

Meteorite

by

Michael L. Fawcett

1861 9th Street, Unit B
Los Osos CA 93402
(805) 534-1229
mfawcett@calpoly.edu

FADE IN:

EXT. METEOR CRATER - ARIZONA - DAY

The crater persists eternally in the Arizona desert, and might shout, if it could, "watch out for what may be coming from the sky!"

EXT. METEOR CRATER

JOHN RUSSELL, 50, fit and inquisitive, and his son, RUSTY, 16, look out on the crater. They wear jackets.

RUSTY
Only fifty meters across?

JOHN
The Canyon Diablo Meteor. Mostly iron. Maybe thirty tons.

RUSTY
They find any of it?

JOHN
Thousands of small pieces and still counting. And larger fragments. The Holsinger fragment is about three feet across and weighs one-thousand nine pounds. It's in the Visitor Center.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Wow! I never imagined it this big!

A fey, young, good-looking woman joins them, stylishly dressed for the fall desert. She takes in the crater vista.

WOMAN
How long ago?

RUSTY
Dad says fifty thousand years.

The woman extends a hand.

WOMAN
Sheila Wilson.

JOHN
John Russell. My son Rusty.

SHEILA

Looks like we're the only people here.

JOHN

Everyone else is more interested in pushing along Interstate 40.

RUSTY

What brings you here, Sheila?

SHEILA

Long story short, I think I found a meteorite. Thought I'd show it to one of the rangers.

JOHN

No rangers here. The crater's on private land.

SHEILA

Oh?

RUSTY

Could we see it?

SHEILA

Of course. It's in my trunk.

The three walk over to Sheila's car parked near John's SUV. It's seen better days.

RUSTY

Dad teaches physics at U.C.L.A. But he's into meteorites big time. Found over a hundred of them.

JOHN

One hundred sixteen to be exact. I'm an addict.

Sheila smiles at the men and opens the trunk.

There's nothing in the trunk (which is immaculate) except the meteorite, shrouded in an expensive-looking piece of fabric.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Where are you from?

SHEILA

Back east, before. Now Tucson. In a hotel until I find a house.

She reaches into the trunk and carefully folds back the fabric to reveal the meteorite, as if it were a religious relic.

A magnificent, prototypical iron meteorite, over a foot in diameter, dark and lustrous.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I call it my "shooting star".

JOHN
Hell did you find this?

SHEILA
Gold Basin, north of Kingman.

John reaches into the trunk and tries to heft the meteorite.

JOHN
How did you get it into the trunk?

Sheila makes a show of flexing her biceps.

SHEILA
The adrenaline of discovery, I guess.

RUSTY
It looks like it just fell from the sky.

SHEILA
It was still warm when I found it.

John fishes a cigarette from his shirt pocket and lights it.

RUSTY
Dad, remember, just one cigarette a day.

JOHN
Son, this is a pack-a-day find.

SHEILA
Should I tell the Visitor Center?

JOHN
Oh, God no. It's an iron meteorite. The Canyon Diablo was iron. They may think you found it on their property. Don't risk a hassle.

SHEILA
So what do I do?

JOHN
You can buy a house in
Armory Park.

SHEILA
(stunned)
It's that valuable?

JOHN
Damn near priceless.

John takes out his cell phone, punches some buttons, takes a note pad from his jacket pocket and writes. He tears off the page and hands it to Sheila.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Call this guy. Mention my name.
He'll know what to do. Got the
exact location where you found it?

Sheila pulls an iPad from her shoulder purse.

SHEILA
I took pictures.

She places the iPad on the hood of the car.

As John and Rusty look on, she scrolls through four photos, commenting on them as they appear.

INSERT - iPad SCREEN

They see the dark form of the meteorite amid a swath of brown desert.

SHEILA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
My heart skipped a beat when I saw
it. I knew it didn't belong there.

They see the meteorite and a section of road and hill in the background.

SHEILA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's the Excelsior Mine Road in
the background. I highlighted the
hill in yellow on my topo map.

They see a close-up of the meteorite.

Another angle on the meteorite. Hills in the background and a small shed a hundred yards away.

SHEILA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Those are the White Hills.

BACK TO SCENE

She turns off the iPad.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
So whadda ya think?

JOHN
Just decided to go hunt meteorites?

SHEILA
I made a galactic faux pas of some kind?

RUSTY
First time out you find a humdinger.

JOHN
Call the man. He contacts the Meteorite Nomenclature Committee. They determine what kind of iron meteorite it is. Name it after a nearby geological feature. List it in The Meteoritical Bulletin.

SHEILA
Give it a pedigree and a provenance.

JOHN
Exactly.

RUSTY
You headed to Tucson now?

SHEILA
Yeah, I'll swing back on Route 40 to Holbrook, then Highway 77 south. You?

RUSTY
Forty west to L. A.

John hands Sheila his business card.

JOHN
Let us know what happens with your shooting star. It's close as I'll ever get to a major find.

SHEILA
I will.

JOHN

You'll be a celebrity in meteorite circles. Discoverer of one of Arizona's most important meteors.

Sheila hugs both men and gets into her car.

She drives away rapidly, waving and spinning gravel.

INT. SUV - LATER

John and Rusty drive north on the side road toward Route 40.

RUSTY

She said it was still warm. Why would she say that?

JOHN

Maybe to make it more dramatic. But get that thing into her trunk?

RUSTY

You couldn't budge it, huh?

JOHN

The odds baffle me, too. Finding a penny-size meteorite is one thing. A museum specimen iron meteorite? Her first time out?

RUSTY

Another thing. The dates on her photos are a month old.

JOHN

She's driving around all that time with it in her trunk?

RUSTY

Could it be hot?

JOHN

Rather than warm?

Rusty laughs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I know all the large iron meteorites that have been found world wide. This is a new one.

(hits steering wheel)

Damn! Why didn't I get a picture of it?

They see the Route 40 West sign and turn onto the interstate.

EXT. MAIN STREET - SELIGMAN, ARIZONA - LATE AFTERNOON

Seligman is a paeon to old Route 66.

EXT. MOTEL - SELIGMAN - CONTINUOUS

John pulls in.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

John looks out the window.

JOHN
Hello!

RUSTY
What is it?

They both look. They see Sheila about to get into her car with a cup of coffee.

EXT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

John gets out of the car.

JOHN
Sheila!

Sheila looks up. For a second, annoyance clouds her face, then sun.

SHEILA
Well, lookie who's here.

JOHN
Thought you were going east on
Forty to Holbrook?

SHEILA
Curiosity killed the cat. Never
been to Seligman.

JOHN
Say, could I get a photo of your
shooting star? In all the
excitement I --

SHEILA

John, I... I don't have it.

Rusty comes to his dad's side.

RUSTY

Don't have it?

SHEILA

Don't need the money. Nor the publicity. I gave it to Jake, the man with the rock shop near Williams. Now he could use some help.

JOHN

You gave your shooting star to Jake Barnes?

SHEILA

You know him?

JOHN

All the meteorite hunters know Jake.

SHEILA

He an expert like you?

JOHN

Eyesight. Can't distinguish a meteorite from a country rock.

SHEILA

Sorry. I gotta go. It'll be dark soon.

She shrugs.

JOHN

(mystified)

As you wish, I guess.

She gets into her car, backs out, and heads east on the frontage road, stepping on the gas.

Rusty looks after her, hands on hips.

RUSTY

I'll be damned all to hell.

INT. SUV - DAY

John and Rusty head back toward Williams.

JOHN

We'll probably find Jake dead from shock.

RUSTY

She could have given it to us.

JOHN

Let's not think in that direction.

EXT. ROCK SHOP - DAY

John parks in front of the rock shop.

A crude sign shouts Apache tears, obsidianites, arrowheads, meteorites, etc.

INT. ROCK SHOP - DAY

Your garden variety rock shop. Trays of rocks sit on tables alongside wooden boxes of rough, etc.

John and Rusty poke through some arrowheads in a tray.

JAKE BARNES, 85, comes into the shop from a back room. He uses a walker. Wears a plaid shirt and overalls.

JAKE

Indian fella lives up near Show Low makes those.

JOHN

Good to see you, Jake.

JAKE

Same here, John. Hi there, Dusty.

RUSTY

Rusty.

JAKE

This damn walker I kin hardly git out to look for agates. Only meteorites I got er those chondrites. Don't suppose you could use any a them.

JOHN
Young woman come in here yesterday?

JAKE
Bought some a those arrowheads.
Chondrites, too. Said her name
was... Sheila. Real friendly like.
(pronounces the 'g')
Said she was from Los Angeles.

John and Rusty look at each other.

JOHN
She give you anything, Jake?

JAKE
(laughing)
You mean like a blow job?

Rusty lets out a snort.

JOHN
She told us she gave you a museum
quality iron meteorite she found up
at Gold Basin.

JAKE
She did I'll buy me a double-wide
and head for Sedona.
(perplexed)
Why'd she say she did somethin'
like kat?

JOHN
Hell if I know. Anything. Anymore.

INT. SUV - DAY

John drives, his jaw set.

Rusty turns slowly toward his dad.

RUSTY
You think Sheila's shooting star
was an illusion?

John pops the steering wheel with the side of his fist.

JOHN
Damn! I shoul'da got a picture of
it!

CUT TO BLACK.

