

The Pier of Fear

(A Memoir of Adolescence)

by Donna Delaney

I was early picking up Dad. I started walking through the wildlife refuge in Merritt Island, Florida while waiting for my dad to get off work from NASA. The path I was walking opened onto a pier which went over a swamp. The pier was huge. It looked like this new, wide pier should be jutting way out over the ocean instead of this swamp. When I got to the middle of the swamp, I saw a huge pile of crap. I did not know if it was from a bear, a panther, a deer, or a gator. Whatever it was, by the size of the scat, it was bigger than I was. I had never walked this path before, and it suddenly dawned on me that NASA was surrounded by this wildlife refuge for security. The guards covered the roads, and who would be stupid enough to walk through a gator and panther-filled swamp? Me, that's who.

Well, I had walked this far; I figured it was about halfway, so I might as well walk the rest of the trail. By the time I made it off the other end of the pier, I was fatigued and frightened. The sun was setting, and I did not want to be in the refuge after dark. Plus, my dad should be waiting at my car by now.

The path got wider and wilder. Deep hoof prints were everywhere. All of a sudden, the path ended in a big mud circle. Oh my goodness! I had followed a wild pig trail! I must have lost the path! I would have to go back, but what if I met a sounder of wild pigs? Palm trees lack low branches to help me climb; palmetto bushes are sharp and prickly. I didn't want to get near them. There were no sticks, but I found a rock. I would hit them with rocks. Yeah, that wouldn't tick off a wild boar and make him bite me, or worse, stab me with his long jagged tusks. Yet, I kept collecting rocks on my way back to the path. I then took the way I had not yet traveled, hoping it would be shorter and pig-free.

I found a set of railroad tracks and followed them back to the road. There was gravel everywhere, so I dumped the rocks. I was now in view of my car sitting in the parking lot of the nature trail. Nature! Poo! We don't need no stinking nature!

After explaining my whereabouts to my father, I asked, "Hey, Dad, where do you want to eat? I'm starving. I hope wherever it is, they have sweet tea!"

Dad grinned, "I'm in the mood for Porky's Bar-B-Que."

