

A Stupid Idea

By: Nathan Jones

“I can’t believe we’re doing this.” Sharon’s tone was sharp, and she’d started to sound like Mom. “You know we’re gonna get caught, right?”

I looked at the ground to avoid telling my sister that she was ruining this, that we never wanted her to come along anyway. This was *our* idea. *Ours*. We knew how stupid it was, and we knew we’d probably get caught. We just didn’t care. It was as simple as that. “Relax.” I told her, “We talked about this already. It’s not like we’re gonna run all the way there. Bobby says he knows a secret way in.” I glanced up at my sister and realized her arms were crossed. “Seriously.” I added. “We’ll be fine. We talked about this stuff at Bobby’s house last night.”

Watching my sister think it over, I tried not to look too nervous. Sharon always had this way of going with her gut, and I could tell by the look on her face that her gut was saying this was beyond stupid, that we had no business going near that rock quarry, even if Bobby’s friend Darrel had said it was the coolest place ever.

“You gotta see it.” he’d told us, his eyes wide and lit up. *“The dunes there are huge. Huge. You can literally slide down for almost a full minute.”*

That was all it took to convince us to check that place out, and as I looked towards my brother and Bobby up front, I prayed that my promise to Sharon that we’d formed some kind of “plan” wasn’t a complete and total lie. Taking another look back towards the house, I called out to my little brother. “Ryan!” He didn’t hear me at first, so I shouted louder. “Ryan! Did you lock Rusty inside?”

Nodding back, Ryan continued his conversation with Bobby, stopping only to remind Sharon and I to stay close. He and Bobby had apparently been planning this long before he talked to me about it, and though my biggest fear was originally that I’d see our dog come running behind us, I could now see as Bobby pushed some branches aside that the trail we were taking wasn’t one I was familiar with.

“How long has this been here?” I asked, trying not to sound like a wimp. “Can’t we take the other one?”

“Not sure.” Ryan replied. “But Bobby told me he found it last week.”

“That’s fine,” I said, “but can we just use the normal one? This one doesn’t look so good.”

“I already checked that one.” Ryan said, swatting a spider-web with a stick he’d picked up. “There were signs everywhere. We didn’t want anyone seeing us, so we figured we’d use this one instead. Besides,” he added. “Bobby says this one’s probably quicker. He thinks it cuts right into the back of the quarry. The trucks don’t patrol back there.”

Realizing I couldn’t talk my brother out of it, I glanced back to see my sister still behind us and hoped we’d make it to the quarry before dark. Mom had no idea we were up here, and though I figured we wouldn’t be out too terribly long, I didn’t like this place at night. The woods

behind our house were pretty damn scary, and while we'd lived here all of our lives, we usually stuck to specific trails. We had the bike trail on one end, and the creek on the other. That was all we needed, and we didn't do much in the ways of exploring. Dad had warned us against that.

"We can't stay long." I called out, realizing Ryan and Bobby had gotten ahead of us. "Dad'll be home soon!"

"Hurry up then!" I faintly heard Ryan holler back, and with that, Sharon and I made our way further into the trail. We walked slowly at first, doing our best to keep to the middle, the narrowing and widening of this trail seeming very different than the ones we were used to on our bikes. There were rows of briars spread throughout, and amidst the low and tangled vines we pushed aside to make our way through, we were forced to dodge broken tree limbs that stuck out like quills on a porcupine.

"This is stupid." Sharon muttered, slapping an ant off her leg. She pulled some pine straw from her yellow curls and growled. "Why are we doing this? Seriously."

"You can go home." I shot back. "I'm not leaving. I wanna see this place."

"You guys better be back soon." She glared at me and I could tell the words "Or I'm telling Mom" were just waiting to come out.

"We will, Sharon, rel---" my words were suddenly cut short by the sound of Ryan yelling.

"Get over here!" we both heard. "We found something!"

Racing down the hill as fast as we could, my sister and I scrambled down an embankment to find Ryan and Bobby standing still at a small clearing, their eyes fixated on a ring of stones spread out evenly across the grass. Looking closely, we realized that the stones seemed to be in a sort of star-shaped pattern, the inside of which held another stone that was larger than the rest, a bit bigger and kind of round like a small table. There were logs too, one at each of the four corners of the clearing, and strewn about the entire area, the four of us could see beer cans, burnt out cigarettes, and even old pairs of clothing. This place looked weird.

Bobby wasted no time, and as he stepped in to investigate, my sister suddenly stepped in front of him.

"No." she said, her eyes wide. "Let's leave this alone."

"Why?" Bobby asked, his curiosity obviously peaked, "This is cool! We should check it out."

"Just..." her voice trailed off and I could tell my sister was scared. "Just don't, ok?" She grabbed Ryan's arm and I watched as she sought to pull him back towards the house.

"Let me go." He said, pulling away from her, "I wanna check it out too."

The three of us looked around while my sister stood nearby, and though part of me wanted to know why she was so scared, the other part of me didn't want to ask. I wanted to

know what this place was, no matter how weird it felt, and as I stepped into the clearing and began to take a closer look around, my eyes suddenly moved to what appeared to be markings and drawings all over the ground. They looked deep, like they'd been dug up with a pointed stick or something, and as I bent down to run my fingers across a few of them, I realized immediately that they looked like words. Squinting my eyes, I tried my best to make out what they said. No good. "Weird..." I muttered, "It's not even English." Standing up to make my way back towards my sister, I was stopped short by the sight of Ryan and Bobby huddled near the larger stone in the center. With their backs turned to me, I could hear Bobby giggling, his shoulder nudging Ryan and the words "Pick it up" almost whispered so my sister and I wouldn't hear.

"What is it?" I interrupted, moving towards them. "What's there?"

It wasn't until I actually reached the rock that I saw the fur and, leaning closer, I could see the body of what looked to be a dead rabbit dangling halfway off, its shriveled mass pinned against the rock by Bobby's stick.

"Gross!" Sharon exclaimed from the sidelines. "Leave it alone!"

Bobby looked back at Sharon and then again at my brother. "Pick it up." he repeated. "It's just a rabbit."

Looking Bobby in the eyes, I stepped between my brother and the carcass. "That's enough." I said, knocking it of the rock with my stick. "Let's keep going. I don't like this place."

We made our way out of the clearing, moving further down the trail amidst the groans from Bobby that we were being "pansies." Making sure to keep my eyes on Ryan, I tapped my sister on the shoulder. "We've gotta tell Dad about that place." I said to her, "I don't want Ryan going back there."

"What did you think I was gonna do?" she retorted. "You're lucky I didn't go get Mom. You know how Ryan is. He'll do anything Bobby tells him. He'd have picked that thing up and everything if we hadn't been here. What if it had something on it? Those things carry diseases, ya know."

"I know." I said. "I took care of it."

I looked back at my little brother and wished my sister was wrong. Ryan had always been a follower, and though I wished that he wasn't so quick to try and impress Bobby sometimes, I realized why he did it. Bobby didn't have rules at his house. He didn't have parents that cared enough to tell him to be home at a certain time, or that he couldn't go to this place or that. He didn't have any older brothers or sisters doing their best to keep him away from the cigarettes he constantly tempted my brother with, and he didn't have the kind of supervision that makes it impossible for a kid to watch porn in his living room. He was basically free to do as he pleased, and that often meant that he went looking for a partner to do it with. Ours was simply the closest house to his, and Ryan the closest kid his age.

It didn't take long for us to reach the end of the trail, and though I had kept my eye out for any more of those weird clearings, I was thankful when I didn't see any. Sliding down a

small hill, the four of us stopped as the trail opened into a large tree-line, its edges thick and tangled with briars, low branches, and weeds.

“This is it.” Bobby said, pushing his way through. “Follow me.”

We did our best to keep up, and as the three of us followed him through the brush, fighting thorns and needles as we went, Bobby suddenly stopped in front of us. “Hold on.” he said, “I think I see something.”

We froze in place and waited. Nothing. This pine straw was sharp, and my hands were beginning to hurt. “Are you sur--”

“Quiet!” Bobby said, cutting me off. “Listen.”

It was then that we heard the distinct sound of a car engine, and I looked back to see my sister glaring at me with an “I told you so” plastered all over her face. “Dude.” I groaned. “You said there weren’t any trucks here.”

“There weren’t!” Bobby snapped back, trying not to go above a whisper. “At least there weren’t last week. Darrel said...” He stopped himself short and let out a sigh. “Look.” he added. “Darrel said they didn’t come back here, so I believed him. Let’s just keep our heads down till they leave.” He pointed ahead of us and motioned for our eyes to follow. “See?” he said. “There’s the rock wall I told you guys about. All we gotta do is climb that, and we’re in. The dunes are on the other side.”

I looked back at my sister again and shrugged, watching as she rolled her eyes. With our heads held low, the four of us waited for whatever was making the sound to come around the bend, and it wasn’t long before we spotted the large, white pick-up making its rounds through the quarry, its tires crunching the gravel as it sped by. Wasting no time as the last of its dust-trail faded, we raced across the gravel road towards the rocks ahead, each of us scrambling to find our footing and scale as quickly as possible. I looked around, admiring the wall as I climbed. It was big, much bigger than Bobby had originally described, and as I scanned each of the rocks around me, I realized that the four of us could easily lie across either one of them. Our bodies completely hidden from sight by the large branches that hung low from a nearby tree.

“This is incredible!” I said, doing my best to beat my sister to the top. “How did you guys find this?”

Bobby smiled. “Darrel found it first.” he replied, placing a hand upon a nearby stone. “He said he accidentally found it when he was running from one of the security guys here. Not sure how they spotted him, but he said he climbed this thing to get away from the dude and got curious enough to check out the top. Dude never found him apparently.”

“I can see why.” I said, looking down to see how high we were. “I wouldn’t have chased him either.”

We continued to climb, and it wasn’t long before Bobby reached the top ledge, his hand going down first to help Ryan to the top. My sister had fallen behind, and as I looked back to see how far she’d lagged, my fingers slipped on a nearby rock.

“Look out!” I screamed, sliding down a few of the rocks, my fingers scraping on the way down. My foot hit another stone, and I breathed again.

“Be careful!” Sharon almost shouted up at me, her body just a few feet below mine. “Don’t kill yourself up there!”

“Sorry...” I muttered, trying to will my heart-rate to go back to normal. I reached up again, this time making sure to feel the firmness of the rock before putting all of my weight onto it.

“It’s getting dark.” I heard Ryan say. “We gotta hurry. I don’t want Mom to yell at us.”

My heart still beating a bit faster than usual, I made it to the top of the wall alongside Bobby and my brother, breathing a sigh of relief as Sharon pulled herself up soon after. With the sun just beginning to go down, the four of us stood silent, our mouths gaping in awe and excitement as our eyes met the sand dunes we’d come all this way to see. Measuring well above forty feet apiece, the four of them towered over everything any of us had ever seen, and I couldn’t help but imagine them as dinosaurs.

“Wow...” I finally muttered, my eyes fixated on the dune farthest across from us. “You weren’t kidding.”

I felt a punch on my arm and watched Ryan and my sister race behind Bobby to see who’d beat who to the top, my own legs spurring into action as the four of us sprinted headlong up the dunes. Throwing myself on the incline, I raised my hands in the air and forgot all about the fact that we’d probably be in a lot of trouble when we got home. My body racing down the dune faster than any waterslide I’d ever been on, I closed my mind to how stupid this probably was, my focus solely on the count. I wanted to make it to sixty.