

TOTALLY
UNEXPECTED!

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Dedication

This story is dedicated to Shelley, Sandra, and Amber,
who helped in its completion.



CHAPTER 1

The Park

It was late March. Rebecca felt Butch's massive muscular arm drape across her shoulders as she retrieved her math and science books from her locker at Whatcom High School. She quickly shoved off his arm, slammed the locker shut, and turned to face him. He placed his arms against the wall on either side of her, pinning her, and then leaned in.

"Let's go to Rick's for some burgers after school today, and later we can go to a movie at the Bijou and then . . ." Butch's tone of voice demanded rather than invited.

"And why would I want to do that? I'm *not* your girlfriend," Rebecca replied.

"Because it's only natural that the best athlete at Whatcom High School goes out with the most popular and most beautiful girl; it's your destiny."

“Butch, I appreciate the attention, I really do, but I’m *never* going out with you.”

“You’d better meet me after school at Rick’s or else!”

“Or else what? What part of *never* don’t you understand? I’m going to be late for class.” Rebecca ducked under his arm.

“You’d better be there!” Butch grabbed her upper arm.

“Let go of me, Butch!”

“Is there a problem here?” Mr. Steele the Vice Principal asked as he made his way toward them. “You two had better get to class.”

Butch released Rebecca’s arm, and she dashed into her science class. She took her seat next to her best friend, Loretta, at one of the lab benches just as the final bell rang.

“Cutting it kind of close, Miss Robinson,” Mrs. Goodman, the science teacher, said.

“Sorry, Mrs. Goodman.”

Mrs. Goodman turned back to the others. “Okay, listen up class. Today we’ll be doing the experiment on electrolysis at the end of chapter twelve. For those of you who read that chapter last night, this should be no problem. Just follow the instructions and be sure to write all of your observations in your lab notebooks. I will be collecting them for grading at the end of class.”

“That Neanderthal Butch cornered me at my locker just before class,” Rebecca turned and whispered to Loretta. “Can you believe it? He thinks I’m his property. He expects me to meet him at Rick’s Diner today after school.”

Rebecca and Loretta collected all the equipment they would need for their experiment from the storage cabinets and returned to their seats.

“Here, fill this beaker and these test tubes up with water while I get the electrodes ready. This is going to be fun producing hydrogen and oxygen gas from just water,” Rebecca said.

“Maybe for a science geek like you, but I don’t see anything fun about this,” Loretta said.

“I know what Butch wants. He just wants to hook up with me so he can add another notch to his belt! Well, that’s not going to

happen. If any guy wants this,” Rebecca pointed to her body, “he’s going to have to put a ring on my finger first.”

“Butch is a little rough around the edges, but I think he’s cute.” Loretta flipped her curly red locks out of the way.

“Yeah, Butch is a fine physical specimen, but I would not call a narcissistic control freak like him cute.” Rebecca clamped the test tubes and electrodes in place.

“He’s not the only control freak around here,” Loretta muttered under her breath as she handed a large beaker full of water to Rebecca.

“What was that?” Rebecca asked.

“Oh . . . nothing. I’d go out with Butch if he asked me.”

“If you like him so well, you can have him. Maybe *you* should meet Butch at Rick’s. That would be a big help to me because there’s no way I’m going to Rick’s to be with Butch. I want a guy who will treat me with respect and love *me* and not just my body. I want to find true love and have a future away from this small town. And, eventually, have a family of my own.”

“Me too. I want all that, but for now, I would love to have a boyfriend. I’ll be happy to keep Butch busy after school.”

“Good. I’ll slip away to our meadow at Lake Whatcom Park and meet you there later.”

“Yes, I’ll make up some excuse to leave Butch. I can even sneak some of my dad’s beer for us. After all, it’s Friday, so we can party at the meadow tonight,” Loretta whispered.

“That would be great! I’ll pick up some snacks.”



After school, while Loretta kept Butch occupied, Rebecca grabbed her pink backpack and headed for the park on her pink mountain bike. She stopped at a sandwich shop to buy two sub sandwiches, still thinking of Butch’s “invitation.”

“Animals! All the guys at school are nothing but animals! And Butch is the worst!” Rebecca exclaimed to herself as a squirrel

darted across the street in front of her. It was a gorgeous sunny day—a rare occurrence in early spring for Whatcom, Washington. The fresh mountain air caressed her cheeks and blew the long blond hair flowing from beneath her pink bicycle helmet back behind her, like an old time aviator's scarf. She pedaled up to the edge of the forest at Lake Whatcom Park. Rebecca liked the meadow there because it was surrounded by the forest. She and Loretta had discovered it when they'd first explored the park ten years earlier. They'd been in the first grade then. Rebecca didn't care what her parents thought about her and Loretta hanging out at the meadow that evening. She was nearly seventeen and felt she could make her own decisions now that she was almost an adult. Besides, there wasn't much else to do in Whatcom. She'd already seen the movie currently playing at the Bijou.

Rebecca knew her good looks made every guy in school want to date her. She could see their yearning as she walked down the hallway. But she knew they had only one thing on their minds; they just wanted to hook up with her. And, of course, all the girls either hated her or wanted desperately to be her friend so they would be elevated socially by such an association. Although Rebecca enjoyed the attention, she tried very hard not to let it go to her head.

Rebecca carefully walked her bike down a path which led into the woods, pushing past the lush ferns cowering beneath the towering fir trees. She breathed in the fresh smell of the woods. It was peaceful there. All she could hear was the occasional twitter of birds. As she approached the meadow, the glint of the sun reflected intensely off of something in the meadow. Rebecca stashed her bike, backpack, and helmet next to a large tree in the ferns. She continued down the path to the meadow—and froze. She didn't know whether to stay put or to run.

What's this? A UFO in the middle of the meadow? The strange craft looked like a giant black triangle about fifty feet long with a wingspan of about sixty feet from end to end. There were windows on the top of what seemed to be a cockpit. She half expected little green men to pop out and zap her with their ray guns. She didn't

see anyone, however, so she cautiously crept up for a closer look. *I've got to check this thing out.*

Rebecca smelled lingering smoke from the scorch marks in the grass. They were directly below six small openings in the bottom of the UFO; she noticed them as she walked under it. The UFO was about six feet off the ground, resting on rubber tires that extended from it like the landing gear of an airliner, only smaller. In the middle of the craft, by the main landing gear, extended a small ladder that came from the interior of the UFO. At one end of the “wing”, some panels were open, exposing the inside. A tool box rested on the ground near a small step ladder. Where had the occupants of the UFO gone? And where did they get these ordinary tools? Did these aliens steal them from someone's garage?

Rebecca explored the open panels. She paused at the base of the ladder. Perhaps it wouldn't hurt to take a quick peek inside. *After all, I could use a little adventure in my life. I would love to know more about this UFO and what makes it tick.* She climbed the ladder through the wheel well leading into an open hatch in the floor. Rebecca cautiously raised her head above the floor of the cockpit. There was no one inside. The coast was clear. At first glance, the flight compartment was disappointing. There were just four ordinary looking seats; two in front of a massive instrument panel and two more behind them. Rebecca crawled up into the cabin. Behind her—towards the back of the flight deck—were various sizes of lockers suitable for holding equipment. Rebecca walked towards the instrument panel and noticed all the labels were written in English. *That's strange you would think aliens would use some exotic language.* She peered out the windows. There was nothing but trees in front of her.

Rebecca heard voices outside. *Oh, perfect! They've returned! I'm so freaking dead!* She crept down the ladder and lowered her head below the opening to get a look at the source of the conversation. She started to sneak down the ladder to get away but thought better of it. *What if they see me?* The two men in spacesuits had reached the open access panels. One was up on the step ladder, reaching

in to work inside the aircraft, and the other stood on the ground with his back towards her, handing up tools.

“It’s a good thing we’re close to home so we could get some spare parts, Dad,” said the one on the ground.

“Yes, otherwise we would really be in trouble. I’m glad we found this meadow, too. This way, we can land without people seeing us. The last thing we need is undue attention—especially from industrial spies.”

These guys don’t look or sound like aliens. Maybe they’re just humans?

“Alright, the new component is in place; go power things up. Let’s see if it’s going to work, Scott.”

“Okay, Dad.” The one called Scott turned and walked toward the ladder Rebecca sat on.

Rebecca jerked her head up, scrambling up the ladder while frantically looking for a place to hide. She opened the largest locker. More space suits! She climbed inside and closed the door behind her. She left just enough of space so she could peek through a crack at the instrument panel. Rebecca sat on the floor, her back against the wall, her legs scrunched up but still touching the front wall. The spare flight suits hanging above her draped over the top of her. No sooner was she hidden inside than the man referred to as Scott came quickly up the ladder and bounded towards the instrument panel. All Rebecca could see was his back as he turned on some switches, which caused the entire aircraft to hum like a hive of bees waking from a nap.

“Okay Dad, everything checks out,” Scott said over the radio. “It looks like we’re good to go.”

“Good! We need to get out of here. We’ve already lost too much time. Come help me button things up.”

As Scott turned to leave the cockpit, Rebecca instinctively turned away from the crack.

“That’s odd, why is this locker door open?” Scott firmly closed the door and climbed back down the ladder.

Rebecca was now in complete darkness. She felt around the door for a latch to open it from the inside. Nothing! She was trapped.

Panic spread throughout her body. What could she do? What would these guys do to her if they found her in their UFO? Would she ever see her family again? She pulled out her cell phone to call for help. Its light permeated the locker, but... no service! Frantically, she moved her phone around the locker to find a signal. Still no service! Tears trailed down her cheeks as Rebecca tried to summon courage. How could she explain this to these guys, or to her parents if she ever saw them again? *I'm done for; I'm so totally done for.*

Soon, the two men climbed the ladder and entered the cockpit. There was a clatter of locker doors closing as they stowed the equipment. She heard the hatch in the floor close with a thump. There was a roar of rocket engines beneath her, and she sensed the aircraft rising into the sky, like a very fast elevator might. It stopped and hovered for a few seconds. She heard the hum of the landing gear being raised and felt the doors close. Her back began to vibrate against the locker wall. The two jet engines in the back were deafening as they throttled up but then they quieted to a dull hum. The UFO shot forward and up at a steep angle, causing Rebecca to bang her head on the back wall of the locker which caused a loud boom. She rubbed the back of her head to relieve the excruciating pain, wanting to scream, but she didn't dare. The UFO leveled out, but there was still a sensation of moving forward.

Rebecca heard footsteps and the clanging of locker doors opening and closing. The door to the locker where she was hiding burst open, and the light from the cockpit blasted her eyes. When Scott pulled back the flight suits to get a better look inside, Rebecca stiffened. She stared up in horror at the man before her in a white spacesuit with a dark visor pulled down on his helmet.

"Whoa, Dad! There's a girl hiding in the locker where we store the flight suits," Scott said over the microphone in his helmet.

"A girl?" the dad yelled.

"Yes, a girl."

"They'll do anything to find you, Scott, won't they?"

"Alright, Dad!" Scott laughed.

"How did she get in there?"

"Well Dad, if I knew, you'd know."

“Good point, Son, she must have climbed in while we were picking up the spare part from Daniel. Well, it’s too late to turn back now. We don’t have the time or the fuel to spare to take her back. She’ll just have to come with us. Get her into a flight suit, Scott so that we can get back underway.”

Scott raised the dark visor on his helmet and extended his hand to Rebecca. “Hi, I’m Scott. What’s your name?”

“R-r-r-r-becca R-r-r-robinson,” Rebecca stammered as she looked up at Scott’s kind blue eyes.

“We need to get you out of there and into a flight suit for your own safety.”

“Are you aliens? Please don’t hurt me,” Rebecca pleaded.

“We’re not aliens, but our true home is not of this world, and we wouldn’t dream of hurting you. Now, please take my hand and come out of there.”

Rebecca grasped his gloved hand and gingerly climbed out of the locker. Her legs and feet tingled as the blood rushed back into them. Scott grabbed one of the flight suits from the locker.

These guys may not be so bad after all. They may not kill me, but my parents will when they find out what happened. Hmmm, Scott’s not bad looking.

“This is my mom’s suit. I think it will fit you, Rebecca. Place your hands on my shoulders and I will help you climb into it.”

Rebecca grasped Scott’s muscular shoulders as he pulled the flight suit over her sneakers, blue jeans, and pink shirt. After she zipped up the suit, he gently placed the gloves over her hands, making sure everything was properly sealed. Then he took a helmet from the locker and placed it over her head, locking it in place on the suit’s collar after she tucked her long hair out of the way. Scott turned some knobs on the front of the suit, and Rebecca heard the crackle of the radio speakers in her helmet come on. He closed the locker door, took Rebecca’s hand, and led her to the seat behind his dad. After she had sat down, Scott fastened the safety harness around her, activated the ejector mode switch on the seat, and hooked up a hose to her suit. She felt the rush of cool air inside. Scott pulled down her visor and took his seat again.

“Rebecca, this is my dad, Ashley Anderson. Dad, this is Rebecca Robinson.”

“You have a lot of nerve young lady, stowing away on our plane. Don’t you have any respect for other people’s property?” Mr. Anderson scolded.

“I’m sorry, sir, my curiosity got the better of me. I didn’t like expect to find a UFO in the meadow. What are you going to do with me?”

“We forgive you, Rebecca,” Mr. Anderson said. “And for your information, this is *not* a UFO. It’s an experimental aircraft built by my company, Anderson Aerospace, called the AX-44. As for you, you’ll just have to come with us to Hawaii where we’re going to pick up my wife. When we get there, you can call your parents and explain what happened. I imagine they’ll be worried sick. We’ll bring you home Saturday.”

“Oh no! My best friend Loretta was supposed to meet me at the park. She’ll think I was kidnapped! And when my parents find out what happened, I’ll be grounded for life!”

“I don’t think it will be that bad. Do you live in Whatcom, Rebecca?” Scott asked.

“Yes, my dad owns the sporting goods store there.”

“We live there, too, but I don’t get to town much.”

“Sit back and relax Rebecca, we have a long flight ahead.” Mr. Anderson pulled back on the stick, causing the aircraft to shoot up at a steep angle again. He leveled the aircraft off and banked towards the southwest.

“Set a course for Hawaii, Scott, on the navi-computer,” Mr. Anderson said as he throttled up the jet engines to full power.

“Right, Dad, course locked in.”

“Mr. Anderson, I was wondering what the skin of this aircraft is made of?” Rebecca asked. “It felt like a ceramic vase.”

“You’re not far off Rebecca. It’s a ceramic composite material we invented called Ceracite. It helps protect the aircraft from the heat of traveling at supersonic speeds and is lighter than aluminum.”

Rebecca gazed out the window. She could barely see the ground below through the clouds. It looked like they were coming up

on North Seattle. She had never flown in an airplane before and found the whole experience exhilarating. *Are these guys really who they say they are? Can I trust them?* She dreaded telling her parents what had happened. What must they and Loretta think about her sudden disappearance?