

Cave Man

By Marilyn Reeves

I can hear Jack's van grinding its way up the dirt road that leads to the watch tower, where I broke in an hour ago and called for help. I can't believe he's found me before the cops could get here. And since I've just tried to escape, he's probably going to kill me!

My name is Kiley. I'm a 27-year-old newly-wed and this is my story:

Five days ago, I stopped by the store on my way home from work to pick up some things for dinner. While I was loading the groceries into the trunk of my Honda, a rust-colored van pulled up next to my car and a burly man with a scruffy black beard got out and opened the back end of his vehicle. Suddenly, he was thrusting himself against me, pinning me to the back of my car. I couldn't scream because he was holding an acrid smelling rag over my face.

When I finally woke up, I was lying on a dirty old sofa inside a dark cavern, the only light coming from the fireplace across from me. The man from the parking lot approached and offered me a bottle of water, which I gratefully took. He told me his name was Jack and that he wasn't going to harm me. He said he wouldn't touch me until I told him I loved him. Ha! That would be the day! I told him I was married, but he didn't care.

Over the next few days, I began to relax a bit, as – true to his word – he never tried to molest me. He has a store of food inside his cave and I ended up helping prepare meals.

He said he was a fugitive from the law. He had escaped from prison more than fifteen years ago, and has been hiding out there in that cave ever since. He makes a living by picking a few gold nuggets from the mine shaft, which he sealed off from his living quarters with a large mattress.

When he pulled the mattress aside, I saw an oar car sitting on some tracks that led down into the mine. He told me to hop in and gave me a ride down the shaft. It was pitch black down there except for his headlamp and a lantern suspended from the front of the oar car. But about a hundred yards in, I could see light filtering in through a rift in the ceiling, about thirty feet overhead. That gave me an idea.

And then this morning, Jack locked me inside the living quarters and took the van to town to bring back more supplies. After he left, I donned his headlamp, shoved the mattress aside, and then worked my way down the tracks to that shaft of light coming from the ceiling. Using a pickaxe, I managed to climb up the rocky incline to the top and wriggled my way out.

Oh, what a relief it was to finally breathe fresh air! I was somewhere up high in the mountains. I walked to this distant watch tower, where I found a radio phone and called 911.

But where are the cops? Jack's just now pulling up in the driveway. He's getting out of the van. Ah, now I see red and blue lights flashing! They're coming up the road. Jack is trying to run. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Jack's bleeding body is sprawled on the ground.

His fatal mistake was taking me down into that mineshaft, where I found my means of escape.