

# VOLUME I

## Book One

**“Regret is a form of punishment itself.”**

**- Tennessee Williams**

# A LETTER GUIDE FOR REBECCA

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A First book by Derek Devon

## Preface

As a first-time author, I want to thank you personally for taking a chance with me and reading my book. For years I always felt I had a 'book in me', but never seemed to find the time to commit to sitting down and writing my book. Finally, in May after listening to a couple of TC's pod cast's (*TC After Dark*), I found that motivation and began the task. Much of the book's genesis came from my own life experiences. It was both an exhilarating and rewarding process, especially allowing me to relive many precious moments from my past, if only now through the written word. Also, most of the locations and places are real, and I have been there and did most of what I wrote about if you strip away the sci-fi stuff. I hope that I would be able to foster in you the opportunity to relive your precious memories and moments, from your past, through the characters and their story in this book.

As a true pragmatist, I can think of no better measure to determine if this is something I want to continue to pursue or was a one-time self-indulgence and homage to the 'real Rebecca'. So, I would like you to be the determinant factor. If you enjoyed this read and I was able to stir in you some of those old memories and feelings like I hope, then I would ask you to consider doing the following: First, leave a review wherever you purchased the book (Amazon etc.). Second, if you know two people who would also like this type of read, encourage them to buy the books or maybe give one or two as a gift. You will soon learn I am a fan of 'Networking' and the 'exponential growth' factor. Third, consider maybe writing something yourself (*Nudge-Nudge TC*). The 'Letter Guide' series will be a 3-volume set with Volume one containing book 1 and 2. I wanted you to get 2 books for the price of one as my way of saying "Thank You."

One of my editors once asked me, 'If I could actually have what happened in the book really happen to me, would I truly do what I wrote I would do?' I can honestly answer, ABSOLUTELY! That is why it was such a pleasure for me to write. It's who I am, good or bad! Finally, I am preparing my sailboat '*It-girl*' for a circumnavigation in a couple of years, so if you see me out on the ocean, please, come and say hello and maybe enjoy a stout with me; or a glass of Port and cheese (*wink...wink*).

## Dedication

*To my Mom and Dad, who I miss every day!*

## I Need Your Expertise!

I don't know if you will agree with me or not, but I think this book would make one hell of a movie or even a mini-series. I am an avid movie watcher and still frequent the cinema and whenever possible love to watch a new movie in Imax 3D. Often when a new movie gets released, I like to critique the actor selection for each particular role. More times than not, I find myself wishing an alternate specific actor would have been better suited for the role. And when a movie gets the perfect actor for a role, it's almost always a great movie or an outstanding performance (ie. Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones, Bruce Willis as Harry S. Stamper, Hugh Grant as William Thacker, Brian Dennehy as Sherrif Will Teasle, Helena Bonham Carter as Bellatrix Lestrange, Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, Sigourney Weaver as Ellen Ripley, George Clooney as Old Derek Devon (😊), and I could go on and on).

So, if you go visit the book's website:

**[www.ALetterGuideForRebecca.com](http://www.ALetterGuideForRebecca.com)**

There is a section that will allow you to enter your recommendation for a particular actor you believe would be a great fit to play the selected role. I hope you will allow me to tap into the enormous brain trust that is out there and who knows; Maybe one day the book will become a movie and the casting director will use your suggestions. I thank you for the consideration and to those that share their opinions, a very special thank you!

As a first time novelist, making the New York Times best seller list is a major milestone and with your help, maybe this book can do what Harry Potter did for the fantasy genre for the Science Fiction genre. I invite you to enjoy this ride with me.

If I am ever fortunate enough to have a famous actor or actress (*or influencer*) read this book, and you liked it, please let your adoring fans know. I would be extremely grateful..... 😊

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***[If you are getting tired Rebecca and want to take a break from reading this guide, then this would be a good place to do it. I think you will want to be fresh for the next few pages...]***

**2** **June 24th (Shortly after midnight):** I had taken a chair, from the deck, down to the dock, and proceeded to set up my little private port and cigar area, when I first felt an odd sensation in the air. It had to be around midnight, maybe close to 12:30 when I detected a strange odor. I had never smelled anything like that before and proceeded to light my cigar. I brought my favorite lighter that my cottage buddy Hart gave me, and performed the customary 'end clip', with the clipper my cottage buddy Hart gave me also. Thanks, Hart (*I smiled*)! As I applied the required saliva coating to the cigar, I thought I heard a faint crying sound. I stopped for a moment and listened, as best as I could, considering my hearing was less than perfect, or some have accused me of being outright deaf. After a minute passed, and I was unable to hear what I thought I heard, I continued my cigar lighting ritual, complete with the lighting, cigar spinning, finishing with the flame to the end. Another perfect light job!

I took my first proper puff and took a look up at the sky. Looked like a clear sky, and the temperature was not that bad. I would guess it was about 10 degrees Celsius, with no breeze. Having enjoyed the first puff or two, it was now time for the first sip of my port. Every time I drink Port, I can't help but remember my great port hunt of 1993. Harley motorcycle, good friends, and plenty of Port hunting. I know I shipped back over 30 bottles, and I also know that half turned into excellent cooking vinegar. But to find a few 1882 Grahams private reserve winemakers only selection made it all worthwhile. I know my buddy Bernie was pissed-off at my find, but that is what differentiated me from the B-man. Fortunately for me, the label had fallen off and was hidden under a half-inch of dust at the bottom, or the shop owner would have never allowed me to buy the box. I paid him \$100 US for the whole box, as is.

I was prepared to go anywhere while Bernie was more selective, and I think, interested in finding women than a lost rare bottle of port. We must have stopped into a couple of dozen, out-of-the-way wine and



Liquor shops. I was head to toe, covered in 50 years of dust when I emerged with the old wooden box. The owner of the shop claims, he never knew the box was where I found it and had no idea how old it was. I think he was more concerned it was all just going to be glorified vinegar. Well, that is what makes Port hunting so exciting. One man's box of dust-covered vinegar is another man's pot of gold! I think Bernie, always felt I should have given him at least 1 bottle, as consideration for him being such a great guy. I decided it was better he learned the cost of taking the shortcut and womanizing over Port hunting.

I will never forget when I put the 2 other bottles up for auction, without fully appreciating what I had found. Part of me, still feels some guilt, that I had the nerve, to drink a \$7,000 bottle of Port, with average cheese (*Yes, another giggle*). Looking back Rebecca, I wished I had taken you to Portugal and toured these iconic wineries. I know you would have loved the adventure far more than Bernie. I still have the letter you sent me when you did your European 'find myself' tour in the summer of 1981. I think we both know you never needed any finding!

After a few more gentle puffs, and a couple sips of my favorite late-night indulgence, I thought I heard a faint crying sound again, coming from the bay, beside the dock. There was enough moon to light up the bay that night, but I could not see anything but the lake. I tried to focus my gaze, in the direction where I thought the sound was coming from, but again, just lake. I sat in the chair, with my gaze fixed on the spot I thought the sound came from while continuing to take slow and small puffs of my cigar. I would estimate that it took about 3 minutes before I noticed a ripple in the water coming toward the dock.

My immediate thought, was the old Snapper Turtle that was living under the dock last year, was out cruising the water. Well, no big deal, mystery solved, and I was glad I had determined the source of the sound. Back to my sipping and puffing. As I relaxed again back into the chair, I started to stare up into the sky, and as I often did, started to think about you, Rebecca. I wonder what Rebecca is doing now. Did I do the right thing and not find out where she was living and force some contrived chance encounter at the grocery store. I think that was one of my favorite, 'What if's', to pass some personal quiet time, and I always enjoyed daydreaming about what I would say. When I sent you the text a few

years before this, I was not prepared for your reply. I was somewhat devastated, but also part of me, fully understood why it had to be. Back then, I had always tried to convince myself that you deserved better than me (*I am sure Rebecca 1.0 would be agreeing with me*), and if I truly loved you, and wanted what was best for you, then it couldn't be me. I have always wondered what a psychologist or psychoanalyst would think of my reasoning. Lucky for me, I was always too cheap to find out.

There was that sound again, this time a bit louder. I was sure it was coming from the middle of the Bay, but I could only see the lake. There was nothing there, so, what could be making the sound? I know a bullfrog can make a crying sound, but this was different, not a bullfrog, I could not see anything but the lake. As my curiosity got the better of me, I thought I might hop in the canoe tied to the dock, and paddle over to see if I could figure out the mystery. I was certainly not drunk by any measure and paddling out into the bay in the middle of the night could not happen, without a couple of additions to the trip.... my bottle of Port, and the fish cleaning knife Al left on the dock from earlier. Just in case it's the Snapping Turtle, trying to lure me out, pretending to be in distress, and then flipping the boat and eating me (*that was a joke, Rebecca*). And so, my adventure began. I put the Port bottle on the edge of the dock, stuck the cigar into my mouth, and started the most difficult part of this whole process, bending down and getting into the canoe. For a guy that canoed almost every inch of Algonquin park, in his youth, during the numerous canoe outings with you at the cottage, one would think it would be a no-brainer getting in.

After some unplanned moans, and they were not pleasurable moans, I managed to slide my butt into the middle of the canoe, so I could rest it on the center yolk. A simple J stroke and I will be out to the middle of the bay in 3 minutes. After getting in, the next emergency was figuring out where I could put my Port Snifter. After scanning the canoe, my only option was to leave the glass and bring the bottle. At least it had a cork stuck in the end so all would be good.

There it was again. Yes, it was getting louder each time. And now with my 'on the lake' positioning, I would bet it was coming from the middle of the bay, some 200 yards away. But there was nothing but lake. I looked across the bay and could see the rock cliffs lining the shore all

along the opposite side from where I was. Maybe the sound was occurring someplace else and was bouncing off the cliffs towards my position. I began to scan around the lake to see if I could pick up anything out of the ordinary that would give me a clue as to what was I hearing. Nothing. Just lake. As a true adventurer and fearless (*yuk yuk*), I did what anyone in my situation would do when put into this perplexing position. I popped the cork and took a mouthful of the old Taylor Fladgate. A few puffs, and now I was ready to head to the middle of the bay. Might even be cool to lay on the bottom of the canoe for a while and stare at the sky. Who knows, maybe Peter Quill will appear overhead, or I guess, truer to the story, Yondo. If you smiled Rebecca, then you know you're a sci-fi lover.

I put the paddle in the water and made my first J-stroke. Still had it after all these years, Rebecca. Again, with another J-stroke. There was that smell again. I don't think I ever smelled anything like that before. Maybe there is some methane trapped under the lake and is slowly leaking out. Great, a few more strokes, and I could lose the water's buoyancy and sink to the bottom. Thank God, it's at best, 12 feet here according to Al. Al could have his own Bermuda Triangle on his lake. When I start to get a bit nervous, you probably noticed I tend to get a bit silly with my thoughts. Rest assured, behind those silly thoughts, I am soiling myself. Figuratively speaking that is. Truth is, as you well know Rebecca, both now and before, I always could turn off the scared valve, and when needed, the morality valve. I must have been subconsciously doing just that. My whole body went into its defensive mode. My Spidey sense was telling me, that I was not alone out here, but my eyes were telling me the opposite.

Another, bigger dose of that smell. As I began to bite down harder on the cigar in my mouth, my instincts had me reaching for the Rapala knife. I am a smart guy and have had many experiences in my life, certainly more than most, surely, I can figure this out. Weird smell, strange sound, almost full moon, no wind to speak of, Al in bed, Derek floating in a canoe in the bay. What could go wrong with this picture? Rhetorical question!

I can honestly say that what I felt next, was almost identical to the time my dad took me out in a canoe when I was about 6 or 7 on Lake Mazinaw. I was in the front, and dad was in the back. I don't think dad

had a lot of experience in a canoe. We were fishing along the shoreline. Dad wanted to paddle to another spot, just up ahead, when all of a sudden, the canoe began to slowly rise at the front end, eventually rising right out of the water. It rose, which felt like feet, but based on my post-dad canoeing experience, probably a foot at best. The rise was not the issue, but the canoe slowly started to tip to the port side, (*left side Rebecca*) as the angle continued to increase, I must have realized I was destined to go into the lake.

Splash, I was in, luckily, I had a life jacket on, mother's orders, even though I was a good swimmer, but the scary part was the canoe landing on top of me upside down. While I wish I could tell you, I was strong and fearless then, truth be told, I started wailing like a baby. I felt my dad grab onto me and tell me, "Everything was ok. We just ran up on a stump and it caused the canoe to tip." With one arm, dad flipped the canoe back upright and with his other hand, grabbed me and stuck me on top of the partially submerged stump. The initial shock seemed over, and I believe I had come to realize that I was safe on top of the partially submerged log, dad was safe, and I didn't need to cry anymore. One good part of falling in water, then bawling like a baby, hard to tell tears from the lake water. As I sat on the stump watching my dad, he got to a shallow spot near the bank, then tipped the canoe in such a way as to empty most of the water. He then climbed up on the bank and got himself back into the canoe, where he was before our tipping. He grabbed the paddle, and most of the fishing equipment was still in the bottom of the canoe. Dad turned the front of the canoe towards me and told me to step in. I followed his direction, and with the tears now behind me, I noticed dad staring down into the water.

He said, "There it is."

I asked, "What?"

"Our fishing tackle box. It was not fully closed and must have sunk," as he continued to comment while maintaining his fixation on the location.

Fortunate for us, the fishing rods had cork handles and either floated or hung up on the yolk and seats. Our new challenge was not to catch a fish but to snag the tackle box. I don't remember how deep it was, but it was no deeper than the length of my dad's fishing rod. He was able to

bring his lure, with the hook, right up to the tip of the rod, then use the rod to position the lure's hook, to snag the tackle box. It took a few tries, but dad managed to get the box up to the surface, grab it, and put it on the bottom of the canoe. I think we lost a few lures, but it was so long ago, that I can't recall that detail accurately. After that event, dad and I paddled back to the resort to change clothes and tell everyone about the near-death ordeal. Well, that's how I remember it. Dad's version to mom was less "Oh my god" and more laughing at us falling in. Knowing me, I am sure it has been told over the years with a variety of endings and recollections.

So, as the canoe began to rise at the front, I did what any experienced canoer would do, I plopped my fat 'hockey player' ass down to the bottom, from previously resting against the yolk, with the paddle now straddling the sides, and being used to offer me the ability to try and maintain the upright posture of the canoe, and balance myself in the middle. Unlike dad, and our canoe adventure, I was trying to prevent the bottle from falling in, or my cigar from getting wet. All kidding aside, what was even more baffling, was the front of the canoe was gone, or should I say about 3 feet of it. By this point, I can say that I had gone into full defensive mode. I turned off my fear valve. I thought I was ready for anything but was prepared for, not a thing. I found myself starting to test the stability of the canoe. I applied a little weight, shifting from port to starboard. Could I get it to wiggle? Nope, nothing. A little harder, and still no. I now made the decision, to reposition myself back up onto my knees. As I said, fear valve turned off, and one of the benefits of this, it also shut off my pain receptors.

I pulled myself up onto my usually 'painful' arthritic knees, with no movement from the canoe. But as I stared at the missing front of the canoe, my senses were telling me that the canoe was still in one piece. I simply could no longer see the front part. It looked like someone cut the front three feet of the canoe off, and I was looking at lake water that didn't seem to want to rush into the rest of the canoe. Well, my physics knowledge was telling me, that is not possible, but my years of watching sci-fi television, and movies, were telling me differently.

Rebecca, you must be at this point, already rolling your eyes and thinking that this is some elaborate gag or prank, or worse, that I am truly nuts. I promise you it is not, and, I am not nuts, and if you will simply

force yourself to read 5 more pages, JUST 5, I am sure it will all make sense. You know how I hate the expression, "I promise you on the life of my kids" statement, so, I would never invoke that. But I will remind you, of that Friday, back during the first week of June 1977, when I saved your brother's life. Most will challenge me on that claim, but you were there. It was the first time we hung out (*as friends*).

I will remind you of my unexpected arrival at old Gibson's Pond. By myself, for a swim, which just happened, to be the same day and time you, your brother, John, Matt, and Frank decided to play hooky that Friday afternoon. 'Let's go for a swim, on our way home from High School'. One of the many benefits, of using Martin Side Road to bike to school, I guess. I am sure that is where you developed your love of cycling. It was pre-planned since you had your bathing suit on at school. I could see it under your shirt that morning. Yes, I was checking you out at school. I needed to confirm if that was Gibson's Pond Day. Strange, you never did ask me why I would go to Gibson's Pond, swimming by myself, after that day. Was it just a coincidence?

Man, I remember that day like it was yesterday. One of my fondest memories since it was the first time I was able to gaze at you in a swimsuit (*since my return*). No one looked better in a one-piece swimsuit than you (*I know you just smiled*). I would credit the biking mostly, but I must confess after meeting your mom, it was also genetics. And we can't forget to mention your fabulous gait. A cross between athletic and sexy. If you ever wondered what you look like from behind, the closest example that comes pretty darn close would be Shakira 😊.

I detected that day, a bit of shyness when I swam across the pond to where you were sunning yourself. I certainly hope I wasn't gawking at you like some love-smitten horny young kid. With all the trees around the pond, it was the only spot you could get direct sun. What you don't know, is that I had been keeping an eye on you since grade 8. My grade 8, your grade 7. I made sure not to let you catch me with my gazes. I am pretty sure; I was also invisible to you. I even made a point to keep my interactions with your brother 'Tonka' (*Todd, we just call him Tonka after what he did to his jeep*) to a minimum.

But I do remember meeting your parents for the first time at the grade 8 graduation although they did attend the big gala in 1974, I

attended (*more about that later*). I purposely went over to offer my congratulations to Todd on graduating, hoping he would introduce me to your parents. Your mom, who you got your looks from, and Dad, were extremely kind, and also congratulated me on winning Athlete of the year and highest-grade point average. I was planting the seed of acceptance, for the future. My digression into old memories is certainly lengthening this section of the guide. I will try to limit them, but they are putting a huge smile on my face as I write this. Not to mention my tendency to re-read the entire section every time I need to edit it.

Can you remember how I suddenly jumped up and began to run around Gibson's Pond, in the middle of our chat, to the other side? The guys were using the swinging rope to do flips into the pond that was slung over the huge willow tree branch. Can you remember, how I immediately grabbed the other end of the rope, that had been tied off to another tree branch, with about 4 feet of excess rope dangling down, almost touching the ground? Do you remember, I grabbed the four-foot section, and tried my best to wrap it around my waist, just as your brother started his swing. Then, we all heard the sound, of the lower branch holding the rope, breaking, and your brother landing in about 3 feet of water on his back instead of 10 feet of water with his feet, producing a rather large bruise on his backside.

It took Tonka a few minutes to get the wind back into himself while he was struggling to keep his head out of the water. Then, the rather loud painful scream when the pain from landing on his back made its way to the necessary receptors. By this point, you had gotten up yourself and were running around the pond to join everyone, who were now watching Tonka's face contort in obvious pain. What you didn't notice, or at least I don't think you did, was my eyes stuck to you, thinking, how you had grown into such a beautiful girl. But I knew deep down, I had done what I needed to do, and that our time together was soon to end for a while. We all kind of just stood there for a few minutes, just staring at Tonka, and all realizing what had happened.

Remember John and Matt saying, "If Derek had not been holding the rope, your brother probably would have ended up landing on a pile of rocks along the shore." That certainly ended the rope swinging session,

and we all slowly entered the pond, to assess what happened, while Tonka did his best to try and laugh off the incident.

I said to Todd with a grin, "How do you plan to explain the huge bruise on your back to your folks?"

"Rugby," Frank chimed in. "You got it playing Rugby." We all laughed since Rugby would have been the last sport Todd would ever participate in. Great guy with a big heart but a small frame.

Do you remember the huge rope burn tattooed on my lower back, that took the weight of Tonka's swing? I am pretty sure you do recall since you were the one, that came over and pointed it out to me. I can still feel your hand touching my back. While you thought I was probably in pain, I can assure you I was closer to the ecstasy side of the scale than pain. Rebecca Hamlin just touched my naked back! It was somewhat short-lived, as the new, pervy old man thought, replaced that precious golden moment. You will understand this mental issue better shortly. Remember you asking me, how I knew the rope would break, and I told you I could see the rope fraying from where we were laying and chatting? I lied. I did not see any rope fraying. Think about it. The loose four-foot section hanging was completely hidden from us because it was behind the trunk of the huge tree. Try to find those lost memories to confirm what I am telling you. So, the question would remain, how did I know to run and grab the rope?

Please, I beg you. Read the next 5 pages and you will understand, that, had I not grabbed the rope when I did, your brother that day would have hit the rocks, broken his neck, and would die in your arms on that day. It would be a devastating event for you, your family, and I am sure reshaped your life, into the life I came to know and love. This was now a new lifeline, that I could not predict anymore, since I was the one who decided to alter it. I think you would agree from Todd's perspective, it was for the good, assuming you can buy into my explanation.

When we all decided the hooky fun was over and it was time to make our way back to reality, and our respective homes, I don't know if you recall me touching your hand when it was gripping your handlebar and saying, "I will be watching you." You never did comment on that either. I hope your creepo meter did not start going off. As we emerged onto Martin's side road, you guys all turned left, and I turned right. You guys



were lucky. All downhill, while I had one of the steepest biking hills in the area. But unlike the old days (*Derek 1.0*) Derek 2.0 was all about being the best he could be and peddled up the hill as fast as my legs would allow me. While my heart wanted me to continue our chatting after that day, my brain, unfortunately, knew better, and it was not to be.

I began to move toward the front of the canoe so I could get a closer look at what I could only assume was some optical illusion. I moved forward on the other side of the yolk and realized that I still had my cigar firmly held by my teeth. I decided to let myself take a puff. I was now only a foot from the mystery of the missing section of the canoe. Suddenly, I had another major whiff of that odor I could not identify, and for a brief moment, I found myself unable to breathe normally. Then, I heard without any doubt, the odd crying sound, and I was sure it came from about 10 feet in front of where I was now positioned. I slowly moved my arm forward, to where I figured the canoe side should be, and it was at that moment, I can honestly tell you, I knew exactly what was happening and that my brain was right.

As my hand grabbed what I thought would be the side of the canoe, my forearm, and hand were gone. Just below my elbow was water, but my hand was grabbing the canoe, and I did not feel any water. I felt the canoe side. No doubt, I had my hand, which was no longer visible, on the canoe side. I stopped, and to prove to my brain that I was right, I slowly retrieved my arm and hand from the fake water and my world made sense again. High-tech camouflage. Bingo! Probably military, and I was sure that it would only be a few minutes, before a bunch of military guys appeared, and would take me into custody. I decided to relax, sit my ass on the yolk, grab my bottle of port, and try to enjoy a few sips, maybe a self-pat on the back before all hell would let loose. Why would the military be here at Al's lake? Maybe because they thought it was deserted, and did not know, Al and I would be coming in. But, if the military was doing some top-secret testing, then surely, they would have had monitoring going on. Maybe they thought they were safe behind this high-tech camouflage. Well, at least I am sure, they would have enjoyed our concert earlier. The crying noise was most likely a failing bearing.

Something was not right. No military yet. Odor dissipated but I again heard the odd crying-like sound, it was coming from behind the

camouflage barrier. I started to examine the barrier, with a much more discerning eye, now that I was aware of what it was. I have always considered myself more scientist, than liberal arts guy, and can even point to a few inventions that I have designed and built over my life. I am referring to the ones that I invented not the ones I may have lifted. Boy Rebecca are you going to have a whole new perspective of me shortly. Now, my scientist curiosity was starting to kick in, and I thought it was probably about time for me to venture behind the curtain to look at the wizard. I figured why not do it with some chutzpah, so I grabbed the bottle of port and moved forward toward the missing section of the canoe. I assumed the canoe was still (*no pun intended*) in the water and did not see any need to go and get wet. After all, I am sure I was about to see some stunned faces when I broke through the high-tech barrier.

When I was 14, my best friend Luke Mattson and I, discovered an ad in the back of a magazine called Outdoor Life, for a blow gun. Yes, a blow gun. Luke and I knew each other through our early hockey careers (*Novice through Bantam*). He played for a team in the city relative to where his family lived, and I played for a team that was based on where my dad worked. I played for the Westinghouse Bengal's. We both played in the same league. We were the same age, and in fact, he was 6 days older than me. He was captain of his team, and I was captain of my team. I think we had a mutual respect during this competitive time.

In the summer of 1972, his family moved out of the city up to good old Sherman Falls. We called it up the mountain. I only discovered this on the first day of grade 7, when we spotted each other in the hall of Senior Public. I get into far more detail about Luke and me further in the guide so I won't repeat it here. Suffice it to say, we became best friends as you know. Getting back to the blow guns. We had been working, shoveling snow at my grandmother's seniors' home, and had our own money saved, and our parents didn't care how we spent it. So, Luke and I ordered the blow guns. I think they cost around 20 dollars each. Turned out it was an aluminum tube, some drapery beads, piano wire, and instructions on how to make the darts.

One night, I awoke to a strange sound, coming from outside the house. I had never heard the sound before. It seemed to get loud, then slowly got weaker. When it was loudest, it almost shook the house. I came

out of my bedroom, and it appeared that my sister was awakened by the noise, just like I was, and we met in the hall. Our bedrooms were beside each other at the end of the hall. I am sure we looked at each other and asked what was going on. Again, every minute or so, the sound got louder and louder, then got quieter and quieter, but always very noticeable. Mom and dad's bedroom was in the basement, so I guess they never awoke from the sound. I said to my sister, "Let's go outside and see what was going on." I could tell my sister, who was a couple of years older, was not a fan of the idea and was noticeably scared. Not knowing what it was, I decided it was best, if I was armed, and I retired to my bedroom, where I retrieved my only weapon, the blow gun and a handful of darts.

I proceeded to the front door with my sister, and I believe I was in front. We went out onto the front porch, and as soon as we emerged from the house, the sound level was almost deafening at times. Still the same pattern. Loud, then soft, in 1–2-minute intervals. What made it even more interesting, was the fog. Yes, believe it or not, we had fog that summer night. Clutching my blow gun, I said to my sister, "it sounds like it's coming from up the street, let's go and see if we can see anything." This for me was a defining moment in my life. When faced with a completely unknown event, that certainly had my sister scared to the point she decided to retreat into the house's front doorway, my curiosity seemed to trump my sense of fear. With my blow gun drawn, I proceeded down the porch steps, and moved west across the side lawn, reaching the paved road. The sound was coming from the northwest. As I made my way along our street, moving towards the ever-increasing drone of the sound, I realized that I loved the adrenaline rush I was experiencing. I was not in fear, I was in a state, I only can describe as, wonderment, and extreme curiosity.

I think if I was hearing a sound I could identify, such as a gun or missile fire, then I would hope fear would be guiding my decision-making. But at this time, in this situation, I started to let my imagination get the better of me and had my first thought it might be aliens. While in my defense, I loved sci-fi and had watched every Star Trek episode multiple times, and my thoughts of aliens turned out to be short-lived. By the time I had made it about 300 yards up the street, my brain had figured out what was happening. I think at that moment, I had a combined

sensation of laughter and relief. Not sure what was more dominant, but laughter would be dominant when I retold this story over the years. See, it turned out, that not far from our house was an old air-raid siren tower. It had been built years ago but don't know the exact date. I don't think it was the 1940s but more the late 1950s. It was a long-standing fixture in our community and remained erect since the cold war, and for several years, after this event. Turns out there was some electrical malfunction, and for the first time since they stopped doing the test before I was born, it decided to do, one more swan song, for the neighborhood as the giant cone speaker began to rotate.

Having realized what it was, my attention now turned to getting back to the house before any of the neighborhood spotted me out in my pyjamas carrying a blow gun. I read in the local paper, that after that event occurred, they disconnected the power. So, I hope you can now appreciate that my decision to engage the barrier rather than jump into the lake and swim back to the cottage, was an innate act. I think it was simply in my DNA. You're probably shaking your head in agreement based on everything that we have been through, or should I say, I have been through that you know about.

I was about to put my head through the barrier when a reflex caused me to stop. My phone: It was in my jacket pocket, and I think I would like to do a little recon first before I stick my head through an unknown barrier. I already knew my hand and arm went in and came out safe, but I didn't want to risk my head yet. I unzipped my jacket pocket and removed my phone. I switched it from sleep mode, to active, and touched the camera icon. I had the phone on me, just in case, I felt like listening to a few songs on the dock. I had on my phone, the 'World's Greatest playlist'. Well, that was my claim, and I always challenged people to prove me wrong. The camera function booted up, and I pointed the camera at the barrier. The Lake appeared on the screen as I would expect. I hit the video record icon, and I slowly moved my hand and then arm through the barrier, until my elbow reached the edge of the barrier, but remained visible to me. For a split second my brain fired "War amps." My brain probably figured if I lost my forearm but still had my elbow, I could still get some prosthetic that would allow me to hold onto a hockey stick and continue my quest to make it to the show. (*I just giggled*).

As my hand penetrated the barrier, this time I took notice of the sensation and tried to figure out what was being used to generate the barrier. I was leaning toward some special fog-like gas, that had a unique crystalline structure, that allowed some projection of the lake to be displayed from behind, creating the illusion of looking at the lake. But what I felt was absolutely nothing. No temperature change, no wet or gooey feeling, no electrical static-like effect, just nothing. I would be dishonest with you Rebecca if I did not confess, that I did have the thought that I could lose my lower arm doing what I did. When I stuck my hand through earlier and grabbed the edge of the front of the canoe, I had not yet completed my usual detailed 'What if' scenario in my head. Funny, that is something I do very well, but it took a back seat at that moment, which was rare. It was another blow gun moment.

I let the phone video record for a few minutes, and I did my best to use a slow panning movement, in hopes of getting as much visual information as I could. I was also prepared for someone to grab my arm, or hand, at any moment, and take the phone, before potentially pulling my entire body through the barrier to the other side. I had instinctively anchored myself in the canoe, to make that situation, as difficult as I could if it was to happen. After a few minutes of panning and filming, I slowly pulled my arm back to my side of the barrier. As I did, I thought I felt something touch my hand. Might simply have been the barrier itself, and the effect of passing through it, but I couldn't disregard what my mind was telling me. I turned the phone towards me and touched the play icon. As I drew my attention to the screen, to see what was on the other side, I again heard a faint odd crying sound.

As the video began to play, I could not believe what I was watching. I swear to God Becca, which isn't saying much since I am a devout atheist, but what was on the video screen was impossible. It was a video of Rebecca and Derek, at the Hermitage, that day after we had our first fight as girlfriend and boyfriend. It was our first, what I would call, high school adolescent lovers spat, since, by this time, we had accepted that our sexual activity was restricted to everything but, you know what, at your request, I will remind you (*I giggled again*).

I was sitting on the top of the east wall of the ruins about 10 feet up, more specifically, the original servant quarters section, when you

emerged, from the trees, bare ass naked, with nothing but a smile. To be honest Rebecca, I don't even remember what that spat was about, but it must have been somewhat contrived since you were able to quickly find me at the Hermitage. You always knew it was my fortress of solitude. Deer tracking, fort building, fishing, hiking, and just loving being outdoors with my best friend Luke. I could honestly say, I knew the Hermitage area like the back of my hand! I always try to go there every April 14th and place a red rose on the window ledge of the ruins east wall, which lets me, honor the day we became officially Girlfriend and Boyfriend. I still call it the greatest day of my life (*Although I think I have a few 'Greatest Days' when it come's to you*). I will ask you, do you remember the heart-shaped locket? But I know you would be shaking your head, no. I know you have been throughout this reading so far, often wondering, who is Derek talking about, because it certainly wasn't you most of the time. I promise the answer is coming.

How was this possible. I was looking at a video, of something that took place 46 years ago. There were no cell phones yet, and I know, there were no cameras at the Hermitage. I don't know how long I stared at the video, but, for a brief moment, I could not take my eyes off of you. You were 16, going on 17 in September, and WOW, you were so beautiful (*Not to suggest you're not still as beautiful*). But how was this possible? I had done my best to retain my memories of you over the years and cherished a few photos of you I had in my memory box. The box you gave me. It had the Boutonnière you gave me from your graduation party, pictures from a mall photo booth, some pictures I took with a disposable camera, a couple you gave me, and my favorite, a few pics from our time at the cottage. I wish you could remember the one at the cottage taken with my gramps, and you wearing my high school football jersey and your/my favorite white cotton bikini style undies. (*Another giggle*).

But the video of Rebecca was taken from multiple camera vantage points. There was the view of me looking down at you emerging from the trees, there was a view from where you were standing looking up at me smiling. There was even a view of me, coming down off the wall, and running over to you, telling you to quickly get your clothes on because people were coming up the drive. Fortunately, I could see up the drive

from the top of the wall or it could have been a completely different outcome. (*I just smiled again*).

I don't know for sure, but I have to guess, that it was about this moment that I first thought maybe I was going nuts or was already nuts in some hospital strapped to a bed enjoying this crazy dream! My military camouflage rationale was now giving way to me most likely having a mental breakdown. Even in this momentary state of confusion, I touched the phone again so I could replay it. There you were, birthday suit, smile and for a moment, I felt a lifetime of regret rushing through me. I thought, what a loser I was, as you stood smiling up at me. I had perfection, and somehow, I managed to screw it up. This is certainly not the time to start the whole regret montage. I would run out of computer memory if that was the case. I guess, buried in my brain, was the one question I never could answer with any sort of comfort or definitiveness that haunted me since the day you dumped me. ***Why did you dump me?*** You were the love of my life. I even gave up going back to U of Miami, because I did not want to be so far away from you, then you dumped me. No warning!

I often like to, 'go to my memory of you' driving over to my place the night before I was to leave to go to U of Miami for my first semester. You were on my lap, sitting in the living room when you said the words that would shape my life, times 2! "I think I am falling in love with you." Every day I was at University, I could only think of one person, you. I counted the days till the end of the semester, so I could get home and be with you. You were my 'It-girl' Rebecca. Maybe, I was becoming too clingy, and I was suffocating you at a time you needed to figure out what you wanted to do with your life. I am sorry Rebecca, and I know none of this makes sense to you. Hermitage, being naked, my university saga. So, rather than confuse you more than you must already be, let me return to the events taking place on Al's cottage lake. There will be plenty of time to decide if I am just a nut job!

Ok, let's recap; some barrier capable of acting like perfect camouflage, or maybe, I should switch up my word choice, to calling it a 'cloaking system'. For the sake of simplification, I will define camouflage, as a stationary or static state, and cloaking is a dynamic state. I needed more data. I needed more time to let my brain process this unbelievable situation, so I decided to do another exploratory video, and see what

comes next. I reset the video (*making sure I preserved the first one*) on the phone, hit record, and repeated the process, exactly as before. I pulled my arm back, turned the phone screen toward my face, and pressed stop then replay. This I was not prepared for. I was in my mental zone of no fear. Valve shut tight. It's what kept me from either fainting or jumping in the lake and swimming back to Al's and assuming the fetal position in my sleeping bag. It has always served me well, and I knew it was about to be tested like never before.

As the video started, I immediately knew when, and where this was. It was in the garden solarium at my mother's nursing home in 2003. We had just returned from the hospital, and I took my mother into the solarium, so I could process what just happened. You see Rebecca, earlier in the day, I went to see my mother at the nursing home, after she called me, and said she was having difficulty breathing. When I arrived, I found my mother lying in bed, struggling to get her breath. I immediately told the home supervisor to call for an ambulance. I went with my mother to the hospital. She was taken into the emergency ICU area, and a doctor started to take a look at her. I went to the waiting room, to do what everyone does in a waiting room, wait.

The doctor came out to see me after about 30 minutes and told me that they had given my mother some meds to help her breathe easier and they needed to send her up to get an x-ray. They said they were a bit backed up; it was going to take about an hour. I went into the emergency area to see my mom and see how she was feeling. She told me she was feeling much better and could breathe almost normally again. What a relief. I told her I was going to pop out for a quick bite to eat, and I would be back in an hour. I was starving. I asked if she was hungry, and wanted me to bring her back anything, and she politely declined. I think she was exhausted from trying to breathe the last day or two.

What you also don't know Rebecca, is that my dad was in another hospital, and just had the lower section of his leg amputated as the result of his diabetes and was also fighting an infection that developed. I had been bouncing back and forth between visiting my dad in the hospital, and my mother in the nursing home, while attempting to start a new internet company. I moved home a few years earlier, to act as a caregiver for my parents, who were struggling with their health. Dad was on home



dialysis, and mom was in her wheelchair. The only reason dad was able to do home dialysis, was the commitment I would be his home dialysis assistant. I became quite proficient in needling him for the IV line. Eventually, we all decided, it would be better for mom to go into a nursing home. Dad's health was on a slow and steady decline, and he no longer could assist my mother with her needs, to keep her in the family home. Home healthcare support only went so far. I had been there (*my parents' house*) now for 3 years. Originally, it was only going to be for 1 year, until my dad got his kidney transplant. Well, the transplant came, and unfortunately did not take, and this is where things were heading.

Dad did not have any chance at another kidney, and unfortunately, I was not a match for him being adopted (*And I checked*). So, mom went into a local nursing home which made it easy to take dad to visit (*a 5-minute drive*). This was their life now. Separate from each other, their health declining, and me trying to make up for all the youthful indiscretions that I put them through. Payback time! A great fringe benefit Rebecca, I got to spend a ton of time with them, while all my peers were building their own lives and families, not unlike you, not you but the other you.

So, back to the solarium. When I returned to the hospital after grabbing a bite nearby, I found my mom still in the same spot in the emerge department. My mom said she had the x-ray and was waiting to see the doctor. I spotted the doctor who I spoke to earlier and went over to the desk area to get an update. He noticed my approach and moved into a more private area to speak with me. He told me that they did a full chest x-ray and that they found my mothers, pre-existing, but presumed in remission, breast cancer that was diagnosed years ago, had somehow now fully metastasized. I had watched enough medical TV shows, to know this diagnosis, to ask the uncomfortable question, "How long does she have?"

As soon as the words "fully metastasized," emerged from his mouth, my body and brain went into the old emotional shutdown mode. Turns out that not only could I shut off the fear valve at will, but I could also shut off a few other valves. What the doctor said next, however, would prove to be one of the better tests on the strength of my valve shut-off capability.

"I would give her a few days, a week at best, but there is no way to know for sure. The chest x-ray was full of cancer. I was surprised how well she responded to the meds we gave her to alleviate her breathing difficulty," he informed me in a doctor-like, non-emotional, but caring tone.

As I tightened the valve all the way, I asked "Can I bring her back to the home for a few days, or are you keeping her here? Are there any treatments to help her be comfortable?" as I stared directly into his eyes.

He told me, "It would probably be ok for a couple of days, but as things progress, she will start to experience a lot of pain. She will need to start taking some pretty strong pain meds that will most likely make her sleep all the time."

The valve was holding, and my 'What if' planning brain kicked into high gear. First, however, another test of the valve's strength. I needed to tell my mom. I went back into the bed area she was in and pulled a chair up beside the bed. I grabbed her hand, and with every ounce of strength keeping that valve closed, I told my mom exactly what the doctor told me, except the part about coming home. I needed more time to plan for this. She wasn't upset, and even smiled, and seemed to be, on some level, at peace with what fate awaited her. I think she was probably more concerned about my mental state. After all, she's a mom. I arranged for Darts to come and pick us up, since mom was feeling much better, and could travel by Darts in her wheelchair, back to the nursing home. The doctor gave me a pill bottle, and an inhaler, gently shook my mom's hand, fully knowing her fate, and gave me the customary pat on the back before he turned and continued his duties.

We sat out front and waited for Darts to arrive. As we sat there, my mom turned to me and said, "Do you think I could come home to the house for a few days?"

I gave mom a reassuring smile and said, "absolutely."

Before I had finished the absolutely, I pulled out my blackberry and started making all the arrangements. Thankfully it provided me with the distraction I needed. The Darts van arrived, and I loaded mom on, and we began the silent trip back to the nursing home. Deep down, I was destroyed. An emotional wreck! I just could never show her that. Losing your mom is always going to be the hardest life event, except maybe your

child, which, thankfully, I had no experience with. If losing a mom hurt this much, then I can not imagine the pain of losing a child. It's a major shaping event.

We arrived at the nursing home, and I took my mom into the sitting area, in her section of the home. I left her for a few minutes so I could speak to the people in charge and let them know I was going to be taking my mother home for a few days. I informed them of the doctor's diagnosis, and I could tell, they were upset by the news. Everyone jumped into gear to help pack up an overnight bag, with all my mom's personal care items, as well as some clothes. Another worker handed me another large bag full of more nursing care-type stuff, anticipating, that I would not have anything at home. I had called her old CCAC contact who was still listed on my phone and let her know the situation. I asked if she could arrange for some, in-home health care services.

The plan by this point was to bring mom home until I could no longer safely care for her, and then transfer her to St. Peter's hospice section. With Dad in the hospital, I planned to repurpose his (*medical*) bed and move it into my mom's old room on the main floor. I requested a Darts van again, to take my mom from the nursing home to the house, a ride of about 5 minutes, but they could not get a driver there for an hour. So, with time to kill, we went out to the solarium.

I sat in the solarium, with my mom's wheelchair pulled alongside my chair, and I held her hand. We did not say much but I could feel the valve starting to fail. I knew what would happen if it did, and suddenly it dawned on me, that the last time I cried, was the rainy afternoon, you came to my house, in the old Gremlin (*and yes, I now hate Gremlins*), and told me you wanted to break up. Yes, you once drove a Gremlin (*Minor giggle*). The love of my life wanted to go away to her university in the fall, single. The pain I felt was devastating. Nothing I had ever felt before. I remember sitting there, crying like a little child saying, "Why?" "Why?" What a sight, two grown, not far from 20, young adults, sitting in a Gremlin crying. I think the pain was so great for me, that I needed to find a way to control it or suppress it. I am sure this was when I developed my valve system for the first time. Find the valve and turn it off. Simple. Well Becca, it was that simple. It took some time to develop the

discipline, but I must say, it has served me well, in what I have had to do, and what I have done.

Unfortunately, the solarium sitting turned out to be my kryptonite. As I sat there, holding my mother's hand, I knew this was going to solidify my view on religion for good. What God would ever do something like this to my mother? If I ever came face to face with God, I would beat the crap out of him, for allowing this to happen to my mother. And anyone that would try the old, 'it's god's design', you get the crap beaten out of you even more.

The old solarium moment certainly had several tentacles. First, exposing the weakness in my valve system, second, solidifying my anti-God view, and now third, my first contact with those responsible, for the mysterious barrier. When I played the second video, Rebecca, it was me, sitting in the Solarium holding my mother's hand bawling my eyes out just like in the Gremlin repeating, "it's not fair, it's just not fair."

I remember in the original, non-video version, my mother putting her hand on my head and saying, "It's ok. Don't worry about it. Just make sure you look after your dad." No tears, no anger, just a mom, being a mom and worrying about everyone else. Just having to write about it after all these years, is testing the old valve system. After the solarium, I never cried again, until your mom's funeral and it was only my eyes filling up this time, but with my sunglasses on, no one could tell. And you never spotted me in the very back. Then when old Emma had to be put down. I guess my valve system kryptonite is three-fold, Mom, Emma, and Rebecca. Although, you also get the credit for creating the beast! (*I smiled*). I needed to add this to counter the potential failing valve.

In the video version on my phone from the barrier, it was my mother now saying to me, "It will be ok. They need your help. Go save them." Unlike the Hermitage video which was more of an exact replay of the event, this one had a new dialogue between my mother and me. While you would think my first instinct would be to ask, "who are they?" But it was my mom telling me. I don't have any reason for what I did next, and I can certainly tell you I have relived this moment over in my head for years, with the same outcome. I simply don't know, and most likely will never know. But what I do know, is what I did next was the right decision, and what I am doing now, telling you Rebecca, is the right decision.

***[I know I said only 5 more pages, but as I write this, no shortcut can do justice to what I am going to ask of you. Going back and editing the 5 to 10 just seems wrong.]***

I took the phone and returned it to my pocket. I took the cigar out of my mouth and put it on the seat of the canoe. I took off the summer jacket I was wearing and returned the cigar to my mouth. With all the necessary valves shut, I slid out of the canoe into the lake. A bit chilly, minor shrinkage most likely (*not that it mattered at my age - another giggle*) but, not too bad for June. I held onto the side of the canoe and began to slide myself through the water, along the canoe, toward the front. If this was going to be my final act in life, just like my mom, I was already at peace with it. I lived a full life, even though it was a life full of regrets. Better they find me bloated, floating in the lake, than in a nursing home drooling, wondering who I was. My helium exit plan was always going to be the best way, but if this is the day, I am ok with that. My only final regret would be never having the opportunity to tell 'that Rebecca', that the time we spent together, and those memories, sustained me, and made me thankful for the time she did give me.

My body started to pass through the barrier, and as my mouth came up to the barrier, I tried to take an extra deep breath, but the cigar was making that impossible as I began the transition. If I had to guess, the barrier would be only a few millimeters thick. After all, I had put my entire forearm through earlier. But to my surprise, the barrier was very thick. I was not as good as I use to be, holding my breath underwater, but was still able to get into the two-minute range with a little Zen help. Thankfully, my freediving over the years helped me maintain my lung capacity. I reached the bow of the canoe but could not see it. I closed my eyes when I entered the barrier not knowing what effect it may have on them. Blindness was never high on my, 'I could live with that' list. I could even live with being 'John Bobbitted', but to lose my sight, would be one of the worse losses to bare. Unfortunately, at this point, I was going to have to transition into treading water. It was very unfortunate, that the barely half-smoked Romeo and Juliette, would have to be sacrificed. I took a quick last puff before I let it go.

As I released myself from the canoe, I tried to maintain a straight line through the water. Thankfully, I felt comfortable I could tread water out here for some time but may have to lose the jeans shortly to lighten my load. I moved what I would estimate was another 4 feet, and with my eyes now open, the inside of the barrier certainly looked like a dense fog without any wet feeling. It had been a while, but I heard again, the odd crying sound, and it was certainly sounding like it was getting closer. Just as the sound faded, the barrier was gone, or should I more accurately say, I emerged from it. I am pretty sure, I know what you are expecting me to describe what I see, which will then, certainly cause you to roll your eyes and say, "I can't believe I let him draw me into some crazy fantasy prank."

Well, Rebecca, any sane person would think exactly like you're thinking. So, to make it even more interesting, I won't say the word.

I will describe what I was seeing or believed I was seeing. About three feet, maybe four feet in front of me, is a large, I will assume, oval-like structure. Being so close to it, and because of its size, I have no idea its full length, width, and height. It appeared like it was partially submerged, but again, I could not tell from my vantage point. The exterior was relatively smooth, almost translucent, except for a couple of what appeared to be openings that protruded into the object.

I was back rethinking maybe military again, but visually, it looked more 'space-like' based on my TV watching and reading and not first-hand experience. I continued treading water and moved closer to the openings, hoping they were not some exhaust ports, and I was about to be incinerated. As I reached the opening, which measured about 2 feet by 3 feet, almost round, I decided to go to the next level of, "oh my god," and touch the structure. The material was like nothing I had ever felt before. My hand glided over it like it had absolutely no surface tension. It did not feel wet or slimy. I was beginning to rethink my thought of trying to climb into the hole and venture down. With the surface having no surface tension, I would simply slide without any ability to stop, down the shaft/hole. My luck, I would end up inside some new military jet engine. Well, even if I wanted to go into the shaft, there was nothing to grab onto, to pull myself up. I found myself, constantly rubbing the surface, trying to figure out what the hell it was. Suddenly, I heard the

crying again, and this time, I could identify where it was coming from; the second shaft. I needed the canoe to assist.

The problem now was, where the hell is the canoe. I decided to try and retrace my route, which I estimated could be no more than 18 feet. I began my treading, and after a few strokes, I was back into the barrier. After another few strokes, I began to emerge from the barrier, and true to my natural directional instinct, the canoe was two feet to my right.

I grabbed the canoe, and tried to pull it towards me, but like before it would not move. Another mystery. Well, once again, using my hands, I slid along the gunnel toward the front to see if I could feel what was holding it. As I entered the barrier again, I slid one hand down the side, towards the bottom, to see what it was resting on. To my surprise, I felt nothing. I moved over to the opposite side and tried the same exploratory move there. Nothing. Well, I knew it may eventually come to this, but it was time to go under. Wished I had my mini scuba tank now! I sure hope that old snapper is not staying up late tonight. I took a deep breath and slowly submerged using the bottom of the canoe to hold me down, and in place.

As I held myself under the canoe, I began to stretch out my arm, and search for the thing holding the canoe in place. I felt everywhere. At one point, I used my head up against the bottom of the canoe, to hold my position, as I tried to cover 360 degrees with my two arms. I continued to work myself to the back of the canoe, from the underside and found nothing holding the canoe. When I reached the back, I came up and grabbed a fresh breath of air. Wow, another cool mystery. First, the barrier, then the structure, and now the invisible force field, holding the canoe. I moved back toward the front. I wondered if the aluminum was reacting with whatever the barrier was, like a magnet on steel. This mystery was above my pay grade. I was not yet ready to surrender my educational learnings, since I was sure, I was entering a new area of science. Well, a new plan developed, and so I grabbed the paddle, my Rapala knife, and since it was staring me in the face, my bottle of port. I know my adrenalin was at an all-time high, but in the forefront of my mind, I was starting to think about the potential monetization of this whole situation. I may be learning highly secret military stuff, but somewhere in that sci-fi over-exposed brain of mine, I was enjoying a

little fantasy exploring with the old, 'Could it be... wait for it.... Alien?' A Close Encounter of the 'Al' kind. (*Another giggle, maybe an eye roll*).

I headed back to the structure, and thought, that this may be a secret stealth plane, and the material was some new, non-reflecting, non-surface tension substance, that could not be seen by radar. The barrier was most likely some form of chemical reaction, between the material and the water. Maybe, it had to make some emergency ditch here, and since it was 100 percent stealth, the military couldn't find it. But where are the pilots and crew? Is it a drone? Maybe there's a reward somewhere. So, with canoe stuff in hand, neck of the bottle in my mouth, back to the structure I went. I was getting better at my travel angle, as I emerged almost exactly, as I emerged last time. When I got to the farthest opening, I proceeded to place the paddle up on the surface, but, as soon as I let go, it started to slide down the hole. I grabbed it before it went too far. My last effort was to try to wedge the paddle on an angle, so it would create a hold, to allow me to pull myself up, out of the water, and into the shaft opening. I put the port bottle down for a second, to adjust my hand hold on the paddle, and before I could move fast enough, it slid down the shaft opening.

Not to waste the opportunity for more intel, I stopped everything and listened to see if I could hear the bottle crash or hit something at the bottom. One Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi, and nothing. My luck, some air force officer would be enjoying a nice port later. I tried to wedge the paddle, but it would not hold its position. It just wanted to slide. Plan "B." Let's see what happens when I hit the surface with the paddle. Maybe, the noise will force someone to come, and inspect this part of the aircraft. I tried to put my arm over the edge, to balance me a bit, while I cocked my other arm to swing the paddle against the side. Well, it worked just perfectly. I was able to get a pretty good, and forceful 'Vladdy Jr.' swing with the paddle, but another mystery just emerged. No sound was emitted. I did it again, and again. This stuff also can absorb energy. Well, the mysteries kept growing and my resolve to get into this structure was equally growing.

Ok, now the big guns. Time to go and wake Al and introduce him to my new crazy sudoku. I didn't know if I would encounter the Lion from the 'Wizard of Oz Al', after encountering the wizard for the first time, or



hopefully, it would be 'Leonidas A1', but with a 24-pack instead of a 6-pack. I swam back to the canoe and put the paddle in the canoe when I felt something touch my leg. Oh no, the Snapper was here. I attempted to kick the area I was guessing it would be in, but my foot didn't hit anything, and I did not feel any pain from an angry snapper turtle bite. Suddenly, whatever touched my leg before, now had a really good grip. It felt more like a Hydro linemen's horse cock. All crude joking aside, the horse cock (*Actually called Kellmen's Connector I believe*) refers to a special metal-weaved device that when you insert a large wire cable into it, like one of those overhead power transmission lines, as you pull on the other end, it grabs the line and the harder you pull the tighter it grabs. It's used to pull large wires through conduit. Probably need to show you one for you to fully understand how it works.

I grabbed the side of the canoe, to prevent whatever had hold of my leg, from pulling me under. I still had the Rapala filet knife in the waist of my pants, and to be honest, I was surprised I hadn't accidentally cut myself with it yet. Well, the leg-pulling increased, and I figured it was some military guy in scuba gear about to drag me under, to incapacitate me, before slapping cuffs on. I might have been able in my earlier days, to hold on a bit longer, but the pull was so strong, that it was either pulling my leg out of the socket or tearing every ligament in my fingers. In anticipation of the submerging, I forced myself to take a really good deep breath. As my head broke the water surface, I went into my free diving Zen mode. I had no idea how long I would be underwater and wanted to preserve my air, for a potential hand-to-hand, fisty cuff, with the frogman. I am sure they, or he, would have no idea how long I could hold my breath. Boy, will he be surprised! I don't know what prompted a flash memory Ingram to pop, but I thought at that moment, "Surprise, Surprise, Surprise" with the customary Gomer Pile drawl.

I hate being pulled backward, as it inevitably leads to me getting a nose full of water. Who needed Navage now? Without a mask in the evening water, I was as good as blind as to where I was being pulled. I tried to reach down, and feel the rope around my leg, but the speed was a bit too much, and I had to stay focused on keeping my body streamlined to avoid any drag. Drag equated to the loss of air. I kept my legs together, and arms crossed my chest, with hands grabbing my shoulders. It was

probably around a minute so far when the water started to brighten, or should I say, I was entering an area that had light.

Based on a minute, and the speed I was being pulled at, I estimated we could have traveled, over one hundred feet, probably close to one hundred and fifty. That would rule out the two shaft holes, and I know the lake is at best fifteen feet deep in the middle. So, if my math is close, I could be anywhere. I started to slow, and I was comfortable with maybe, another minute tops before I would enter drownsville. Without any forewarning, I think I left the medium of water, and now found myself in a medium of warm air. Lights had dimmed again. I know it could have gone really, really bad, but fortunately, I was now breathing air, I think it was. Well, whatever it was, it did not kill me obviously, and my lungs could function just fine. It finally dawned on me; I was being pulled along by the same material as the hull. The Zero surface tension stuff.

Without the water, I was now free to try and contort my body, into a shape that would allow me to grab the thing wrapped around my leg. Well, mystery number four, or are we at Five. I kind of lost count. When I grabbed my leg where the attachment point was, I didn't feel rope, I felt (*by touch*) the same type of material covering the external hull of the vessel. Well as quick as it had started, the ride appeared over.

I was now in some sort of test tube-like structure. It was still fairly dark, but I could make out something, about twenty feet to my left. Not enough light, but something was out there. Now I needed to turn ON the valve governing the 'alien probing' experience. (*I could not resist Becca*). I remained in the same position, in the giant test tube, when I noticed another light starting to blink. Then another light, and another. Soon, the entire room, or whatever you wanted to call I was in, began to reveal itself. The room itself was cylindrical, like my test tube, but maybe ten times the size. The walls did not look solid, but more organic. The lights seemed to be embedded in the organic wall covering. I took a quick look at myself to assess my situation.

Feet covered with what I think is the same material the hull is made from, just like the horse cock device, I had previously described. It appears to be attached to the bottom of the clear cylinder structure I was in. I touched, what I assumed was the wall of the tube I was in, and again, a surface I never felt before, and can only describe as void of any surface tension. I can only assume, as a defense mechanism, my thoughts now turned to the idea that some big probe would enter my tube, and would go up, you know where (*that's all I am going to say about that – big grin*). I was now glad I had not removed my jeans. Humour can sometimes be a welcome distraction. I can't explain what happened next, because I don't

remember, and I was never able to find the time to ask. Whatever happened next, must have put me to sleep.

My next vivid memory Rebecca was being on a bed-like device with the hull material stuff fully engulfing my body. It was like a giant condom. Form-fitting, but the only part of me exposed was my head. I tried to move but was being kept motionless by the substance. While I had no mirror to guide me with what was happening on my head, I did feel something on my head. The other thing going on was a faint humming sound. As I lay there, I heard a voice. It was the audio of my mom in the solarium again.

"It will be ok. They need your help. Go save them," mom said just like in the video.

Funny how our minds work; I had this instant flashback to an old Jodie Foster movie called 'Contact'. Not sure if you ever watched it. Just in case you want to watch it, it was released back on July 11th, 1997. I am sure it's available online somewhere and may help you in the near future with a bit of context. I had pretty much ruled out military and was more leaning toward a nervous breakdown, or maybe this was some transition process you go through when you die. Maybe I was sitting on the dock and suffered a massive heart attack, and this was my brain letting go.

"It will be ok. They need your help. They won't hurt you," mom said. I was having my very own 'Field of Dreams moment'.

Wow, the message changed. Well since I am here, and probably dead or dying, why not enjoy the last ride I thought. So, I took a second to think about what I wanted to say, and decided the best reply was, "I am not afraid. I am just trying to figure out if this is real or am I crazy, or worse, dead."

"It will be ok. We need your help. You're not crazy or dead," I heard mom reply.

"Then please explain how we are communicating mom," was my next response.

I am sure you would agree that my little written dissertation so far would certainly make for a great National Enquirer piece, or maybe the makings for a good sci-fi book. But I think at this juncture, and I have given this a great deal of thought Rebecca, it's best to leave this storyline temporarily and provide you with something different to maybe help condition your mindset moving forward.

**Hope you enjoyed this sample!**  
**Now go and buy a couple copies! ☺**