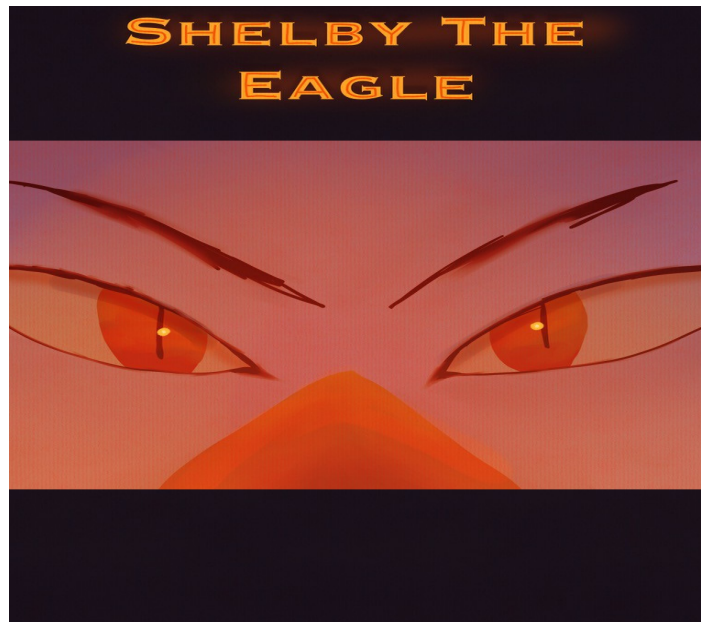


Short Stories by Terry Miller, influenced by Steven King



This book cover was created by my granddaughter
Chloe

Author's note:

I was sitting in my recliner sipping some Merlot when a giant bird flew down and landed on my patio roof. In my relaxed state, this got the wheels of my mind turning and I wrote my first short story. That is why I named my blog “Wine Induced Short Stories”. To date, I have written over 50 new short stories.

Shelby the Eagle
Chapter 1

It is hard to believe how I got in this situation. Life goes on smoothly and then all of a sudden something drops from the sky and your whole life is changed.

It is morning now and I am waiting for my morning sushi breakfast. I have been camped out (hiding out) in this remote area of San

Bernadino mountains for several months. It is a good spot away from most people and with a fresh supply of water and animals to hunt. Hunting is something I rarely do since Shelby always brings me something each day. I look up and see her flying high. She drops down and leaves a fresh 5 lb live trout at my feet. Like I said, sushi for breakfast.

This all started months ago. I was reclining peacefully in my beautiful home with a fantastic view of the southern hills. Suddenly, I spotted a giant bird silhouette blocking out the sun light. I had seen this several times before, but could not understand why this was happening. Later that day I got out my ladder and looked up on top of my patio cover. I could not believe my eyes. There, shielded between my roof eave and patio cover was a giant nest. I now suspected what was going on. I couldn't see anything in the nest, so I set up a remote live camera and put everything back to normal. The camera was set up as a motion sensor and would only record when activated. The next day I viewed what had been recorded. There in full color was what I had suspected. A mother eagle making it's spring time nest. At first I did not tell anyone about this, even my wife. I waited patiently watching each days recorded events. I was finally rewarded seeing a couple eggs in the nest.

I decided to name her Shelby after that famous race car driver and designer Carroll Shelby and his Eagle racing team. I actually owned and drove a Shelby Mustang GT500 convertible when I was in my 20's.

So each day Shelby is bringing fish from somewhere. I think Diamond Valley Lake, as that is not too far for her hunting distance. The fledgling are getting bigger and fatter each day.

I decide to go live on YouTube with daily streaming videos. This made me an overnight sensation and Internet celebrity.

People start to come around, appear at my door step wanting to see the nest. At first I let them come in to view, but too many are coming around from all over, even out of state.

I finally tell them no, but that doesn't stop them. They come up my hill and climb the fence. It is getting out of hand.

Shelby becomes nervous with all the attention and action. She does not want to wander too far away from the nest anymore, but there is not enough available fish nearby, so she does what any mother would do. She improvises. Not wanting to leave to hunt in the distant lake, she starts picking up residents small dogs and cats that are abundant in our community. Suddenly my video recordings are filled up with live dogs and cats being pecked to death by the fat and voracious babies. This has turned into a real horror story.

Neighbors and residents are turning against me and Shelby. At first I start to bring adequate food supplements by buying fish at the local supermarkets for Shelby to feed her offspring. She looks appreciative of my efforts and starts to treat me as her food provider and benefactor. Not nervous with me close by.

Although these efforts have stopped her from killing neighbor's dogs and cats, it has already gone too far. Now there are protesters in front of my home with signs and shouting, kill the eagle. At first I just ignore them. Then one day I hear and see someone firing a gun trying to kill the eagle. One bullet goes astray and strikes my wife killing her instantly. I am in shock and rage. Not even thinking straight, I retrieve my AR-15 that I have never fired before. I load

up a 10 clip magazine and step out on my back yard. I have a commanding view of the other shooter. Without hesitation, I line up and fire 4-5 rounds, not sure how many. I see him go down and not get up. I realize this is a life changing moment. Soon the swat team is outside my home with bull horns calling me outside to surrender. I have no choice but to give up.

As I am arriving at the police station, there is a counter protest by the “Friends of Shelby” This really distracts the police. Meanwhile, Shelby has followed me to the police station. She swoops down and attacks the officer holding me. This allows one of the protesters to retrieve his handcuff keys and frees me. I jump into a waiting van and take off. They had previously taken my backpack and camping stuff from my garage and then escorted me away from the police station and deposited me somewhere up on the highway leading to Big Bear Lake. This is an area I am very familiar with. Since I have my bow and arrow gear in the backpack along with my survival and camping stuff, I feel I am well equipped. I hike on a remote trail to Dollar Lake. This is a remote site miles from any civilization, but a place I camped at when I was a boy scout 60 years before. This is where I find myself as I started this narrative at the beginning of the story. Shelby has adopted me as her benefactor and each day hunts at and near Big Bear Lake where she captures live trout, squirrels, and rabbits that she picks up and drops each day at my feet. Not sure how long my life will be or what will transpire. If I return to civilization, I will spend the rest of my life in jail. Actually, I am living a dream. I always envisioned living like this someday. I have finally found a weight loss program that works.

Shelby the Eagle
(Chapter 2)



After I found my spot to set up camp, Shelby had been gone for several days. I did not know what transpired back at my house. I only found out later from a wandering hiker. I told him that I had been hiking and camping for awhile and had no cell phone service. I asked him what was going on down the hill? I had been cut off from all news. He told me that I was part fugitive and part hero. Of course he did not know I was the guy they were talking about. The anti-gun nuts had gone berserk demanding my capture and be shot on sight. How ironic. The second amendment advocates and Audubon Society called me a hero.



This is what I heard happened:

Shelby had to return to my house to check on her offspring. At that point in time, the newly born had already learned to fly. They still did not know where to go, so they stayed around and in the nest. When Shelby arrived, someone was up on a ladder with a net trying to capture the babies. This did not go over well with Shelby. She knocked the guy off of his ladder. Others around the area were helping the guy and tried to shoot the birds with a shotgun. Luckily none of the birds were hit. Still Shelby knew it was time to depart the nest. She arrived at my camp with her fledglings in tow. She set up her own camp near mine. The young birds remembered my attempts to feed them, and just like their mother, were not afraid of me. I named the two offspring Flutter and Tweety.

I think Flutter is a female because she looks bigger than Tweety the male. Seems backward but that is the case with eagles. The small birds learn from Mom and bring me worms and lizards each day.

This is good because my Rambo knife had a fishing kit in the handle. I set up a trout line in the nearby stream and catch fish each day. This is enough for me. Sometimes I am lucky with my bow and arrow and shoot a squirrel or rabbit. I have to be careful with building a fire so as not to make too much smoke or let the fire get out of hand. My flint sparkler works just fine, although I had several butane lighters in my backpack. I also have a solar powered battery pack that I use to recharge my flashlight for nighttime use.

The birds can see that I am able to feed my self as I fish from a nearby stream, but still bring me fish and worms everyday. I am not sure which is which. Either they are my pets or I am theirs.

I had survival stuff in my backpack. A flint sparkler for making fire. Water purifier pills. A water bottle filter system. Space blanket. Mini propane stove, matches, and several knives, besides my Rambo knife kit. Solar battery pack allows me to play games on my tablet (no Internet).

I smashed my iPhone and turned it into a No Phone I watched too many movies where they can track your phone.

Shelby is really an awesome specimen. I don't have a measuring tape, but I estimate her wingspan at 7.5 feet. I am no ornithologist, but I read somewhere that eagles can live up to 20 years. She appears to weigh about 15 lbs. I can see her hunting and diving sometimes and it looks like she flies at about 75 mph and reaches 100 mph while diving. Eaglets mature in about 1 month and already are getting bigger each day.

Eventually they all develop a warning system for me, when they see other people. I can hear them squawk, one squawk for each person in a group. This allows me to avoid people altogether.

I didn't bring any of my medicines with me, but after two months of living in the wilderness, I have never felt better in my life. I have found several sources of Vitamin C growing wild in the forest. Vitamin C is needed to prevent scurvy. Sailors knew this and always brought fruit on their voyages.

At this point in my life, I don't think I will live long enough to worry about high blood pressure, cholesterol, or diabetes.. Pawpaw fruit, has green skin on the outside and yellow fruit inside. Wild blackberries, elderberries, and raspberries are abundant in the hills and valleys not far from my camp.

I spend time making my camp and area secure. I set traps, non lethal at first. Mostly just snares, but also prepare for a time I know will come, when something more formidable is required. It only takes a moment to arm my lethal traps. I prepare for the day I know is coming.

One day, returning to my camp with some fish I caught, I encounter a big black bear. He looks really threatening, so I throw him the fish that I caught. For several days in a row, the same thing happens.

After awhile, he starts to treat me as a food provider instead of danger. This is similar to my experience when I first met Shelby. I named him Gentle Ben. So my wild natural family is growing.

Side Note: (Black bears in Alaska, when preparing for hibernation feed on salmon. But they only eat the brains and eggs of the salmon. Why? They need to stock up on fat and those parts of the salmon have the most protein and fat. While touring there, I saw many whole salmon carcasses laying around along the touring paths.)

One day “Ben” shows up with two trailing cubs. OK, my bad. I had to rename the bear Benita. Ha!



The next day my early warning system lets me know one person was in the area. I was not quick enough to hide and was exposed. So as not to look suspicious, I casually walked along. He said he was part of a group of civilian vigilantes hunting the fugitive from justice who had shot someone. I used the same story I had used on the other hiker, but could see this guy was not convinced.

(Side note: Those who know me best would recognize what would really happen in real life. I would have waited until he was around the corner and out of site, then yelled at him with a raised fist. “Get out of here you loser.” Since I am the author, I can make myself as heroic as I want.)

To continue: He started to reach for the pistol in the holster on his

hip. I faked like I was going to turn around and grabbed my backpack. I pulled out my Rambo knife from the scabbard on my belt. I flung the knife sideways and struck him in the wrist. Before he could recover, I was on him and had the knife at his throat. I said, "Where is the justice for my wife who was shot? Where is the justice for these wild birds? I could kill you right now, but I am letting you go as a warning to the rest. This is not civilization up here. I am the predator, not the prey. You all should just let me be. I am no threat to regular people if not provoked."

(Side note: Please forgive me if I am stealing from former Rambo movies, but there is only so much you can do up here in the wilderness. Original material is hard to come by. Ha!)

Shelby the Eagle
(Chapter 3)

It is now the next day after I ran into the hiker. I am sure he told of my whereabouts and passed on my warning. I am also sure that the authorities will ignore my warning. So let the fun begin. Towards the end of the day, I use my spotting scope and see a lone man creeping up the hill toward my camp. He doesn't see me as I watch him climb up into a nearby tree. He positions himself on a strategic heavy branch waiting for a view of me. He has a high powered rifle with a scope. So he is the advanced assault man to kill me. A sniper in the trees. The advantage for me is, I see him, but he doesn't see me. My arrows are silent too. I had anticipated something like this and recognized this spot as a unique advantage point. What he doesn't know is that I had previously tied a rabbit skin bag of rotting fish guts above his head.

It is getting around dusk and the time when Benita makes her nightly

rounds. The sniper hears and see her rustling in the brush with her cubs trailing. He takes aim at her. I step out of my hiding place and fire an arrow at the fish bag. It pierces the bag and he is drenched in a stream of stinking fish guts. Now he turns and aims his rifle at me. I jump back into my hiding place behind the boulders. Benita smells the fish and sees the sniper in the tree. She starts vigorously shaking the tree. This throws the sniper's aim off and he re-positions the rifle to bear down on her again. (Get it “bear down” wait, this is no time for jokes). This gives me the opportunity to step out again. With all the practice shooting at rabbits and squirrels, I can hit a bullseye the size of a quarter at 25 yards. I fire and my second arrow hits him in the leg. This knocks him out of the tree and he falls at Benita's feet.

The next thing I hear is the tearing of flesh and his screams as Benita shreds him to pieces. I go over and see what is left of him. I take his high powered hunting rifle and a box of ammo.

This is unfortunate though since now Benita will be marked as a vicious killer beast and will be hunted just like me. She retreats to her den higher up in the hills. Shelby has seen all this from up on high, but doesn't interfere at this point.

I am sure the next group of hunters will arrive tomorrow and realize that I am now armed. I previously built a safety nest. What is that? I dug a small trench large enough for my body and some provisions. Water, flashlights, some small amount of food, my bow and arrow and some survival stuff. I also now have a rifle. I made a grass mat that I can close over the opening to conceal myself. I can hide and stay in there for a couple days if needed.

I slept all night in my safety nest. The next morning, I hear footsteps from dozens of hunters with guns roaming around and near my camp

site. This is the follow up mission after the advanced sniper. I can hear blood hounds and I think the dogs can sniff me out, but I have also prepared for that situation.

About a week ago, I crossed paths with a family of skunk. I was surprised by them and I got sprayed on my pants leg. I tore off some of the material and tied several pieces along the path where I encountered the stupid hiker.

Suddenly I hear the dogs howling and wining. Their noses have found the skunk strips. A hound dog's smell is 15 times stronger than humans and I imagine that this full strength sniff has rendered them useless. There are spike traps all around my nest too. It is unlikely that anybody or animal can surprise me.

I feel safe in my nest and can hear the yell of the occasional hunter who steps into one of my traps.

I remain in my nest until it gets dark and don't hear any more noise from the hunters. I think they have gone back down the mountain to re-group. Now I have the opportunity to retreat to another hiding place. This one is higher up on the mountain and on a precipice among large boulders. In fact, this is where Benita's cave is. I hide along with her, but know that the day of reckoning is coming.

The next morning there are dozens of hunters positioned below my hiding place. I suspect that they must have brought a fresh group of bloodhounds. Still, I am out of site and have not been discovered yet.

Then all hell breaks loose. Shelby has found me and is dive bombing the hunters. They don't see her coming from up on high in

one of her 100 mph dives. She rips into the shoulders of the hunters with her razor sharp talons. Many of the hunters stand up to get a better shot at her. Not on my watch guys. I use my high powered hunting rifle, that I took from the sniper, and try to shoot the guns from their hands. Sometimes I miss the guns and hit their leg or arm. This temporarily stops them from aiming at Shelby. Now they are zeroed in on me as I am no longer in hiding. We ping pong back and forth between the hunters trying to shoot me and Shelby causing all kinds of havoc from above. Benita gets extremely agitated by all of the commotion and fears for the safety of her cubs. She breaks out of the den and charges down the hill toward the hunters. The shotguns most carry are harmless to her thick hide. She barrels over several hunters before she is struck by several high powered bullets and crashes to the ground. Then the inevitable happens. One hunter gets off a lucky shot and hits Shelby on one of her dives. I hear the blast and see feathers fly. She crashes to the ground with a loud thud. I ignore my own safety and run to her side still carrying the rifle.

I see the white puff of smoke from the rifle and feel the bullet go deep in my chest.

Side note: (I stole that line from Marty Robbins song "El Paso". It was #1 on the charts for 13 straight weeks in 1959.)

To Continue:

I am fatally shot. I stumble along and finally fall within feet of Shelby and Benita. The setting sun is casting a crimson glow over the horizon, as I see our life's blood of the same color oozing out into the sand where we lay. I look over and am not quite sure what I am seeing. Looks like tears cascading down from Shelby and Benita's eyes that matches the ones from my own. The sun fades out along

with our last breaths. The last thing I hear are the sounds of Benita's cubs howling and Flutter and Tweety crying in the distant sky.

Side note: (How dramatic!)

Epilogue:

What is happening? I thought I was dead. Now someone is shaking me vigorously from my prone position. I look up and see the concerned face of my wife. She asks: "Are you alright?" Still not sure what is going on. I sit up and look out at my beautiful patio and see the setting sun cast a red glow in the distant horizon. It then dawns on me, this has all been a long nightmarish dream. I hear the sound of many birds fighting over the bird seed in the feeder. The next day, I wake up early and quickly remove all the bird feeders.

References:

To add credence to my story I actually have all the stuff mentioned in the story in my backpack. My AR15 is what I used to shoot the guy who killed my wife. The Rambo knife has a fishing kit in the handle. It also has a mini compass. I have a mini single burner along with cups, mini pot for boiling water, a flint sparkler, matches and butane lighters. My compound bow has a visual site on it with range markers for accuracy. With practice, I really can hit a quarter size bullseye from 25 yards. I have a compact sleeping bag, single person tent, sleeping pad, rain parka, gloves, space blanket, wool cap, mini lantern and several flashlights. I also have a Garmin hikers GPS.

Note: My granddaughter said that saying the story was a dream took away some of the emotional impact of the story. So I wrote an alternate ending.

It basically projected 10 years into the future and any hunters up in the Big Bear area with guns would be attacked by Flutter and Tweety, who had grown to full size and would peck their eyes out. She said that was more appropriate for a Steven King type story.

The End