

## Phantom Bigfoot Strikes Again

EARLY THE FOLLOWING morning, Duane sat on the Harley, concealed at the edge of the forest. Stretched out in his Bigfoot duds, he yawned loudly. Sprawled along his bike with hands behind his head, he stared at the blue sky. He was at peace. But memories of when he wasn't at peace still haunted and even embarrassed him.

His thoughts wandered back to when he was at school. Duane had already made a name for himself as the dumbass who needed beating up. He was constantly hiding from the bullies searching for him now that Virgil had left town. One day he was saved from a swirly down the toilet by Coach Jones, a barrel-chested bald ex-footballer. Coach helped train Duane and put some muscle on his wiry frame. After school he would train Duane in the finer art of football.

Not long after that it was Duane's eighteenth birthday, and he had the shock of his life, just after his mother had left. He woke up from a night of weird visions chasing ape-like creatures in the forest. As usual he had to use the toilet. He burst into the bathroom and came to a stop. Before him, stood a monster as naked as a jaybird, but not naked. The creature was covered head to toe in long blond hair and was at least seven feet tall.

He was about to run for it when he recognized his father's facial features. "Dad ... is that you?"

"Hello Duane ... I guess it's time I explained some things." He laid a hand on Duane's trembling shoulder. "I've been The Guardian of the forest for too long now and it's time to join my new family." He smiled big yellow teeth.

"What's happened to you, Dad?" Duane thought of the film *Teenwolf*. "Are you a werewolf?"

Sam laughed. "No Duane ... I'm a WereBigfoot ... not a true Bigfoot and not exactly human. I was chosen by The

Elders, as many before have, to help our tribe stay a secret and to stop their gene pool from drying up.”

“Chosen?”

“Yes son, chosen by the lights up at The Big X. They took me to the place I can never remember, but that’s not important ... what is ... is you, my son ... you must continue to protect the forest and its secret.”

“What secret, Dad?”

“The Bigfoot! They must never be discovered ... don’t ask me why ... The Elders have never thought fit to tell me ... but it’s real important ... but I gotta go now, Duane.” Sam shuddered and trembled. “The forest is calling me.”

Duane heard strange animal sounds echoing through the woods. “Wooooo ... wooooo ... woooooo.”

“Am I going to change too, Dad?”

“Yes son, you are The Guardian now. The lights will tell you what to do ... and your sixth sense will come in handy.”

“Sixth sense ... like in the movie?”

“Not exactly, Duane ...do you remember the lights?”

“You mean that time I was spying on Virgil and Lou at Little Beaver and I saw the lights? Not long after that Virgil left,” he added as an afterthought.

“You got it in one, Duane. They chose you way back then. In the pantry is some weird-tasting stuff ... fermented Joobaaa ... drink it all ... but not at once ... it helps prepare the way. If you like you can water it down with some OJ and limejuice, makes a great cocktail. It won’t diminish its unique qualities.” “Eh, okay Dad. Will I see you again?”

“Yeah ... I’ll be dropping by now and again to see how you’re doing.” Sam kissed Duane’s cheek and dashed from the log cabin howling like a howler monkey.

Duane’s thoughts wandered. He recalled an embarrassing moment, not long after he’d taken the Joobaaa. It was during a football match. Something was up the moment he slipped on his head gear. A feeling of suffocation overcame him. The cheering teenagers went silent. All he could hear was his own breathing and his heart hammering painfully. With animal instinct, he ran hell for leather as his team mates tackled the

defense. Without looking, he sprang high into the air and caught the ball then did a *Forrest Gump* and didn't stop running until he was in the forest. That was the last time Duane participated in sports. From that moment school seemed useless and nonsensical.