

IN HER HEAD – by Rob Steele

The scream echoed through the valley. "Get back in here Matt," called John Kay. "You're acting like an idiot and you're gonna fall out of the damn truck. Get your ass back in here!" Matt Davis looked in open through the window and shrugged before climbing back into the truck. "You really act like an idiot sometimes, you know that."

"Oh come on, Johnny," Matt drawled. "You should try it sometime. The view from out there is great and the echo is so awesome!"

"I'm driving the truck," John retorted, fixing his friend with a stare. "And you aren't driving my truck."

"It's your dad's truck," Matt mumbled.

"Fine! You aren't driving my daddy's truck." He turned back to the road to see a deer staring into his headlights. He swerved to avoid it and ended up actually turning onto another road altogether.

Phoebe Nixon covered her eyes for the evasive maneuver. *What was I thinking?* she thought. *I was perfectly fine at the party. John just offered me a ride home. Less embarrassing than having dad pick me up, I guess. I should have known that Matt would tag along. And now I'm stuck sitting between them in a Ford F-150 on River Road... going the wrong way. At least we're on the way home. I can't believe they've got the windows open. This is going to make my hair insane.*

She didn't really think the company was that bad; she was just slightly worried about her reputation. She was an attractive young woman who, she recalled at this moment, had once been told she looked like what would happen if a blonde Katy Perry played Velma from Scooby-doo. And, now, she had just left a party with two guys whom she decided looked like Scooby-Dum and Scooby-Dummer. Would people think she was going to have a threesome with them? Would they tell her dad? That would be horrible. Her dad, the "Right Reverend," had enough issues with her going to the party as it was. But she was a high schooler and determined to have a good time before senior year started.

Besides, who cared if her classmates thought she was sexually active, which she wasn't. She was going to have one year of fun before she left for college no matter what. That wasn't going to be an easy thing to do with her dad being a very prominent priest in town, or, as some people thought of him, the other priest. And that was the other problem. It was going to be difficult to have fun in a town as small as...

"Broad Town, Georgia!" Matt drawled, reading the city limit sign. Phoebe rolled her eyes. *We know where we live you dork*, she thought. But Matt, in her eyes, was a very simple person. He was on the football team and popular enough to get invited to these parties, like the one they just left at the old Major's farm, and to leave with several cans of beer, one of which he opened with a *splosh*, spilling some into the truck.

"Dude!" John cried. "This is my dad's truck and you're opening a beer!? He's going to think I was drinking in here!"

"Relax," Matt said, taking a few gulps from the can. "Just tell 'em it was me. They like me. And my parents don't care." John sighed and tried not to get any more upset. Phoebe took this time to make sure her seat belt was fastened and tight. She didn't have a shoulder strap, being in the middle, and that made her more uncomfortable. Matt continued to drink his beer and look out the window.

"Hey," Matt asked. "What's that?" He stuck his head back out the window and looked up. "There's something above the trees. What is that?"

John looked up through the windshield and shook his head. "Probably a plane or something. We'll be on the bridge in a minute and you can get a better look, okay?"

"Okay, Kay," Matt smile goofily. John hated having his last name played with like that but never really could do anything about it. He couldn't very well stop Matt from talking.

A few seconds later, the trees at the side of the road disappeared, replaced with Jacob's Lake when they entered the bridge. Matt leaned out the window again and looked up and behind them. "There it is! It's a fireball or sumthin'."

John shook his head in disbelief. Phoebe turned to look through the rear window. There was a fireball! And it was heading right for them! "Oh shit!" she cried. "John, there is something and it's gonna hit us! Go faster!"

"What?" he asked, looking in the rear view mirror. "Where is this..." The fireball landed. It tore through the bed of the truck, igniting the gas tank, which exploded, sending the truck into the air. The fireball hit at an angle causing the truck to lurch, so when the explosion happened, it threw the truck, end over end, into the Jacob's Lake.

"Ohmygod Ohmygod Ohmygod," Pheobe cried as the truck spiraled into the lake. Matt was almost instantly thrown from the vehicle. John, who was not wearing his seatbelt, was thrown against the roof of the cab and when it hit the water, it crumpled, crushing his head between the roof, the windscreen and the dashboard, driving the steering wheel through his chest.

Phoebe lost consciousness on impact and didn't know what happened. At least, not until she awoke in a hospital room. A nurse hovered over her, shining a pen light into her face. "There we are," the nurse said, smiling. "We thought you'd be out of it today."

"To... today?" Phoebe croaked. Her throat was completely dry. The nurse handed her a styrofoam cup of water with a straw and instructed her to sip slowly. The water both felt good and painful as it coated her raw throat. "What do you mean, today?" She asked, sounding a little more like herself.

"Oh honey," the nurse said, "you've been out since the accident. That truck just blew up and I'll be honest, I've seen the pictures, I'm amazed you survived. Those two boys with you weren't so lucky. What were you doing out there anyway?"

Phoebe thought back. "We... we were at a party. They were driving me home." Her memory was cloudy and it discomfited her. "There was a fireball? And the truck just went up and... that's about all I know."

"A fireball?" the nurse said skeptically. "Uh huh. Honey, you should know better than to get in a truck with someone that's been drinking."

Phoebe looked confused. "John wasn't drinking," she slurred. It was getting hard to remain awake. "Matt was. John was good about that kind of thing."

"Uh huh," the nurse nodded. "Sure he was, baby. Well, it doesn't matter, really. He's gone now. You're the one stuck here paying the price." Phoebe responded with a puzzled expression. "Honey, can you move your legs?"

"Why are you changing the subje..." she began. She stopped when she realized that she *couldn't* move her legs. Actually, and she thought about this, visibly straining for a moment, she couldn't even feel her legs. "I can't feel my legs!" Those were her last words before she passed out again.