

Martin & James vs. The Crazy Weatherman
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Ramblings

Hello and welcome one and all,

I am truly humbled and grateful that you are reading this story, the third one in the Martin & James series. I am glad the stories have brought some enjoyment and pleasure.

When I originally got it through my head that I really did want to write, I had an idea. Then, I sat on it and let the idea 'evolve' in my mind. Looking back now, I think it was more a matter of being afraid - afraid I couldn't actually write and afraid that no one would want to read it. The fact that you are reading the third Martin & James story tells me that someone enjoys this. That's totally mind blowing to me. Boom. Again, I am completely humbled and grateful.

I hope, that as you read through this story, that you enjoy it and find a bit of an escape from whatever your stresses are for the day. I hope that you want to read more, to learn more about the masked man they chased or learn more about the agency and other agents. Maybe you are questioning why they have a kid with a field agent - which is totally weird.

Well, the story you are about to read, does not answer all of those questions. That is the other thing that originally popped into my head when I wanted to write. I had never written a full length novel and didn't have the confidence that I could do that. I did want to write, but if I got discouraged while writing my first novel, I would stop and never know if I really could do it. I'm probably not the only one that has ever felt that way.

To solve that dilemma, I decided to write short stories. This thought came from my love of the Conan stories by Robert E. Howard. Not that he consciously thought about writing short stories that just captured a slice, or an adventure, in Conan's life. He was writing for what he had at the time - magazine's that would publish short stories. The way Howard did it was to just write various stories about Conan in different stages of his life. There wasn't really a thought to make a full life history or to even connect them, it was just stories. I loved that.

So that's where I was, wanting to write stories but not sure I could. I decided to write a series of adventures about my main character and idea for the world. I did a couple, talked with some people, wrote some more, etc. Finally, I found someone that helped me out and encouraged me to stop with the individual stories and write a book. By that time, I felt that maybe I could.

OK, that's not the whole story, but I will regale you with more at some other time. Since I took my main idea and went the full novel route, I still wanted to get some action adventure stories that were a bunch of stories loosely connected. My stepson, who is a very active dreamer, started telling me about some of his dreams, and that's the final piece I needed.

So here we are. Action stories about a duo fighting the forces that want to destroy the world. They have some connection, and more of that will come out in time, but they are

just fun reads. That's my hope and desire.

With that said, I won't hold you up any longer from finding out about this crazy weatherman and how Martin and James, maybe, defeat him.

Enjoy!

Crazed Weatherman

The boy stared without blinking, his eyes watering from the strain. He scrunched the muscles, fighting the urge to blink as the light breeze dried out his pupils. The newspaper he stared at fluttered, the breeze catching its edges. The hands holding the newspaper up moved as the pages were turned. The boy stared harder, if staring could be rated by the effort put into it. From behind the paper, a voice floated up.

“James, I have informed you that you have already consumed a glass of chocolate milk and that you would need to wait before getting more.”

Tightening his lips to match the tightness of his eyes, James attempted to stare even harder, throwing every bit of his will into the effort. Hearing a sigh, probably the most aggravated sigh he had ever heard, James straightened slightly, suppressing the smile that threatened to take over his mouth. Hearing the crinkling of newspaper, he looked to the side, appearing to be looking out at the sky beyond.

Peering over the edge of the paper, Martin contemplated his young charge. Though he appeared to not be paying attention, Martin knew better than that. The boy could become focused like nothing else, and right now he was focused on more chocolate milk. Watching the wind ruffling the red hair, Martin suppressed an impulse to grin. He was fond of the boy, but now was not the time to lose concentration. Though, he thought, it might be time for more chocolate milk.

“James,” he started, seeing the small head whip around and the eyes stare at him intently, “there may yet be sufficient time for a glass of chocolate milk.”

Before he could even finish the sentence, James had stood up, grinning wildly and waving for the maitre d’.

“But James, that doesn’t mean that making a spectacle of ourselves is required.”

Chagrined, face blushing to match his hair, James sat as the tuxedoed gentleman approached their table.

“Yes, my young sir, how may I serve you.” The man bowed as he said this eliciting a giggle from James.

Straightening to match the older man, James said, “My dear sir, I require another glass of chocolate milk.” Hearing Martin clear his throat, James hurried to add, “Please.”

“Yes, young sir, I will hasten that right out.” Winking as he left, the waiter headed to the back, easily swaying with the motion of the car as they glided through the air.

Smiling, James looked back toward the windows. He watched a bird fly past then turned to Martin.

“Can we get higher than the birds?”

Martin thought for a moment, running his tongue over his lips. “Yes, James, we can get higher than the birds, but we wouldn’t want to.” Seeing his charge look at him curiously, Martin continued. “You see, the higher we go, there is less breathable air. It has something to do with the distance we are from the ground. I’m not really sure and I’m more than happy to leave that to the scientists.”

James thought about this for a few moments before asking, “Sir, was the chief correct?”

“About what, in particular, James?”

“About this weather guy. Is he really as powerful as the chief said at the meeting? Can he really wipe out whole cities?” James’ arms flailed as he said whole cities. Realizing he was gesturing wildly, he pulled his arms in, giving his mentor another glance. “And is that why I couldn’t wear my hat?”

Martin looked at the young boy. James was not just his squire, he had developed a soft spot for the boy. While he still had much growing up to do, Martin knew he could count on him when needed, even if Martin still objected to the training program that was required by the agency. He also was the one spot in Martin’s life that brought some joy, like now, watching him get excited about the possibility of destroying a whole city. But he must teach discipline. It wouldn’t do to smile and laugh while on a mission. No matter how much he desired just that.

“Yes, James, the Weatherman is that powerful. He could call up wind that can level buildings. Or create a storm over the ocean that causes a tidal wave to level a coastal area. And your hat would be easily blown to the wind, as they say. So, yes, he is that powerful and must be stopped. We must be watchful and careful.”

“Aren’t we always?” James asked, his innocence showing through the stare he gave at the older man.

“Hmmm,” was all that Martin answered.

Movement caught Martin’s eye. Looking around, he saw that many of the patrons had grabbed hats or napkins to stop them from being blown by the wind. His intense gaze peered around, noticing that the whole ship was swaying as the breeze increased. His hair was blown back and forth and even his mustache felt like it was moving.

James started to imitate his mentor, but was distracted when his chocolate milk arrived. Smiling widely, he started enjoying the drink when he was startled by Martin jumping to his feet.

“James, we must go. Now.” Martin hurried toward the staff door at the rear of the cabin.

Racing to follow the older man, James skidded to a halt and glanced between Martin disappearing through the door and his chocolate milk. Decision made, he ran to his glass, gulped the milk in three large chugs, and ran to where he had seen Martin disappear, wiping milk from his lips as he went.

James stopped as he walked through the door. While the main cabin area was well lit, he was now in what seemed to be a tunnel, and it felt like the walls were leaning towards him. The floor under him seemed to be trying to get away from his feet. Sticking his hand out to steady himself, he squinted, trying to see further in the gloom. Taking a cautious step forward, he once again caught himself as he was thrown against a wall, everything around him seemed to shift. Stumbling forward, James stopped when he heard a hoarse shout and knew it was Martin.

Rushing toward the sound, James again stopped as he burst into sunlight.

“Ah, the party is complete now that young James has joined us.” The voice wasn’t familiar to James. Blinking from the sudden sunlight, he tried to see who had spoken. Feeling a hand on his shoulder, he spun, executing a painful twist as Martin had showed him.

“James, it’s me,” Martin said. James blinked, saw the older man, coat fluttering in the wind, then turned to the other figure that was ... floating?

The area they stood was at the rear of the dirigibles cabin and consisted of a series of catwalks leading to the spinning propellers. Thick, rough rope wound up to the sky and connected to the metal skinned balloon above them. James gulped, realizing that one wrong step would lead to a very long fall. Peering down he corrected himself - a very, very long fall.

Forgetting the drop, he concentrated on the floating figure. Just off the side of the catwalks, a man wearing aviator goggles and an apron, appeared to be standing on nothing but the air. Whipping around his head, his long black hair appeared to be alive, like snakes on the head of Medusa. A grin spread across his whole face, engulfing his features. James got the willies looking at that smile and took a slight step to get behind Martin.

“Perrin, stop what you are doing,” Martin said.

The floating man didn’t react, his smile never faltered. Martin saw him move his hand then grabbed a support to keep from being flung over when the massive airship rocked as if hit by a giant fist. Checking that James was also safe, Martin turned his attention back to the floating man.

“Perrin, we don’t need to endanger anyone else. I want to help you. Do not persist on this course of action.”

The other man made no indication of having heard, his smile stayed fixed. He floated further from the man and boy, spinning to face away from them and lifting his arms out from his sides.

Martin motioned for James to head down one of the catwalks while he started in a different direction. The suspended figure would be between them in moments.

James, watching his footing very carefully as he edged along the walkway, grasping each support and guide rope fiercely. Every time his gaze caught the distant ground, he gulped and gripped even tighter. Opposite, Martin stepped carefully, while never allowing his eyes to leave Perrin, except to verify that James was still all right.

The airship jerked as another gust of wind battered it. Several distant shrieks sounded above the wind before being lost in the growing cacophony. Martin and James exchanged looks as the ship jerked below them. Both jumped as a burst of lightning crackled through the sky close to the ship, followed by a thunderclap that nearly deafened them. James cried out, covering his ears. The wind buffeted him, driving him to the edge of his catwalk. Martin tensed, heading towards James, but he stopped as the young man pulled himself up, grasping the support and breathing heavily.

Seeing James safe, Martin steadied himself as he reached into his trench coat, fighting as it was whipped around by the high winds.

“Perrin, stop this, talk with me. Tell me what you want. Why are you doing this?” Martin called, voice sounding thin in comparison to the wind shrieking all around.

Drawing a small disc out, he motioned at his younger counterpart to do the same. James nodded then struggled to maintain his grip while pulling a similar disc from his back pocket.

The floating man didn't look at Martin as he answered. “Really? That's the best you can do? Thinking to draw this out as you engage me in conversation? I thought you were a man of action?”

“Ok, we can do things that way also. Come down here. You and I can settle things one on one. Show me what you've got.” Martin steadied himself as he twisted the disc.

“Settle things? Ha ha, you are much funnier than I had been told. But I agree, it is far past time for me to show you what I've got.”

Another crack of lightning lit up the sky, surprising James. He fumbled the disc and juggled it before gaining control. Once James was ready, Martin exaggerated counting down, then both threw the discs toward the closest area of the ship.

Without warning, a furious roar of wind knocked the two agents against the rails, tilting the balloon and causing more shrieks of alarm to rise from inside the gondola. Martin's eyes immediately snapped to the discs still soaring towards their targets. He watched as a hail storm showered the area, knocking both discs out of the air to plummet toward the distant ground. Hearing a close cry of alarm, he saw James raise his arms protectively over his head as hail pelted him from above. The hovering Perrin floated further from the balloon, laughing as he did so. The sky behind him started to darken, and there were angry snaps of lightning from the clouds.

Martin surveyed the scene, mouth tightening as he realized there was nothing further they could do. Standing, he struggled against the growing force of the wind. Motioning for James, they both started crawling along the platforms toward the safety of the door.

Seeing movement in his peripheral, Martin glared as Perrin floated closer.

“So. You thought you had me? Me!?! You obviously don't know who you're talking to,” the man said.

Martin strained to hear over the howling wind. Growling as he fought to hold on, he said, “I know who I'm talking to. All of you mad men are the same.”

A throaty chuckle escaped Perrin. “Mad men? I think not. From my perspective, it is you who are mad. Have you been able to stop any of us? No. You think you are organized and can protect the world. We think not.”

“Again, that just makes you all mad. Your goals of world domination will not come to fruition. I will see to that.”

“And again, you think one thing and are totally wrong. You see, I am in control at the moment. I hold the lives of everyone on this ship in my hand.” To demonstrate, he held his hand in front of Martin's face, palm up. Closing it quickly, Martin was jolted by another burst of wind followed by pelting hail.

“This little windstorm you created? This will not stop me or the next agent from coming after you.” Without warning, Martin lunged, straining to grasp the floating man

in front of him.

Backing away, Perrin said, “Tsk, tsk. That simply is rude behavior, do you know that? Why, I tried to reason with the last agent,” he said, and stopped. Martin’s face had jerked, as if from a spasm, then harden into an unreadable mask. Enlightenment blossomed on his face. “Oh, so you knew the last agent. Maybe even a friend. Someone you’ve come to avenge, perhaps? Oh, I find that utterly priceless.” Laughing heartily, Perrin spun around, the fury of his storm buffeting the entire airship.

Looking over at his companion, Martin saw that James was just feet away from safety. Once James was safe, he might be able to deal with this threat.

“James,” he yelled over the shrieking weather. “Go tell the captain to descend immediately.” He wasn’t sure James had heard until he saw a small thumb poke up to tell him message received. Yes, he could count on that kid.

Before James moved another inch, a wall of hail pelted him. As he cried out, his arms instinctively flew to protect his face, and a surge of wind blasted him from the opposite side.

“No!” Martin yelled, seeing the boy pushed over the edge and plummet to the ground. Their eyes met and Martin saw fear and pleading in those little eyes that had grown to the size of dinner plates. Looking back, he realized that Perrin was also watching the boy and had floated close enough that Martin could reach him and end this disaster. But it would also mean ending James. Clenching his jaws tight enough for the muscles to show, he stepped toward the floating madman, preparing to jump. Stopping, he realized there had been something else in the boy’s eyes. Looking at the distant falling body, he realized what those eyes had shown him. Trust and love, they had shown him trust and love and he was determined to see that again.

Without further thought, Martin plunged off the platform, following the boy straight down toward the distant ground. Gathering his coat around him, he streamlined himself as much as possible, determined to reach the boy before it was too late. Martin realized they were falling too fast, the wind was stronger and pushing him to the earth at an accelerated rate. Determined not to let Perrin win, Martin willed himself closer to the boy.

As he fell, like an avenging angel, Martin’s hands played restlessly with his coat, gliding across the surface and slapping himself several times. Nearing the boy, he saw James had his arms outstretched and legs as wide as possible.

“Good boy,” Martin thought, pleased that all their training was paying off and may save both of their lives.

As he approached, he and James locked eyes once again. Instead of seeing sheer terror, as he had feared, he saw a calm and complete trust from his young charge. Martin kept his eyes staring into James as they slowly grew closer. When they were about to touch, Martin nodded sharply. Seeing the signal, James grabbed a button on his vest and pulled while Martin had grabbed his coat and held it out, looking like he was trying to fly.

And fly he did. The wind caught the outstretched coat and a ‘plink’ sound was heard

above the wind. Martin's coat became much more rigid and pulled further out, stretching the material. During this process, out of James' vest, tendrils were growing, looking almost like limbs as they waved in the breeze. The tendrils flailed wildly before moving with purpose to Martin's jacket. When the tendrils had grasped Martin, James was jerked forward and crushed against Martin, held firmly by the tendrils wrapped around them both.

"James, there may be cause for us to work on your balance," Martin said, raising his voice to be heard over the wind, as he looked to the ground, which was much too close.

"Yes sir, I think that may be wise," James answered, eyes widening as he saw how close the ground was getting. Quickly, he shut them tight, hanging onto the older man tightly.

Hiding a smile, Martin said, "I believe I don't need to tell you to hold on."

A moment later there was a flapping sound, and more material shot out of Martin's coat. Immediately, it took on a firm appearance and gave the two figures the look of a large bird gliding through the air.

"And Icarus flew..." Martin intoned. Leaning, he adjusted the path of the glider, circling and heading back toward the airship.

As their turn was completed, both blinked from a brilliant flash of light. Looking toward where the dirigible was, both gasped as they bore witness to the incredible fury of the storm. The airship was blossoming into a giant fireball as lightning lit the sky in such brilliance that James marveled at how much brighter it was than the now exploding ship.

"Come James, we must report back to headquarters at once," Martin said, veering their glider away from the fiery chunks falling around them.

"Sir," was all James said as he pointed. Martin spied a floating figure drifting away from the explosion, lightning repeatedly striking the person as they flew away from the explosion and the duo. Grimacing harder, Martin shifted, sending him and James on a tight spiral that carried them down and away from the failure in the sky.

Now that you've read the story...

There you go, a fun adventure, but a dismal failure for our heroes.

If this is the first Martin & James story you have read, I encourage you to visit my website.

[Http://sa-schneider.com](http://sa-schneider.com)

There, you can find not only more Martin & James stories that you can read, but also stories for other characters and series I am working on - like The Vindicators and Melvin, the Redneck Trucker. I may also have a few miscellaneous stories there and will soon add the Liza Jane stories, which I truly can't wait to share.

Thanks again for reading, I look forward to sharing more stories with you.

Excerpt: M&J vs The Masked Moss Trooper

Below is an excerpt from the first released Martin & James story. They are chasing a masked assassin and must capture him before he escapes on a speeding train.

Stopping suddenly, the tall man didn't notice when the boy bumped into him. A small dust cloud rose around the boy as, rubbing his nose, he took a step back and looked up into the narrow face, the piercing eyes still looking all around. "James, the current moment is not appropriate for levity." Confused, the boy had forgotten the giggle of several moments ago, though the man had not. Forgetting his confusion, the boy saw the man's mustache quivering, causing him to stifle yet another laugh and instead something that sounded like 'Snork' came out.

Clearing his throat, the boy puffed out his chest and threw his head back. This caused his baker boy cap to fly off, but was ignored for the moment. "Yes sir," he said, looking around as if he was spying on slews of evil doers. The man glared at the boy, but decided to not say anything as the boy took an overly dramatic stance while peering around.

Again the whistle sounded it's long wail. The boy said it sounded like another banshee, earning an even sterner glare.

"James, we must locate Vincent and we must endeavor to do so before he can board this train!" The man, Martin, stated. The boy thought every word sounded like an order from some general on a battlefield, but he kept a straight face, with only a small giggle, easily covered up by the sound of rushing feet as people hurried to climb on board. Throughout the station, people swarmed, saying good-bye to loved ones with hugs being given all around. The man and boy struggled to see through the crowd.

An insistent beeping joined the racket. Reaching into a coat pocket, Martin pulled out a device that looked like a small, mangled bike frame. Pulling and twisting, in moments he had assembled a mini dish sitting on a platform with a wire trailing to an apparatus that looked like a flight helmet. Handing the dish to his small companion, who immediately started moving it slowly around while watching a red, blinking light on the back, Martin pulled the helmet on.

Inside, he was greeted with an image, though fuzzy, of his chief.

"Yes, chief," he said.

"Well, do you have him? Stop beating around the bush, my boy," the stern looking man said.

Without even blinking, Martin answered, "No, sir. We are trailing him, but since he destroyed our car, we have been unable to apprehend him."

"Well, hurry it up then, I don't have all day. It is vital that he be apprehended. We have been one step behind him for much too long. So quit standing around like it's tea time, do your job!" The little man in the image, slammed his hand down and everything went dark. Feeling a tugging, Martin removed the helmet to regard James.

"There!" the boy yelled, pointing to a man about to board the train.

The man, one hand gripping the rail to haul himself aboard, jerked his head, looking back at the pointing boy. His face was covered in a mask that looked like part leering demon and part wild animal. The eyes behind the mask widened, looking at the two now hurrying through the surging crowd. Cries of outrage erupted as the tall man shoved past people already pushing to get on, his limp giving him a drunken quality. The boy was left behind, struggling to catch up and collapse the instrument he still carried, and was knocked about as angered passengers once again pushed to get aboard.

As James reached the steps, he was grabbed and hauled on board, just as the train gave a lurch and the wheels started turning slowly, dragging the behemoth down the tracks.

“Damn,” Martin swore under his breath. He knew it would be harder to capture Vincent while on the moving train, but at least they knew he was definitely here. Entering the passenger car, he drew the boy along, hurrying down the aisle and receiving stern stares from passengers attempting to get situated. Trying to rectify the situation, James tipped his hat in apology to many, but was constantly getting yanked forward before he could smile and complete the kind overtures.

Stopping, Martin waved his hand, trying to clear smoke and dust that still lingered in the car. Mimicking the movement, James also waved his hand, enthusiastically flapping it back and forth while coughing from smoke inhalation. Others, standing and seated, turned to glance at the newcomers. Giving the man and boy a cursory once over, they turned back to their conversations, ignoring the two.

You can get this story for free at the link below:

[Http://sa-schneider.com](http://sa-schneider.com)

It is also available at Wattpad and through the Biblioboard app.

Excerpt: The Vindicators: Billie's Origin

This is very exciting for me. Below you will find an excerpt from another series of stories I will be releasing soon. This is a group of young people that get thrust into the world of superheroes. It may not have been what they planned for their life, but sometimes life has other plans. The full story, along with a couple others, will be coming soon. If you like this bit, let me know. Believe me, every bit of encouragement helps immensely, so drop a line and let me know what you think:

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Now onto the good stuff:

“Fletch, do you think we’ll find some evidence tomorrow?”

Fletcher shrugged. “Dunno. Someone says they saw something, that’s enough to get us out in this god forsaken country.”

“Man, if I ever saw a UFO, I mean a REAL UFO, I would crap my pants.”

“Yeah, you probably would, ya’ damn pansy ass,” Fletcher said

The first man, Wally, tossed a handful of mud at Fletcher, eliciting a deep guffaw. Scooping food out of their bowls, they sat hunched over, quiet, eating. Wally shifted position, moving his cramped butt on the log. Scraping the last of his stew from his bowl, he scooted forward, ladling out another spoonful.

“You like this stuff? Seriously? I mean, I don’t eat at the Ritz, but gheez, this stuff is just a step above dog food.” Fletcher said, peering into the bowl.

“Hey man, it’s not too bad. Besides, it’s what we’ve got, right?” Wally brushed his dripping bangs, sending drops of water into his bowl. “Just think, if we find some solid evidence, we will be living like kings, man. Lobster every night. Am I right?” His eyes gleamed, from the water or firelight was unclear, as he looked at the second man.

A grunt was the only reply he received.

On the opposite side of the fire, a third figure observed the two men banter. The rain didn’t seem to bother this figure, huddled under a rain poncho and over-sized flat brimmed hat. Nothing could be seen except a pair of eyes, watching the other two.

“You guys are both idiots.” The voice was higher, female, young.

“Like you aren’t, girlie? Seems to me you’re sitting in this rain just the same as us,” Fletcher said. He had stopped shoveling food into his mouth and regarded the girl across the flames of the campfire.

“Fletcher, we may both be sitting in this rain, but I guarantee I’m not an idiot.”

“Yeah, well, how do you figure?” said the man that was not Fletcher.

The girl shifted, possibly to turn her head to regard this man, possibly to relieve cramped muscles. “First, Wally, I have this hat.” She nodded her head slightly, causing a stream of water to run onto her poncho. “This hat has protected me from the sun all day and now, surprise, it also protects me from getting rain down the back of my neck.

Unlike you gentlemen, who have rain plastering their hair to their heads.”

The two men looked chagrined, shuffling their feet as well as they could in the mud.

“And then there’s the footwear,” the girl continued. “I have top of the line boots, designed for hiking in rugged terrain. And they’re water proof. That’s why I can squat in this mud, yet me feet stay dry.”

Wally pulled his tennis shoe clad feet out of the firelight and into the shadows. He heard the girl snort at this.

“Finally, instead of those crappy, cheap rain suits you’re wearing, I have this completely waterproof poncho that I can also use as a tent. Think twice before any fat jokes, and remember, I’m dry.”

The girl’s eyes seemed to glow fiercely from beneath the brim of her hat. The two men looked at each other, but neither met her gaze.

“Okay, yeah, you know, we’re sorry, we just didn’t think we’d need all that stuff you told us about. Besides, we had to have all our camera and recording gear.” Wally looked at her imploringly.

Unflinching, the girl glared back for several long moments, neither breaking the contact. Finally, letting out a whoosh of held breath, the girl looked into the darkness beyond their circle of light.

“You’re right, I’m sorry. It’s just frustrating. You guys hire me to get you in and out of these mountains safely, and then you don’t listen to me. If you get hurt or something, I’m the one that’s going to have to drag your sorry ass out of here.”

Wally’s face lit up in a beaming smile while Fletcher went back to shoveling stew into his mouth.

“See, you do care,” Wally said, “if you’ll drag our asses out of here, I mean.”

Shaking her head, the girl stretched out, scooping some stew into a bowl that she produced from under her poncho.

“So, do you think we’ll find any evidence of that UFO?” Wally asked.

She shrugged. “Who knows, maybe. I might not have seen any UFO’s, but hey, they could be real, right? I’ve seen some crazy shit out here, so little green men wouldn’t be too surprising.”

“Actually, they’re grey,” Wally said.

She shrugged again. “Whatever. That’s your department. I’m just here to make sure you get back out.”

“So tell us, why do you do this, girlie. You’re young, you could be doing much better things than spending it in the dirt, getting bumps from skeeter bites. What makes you come out here?” Fletcher kept shoveling stew into his mouth, though his eyes were regarding her intently.

“I swear, you call me girlie one more time and I will leave you. I’d love to see you find your way home inside of a month. It’s Billie, got it?”

“Sure, whatever, Billie. Who the hell names their baby girl Billie? Were your parents wack jobs?” Fletcher asked, scooping another spoonful of stew into his mouth.

“You know, I just don’t get it. How can you get in front of that camera and not make

people want to vomit?”

“Heh, you got spunk, gir... Billie, I’ll give you that. So fess up, why you do this?”

There was silence for several minutes, broken only by the drip of water on leaves and the crackle of the logs in the fire.

“I kind of have to, I guess.” She gestured around her. “This, out here, calls to me. It’s where I belong,” Billie said, before pausing for several moments again. “You guys are looking for UFO’s. What if I told you I may not know anything about UFO’s, but I’ve seen Bigfoot?”

Startled, both men were staring at the young girl, all thoughts of food forgotten.

“You, really? Oh, this I gotta hear,” said Wally.

“Okay, but no snickering or any of your other pansy shit, got me. I’ll tell you, but if you tell anyone else I will deny it.” After making sure they were paying attention, she added, “Then I’ll find you and kill you in your sleep. Got it?”