

After Tuli Black Wolf rescues hunters on the Grand Canyon's North Rim, she must hike the Dodson Trail in Big Bend National Park to save her mother. Tuli faces intense heat, a lacerated foot and a mountain lion. This is the second book in this series. See also: Grand Canyon Rescue: A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure

Big Bend Luck: A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at  
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3714.html?s=pdf>

# **Big Bend Luck:**

**A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure**

**Devon A. Mihsuah**

Copyright © 2008 Devon A. Mihesuah

ISBN 978-1-60145-631-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Booklocker.com, Inc.  
2008

## Table of Contents

Prologue.....	ix
1. It's Hot Here .....	1
2. My Mother, Virginia.....	14
3. The Bakers.....	22
4. A Serious Fall .....	36
5. Planning My Hike.....	43
6. On My Own. Again. ....	57
7. Mountain Lion .....	64
8. A Serious Mistake.....	72
9. A Bad Fall.....	85
10. Homer Wilson Ranch .....	93
11. Will I Make It?.....	101
12. My Brother Pete.....	112
13. The Snake .....	118
14. Fever .....	127
15. Laguna Meadows.....	139
16. Grandmothers .....	152
17. A Clean Foot.....	160
18. Home Again.....	166
Glossary .....	171
About Big Bend .....	175
Also by Devon A. Mihesuah .....	177

## 1. It's Hot Here

“Nice day for a hike,” said my little brother Pete as he clicked shut his backpack waist band.

“It sure is, *Sioishi*-Son, Mom answered. I watched her roll up our tent. Then she crammed her sleeping bag into its stuff sack. She pushed her sunglasses on to the top of her head and rubbed sunscreen into her face. “See, Tuli. I told you this Big Bend wouldn’t be hard.”

“Yeah, you did tell me that,” I answered. True, at 6:00 a.m., the west Texas morning at the Juniper Canyon camp felt pleasantly warm, not overly hot like the day would become. Last night I pulled the flaps of the tent back and took the rain fly off so the slow breeze could blow through the door and mesh top. Not much air circulated in my tent so Mom and I took off our pants and slept in our underwear. We felt pretty comfortable although I craved an icy glass of orange juice and a cold shower. The heat intensity would increase soon and that was what I thought about instead of enjoying the moment.

“Just like a desert,” Pete said. “Morning’s waking up. Feel that energy? Hear the birds?” Pete can be poetic when it comes to his senses.

“Thanks for stating the obvious,” I replied. I didn’t look forward to the full sun. Obviously, Dad felt the same way I did because he sat on a rock in the shade staring into the distance. Dad’s like me during the hot summer months at home in Oklahoma. He runs early in the cooler mornings then stays inside as much as possible the rest of the day so he won’t sweat.

I had never hiked in a desert environment before. I was used to the mountains, or at least the plains with lots of greenery and water. Here at Big Bend, instead of walking

*Big Bend Luck*

amid lush, humid greenery, we hiked one of the driest, toughest trails in the National Park system.

This morning, the only sounds I heard besides us packing our gear were the chirping of small tweety birds and some fast bugs zipping around. Although the bright sun slowly made its way up into the eastern sky, I could still see the moon, pale and round over the opposite horizon.

"It's just eleven miles today," Mom told us. "Then about nine miles tomorrow and we'll be back to the lodge so ya'll can take showers. First thing we'll do is check in with the rangers then y'all get in the shower."

"I don't need one that bad," Pete said.

"Oh yes you do," I told him. "Your feet smell."

He shook his head. "No way, *Atek-Sister*. I used body wipes."

"I can still smell you."

"So can I, Son," added Dad. "Actually, my father didn't smell so great himself."

"That's enough," Mom said. "Get yourselves ready to go. And Pete. You're first in the shower when we get back. And Dear," she said while looking at Dad, "you're right behind him."

"I'm ready and waiting," Pete said. He wore an Australian hat, the kind that folded up on one side and he was outfitted with a small pack that had all kinds of things hanging off it: sandals to wear in camp, a tiny Sponge Bob figure swinging from some twine, a roll-on tube of sunscreen attached by a key chain link, a whistle and ceramic cup.

I felt hot and sloppy while Pete looked comfortable and clean in his khaki hiking shorts. His blue t-shirt looked spotless and I knew that the sweatshirt in his pack was equally clean and wrinkle-free. The wool socks, sweater and rain gear would be folded neatly. He wore a string with a tube of lip

*A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure*

balm attached to it around his neck so he could wipe some on his lips without digging around in his pack. He carried a small knife and a canister of Mace attached to his belt. But a small kid can only lug around so much stuff. That means Mom carried his sleeping bag, pad and extra clothes.

Pete's skin had tanned deeply after playing in the Oklahoma summer sun for almost three months. He stood straight and strong. My baby *anakfi* (brother) was not quite seven, yet he looked like a little hiking expert. And I knew the knowledge he had in his head about edible plants, animal and human tracks, and survival how-to was more than mine. He also impressed people with his adult vocabulary.

"Aren't ya'll ready yet?" He stood impatiently with his hands in his pockets. The string of his soft, large brimmed red hat was pulled tightly under his chin.

"Yes, I'm ready," I lied. I was still tired from the dry, ten-mile hike the day before. Yesterday felt very hot and even occasionally blistering, a lot like some Oklahoma summer afternoons. This was late August, however, and many tough Texas hikers considered this to be perfect weather.

Summer desert weather is intense and arid except for some quick downpours and I learned quickly that you should move slowly and drink water before you feel thirsty. When you actually are thirsty, that means you're already on the road to dehydration. So I drank a lot of warm water and we kept a steady pace.

Pete was only six-and-a-half, but he had already hiked many long trails. Last year my family went to Zion National Park and he easily made his way along all the longer trails, including the Emerald Pools, then along the Kayenta Trail and back to the Lodge. Then an hour after eating a hamburger and frozen yogurt cone he jogged the Riverwalk, and after that the Pa'rus Trail in the heat of the day. That was a lot for a little

*Big Bend Luck*

guy who insisted on hiking in Teva sandals without socks. The next day he hiked with us on the Angels Landing trail and only came back at the two mile point because Dad was afraid of heights and didn't want to go farther. Really, if anyone could make it across the Big Bend trails without sunburn, aches or scratches, it would be my brother.

Dad looked much like me: pulled together in a hurry and not very enthusiastic about being here in the first place.

"It'll be fun," Dad had said last spring when Mom suggested coming to far west Texas to hike. I knew he really didn't want to come along in the summer heat, so he made it sound as enticing to us—and him--as he could. "There's some gold hidden in the park, you know."

"Where?" asked Pete.

"In the Lost Mine."

"Are we going to the Lost Mine?"

"No, Son. That's on the Lost Mine Trail. They say that if you stand at the door of the Presidio San Vicente chapel on Easter morning, you can see the sun rays hit the mine entrance."

"Wow! Cool! Let's go there."

"We're not going at Easter. And it's not on the trail we're hiking. But the rest of the park is really pretty. There are lost of plants and birds we never get to see. You have to keep your eyes open, kids."

One of the trails we did hike was what Mom called a "warm up" trail the day we arrived at Big Bend. The Window Trail was easy and fun and even had water trickling here and there. Towards the end of the hike we walked through trees that cooled us then we arrived at the drop-off, where water falls 100 feet to the rocks below. We heard a lot of tweeting birds and saw the bushy tail of a fox who scooted across the trail in front of us.



*A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure*

If the Dodson Trail had been as shady and wide as the Window Trail, then all of us could have made it in two days.

But it was not. And so I tried to make the best of the trip.

Dad's khaki pants that looked identical to Pete's were unzipped and there was toothpaste around his mouth.

"Daddy," I pointed to his mouth. "You didn't rinse."

"Not enough water to rinse."

"You swallowed it? Yuk."

He wiped his arm across his mouth.

"Barn door's open, Pop," Pete added.

"So it is," Dad responded. "What would I do without my kids?"

"Walk around unzipped," Pete said. "And you lost the rubber band for your right braid."

"I'll brush it for you," I said. Normally, Dad wears his long hair in an easy-to-contain pony tail. On long hikes, Dad, Mom and I wear our hair in two braids so it doesn't tangle.

"I want Tuli to lead us to the next camp today," Mom said as she watched me tie off Dad's braid with a red rubber band. "You studied the map and you know where to go. Right, Honey?"

After scrutinizing the map for half an hour before breakfast I felt fairly sure about our location. "Okay. We're here by the Juniper Canyon Campsite, right?"

"Yes. We're on the Juniper Canyon trail. Where to now?" Mom knew the answer and wanted me to tell her exactly.

I sighed. "Okay. From here we go through Juniper Draw. Then to Dodson Ranch and that looks to be not quite four miles away. A ranch?"

"An old ranch," Mom said. "The book I read says it's in ruins. That means no horses."

*Big Bend Luck*

“Tough luck, Tuli,” interjected Pete.

“Hush,” I told him. “Then we go across the Fresno Creek. You think there might be water?”

“Not much. But with that rain yesterday there’s a possibility of water here and there. It’ll take more than sprinkles to get the drainages running. Anyway, go on.”

“Well, we go about half a mile to the Elephant Tusk Trail junction then we go a mile-and-a-half to a pass and then into the Smoky Creek Drainage. You wrote a note on this map that says we have to watch carefully for the trail or else we’ll end up on the wrong one.”

Mom nodded in agreement. “That’s right. And after three miles we’ll hit the Homer Wilson Ranch, some refer to that as Blue Creek, where we cached our water.”

“That water’s gonna be hot,” Pete said.

“You’re not going to mind warm water if you’re thirsty,” Dad said.

“Tuli, you’re right,” Mom said. “That’s where we’ll camp tonight. The catch is, we have to make sure we stay on the trail and not miss the cairns. You’re the leader, Honey, so make sure you’re paying attention today.”

“I’ll try.”

“Yes, you will.” Mom then hefted her heavy pack up to her right knee. She put her right arm through the shoulder strap and swung the pack around to her back and fastened the waist band. Then she hooked on her fanny pack with water bottles strung around her waist. The muscles in her arms and legs bunched with the effort of situating the heavy pack on her back.

“You first, *Atek*,” Pete motioned with his arm.

I stepped forward to lead the way. We hiked for a full hour and had only gone two slow miles and I felt hot and a little weak. I hate hiking with a full pack. Luckily, Pete found

*A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure*

a bear claw on the side of the trail. Then we waited on him while he examined every part of it. He held it up between his first and second fingers and made a clawing motion.

“How would ya’ll like to be attacked by this?” he asked.

Dad looked at the claw. “Black bear. Pretty sharp, too. The claw must have torn off somehow.” Then he made the same aggressive clawing motion. That must be a guy thing.

While Dad and Pete played with the bear claw I sat in the spotty shade of a yucca plant and watched a mouse scamper amid the rocks and desert grass. He left behind tiny tracks.

“Too bad we didn’t see the owner,” Pete said about his three-inch claw. “This is cool.”

“You think?” I asked him. “You really want to run into a bear?”

“Heck yes. There’re just black bears here now. Grizzlies are long gone. Any bear we see will probably just run from us. Unless it’s a female with cubs. Scared?”

Actually yes, I was scared at the thought of running into a bear, but didn’t say so. “That claw looks pretty old. See how it’s spilt along the sides?”

“You can string that toenail on a necklace when we get home, Pete,” Mom said. “Put it in your pocket so we can get moving before the day warms up.”

“This air is amazingly clear,” Dad remarked.

“No pollution,” Mom answered. “No artificial lights, either. That’s why we can see the stars so well.”

I slowly stood then started at a slow pace again. As my family discussed the weather and speculated on what it might be like to live in the park, I concentrated on the ground in front of me and the numerous tracks of small animals. The tiny feet of another mouse ran alongside the larger feet of a

*Big Bend Luck*

ground squirrel. The sensuous *S* of a thin snake. The scat of a berry-eating coyote. Watching for tracks had become second nature to me.

As I trudged along I also wished for a bowl of yoghurt with cool fruit on top. Back in the olden times, the Choctaws were skilled agriculturalists who grew mainly corn, squashes, and potatoes. A common way to prepare corn, or *ta<sup>n</sup>chi*, was by smoking and then drying the corn kernels. In winter, the dried corn was then re-hydrated and boiled with meat to create a stew. Law enforcement men, called *nanulhtoka* and hunters carried a bag of cracked corn or some ground corn to mix with water. The best way to eat that corn was to soak it in milk and honey until it softened. They might also have carried thinly sliced and dried *ahi*, that means potatoes, that were similar to an ungreased and less-crunchy potato chip.

None of that sounded particularly good to me. I wanted bananas, mandarin oranges, peaches and some cashews. A smoothie with the same ingredients would be good, too. So would a spinach salad with strawberries or a glass of V-8. I craved salt so maybe I didn't have enough in my system. Pizza would help with that and so would...

"Tulip," Mom said from a distance behind me. I turned to see Mom, Dad and Pete looking down at something off the trail. I hurried back towards them.

"What is it? What did you find?" I asked.

"You're supposed to be paying attention," she admonished me. "That's why we came here. I want you to look around and learn. Look closely at the track your brother found."

I looked at where Pete pointed with his boot. How did I overlook that track? Big pads, no claw marks. A very large cat. I thought it might be a cougar but didn't think cougars were in Big Bend.

*A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure*

“Know what it is?” Dad asked me. He’s a vet and works on large animals, including animals at zoos. He can identify most animal tracks. Each week-end while hiking in Oklahoma Dad teaches me and Pete how to tell the difference between a tree squirrel and opossum, skunk and raccoon, and fox, coyote, and dog.

“Looks like a mountain lion. But it can’t be.”

“Why not?” he asked.

“Because. We’ve hiked in a lot of places where cougars live and never have seen one.”

“Just because we don’t see them doesn’t mean they aren’t watching us,” Pete added. “They’re sneaky, you know.”

“No, they’re smart,” Mom corrected.

“Great. That track looks fresh.” I looked around me.

“Right again, bison breath,” Pete said. “We passed a pool back there. Didn’t you see it under the junipers?”

I was embarrassed to say I hadn’t seen it. I was too busy looking at the tracks in front of my feet and thinking about food.

“He probably drank from that pond this morning.”

“How do you it wasn’t a she?”

Pete shrugged. “I’d have to get closer to tell.”

“You have to stay alert, Tuli,” Mom said to me. “What if you were in a survival situation? You would have walked right past that water.” I knew she would have scolded me more if it wasn’t so hot. Just like me, Mom was not feeling all that perky. I could tell because whenever we go out hiking she talks non-stop about tracks, the weather and why a hiker or hunter would get into trouble in the first place. Pete seemed to be carrying most of the conversations.

Pete took a few pictures of the track with his digital camera and tucked it back into the case on his belt.

“I’m hungry,” he said.

*Big Bend Luck*

“It’s only eight,” Mom said. “Have a handful of trail mix and we’ll eat in an hour. I want to get a bit farther.”

We sat on the ground in the shade of a cedar with bark like the hide of an alligator and munched some trail mix. I like the kind with M&Ms in it. Mom just eats cashews and raisins. Pete prefers dried tropical fruit, especially mangoes, and almonds. Dad doesn’t like dried fruit and nuts so he ate a granola bar and squeezed a melted Baby Ruth out of its wrapper instead.

Pete and I drank deeply from our water bottles that we kept attached to our belts. We kept another one in our pack pockets. And, all of us had full Camel Back water bags in our packs that held one gallon. Mom and Dad carried much more than us; they had two Camel Back bladders plus three full liter bottles in their pack pockets and three more bottles attached to their belts.

In addition to that weight, Dad included an extra gallon for Pete that he couldn’t carry himself and I carried an extra half gallon. Water is heavy, and Mom and Dad hauled about fifty pounds each. This is one reason why long hikes through a hot, dry desert are difficult. No one can live long without water.

We had plenty of it. We already cached water at Homer Wilson Ranch like the guide books told us to. Then last night after a sudden storm we collected almost two gallons of rain that we boiled and purified and drank until we were full. All of us washed our feet and rinsed out our socks—but not in the Juniper Spring stream. We didn’t want the animals that drank the water to get sick.

“Tuli, Pete,” Mom had said to us that evening. “You drank a lot of water today so you need to take these.” She held out both hands and in each were two white tablets. “I already took my vitamin today,” Pete said.

*A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure*

“These aren’t vitamins,” Mom said. “One is a potassium tablet and the other’s sodium. If you don’t have enough sodium and potassium you’ll get cramps and act like you’re dehydrated. Your body can’t function if your electrolytes are out of whack. I doubt that you’re drinking too much water, and I know you won’t suffer from water intoxication, but these will help with potential cramps.”

“Water intoxication? Geez mom. You worry too much.” Pete said. He put the tablets in his mouth and took several swallows to get them down. “Salty,” he commented.

“Tomorrow night we’ll have noodles and chicken broth. For now, eat a can of Beanie Weenies. That contains sodium.”

“Yummy,” said Pete. “I love Beanie Weenies.”

So do I. But only on camping trips. A can of salty-sweet beans with cut-up wieners never tastes as good in my own kitchen.

“At home you get enough salt from what you eat,” Mom reminded us, “but here, you can get sucked dry. You really have to pay attention to what you eat, how much you drink and how much you sweat.”

“Is that why I crave onions with salt on them?” I asked.

“You want onions?”

“My mouth waters when I think about them.”

“Well, I don’t know why you want onions.”

“Doritos and tomato soup, too.”

“Maybe you need salt and potassium. Here,” she took a baggy filled with yellow powder from her pack. “Put some of this Gatorade power in your bottle for the morning.”

So, now it was late the next morning. I had eaten my handful of trail mix, my Gatorade was gone, and I still felt thirsty.

*Big Bend Luck*

“Hey,” Pete said, looking around. “You hear that?”

“No,” I said. “Hear what?”

“A person yelling.”

“Shhhh,” Mom said. She sat up straight and we stopped talking. Little bugs zoomed around and a few birds chirped. Otherwise we were surrounded by silence.

And then I heard the high voice in the distance: “Help!”

“There it is,” Mom said. She stood quickly. “Let’s go.”

“What?” Dad said. “I didn’t hear a thing.”

This time Mom led the way and I knew we would have to scramble to keep up with her. And sure enough, Mom quickly made her way upwards through the brush, cacti and rocks to the top of the small hill. I turned to see if Pete was okay and he hiked steadily behind me, hardly winded. Dad brought up the rear and sweated so much that his gray t-shirt looked almost soaked.

“You okay, Petie?” Mom yelled over her shoulder.

“Okie dokie,” he answered.

“I think the voice came from over here,” Mom said.

“No, that way, Mom,” Pete pointed to the north, about eight paces to her right.

She nodded and started off again. Then she stopped. “Pete. The storm whistle.” My brother pulled out the large orange storm whistle from under his t-shirt and blew. The sound was shrill and almost deafening to me. Of course, I was only standing five feet away and hadn’t covered my ears.

“Here! Here!” We heard a woman’s voice much closer. I figured she was just over the next small rise and down in a gully.

The sun beat down and I felt the skin on my shoulders burning. Wearing a thin white shirt was really stupid on my part. I also knew for sure that the underside of my nose was



*A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure*

burned. The sun reflected off light-colored ground cover and burned the skin under my chin and nose. I had forgotten to put sunscreen in those spots, so sleeping would be difficult. Good thing I brought my little bottle of glycerin to moisten the burned spots.

We came over a rise and looked down in a gulley. Four people lay sprawled on the rocky ground under the sparse shade of boulders and a skinny juniper. One lady looked to be the mother, the man had to be the father and the other two younger people appeared to be teenagers. All four had pale, sunburned skin and wore shorts, colorful hats and packs. They lay on top of their sleeping bags. Cookware and clothing lay scattered around. The packs were considerably smaller than the ones we carried and clearly, they did not bring enough.

Mom, Dad and Pete didn't hesitate. They ran down the slope to the group, while I followed more slowly. I watched as my family took off their packs and squatted down next to the strangers. Mom put her hand on the father's forehead and Dad felt the pulse of one of the teenagers.

The family looked weak and tired. And even though they had naturally light skin, it seemed obvious that much of their paleness came from being in the heat too long. As I thought about how far we were from any of the park lodges--Chisos Basin, Panther Junction and Rio Grande Village—and about how hot the day was becoming and what this meant for people who probably suffered from heat stroke, my heart beat even faster.

“Here we go again,” I said to myself as I made my way to the sick hikers.

After Tuli Black Wolf rescues hunters on the Grand Canyon's North Rim, she must hike the Dodson Trail in Big Bend National Park to save her mother. Tuli faces intense heat, a lacerated foot and a mountain lion. This is the second book in this series. See also: Grand Canyon Rescue: A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure

Big Bend Luck: A Tuli Black Wolf Adventure

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at  
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3714.html?s=pdf>