

"What are you doing for the weekend?" Asked Tiffany. "I am going to go up to No Name Lake and spend a day on the trails," replied Debbie. Tiffany jumped at the chance, "I would like to go to the lake and spend a weekend. Joe could take care of Justin, he is out of work right now and sure has the time."

Debbie quickly replied, "I am going to hit the trails hard, and climb fast, I will be gone for the whole day." "You would have a hard time keeping up." Tiffany replied, "I could spend the day at the lake, go out on my little rubber raft and have some fun. I would like it if Angela could come with us. We could have supper all cooked by the time you got back. Don't be a spoil sport it would be fun." Debbie thought about it for a while, and then replied, "Ok! We will leave at four in the morning, tell Angela to leave her homework at home."

She was sure that those two would never get ready to travel on such short order. Angela being always so busy with her schoolwork and Tiffany was never much for early morning. Chances were slim, that those two girls would be on the doorstep at four a.m.

About fifteen minutes before four a. m. Debbie arrived in front of Tiffany's house, which had only the porch light illuminated. It looked like everyone was sleeping. Debbie gave one toot on the horn, if she did not see anyone it was her chance to get away quick.

The interior light switched on and a bleary-eyed Tiffany and Angela started dragging their stuff out of the house. Damn, they had enough equipment for a boy scout camp. She groaned a little when she saw that Angela was dragging along a bag of books. Debbie opened the window and bellowed, "We are not going to spend the week up there." Angela replied, "hold your horses Deb's we'll load our stuff. It will just take us a minute." Debbie grumbled under her breath.

It was about a two-hour trip to No Name from Spokane. Driving to make up time, Debbie was pushing it a bit while Tiffany and Angela slept. Angela awakened as Debbie took one tight corner a bit fast; the back tires were drifting to the right on a left-hand turn.

Tiffany remarked, "Take it easy Debbie, No Name will be there all day. Let us try to get to the lake in one piece." Debbie made one of her rare smiles and spoke, "Tell you the truth ladies that one made me just about pee my pants. I will back it off some." Tiffany was pleased to see the speedometer on the Bronco, drop from seventy-five to 60 MPH. For the next twenty minutes or so, the girls were pretty much silent.

Tiffany asked, "how close are we?" Debbie answered, "Give me a half hour and you will be cooking breakfast." It was then that the Doe and yearling fawn broke out of cover near the road and darted in front of the Bronco. Debbie hit the brakes and went into a skid screaming "Deer!" Skidding sideways, the Bronco just bumped the Doe's hindquarters with the front end, doing little damage. The back end of the vehicle hit the fawn, with a slam and a solid thump. The Bronco came to a stop and the girls got out to survey the damage. Both of the fawns front legs were broken, the wheels must have gone over its legs. It was an appalling sight watching the poor suffering animal writhe on the ground trying to get up.

Angela and Tiffany watched in horror as Debbie opened the rear hatch of The Bronco. She retrieved the tire tool, and killed the poor animal with a single powerful blow to the back of its head.

"Do not stand there looking like I just killed your kid Angela. The damn thing was going to die anyway. I just saved it some agony." Tiffany could see that Debbie was furious, her Bronco had a busted headlight and there was a dent in the rear quarter panel. The best thing to do was to put on a good face and get on with the trip.

Debbie nimbly moved the fawn off the road by grabbing one of its back legs, and dragging it into the woods. As they pulled away from the dead fawn Tiffany saw the brief reflection of two eyes in the rearview mirror illuminated by the taillights. She wondered if the doe was searching for her fawn.

While pulling into the undeveloped loop at No Name, Tiffany asked, "Where's the toilet." Angela grinned and offered her advice, "Pick a bush, any bush." "Hang on till I park." Debbie quipped, "We will park where the Trail goes down to the lake. It will be a little easier getting your stuff down to the beach. If you need it, I have a shovel in the back of the Bronco."

Tiffany groaned got up in the seat on her knees and started pawing around in the back looking for the shovel. "What a type of place is this with no outhouses," she asked. "You'll love it, trust me." Remarked Angela.

After arriving at the camping ground and packing their equipment down the trail to the lake, the girls started giggling and having fun. Tiffany was busy with her little Coleman stove. Breakfast would be bacon, eggs, and hash browns. After the events of the trip, things were looking up. Debbie was anxious to start her hike up to the high country. She was hungry now and it would be a long day. She would wait until after eating, and drive up to the high country to begin her climb. Stuffing, some Granola Bars into her into her pockets, and filling the canteen with water, she kept herself busy preparing for a long hard day.

Debbie had been an only child in her dad's care, mom had split to do her drugs elsewhere, this abandonment had shaped Debbie's personality. She was a loner. Dad died of a heart attack when Debbie was seventeen. After that she lived with her mother who was then recovering from her addictions. There was a reconciliation of sorts, after a time, but they were never really close.

Mom had helped Debbie through Community College. Debbie got a scholarship and worked nights, college in the day; eventually she got her teacher's certificate. She had a reputation as a winning coach for girl's basketball. Debbie also had a reputation for being tough, and demanding the full measure of effort from her girls. Enforcing this had got her into trouble with the school board. Debbie had to be careful in the future or she would be looking for work without references.

Debbie's relationships with men were short lived. She liked them, but just did not develop any long-term commitments. Still a young woman, and not a bad looking one at that, she figured that would come eventually.

North Eastern Washington State was a favorite spot to move game, animals that were a nuisance elsewhere was placed here. Grizzly bear, moose, and cougar were roaming these hills. She did not expect to run into anything but did have some insurance. Tucked into a compartment on her backpack, where she could get to it fast was a Charter Arms 357 Magnum pistol.

She had inherited this old piece from her dad. The pistol had a 3.5" barrel with a five round cylinder. The handgun was a small 357 Magnum loaded with Magnum hollow-

points. Recoil from the pistol was severe, after shooting all five rounds in the cylinder. Her wrist would hurt. This handgun could take down most threats, including human.

Debbie was an expert sharpshooter due to many hours in the country plunking at cans. You did not use the 357 Magnum rounds for plunking, a regular thirty-eight would fit the chamber and your wrist would hold up longer. Carrying the weapon was illegal outside hunting seasons without a permit, but Debbie could not allow herself to be helpless, ever.

Driving up logging roads and then going cross-country, heading for the high trails. She spooked a couple of deer. They disappeared into the brush with their white tails flapping. Soon she was not able to climb the steep ground, even with the four-wheel-drive. It was hiking time. Chucking a couple of large stones under the wheels of the Bronco to keep it from rolling and not bothering with locking the doors, Debbie hit the trail.

She took a compass bearing to a landmark off in the distance. If caught in the dark, she could back track the bearing and get close to her truck. The slope was so steep she had to work hard to make any headway. Soon she was breathing hard and sweating. This was her idea of fun. She had learned it from her dad.

After spending the day in vigorous exercise, she was exhausted. The granola bars were not doing the trick any more. She needed something substantial to take care of the hunger pangs. It was late in the daytime, time to backtrack the route she had climbed and return to camp. It would not be a good thing to get caught in the dark.

"Thermal imaging, reports a human specimen in a remote area. Computer analysis of the signature shows a mature female." Tarr-Gn spoke telepathically. "Let us continue with the gathering." Tam-Arel gave the order, "Shift to the phase of visibility. Capture her with the graviton beam. Tar-Gn replied with the telepathic alien equivalent of Eye, Eye, Sir and sent the orders to the computer via the telepathic interface."

Debbie saw a strange light and sensation. They were pulling her up as if a giant hand had grabbed her whole body. She saw a glowing ball with an open portal, with a beam of eerie greenish light reaching down and somehow lifting her. Not being the type to yield to fear in the first seconds of an emergency, she gave some quick thought and pulled the pistol out of her backpack. Aiming the handgun at the focal part of the strange shimmering force that was pulling her up, she fired three quick rounds. Next thing she knew she was laying on the ground trying to get her breath back.

Aboard the Hortot vehicle The Gather, called FE00BC-CC by the Hortot, Tam-Arel uttered a telepathic burst with the same meaning as a foul human curse word relating to excrement. "She has damaged the Graviton Emitter. He reported to Tarr-Gn. Shift space-time and return to base. We must replace it before we can continue this mission. How far did the human drop? Is she damaged? We need that specimen. Did you see her reaction time? She was fast and effective. We must repair the emitter and return to finish the job and we need the elements of her soul.

Tam-Arel notified his superior, "Surveillance reports a hydrocarbon-fueled vehicle at thirty minutes walking time from present location. The human should go on the only road to a series of lakes. That will be a good place to do the extraction. Bring the portable mass moderator. We will need it.

The trip was twenty-two earth minutes to reach moon base. Automated emergency repair of the graviton emitter device was only seven minutes by the same time scale. The Gather was quickly returned into space-time and on the way back. The Gather covered the return distance in about eighteen minutes. Soon they were out of dimensional time-shifted-mode and surveying the situation on the ground.

Tarr-Gn was proud of his capable second officer Tam-Arel. He handled The Gather with telepathic control and was the best of the best, the Hortot.

Debbie's right arm had been broken in the fall, no broken skin or bleeding, but she knew a broken arm when she saw one. Damn! That thing had disappeared fast when she shot that last round at it.

She made a sling for her arm from a gauze pad she carried in her backpack for just such an emergency and took a couple of aspirin to help with the pain. What if they came back? She had to get out of here and go where there were people. She believed that the reason this abduction was in a remote area was because the abductor wanted to remain unseen.

Not wanting to be one of those who went into the wilderness never to be seen again she planned to get out of here fast. Spacecraft, flying saucer, aircraft, whatever it was? Who was in it and what did they want with her?

Debbie opened the chamber on her pistol and ejected the bullets, replacing the three empty casings with new hollow points. Getting to her feet, she started to jog down the hill. It took her about half an hour to get back to the Bronco. She ran most of the way.

Taking a couple of falls and skinning up her good hand and both her knees.

She jumped in the Bronco and started it using her good hand. "It is a good thing this is an automatic," she thought. " Don't know how I'd handle all that shifting if it were a standard." She was hitting the potholes and ruts as hard as she could, and keep the Bronco on the road. She would have been bounced out of the seat if it wasn't for the strap and belt.

Debbie's arm was painful and swollen and would have to have attention soon. Concentrating to overcome the pain, she tried to think. Finally she pulled into the loop at No Name, horn honking, lights flashing. Setting the hand brake and throwing open the door with her good hand.

Debbie was down the path to the lake, as fast as she could go. She was hollering as loud as she could, "Leave everything, and let's get the hell! Out of here. Please! I need to go to the Emergency room. Besides, this isn't a safe place tonight. There are some bad guys out there and they have already broken my arm."

She damn, Sure wasn't going to tell them about aliens. The girls would think she had been up on the mountain eating mushrooms or something. Tiffany and Angela grabbed their purses, back packs anything they felt was too valuable to loose, and then headed up the path.

Debbie was a sight, bleeding from her knees and legs, and from both her hands. Tiffany was shocked, "What did they do to you? You going to be ok?" Debbie replied with, "Getting out of here is what will make me feel better."

Angela was looking at Debbie's broken arm with alarm, "You want Me to drive she asked?" Debbie's reply was "I'll drive."

Then the strange vehicle appeared hovering above the exit road. Handing the pistol to Angela, Debbie shouted, "Shoot the damn thing, do it now." Angela just stood there with her jaw open looking like she was in a trance. Debbie grabbed the pistol back out of Angela's hand. Damn! She would be shooting left handed. Pulling the trigger on the pistol five times didn't do much good. The bullets just went out about ten feet stopped and then slowly, as if on miniature parachutes slowly, drifted to the ground.

Three green shimmering globes exited from the craft and surrounded the Bronco with a growing net of shimmering spider webs. Debbie felt herself being immersed in a sea of molasses. Soon she had lost all consciousness.

Waking up with bright sunlight on her face, Debbie saw Angela and Tiffany, still snoozing in their sleeping bags. She sat up and rubbed her right arm for a while, it seemed unusually stiff. So much for Tiffany's talk about breakfast, it looked like they had decided to sleep in. So much for playing on the lake, these girls were so predictable. They worked so hard all week. Give them sometime off and what would they do. Sleep of course