

**Maniac
Martians
Marooned
in
Massachusetts**



What I'm going to tell you is a story about Martians.

That's right.

Alien beings from Mars, one of the closest planets to Earth.

Now, you might think that this is a science fiction story, and that's partially true.

But for the most part, it's a horror story. A nightmare in real life, a terrifying experience that nearly cost the lives of me, my sister, and my friend one awful summer in Massachusetts.

But I'll also say this: if we hadn't stopped the Martians, they might have gone on to take over the

entire state, then the country, and, quite possibly, the world.

So, you might say that we're heroes, and that alone makes me feel kind of proud. Oh, no one knows we're heroes, and we don't care. We're just glad that we did what we did, that we acted in time to save ourselves . . . let alone the entire human race.

My name is Damon Lewis, and I live in Boston, Massachusetts. I am 11 years old and going into fifth grade. I have a sister named Tracy, and she is one year younger than me. She's going into fourth grade. We get along fairly well, for the most part.

And up until one particular vacation last summer, I would have to say that my life was relatively boring. That's not to say that I don't have any fun. I have some great friends, and I love lots of things like sports, video games, and being outdoors. I think I like many of the things most kids my age do.

And one thing I look forward to every year

is our family vacation. Each year, we go somewhere different. One year we went to Disney World in Florida, and it was awesome! Another year, we went to Cedar Point in Ohio, and that was a lot of fun, too.

However, last summer, we decided to stay in our home state of Massachusetts to explore some of the places that we hadn't yet visited.

One of those places is called October Mountain State Forest. It's on the eastern side of Massachusetts and about a two and a half hour drive from our home in Boston. Dad told me all about it one morning during breakfast.

"You'll love it, Damon," he said to me as he placed his cup of coffee on the table. He had a map spread out before him, and he pointed to a particular spot with his index finger. "It's the biggest State Forest in Massachusetts, and there are miles and miles of hiking trails. You and Tracy are going to have the time of your lives."

And for the most part, my dad was right: Tracy and I, along with a friend that we met at the

campground, Amber Duncan, would have the time of our lives. We just didn't know that having the time of our lives would also lead to an incredible discovery . . . and the most terrifying day we'd ever experienced.



On the day we left for vacation, we got a late start, because Dad couldn't find the car keys. He and Mom hunted all over for them. He was getting pretty angry, too. Dad gets mad when he loses things. One time, he forgot where he placed his wallet, and he tore the house apart looking for it. Of course, his wallet was in the exact place he'd left it: on the seat of the car in the garage. Still, he claimed he hadn't left it there and thought that someone else must've taken it to the car on purpose. Crazy.

Anyway, after about an hour of searching for the keys, guess what? Dad found them right where he had left them. They were on the mantle over the fireplace. I had no idea why he'd put them there, but being that he was the last one to drive the car, he was the most obvious one to have put them there.

Our drive was going to take us a couple of hours. For the most part, it was pretty boring. I played a video game while Tracy read a book. We got into an argument about something, and my dad, who was still angry from getting a late start, got mad at us.

"Do you want me to turn this car around?" he said as he looked up at the rearview mirror. Tracy had just slapped me on the shoulder, and I slapped her shoulder in return.

"Because I will," Dad continued. "Don't make me turn this car around, because I'll do it in a heartbeat."

The rest of the trip was silent. I didn't pay any attention to Tracy, and she paid no attention

to me. I just played my game and caught glimpses of road signs as we traveled on Interstate 90. Once in a while, Mom would say something about our vacation and how fun it was going to be to stay in a campground instead of a hotel.

I was looking forward to that, too. Sure, I enjoyed staying in hotels when we went on vacation, but it wasn't very often that we went camping. I was looking forward to having a campfire, roasting marshmallows after dark, and helping Dad cook breakfast over the fire in the morning. I'd even bought a new pocket knife at a sporting goods store, and I couldn't wait to use it. There were a lot of things I was looking forward to . . . but getting attacked by Martians wasn't one of them.

I know it sounds crazy and unbelievable, and I wouldn't blame anyone if they didn't believe me.

Still, it happened, and to this day, I feel very lucky to be alive.



It took us longer than expected to get to our campsite, because Dad took a wrong turn, and we got lost. Dad said that the road he was taking was a shortcut to the State Forest campground, but as it turned out, it took us nearly sixty miles in another direction. We had to go all the way back and get on Interstate 90 again. Dad went on and on about how there 'used to be a shortcut, back in the good old days,' that they 'must have changed the route.'

I thought the whole thing was kind of funny,

but I didn't say anything. I didn't want him mad at me!

So, by the time we got to October Mountain State Forest, it was already getting dark. And by the time we got around to putting up our tents, the stars were out. Dad and Mom had a large tent where they would sleep, and Tracy and I had a smaller, two-person tent that we set up next to theirs.

There were others in the campground, too. Some people had tents, while others had big campers and recreational vehicles. We could see campfires glowing in the early night and could smell the crisp, punky odor of wood smoke.

And I must admit: I really *was* excited. The last time we had used the tent, I'd set it up in our backyard. I had a friend over, and we stayed up really late, telling ghost stories.

But that really wasn't camping. Now, we were a long way from home in a place we'd never been before. I was excited about exploring the area and seeing some new things.

The next morning, Dad was in a much better mood. He was making breakfast over an open fire, and I awoke to the fantastic smells of scrambled eggs and bacon. The sun was already up, and it was a beautiful morning. I dressed, found my pocket knife, stuffed it into my pocket, and went outside into the fresh, cool morning air. Tracy awoke a few minutes later, and she came out of the tent in her pajamas, her hair all messy and tangled.

After breakfast, Dad sent me on an errand.

“Damon?” he said. He was holding an empty plastic gallon water jug in each hand.

“Yeah?”

“Will you take these over to the water spigot and fill them up?” he asked.

“Sure,” I replied. I dried off my hands, took the water jugs from Dad, and set out across a small field, winding around other campsites, making my way toward a couple of small restrooms. Near the restrooms was a watering station, and there was a girl about my age doing the same thing I was

about to do: filling up jugs of water. When she saw me coming, she smiled.

“I’ll be done in just a second,” she said as I approached. “Actually, I’ve been going slow, because I know that as soon as I get back to our campsite, my parents are going to put me to work again. I’m trying to kill some time.”

I put my empty jugs on the ground. “Take your time,” I replied. “I’m in no rush.” Then, I looked around. “It sure is a nice day,” I said.

The girl looked up and around. “It sure is,” she said. “There’s not a single cloud in the sky, and it looks like it’s going to be—”

She abruptly halted her sentence. Not only that, but her jaw fell, and her eyes widened. She dropped the jug of water that she had been filling and pointed into the sky, her face filled with fear and alarm.

“Look at that!” she shouted. *“What in the world is that?!?!”*



I turned and looked up. Immediately, I, too, felt the fear and alarm that the girl was already experiencing.

Something was moving in the sky. It wasn't a plane, as it was round and silvery. And it wasn't a meteorite, as it was moving too slowly. It was moving erratically across the sky, trailing a brown line of smoke, and I was struck with the idea that, although it was a craft of some sort, it most obviously was in trouble and was going to crash.

The girl spoke.

“What is *that*?” she asked again.

“It looks like a flying saucer,” I said, surprised to hear those words come out of my mouth. While I’d read all about flying saucers and UFOs, I’d never seen one before. For that fact, I never really believed they existed. I knew the universe was big, and I kind of figured that there probably would be life on other planets, but most of the stories and pictures that I had read or seen were made up from somebody’s wild imagination.

Moments later, the flying saucer—or whatever it was—vanished beneath the trees. We stood staring and listening, but we saw nothing more, and we didn’t hear an explosion or anything out of the ordinary.

“Do you think it crashed?” the girl asked.

“I think so,” I said. “That was really crazy.”

“Let’s go look for it,” the girl said. “I’ve never seen a flying saucer before.”

“I don’t think flying saucers exist,” I said.

“Then, what do you think it was?” the girl replied. “It sure looked like a flying saucer to me.”

She had a point. I got a good enough look at the craft to know that it wasn't a plane. It wasn't a balloon, and it certainly wasn't a helicopter. It really did look just like a flying saucer from a science fiction movie.

"I'm not sure what it was," I said, "but I'll go look for it with you."

"I'm Amber Duncan," the girl said as she knelt down and picked up the jug of water she'd dropped. Much of the water had spilled out, and she refilled it beneath the spigot.

"I'm Damon Lewis," I said. "My family is from Boston."

"I'm from Hartford, Connecticut," said Amber. "My family vacations here every year." She finished filling her water jug and stepped aside. I knelt down and began filling the plastic jug in my hand.

"This is our first time here," I said. "I figured we might see a lot of animals, but I never thought I'd see a flying saucer."

"Me, neither," Amber replied. Once again,

she looked up, searching the blue sky for any signs of something strange. By now, the smoke that had been trailing the doomed craft had faded away.

I pointed. "It looks like it went down about a mile away," I said. "Something that big shouldn't be too difficult to find."

"I wonder if anyone else saw it," Amber said. "We can't be the only ones."

"I'm sure there must be others," I said. "I wish I would've had my camera."

"I've got to take these water jugs back to our campsite," Amber said. "How about I meet you back here in an hour?"

"Sounds good," I said. "See you in an hour."

She walked away, and I finished filling the plastic water jug, excited to tell my family what I'd seen, anxious to find the crashed flying saucer or whatever it was. If I knew then what I know now, I certainly wouldn't have been so anxious, as I never knew that a simple hike could turn out to be so dangerous . . . and deadly.