kilometre Coastal Hiking Trail, or Lake Superior Provincial Park, with its 175 backcountry campsites. You don't think of Rainbow Falls. It's a small, drive-up-and-pitch-your-tent kind of place that sits right off the highway, catering mainly to locals who want a bit of fresh air and not a lot of bother in getting it.

The park actually has two parts—the main Whitesand Lake section, where Christina and her friends camped, and the much smaller Rosssport campground, three kilometres farther west along the highway, nestled on the shore of Lake Superior. In the main Whitesand Lake section, the campsites crowd into a small area less than a kilometre from the park gates just off the Trans-Canada. There's a comfort station with showers, plenty of toilets and the ubiquitous metal-grilled fire pit at each campsite.

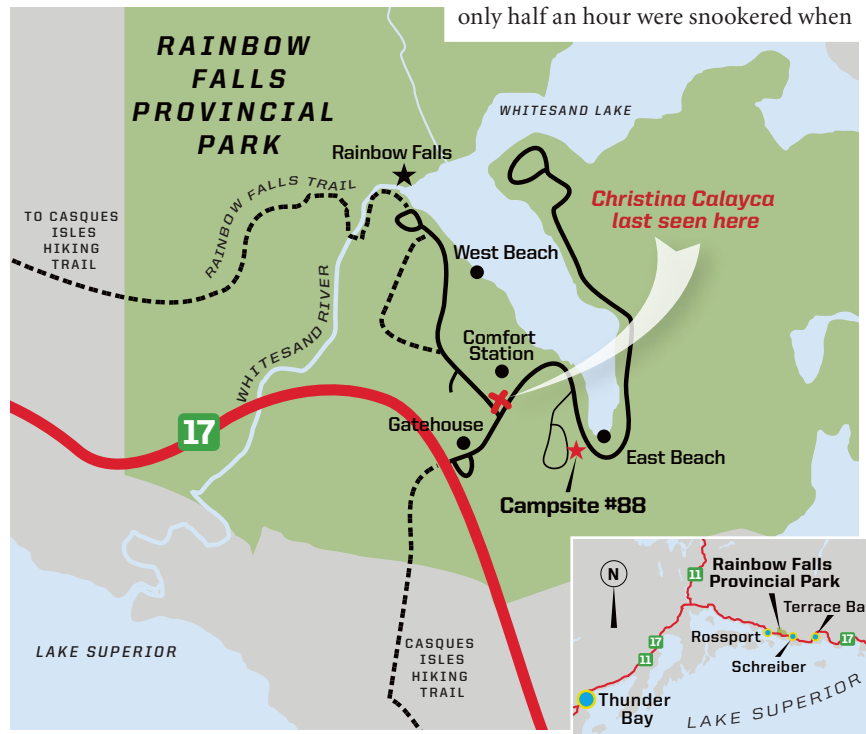
If you're looking for something to do, Rainbow Falls has a smattering of short hiking trails under three kilometres, and there are a couple of beaches on Whitesand Lake. You can also check out the park's namesake falls, a series of cascades and rapids coursing over granite en route to Lake Superior—pretty, but unremarkable as falls go.

For the more adventurous, there's also a long-distance hiking route—the Casques Isles Trail. The trail runs for 53 kilometres between the towns of Rosssport and Terrace Bay, and along the way passes right through the park. Some hikers

tackle the entire trail, either in one big push or in stages. Others choose to hike only one section of the path, such as the 12-kilometre stretch from Rainbow Falls to Rosssport.

**PICTURES** taken by Christina and her friends on the day they arrived at the park reveal nothing out of the ordinary. There's a snap of Christina with her cousin Faith, both of them behind huge sunglasses, posing in front of their tent, at 2:25 p.m. Another shows Christina, an hour later, in a 'Lucky in Love' yellow T-shirt, a plate of picked-over pasta in front of her on the picnic table and J.B. glancing her way. Innocuous, typical photos of friends barely out of their teens on a camping trip.

After frittering away the afternoon without venturing to the falls they supposedly came to see, or even one of the beaches, they decided to have a nap at around 6:30 p.m. Intentions to sleep for only half an hour were snookered when



PHOTOS COURTESY: XXXXXXXX; MAP: GARY DAVIDSON



On the scene: The police dive team on Whitesand Lake, not far from where Christina and her friends camped. Left: Father Raul Escarpe in Terrace Bay.



munity college on fire protection, with dreams of one day being a firefighter. He was trying to improve his fitness. But Christina wasn't interested in running on the highway, and said she wanted to remain in the park.

They approached the gates and the road that branches off to the right, the route that ultimately leads to the falls. She asked Eddy how long he planned to run. "I am going to run until I die." They both laughed at the joke. Eddy says Christina's mood was upbeat—"normal." There were a few people about, even at this early hour, heading for the comfort station, toothbrushes and towels in hand. Christina turned toward the falls road. Without establishing a firm time for meeting up again, she and Eddy separated. He last saw her walking down the road, heading for the falls.

## ABOUT 100 SEARCHERS OFFICIALLY WORKED ON THE CASE, AND EVERYONE BELIEVED THAT IF CHRISTINA WAS IN THE PARK, THEY WOULD BRING HER HOME

Eddy's alarm failed to rouse them. Groggy-headed, they awoke in darkness. It was about 10:30. "We sat there, had a few drinks, ate the rest of the food, had a bonfire. You know, chilling, chatting," Eddy recalls. They were drinking, but not to get drunk. Eddy says they didn't have that much booze with them. The pictures show it wasn't that kind of a night. At 11:59 p.m., Faith and Christina were sitting close together, legs touching, smiling into the campfire. And then, at 12:08 a.m., the last picture of Christina was taken. In it, she is leaning over a frying pan full of the same pasta they had for lunch, fork poised, while Eddy and J.B. also dig in. She is wearing a grey hoodie, black pants and white running shoes.

The group stayed up until about three, when Eddy, feeling stinky from the long car trip, decided to go for a shower. He walked over to the comfort station and returned by about 3:30. He then sat near the fire, hoping to dry his hair a little before turning in. The campsite was quiet. He assumed everyone was asleep, but when he crawled into the tent, Christina whispered, "Let's go swimming!"

"Really?" he laughed, thinking she was serious. Imagining the thrill, the chilling dip in pitch black, a frisson of excitement raced up his spine.

"I'm kidding!" Christina laughed at

him. "It's so dark." He laughed too and they settled down. It was now almost four in the morning.


**CHRISTINA** and Eddy woke up at 6:30, eight minutes before dawn. For some reason—maybe because they were 20 years old, pulsing with excitement about being there, about just being *alive*—they were both energized and raring to go. The two others in the tent were sleepily bundled into their bags, not moving. Eddy and Christina decided to get up. She needed to use the bathroom, and asked him to walk with her to the comfort station. On their way back, one of them, Eddy forgets who, suggested a jog. And both were game for it.

Christina was an occasional jogger, at best. She had stepped on a needle a few years earlier and didn't get it seen to right away. That turned out to be a mistake. It became so embedded in her foot that when it was removed, it left a hard, inflamed callus, making running or even standing for long periods of time painful. She would still sometimes go for a jog to get in shape, but really, she preferred volleyball, which she would play with Faith and another cousin.

As they set out, Christina and Eddy discussed the route they wanted to take and Eddy was keen on running along the highway. He had just finished courses at com-

**EDDY** ran along the highway toward the park's smaller western section—Rossport Campground—but didn't make it that far. He came to a picnic area, where he paused to carve their collective initials on a rock—FCJE—then turned back. He was gone perhaps an hour. The others were still not up, so he sat in a chair and waited. He drifted off, but his nodding head repeatedly jerked him back awake. He wandered in search of an axe that he could borrow to whittle down some oversized logs, but had no luck.

Eventually, at 9:30 a.m., both Faith and J.B. were up. By now, Christina had been gone for about three hours. Still, nobody was worried. Faith suggested she was simply off on her own somewhere, being reflective. She liked to be by herself occasionally, Eddy says. J.B. headed for the shower while Faith and Eddy began preparing breakfast—eggs, ham, bacon. Eddy asked J.B. to check the nearby beach for Christina on his way back. J.B. returned without news. They



Shrouded in mystery: The spot on the road leading toward Rainbow Falls where Christina was last seen by Eddy on the morning of August 6.

## CHRISTINA CALAYCA IS NOW A GHOST, INHABITING A WORLD BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, HAUNTING THOSE WHO LOVE HER UNTIL SHE IS FOUND

ate and then decided to look for her.

It was now 11, and they were, says Eddy, “getting a little worried.” Eddy and J.B. drove up the road Christina had taken till they reached the parking lot near the falls. Eddy told J.B. to search the hiking trail heading off to the left—the Lake Superior Trail—while he went along the Rainbow Falls Trail ahead. There were plenty of people around but Eddy didn’t ask anyone for help. He continued along the Rainbow Falls Trail until the park boundary, where it turns into the Casque Isles Trail and swings west. Eddy kept going, now running, until he reached a point where the trail opens up into a rocky outcropping and he wasn’t sure which way to go. He came back. A woman told him the trail goes as far as Rosspport. Until then, he had no idea.

Eddy and J.B. returned to the campsite

where Faith was waiting, and after taking a breather, they wrote Christina a note and marked the time—1:45. Then all three got into the car, planning to drive to Rosspport, thinking they would find Christina at the other end of the trail waiting for them. At the park gate, they stopped and inquired about trail maps. It was only then, when the gate attendant prodded them, that they told anyone Christina was missing. The attendant suspected there was no way Christina could have made it as far as Rosspport, 12 kilometres away. He advised them to contact the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and then the attendant began making calls. Park personnel immediately started a preliminary check of the trails and beaches. OPP cruisers arrived shortly thereafter. Roughly seven and a half hours after Christina was last seen by Eddy, the search was on.

**AT 4 P.M.**, Christina’s mother, Elizabeth Rutledge, got the devastating call from the OPP that her eldest child was missing. The last time she had seen Christina was at 3 a.m., Saturday morning, when the group had arrived in Eddy’s car. The previous night, Elizabeth had given her daughter a massage and the two of them had fallen asleep, cuddling, in Christina’s bed. When Eddy and the others arrived, everyone was in a hurry. After giving them her car, there was a hasty round of hugs, mutual “I love you’s” and then Christina was gone. Elizabeth, a single parent (she separated from Christina’s father Mario when Christina was one), had no idea her daughter was going as far away as Lake Superior. She only knew she was going north camping. When she got the call from the OPP, she was suddenly forced to deal with the unimaginable—that Christina was missing.

After a mad scramble to arrange flights, Elizabeth arrived at Rainbow Falls on Tuesday, where she was met by OPP constable Keith Jones. It was miserable weather, raining hard. Elizabeth was in tears. Jones noticed her bracelet, each charm depicting a different saint, and asked her if he could get in touch

*Continued on page 82*

## DISAPPEARANCE

*Continued from page 68*

with someone—a priest, perhaps?

The OPP called Father Raul Escarpe. Father Raul had been ministering to the parish at St. Martin of Tours in Terrace Bay for two years, but had never before been to Rainbow Falls Provincial Park. Strangely, on Tuesday, as he was driving home from Thunder Bay, something pulled him toward the park. But he had Mass to prepare, so he decided to visit another time. When he got home he found the messages from the OPP. Could he come to the park? There was someone who needed to speak to him. Father Raul was there within 30 minutes. As soon as he drove in, he noticed the Youth for Christ bumper sticker and immediately suspected he was meeting fellow Filipinos (the organization was founded in Manila). He found out later that he and Elizabeth were even from the same island, Mindanao. From the moment he arrived, Father Raul would be a constant at the picnic area where the family was camping, administering special Masses, talking, listening and waiting with the family for any word.

**WITHIN** hours of learning that Christina had disappeared, the OPP Northwest Region Emergency Response Team, headed by Sergeant Eric Luoto, had launched into full-scale search mode. The team—which established a command post in the park near Whitesand Lake—would ultimately deploy four canine units, three helicopters, two fixed-wing aircraft and a float plane. All told, about 100 officers and trained civilians would officially work on the case, using every piece of 21st-century technology designed to find someone on land or in water—GPS mapping software to track search routes, infrared cameras that would reveal all living creatures, side-scanning sonar for underwater investigation. They would find her, the OPP said. These were the best of the best that north-west Ontario had to offer. And everyone believed that if Christina was in the park, they would bring her home.

The dogs came out first, and they searched the area immediately around the spot where Eddy last saw Christina. Canine units are most effective when deployed on a calm, warm day when the scent isn't carried away on the wind or

doesn't evaporate in the cold. The conditions were perfect. But the dogs ideally need to be tracking within the first 12 hours. Sadly, the dogs and their handlers were working at a 24-hour deficit by the time they arrived on the scene, and no scents were detected.

Next the OPP began searching both the Rainbow Falls Trail and the rest of the Casque Isles Trail. They were conducting what is known as a contour search, in which teams of three scoured the trail and either side. Over the next few days, they would cover the entire 53-kilometre length of the Casque Isles, working on the assumption that they were seeking a live, responsive target. The teams called Christina's name until they were hoarse, listening, waiting for her to answer. She never did.

Meanwhile, other searchers—part of what the OPP calls “hasty teams”—were focused on an area that extended eight kilometres out from the spot where Christina was last seen. (They chose eight kilometres because 90 per cent of all people lost in the bush will be found within that distance of where they went missing.) Hasty teams don't cover every inch of ground, however. Instead, the search coordinator considers natural and man-made features such as rivers, hydro lines or railway tracks that might influence a lost person's movements, determines probability ratios of where the person will be based on their location and their personality profile (e.g., are they more likely to climb a steep cliff or more likely to move downhill?), and then deploys the teams to specific search areas. These experts are trained to look for clues that someone has been there—dropped cigarette butts, discarded clothing, anything.

One of the teams searched not only the falls itself but also the river running down to Lake Superior. It found the only possible leads in the entire eight-kilometre search area—a pair of socks, probably too large to be Christina's, near a 35-foot-deep swimming hole below the falls, and a footprint. But neither lead proved useful. “We couldn't positively link any of the items we found to the lost person,” says Sergeant Luoto, the emergency response team coordinator. The socks probably belonged to a forgetful swimmer, though the DNA evidence is still out on that. And the footprint could have been anyone's.

*Continued on page 84*



## DISAPPEARANCE

*Continued from page 82*

**PEOPLE** get lost in this part of the world. In fact, it seems almost everyone who lives in the area has a lost-in-the-bush story to tell. Even 28-year-old Jason Blier, the acting superintendent of Rainbow Falls and some 26 other parks, has been turned around on occasion. While once conducting a caribou census on Patterson Island, the largest of the Slate Islands just off Terrace Bay, he set his compass declination incorrectly and ended up walking a skewed line, coming out at the wrong spot on the island. After a seven-hour slog over rough ground, he was wet, hungry and knackered, so he decided to set up camp on the shore. "I didn't know where I was and wasn't going to venture into the bush." Eventually, Blier was picked up by boat. Safe.

Most of the people who get lost in the wilderness find their own way out. But some do not. Every year, there are an average of 30 to 40 people reported lost in the bush in the OPP's Northwest Region. "Generally, we find missing people within 24 hours," says Sergeant Luoto. "We have a 95 per cent success rate—even higher." While the majority are found, a few—such as tree planter Aju Iroaga—are not. He was last seen in the bush 70 kilometres north of White River on May 16, 2006. After a seven-day search, his whereabouts remain a mystery.

To get lost in the bush is one thing. But to get lost in a well-signed, fully staffed, car-camping park is quite another. There has only been one other case of a person who has gone missing for any significant period of time in Rainbow Falls Provincial Park. About six years ago, a woman who was 70-something and in poor health was lost for about nine hours. Even that was a head-scratcher for locals. The general feeling is, "How can anyone get lost in the park?"—a place where everyone brings their kids for the annual corn roast and canoe regatta. It just doesn't figure.

**THE** OPP wouldn't let just anyone join the search, and that was an endless source of frustration to the half dozen family members who had arrived at the park shortly after Elizabeth Rutledge flew in. Elizabeth's cousin, Norberto Caguicla, who remained by Elizabeth's side while she camped on site, was driven crazy by the

directive that he could not help. "We couldn't even access the trail openings," he laments. "We were only 50 feet away from the entrance to the waterfall and we weren't allowed to go there."

Local residents also felt an overwhelming urge to help. "The people in this community like to think they are a part of a community that cares," says Mike King, the mayor of Terrace Bay. "There is nobody who would turn their back on anybody." So King and Pat Halonen, a councillor in Schreiber, decided to organize a civilian search effort for the weekend after Christina disappeared. Those who couldn't physically search helped out in other ways, donating and providing food for the searchers. Everybody pitched in.

On Saturday, August 11, about 100 residents from Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Rossport and as far away as Marathon and Thunder Bay travelled by bus to the park and were organized into a grid search by Terrace Bay fire chief Tracy Anderson. Grid searches are generally done when it seems likely the lost person may no longer be able to respond. Former Schreiber mayor Don McArthur and his wife, Birgit, were part of the search team. Struggling through rugged ground the instant they stepped off the trail, they discovered that maintaining a straight line was difficult, even in spots where the bush thinned out. For eight hours the civilian volunteers worked from East Beach in the park straight through the bush to the highway. "I'm in pretty good physical condition," McArthur says. "But I'll tell you, after eight hours, I was exhausted." The civilian search continued on Sunday, when several of Christina's uncles—along with Eddy and J.B.—joined the effort. They found nothing.

In the meantime, the air thundered with would-be rescuers. By the fourth day of the search, an OPP plane was using a Forward Looking Infrared camera in the pre-dawn hours to search for anything alive. It picked up plenty of moose and bear, but not Christina. The rest of the airborne searchers, who'd been flying every single day, were conducting hour-long searches that extended far beyond the established eight-kilometre zone. They were looking for any signs of someone in the bush—stacked rocks, a signal, smoke, a glint of colour. Christina was wearing dark clothing, but Jason Hughes—a volunteer with the North-

western Ontario Air Search and Rescue Organization—says it's surprising how any type of clothing stands out in the bush. Hughes and his fellow searchers reported the coordinates for a few instances of heightened bird activity (more circling ravens and turkey vultures than usual) and one lean-to. All were checked out, but all led to nothing.

Some searchers on the ground—such as Matt Borutski, a volunteer firefighter from Schreiber—wondered how effective the air search could be in the dense bush. There were occasions when the OPP chopper was right above him. "We couldn't see him and he couldn't see us. One of the OPP guys had the best quote about the whole thing. He said, 'You could trip in here and not fall down.' Because the bush, it would hold you up."

After 17 days, and one of the longest searches in the region's history, the OPP officers had to shake their heads and admit that this was one of those times. One of the few. One of the unlucky. One of the five per cent. Christina was still out there. Maybe.

**WHAT** actually happened to Christina is a mystery, but many people who took part in the search believe that she did not disappear in the bush in or near the park. If she had, they say, she would have been found within a few days. At the very least, there would have been signs that she had been there. But there weren't any. And why would a young woman from Toronto, with no experience in this sort of terrain, who was afraid of spiders and rodents—"scared of everything," according to her uncle Bayani Caguicla—venture by herself into thick bush? Particularly when a few weeks before, she and the same group of friends got lost on the Seaton Hiking Trail in southern Ontario, and the experience had so rattled Christina that she later said she was "praying to God to get out." Why would she, of all people, head off the beaten path? She wouldn't, many family members insist. No way.

Some people thought that perhaps Christina had been killed by a bear. It was a theory the OPP seriously considered, flying in a Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) bear expert to the park for a consultation. There are certainly many black bears in the area, so many that the towns of Schreiber and Terrace Bay routinely set

*Continued on page 87*

## DISAPPEARANCE

*Continued from page 84*

bear traps. (The Terrace Bay trap behind the community centre is baited with vanilla and donuts—the local MNR bear technician swears by it.) But despite the booming black bear population, the chances that Christina was taken by a bear are remote. Dr. Stephen Herrero, the author of *Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance*, who has devoted more than 20 years to researching bears, says there are roughly 900,000 black bears in North America and since 2000, there have been an average of only two black bear fatalities a year. Besides, if a bear was involved, there would be signs. There would be blood. There would be drag marks. And the bear wouldn't have taken her farther than 600 feet from the site of the attack. "So after a 17 day-search, not to find some clue, if a bear was involved, I think is highly unlikely," says Herrero. "Not impossible, but highly unlikely."

There are also wolves in the area, but a wolf, too, would have left a decipherable trail—broken branches, shredded clothing, blood. Besides, wolf attacks are generally the stuff of fairy tales, not reality. In North America, there has been only one documented case of wild wolves killing a human.

**PERHAPS** the most common theory about Christina's disappearance—and the most disturbing—is that she was abducted. A clever, predatory sociopath slowed his car, asking for help. And Christina, ever-trusting, believed him. She once told an ex-boyfriend that when she met someone, she trusted them first, unless they did something to break that trust. Would she get into a stranger's car? Probably.

Area residents refuse to believe that someone they know could have been involved. True, there was a murder in Schreiber last year, but it was the first that Don McArthur had ever known about, and the former mayor has lived here for 20 years. Drug related, everyone thinks, though the case is still unsolved. "People here don't even lock their houses," he says.

Locals mention that on the Monday Christina vanished, a legion of outsiders was still hanging around after Terrace Bay's annual Dragfest. And they say that the Trans-Canada brings all sorts of

potential undesirables right through the park. Plenty of people here think that's what happened. Someone nabbed her and took off down the highway.

The OPP has insisted all along that there was no sign of foul play, and that this remains an open missing-person case. That means that the police will investigate any leads, but that there is no evidence to suspect murder. Open missing-person cases include people, for example, who are assumed drowned when a boat is found but no body is recovered. There are currently 25 such open cases in Ontario, but that doesn't include municipalities with their own police forces, like Metro Toronto. And there is no central national registry of open missing-persons cases.

Despite finding no indication of foul play, the OPP did run a parallel investigation during the search. Eddy and the others were interviewed three times by the OPP, including one session that was taped in the Schreiber office. None of them, to date, has been asked to take a polygraph. Christina's mother was told that the OPP was investigating 60 possible leads in the case that included anything from interviewing those who were registered at the park at the time of Christina's disappearance to following up on anything reported to the OPP. Anything at all. Like Paul Gauthier's story.

Gauthier, a resident of Schreiber, believes he saw Christina come into the Rosspoint Campground part of the park, three kilometres west of the main White-sand section where she was last seen by Eddy. He says he was sipping coffee outside his RV at about nine on the morning Christina disappeared, when he saw a small woman coming down the loop from the highway. He says she looked Asian to him, but he didn't think much of it until he found out about Christina, and heard the description of what she was wearing—the hoodie, the black pants, the running shoes. Gauthier can't say for certain it was Christina, but he was sufficiently unnerved to contact the OPP. They interviewed him three times, but their investigations turned up nothing.

**WHEN** there is no trace left of someone, one final theory always emerges: maybe the missing person just doesn't want to be found. Maybe the person ran away to start a new life. That just doesn't seem plausible

*Continued on page 88*

## DISAPPEARANCE

*Continued from page 87*

based on everything anyone says about Christina—that she was trustworthy, dependable, deeply devoted to her family, loved. Christina routinely put others before herself. Ask her friends, family, boss and ex-boyfriend. She would never intentionally put them all through this hell. She would never, they all say, leave her little brother, Michael. She paid for the 15-year-old's music and self-defence lessons, and has been, in Elizabeth's words, like a mother to him pretty much since he was born. And Christina had so much to look forward to. She planned to return to school, hoped to get into teacher's college. Elizabeth had just found a vacation property in Panama and was going to treat her daughter to a holiday. Christina wouldn't just walk out of their lives.

**PEOPLE** grieve in different ways, particularly over someone who has vanished. The tension for Christina's family is unbearable. They are desperate for answers. Some are predictably angry. Some lash out. Some turn on each other. The family has been torn apart by her disappearance. There are those who are furious with Eddy for leaving her alone in the park. And there are those who are not, who see no point in adding to the already insufferable pain by assigning blame. Christina's mother Elizabeth falls into the latter camp.

On August 23, the day the OPP called off the search, many of the men and women who had been pounding the bush for any sign of Christina dropped by Elizabeth's tent to see her, to tell her how sorry they were. She thanked them, shook their hands, even gave them hugs. And it was too much for some of them to bear. "I have never seen so many guys cry," Elizabeth recalls. "This wasn't just a job for them. They had a passion to help Christina like she is their daughter."

A vigil was held for Christina at the falls on a miserably cold Saturday in September, one month after her disappearance. Thirty family members piled into four vans to make the long journey north, stopping at Father Raul's house early in the morning. At 3 p.m., about 50 people assembled along the boardwalk to the falls. OPP constable Keith Jones was there, and Terrace Bay mayor Mike King, and councillor Pat Halonen. The purpose was

prayer and thanks. Father Raul said the Mass, performed the Eucharist. And then Elizabeth Rutledge stood in the driving rain and thanked everyone for all of their hard work and effort in trying to bring her daughter home. Every family member took a moment to shake the hand of everyone present. Then Elizabeth gave Keith Jones, Pat Halonen and Mike King each a thank-you card. And, looking around, she said that if Christina were out there, she couldn't think of a more beautiful place for her to be.

**THERE** is no tense for the missing. Almost two months after her disappearance, Elizabeth refers to her daughter in the present. Christina is a ghost, inhabiting a world between the living and the dead, haunting those who love her until she is found. And now, that's all Elizabeth wants. Sitting on her daughter's bed, she speaks about the psychics who are starting to call. She dismisses them politely, thanks them for caring. Elizabeth, however, is Catholic, and doesn't put stock in any other brand of mysticism. She looks around the room. It is small, littered with the keepsakes of a typical young, devout woman. There is an open bible on the low bedside table and a mural that Christina painted covering the ceiling that slopes over the bed. It depicts a beach with a palm tree and the words "Never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light."

Elizabeth sleeps here now, the bureau lined with condolence cards. She sleeps amongst her daughter's things, most surfaces strewn with photos of Christina—Christina holding a baby, Christina at a birthday party, Christina always smiling. "People are bringing me so many pictures of her now," Elizabeth sighs, pointing out an inspirational poster. It is from First Corinthians: "Love is patient, love is kind..." Elizabeth smiles. "It's her favourite."

Crystal, a small grey cat who has been curled asleep by Elizabeth's side for the better part of two and a half hours, suddenly rouses herself, hops down and pads out of the bedroom. There had been another cat, Elizabeth says. A black cat named Oreo. She had recently had a litter. On the day Christina disappeared, so did the cat. After a week, the kittens died. And the cat? She never came home. **e**

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