

The Visitor.

a short story by

Colin Owen.

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Jezz had been in the saddle all day and boy did he know it. Jake had been real good though and not complained at all. Jezz slapped Jake on the side of his neck, "Just a few more miles feller, then you can be rid of this load you're carrying." Jake made no visible response, but then, what's a horse supposed to do!

The sun was getting low down and shadows were starting to get long, so Jezz pulled Jake up and dismounted. The saddle bags came off and then the saddle. Jezz led old Jake to some water and left him to sort his thirst out. Soon there was a fire burning with coffee and beans heating up. Jezz made up his bed and sat down to eat. It was a good time of day. All was quiet except for the odd coyote howling somewhere in the distance. Jezz paid them no mind, neither did Jake, who was used to this life by now.

The last rays of the sun faded as it sank below the horizon. The darkening sky began to fill with stars, it was an awesome sight, and always had Jezz staring up at it. He was fascinated by the heavens, and out here, on the prairie, there was no finer sight. The need for sleep made it's presence felt, and Jezz curled up on his blanket by the fire. "Night Jake..." Sleep was sweet, and Jezz began to dream.

Suddenly there was a whining sound, and Jezz and Jake where surrounded by a bright light. It hurt their eyes, and Jake began to get real restless. Jezz jumped up and went over to him saying, "there, it's OK boy, take it easy." That kind of stuff. Jake did calm down some, but Jezz was on edge. He wished he had his Colt, but he'd stopped carrying guns years ago.

He looked up into the light, his eyes were more used to it by now. He couldn't see where it was coming from though, and the whine was really annoying. Then it stopped, and the light was gone. The sudden on rush of darkness was just as unsettling as the arrival of the light, and once again, his eyes had to make the adjustment. It took several minutes before he could see well enough to get back to his bed, but he made it, and settled back down into it. Heavy eyes began to close.

"Hi." Jezz groaned inwardly, was he ever going to get any sleep this night. He rolled over and peered into the darkness in the direction the voice had come from. "Who said hi?" He called out. "I did," came the reply. A figure stepped into the light of the fire. Jezz had to do a double take. It was a woman, dressed in a silver suit that fitted her really well. At least, it looked that way from what he could see under the cloak. "What in tarnation are you doing all the way out here in the middle of the night?" He asked in a vexed voice. There was silence. Jezz stared at the stranger who just stood there silently. "Well please yourself," he said in an even more vexed voice and rolled back into bed.

"I came to visit you," she said. "That's nice," Jezz replied. "Do you sleep where you come from?" He shut his eyes and prayed silently. No answer came from her, so he assumed that the Almighty had answered. "Finally," he muttered and got some shut eye.

The stranger stood and watched him as he slept. She did not understand, but that was why she was here. Jake made a noise, and she jumped a little. She had been so intent on the man that she hadn't noticed the animal close by. She went over to Jake and patted him. Jake quieted down and nuzzled into the stranger. She smiled. She had never seen such an animal before, and the feeling was pleasant. She tried to perceive the animal's thoughts but could not. This was all so new to her, it was exciting. She wondered how long the man would be asleep.

The fire died, and the warm glow went with it. Everything changed, it became cold and desolate. "Perhaps that's why he sleeps," she said to herself. "He doesn't want to experience this coldness. She placed her cloak on the ground and lay on it hoping to experience sleep. The ground was hard and began to hurt, but she persisted, and eventually dropped off.

It wasn't long before the sun came up, and with it, Jezz. He sat up and saw her lying there asleep. "Thought you were a dream," he said quietly so as not to wake her. He stopped to take a good look. She was surely a handsome woman, and he'd been right about the well fitting clothes. It was the cloak that was silver, the rest was just white. "Won't be white for long out here," he chuckled.

Jezz had the fire revived in no time and a pot of coffee brewing. She stirred, "What's that smell?" She asked. "Well hi there mam, mornin'. That's coffee brewing, want some?" "Yes please," she answered, trying to get up. Jezz could see that she was stiff as a board. "Not used to sleepin' on the ground are you." "Not used to sleeping at all." She answered with a smile. "What, you don't sleep?" "No, where I come from we don't sleep. I'm probably the first Myran to experience it." "Myran! What's that?" "That's where I come from... The planet Myran." She looked at him as if he should have known this. "Didn't they tell you?" She asked. "Who... Tell me what?" Jezz replied. He poured her coffee and handed it to her. She sipped it and made noises of approval. "Don't have coffee either huh." She shook her head. "Well, sounds to me like you don't have much where you come from."

"They should have told you I was coming." He shrugged his shoulders and she understood the gesture. "It's been advertised on my planet for months." His look said, "What?" "The trip of a life time," she answered, "I'm, here on holiday." Jezz understood holiday. "But why come here to the middle of nowhere?" "To be with you," she answered. "We don't have anyone like you where I come from." Jezz was intrigued. "Why ever not?" He asked. "They all died out years ago." "That's nice." Jezz chuckled in disbelief. "You mean there are no men like me up there." He pointed up. "No," came the reply. "There are no men at all."

Jezz sat in silent thought for a moment. "So, a world full of women and no men." "That's right Jezz." "How did you know my name?" He asked surprised. "It's in the

brochure," she replied and pulled one out to show him. Sure enough, he was there, and so was Jake. "Well I'll be damned," He said starting to get excited. "But how did *they* know?" "Erm... I'm not supposed to tell you that." Jezz looked at her as much as to say, "if you don't tell me..." She took the hint. "Well... It's a planned tour... They've been here before and set everything up." "Then why don't I remember?" He asked, not believing her. "Because they erased your memory," she said and began to look worried.

Jezz just sat there dumbfounded. "So, they've been here, checked me out and then wiped it from my mind... But why?" To make sure you were the right one," she answered meekly. "Right for what?" He bellowed. "Right for me," She said so softly he barely heard it. There was a pause whilst he took it all in. "So, you are for me. Does that mean I get to go... Up there with you?" She hesitated. "That's the plan Jezz..." He went real silent and deep into thought. She just sat and watched him, waiting for what he would do next. Then slowly, his head came up and meekly he asked, "Can Jake come to?"