

Aliens Ate My Pickup

Yes'm, I'm serious. Aliens ate my pickup. Only it weren't really aliens, jest one, even though it was my Chevy four-ton, and he was a little bitty feller, not like some Japanese giant thing . . . an' he didn't really eat it, he just kinda chewed it up a little, look, you can see the teeth-marks on the bumper here an' . . .

Oh, start at the beginin'? Well, all right, I guess.

My name? It's Jed, Jed Pryor. I was born an' raised on this farm outside Claremore, been here all my life. Well, 'cept for when I went t' OU.

What? Well, heck fire, sure I graduated!

What? Well, what makes you thank Okies tawk funny?

Degree? You bet I gotta degree! I gotta Batchler in Land Management right there on the wall of m'livingroom and-

Oh, the alien. Yeah, well, it was dark of the moon, middle of this June, when I was out doin' some night-fishin' on m'pond. Stocked it about five years ago with black an' stripy bass, just let 'em be, started fishin' it this year. I'm tellin' you, I got a five pounder on m'third cast this spring an'-

Right, the alien. Well, I was out there drownin' a coupla lures about midnight, makin' the fish laugh, when wham! all of a sudden the sky lights up like Riverparks on Fourth of July. I mean t'tell you, I haven't seen nothin' like that in all my born days! I 'bout thought them scifi writers lives over on the next farm had gone an' bought out one'a them fireworks factories in Tennessee again, like they did just before New Years. Boy howdy, that was a night! I swan, it looked like the sky over ol' Baghdad, let me tell you! Good thing they warned us they was gonna set off some doozies, or-

Right, the night'a them aliens. Well, anyway, the sky lit up, but it was all over in lessn' a minute, so I figgered it couldn't be them writers. Now, we get us some weird stuff ev'ry now an' again, y'know, what with MacDac-that's MacDonald-Douglas t'you-bein' right over the county line an' all, well I just figgered they was testin' somethin' that I wasn't supposed t' know about an' I went back t' drownin' worms.

What? Why didn' I think it was a UFO? Ma'am, what makes you thank Okies got hayseeds in their haid? I got a satylite dish on m'front lawn, I watch NASA channel an' PBS an' science shows all the time, an' I got me a subscription t' Skeptical Inquirer, an' I ain't never seen nothin' t'make me think there was such a thang as UFOs. Nope, I purely don't believe in 'em. Or I didn't, anyway.

So, like I was sayin' I went back t' murderin' worms an' makin' the bass laugh, an' finally got tired'a bein' the main course fer the skeeters an' chiggers an' headed back home. I fell inta bed an' didn' think nothin' about it till I walked out next mornin'.

An' dang if there ain't a big ol' mess in the middle'a my best hayfield! What? Oh heckfire, ma'am, it was one'a them crop circle things, like on the cover'a that Led Zeppelin record. Purely ruint m'hay. You cain't let hay get flattened down like that, spoils it right quick 'round here if they's been any dew, an' it was plenty damp that mornin'.

How'd I feel? Ma'am, I was hot. I figgered it was them scifi writers, foolin' with me; them city folk, they dunno you cain't do that t'hay. But they didn' have no cause t'fool with me like that, we bin pretty good neighbors so far, I even bought their books an' liked 'em pretty much too, 'cept for the stuff 'bout the horses. Ev'body knows a white horse's deaf as a post, like as not, less'n' it's one'a them Lippyzaners. Ain't no horse gonna go read yer mind, or go ridin' through fire an' all like that an'-

Oh, yeah. Well, I got on th' phone, gonna give 'em what for, an' turns out they're gone! One'a them scifi conventions. So it cain't be them.

Well, shoot, now I dunno what t'think. That's when I heerd it, under th' porch. Somethin' whimperin', like.

Now y'know what happens when you live out in the country. People dump their dang-blasted strays all th' time, thinkin' some farmer'll take care of 'em. Then like as not they hook up with one'a the dog packs an' go wild an' start runnin' stock. Well, I guess I gotta soft heart t'match my soft head, I take 'em in, most times. Get 'em fixed, let 'em run th' rabbits outa my garden. Coyotes get 'em sooner or later, but I figger while they're with me, they at least got t'eat and gotta place t'sleep. So I figgered it was 'nother dang stray, an' I better get 'im out from under th' porch 'fore he messes under there an' it starts t'smell.

So I got down on m'hands an' knees like a pure durn fool, an' I whistled an' coaxed, an' carried on like some kinda dim bulb, an' finally that stray come out. But ma'am, what come outa that porch weren't no dog.

It was about the ugliest thing on six legs I ever seen in my life. Ma'am, that critter looked like somebody done beat out a fire on its face with a ugly stick. Looked like five miles 'a bad road. Like the reason first cousins hadn't ought t'get married. Two liddle, squinchy eyes that wuz all pupil, nose like a burnt pancake, jaws like a bear-trap. Hide all mangy and patchy, part scales and part fur, an' all of it putrid green. No ears that I could see. Six legs, like I said, an' three tails, two of 'em whippy and ratty, an' one sorta like a club. It drooled, an' its nose ran. Id'a been afraid of it, 'cept it crawled outa there with its three tails 'tween its legs, whimperin' an' wheezin' an' lookin' up at me like it was 'fraid I was gonna beat it. I figgered, hell, poor critter's scarder of me than I am of it—an' if it looks ugly t'me, reckon I must look just's ugly right back.

So I petted it, an' it rolled over on its back an' stuck all six legs in th'air, an' just acted about like any other pup. I went off t' the barn an' got Thang—I ended up callin' it Thang fer's long as I had it—I got Thang a big ol' bowl'a dog food, didn' know what else t'give it. Well, he looked pretty pleased, an' he ate it right up—but then he sicked it right back up too. I shoulda figgered, I guess, he bein' from someplace else an' all, but it was worth a try.

But 'fore I could try somethin' else, he started off fer m'bushes. I figgered he was gonna use 'em fer the usual—

But heckfire if he didn't munch down m' junipers, an' then sick them up! Boy howdy, was that a mess! Look, you can see the place right there—

Yes'm, I know. I got th' stuff tested later, after it was all over. Chemist said th' closest thang he'd ever seen to't was somethin' he called Aquia Rega or somethin' like—kind've a mix a' all kinda acids together, real nasty stuff, etches glass an' everthang.

Anyhow, I reckon gettin' fed an' then sickin' it all back up agin jest made the poor critter 'bout half crazy bein' hungry. But next I know, Thang's took off like a shot, a headin' fer one'a my chickens!

Well, he caught it, an he ate it down, beak an' feathers, an' he sicked it right back up agin' 'fore I could stop 'im.

That made me hot all over agin'. Some dang idjut makes a mess'a my hayfield, then this Thang makes messes all over m'yard, an' then it eats one'a my chickens. Now I'm a soft man, but there's one thing I don't stand for, an' that's critters messin' with the stock. I won't have no dog that runs cows, sucks eggs, or kills chickens. So I just grabbed me the first thang that I could and I went after that Thang t'lay inta him good. Happens it was a shovel, an' I whanged him a good one right upside th' haid 'fore he'd even finished bein' sick. Well, it seemed t'hurt him 'bout as much as a rolled-up paper'll hurt a pup, so I kept whangin' him an' he kept cowerin' an' whimperin' an' then he grabbed the shovel, the metal end.

An' he ate it.

He didn't sick that up, neither.

Well, we looked at each other, an' he kinda wagged his tails, an' I kinda forgave 'im, an' we went lookin' fer some more stuff he could eat.

I tell you, I was a pretty happy man 'fore the day was over. I reckoned I had me th' answer to one of m'bills. See, I c'n compost 'bout ev'thang organic, an' I can turn them aluminum cans in, but the rest of th' trash I gotta pay for pickup, an' on a farm, they's a lot of it what they call hazardous, an' thats extra. What? Oh, you know, barrels what had chemicals in 'em, bug-killer, weed-killer, fertilizer. That an' there's just junk that kinda accumulates. An' people are always dumpin' their dang old cars out here, like they dump their dang dogs. Lotsa trash that I cain't get rid of an' gotta pay someone t'haul.

But ol' Thang, he just ate it right up. Plastic an' metal, yes'm, that was what he et. Didn' matter how nasty, neither. Fed 'im them chemical barrels, fed 'im ol' spray-paint cans, fed 'im th' cans from chargin' the air-conditioner, he just kept waggin' his tails an' lookin' fer more. That's how he come t' chew on my Chevy; I was lookin' fer somethin' else t'feed him, an' he started chawin' on the bumpers. Look, see them teethmarks? Yes'm, he had him one good set of choppers all right. Naw, I never took thought t'be afraid of him, he was just a big puppy.

Well, like I said, by sundown I was one happy man. I figgered I not only had my trash problem licked, I could purt-near take care of the whole dang county. You know how much them fellers get t'take care'a hazardous waste? Heckfire, all I had t'do was feed it t'ol' Thang, an' what came out 'tother end looked pretty much like ash. I had me a goldmine, that's how I figgered.

Yeah, I tied ol' Thang up with what was left of a couch t'chew on an' a happy grin on his ugly face, an' I went t'sleep with m'accountin' program dancin' magic numbers an m'head.

An' I woke up with a big, bright light in m'eyes, an' not able t'move. I kinda passed out, an' when I came to, Thang was gone, an' all that was left was the leash an' collar. All I can figger is that whoever messed up m'hayfield was havin' a picnic or somethin' an' left their doggie by accident. But I reckon they figger I took pretty good care of 'im, since I 'spect he weighed 'bout forty, fifty pounds more when they got 'im back.

But I 'spose it ain't all bad. I gotta friend got a plane, an' he's been chargin' a hunnert bucks t'take people over th' field, an' splittin' it with me after he pays fer the gas. And folks that comes by here, well, I tell 'em, the story, they get kinda excited an. . . .

What ma'am? Pictures? Samples? Well sure. It'll cost you fifty bucks fer a sample'a where Thang got sick, an' seventy-five fer a picture of the bumper of my Chevy.

Why ma'am, what made you thank Okies was dumb?