

# Spinnerbait

Amy Treadwell

CHANCE JOHNSON PEERED BETWEEN THE BUSHES AT THE hand-flapping mob of snot-green extraterrestrials pillaging his tackle box. While he'd gone to relieve his bladder on his favorite sumac, the little suckers from who-knows-where had claimed his stuff. They held up his jigs and lures like outsized earrings. One of them dropped his bobber on the ground and poked it with a stick. Two others had stink bait smeared on like war paint.

Chance had never seen aliens before. For years he had spent lazy afternoons fishing at Dollar Lake, despite Uncle Jim's warnings that aliens gathered here. Looked like he owed Uncle Jim an apology.

The six of them stood no more than waist high. He saw no signs of a space ship or ray guns, but then again, they could've set down behind the cattails and stowed their gear inside. Chance's shotgun was back in the truck, but more than anything he wished he had a camera.

One little guy perked up and let out a whoop. The others gathered close. Chance craned his neck along with them to see what it was. The little guy, or L.G. as Chance named him, reached in with slender fingers and pulled out the dragonfly spinner. The others burbled and poked each other. That one was Chance's favorite, too. The shiny blue-winged two-pronged barb flashed in the sun as L.G. raised it to eye level. He sniffed its length. Oh no, thought Chance, don't you do it, but as he rose to help, the little guy popped the spinner into his mouth.

Chance crunched a twig underfoot. The whole group froze and stared at him sticking out of the bushes. Chance raised his hands slowly. His heart did a funny little dance. One wing of the dragonfly spinner stuck out from L. G.'s lips. Please don't swallow it, he willed, and then winced. The alien's jaw clamped down on the hook.

L.G. let loose a blood-curdling scream. The others exploded in howls and pelted Chance with lures, bobbers, and small rocks. He threw his arms over his head and dropped to a crouch, but that brought him in closer range. He wanted to high-tail it out of there, but L.G. was screaming and rolling as the hook worked deeper into his lips, and Chance didn't

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Chance knelt before L.G.,  
whose eyes got very wide.*

want to leave him that way. Besides, these guys might see it as an interplanetary incident and swoop in with reinforcements. Chance couldn't risk that just to save his own skin, even if things were a bit dicey at the moment.

The hail of objects slowed as the little guys ran out of ammunition. They were as reluctant to come near him as he was to approach them. Chance spoke to them like spooked colts. "I'm not gonna hurt you." The aliens shifted their feet. Chance stood up and nodded toward L.G. "I want to help him. Can I come over and take the hook out?" The aliens didn't relax, but they didn't reach for more rocks, either. "I'm gonna move real slow." They warbled as he stepped forward, but he kept on, and the festooned and tinkling bait thieves shrank out of his way.

Chance knelt beside L.G., but the wounded lip jerked back from his hand. "Easy!" Chance soothed. Gently, he pulled the rubbery lip down. The double-barb had sunk into the lower lip and the soft palate, and both leaked green blood. Rows of razor teeth glinted. This would be a bugger to get out.

The others crowded around like eager children, but Chance pushed them back. He fished through his plundered tackle box for his wire cutters and needle-nosed pliers. Chance rubbed his jaw. He would have to cut off the hook and push the barb through the lip—pulling it straight out would just tear a bigger hole. It would involve a lot of screaming. Chance knelt before L.G, whose eyes got very wide.

"We're gonna do this as quick as we can," he said. "But it's gonna take two passes. Hold still." Chance tried not to think of the teeth. He reached in with the wire cutters and neatly clipped the hook. Delicately, he fished out the loose head. Now for the hard part.

With his pliers, he pushed the nearest barb up through the skin. L.G. gasped and kicked, and the other aliens dashed forward, grabbing stones, but Chance brandished the bloody barb like a trophy. "Almost done." He wanted to wipe sweat off his brow, but he didn't dare move. The mob settled back in an uneasy silence. L.G. whimpered. Chance laid the barb down and put a hand on L.G.'s cheek. "Easy," he said, and he parted the rubbery lips. Chance reached up to the soft palate and pushed the other barb through, and L.G. clamped down

in pain. When L.G. relaxed enough to probe the wounds with a snaky tongue, Chance slipped his tool free. L.G. swallowed and hollered a complicated string of clicks and whistles. The others cooed and set down their rocks. Chance tried not to think about the crimp-marks on his pliers.

L.G. chirped, and the others parted like water on a griddle. They returned with all of Chance's jigs and lures, and even a few small rocks. They piled them at his feet.

"Hey—thanks." Chance fought a smile.

L.G. released more clicks and the others gathered close. L.G. tied the pieces of barb into his hair. Chance received a clammy pat. Then L.G. whistled, and the aliens vanished into the cattails. L.G. paused at the fringe to give Chance a blink of recognition, and then he, too, disappeared into the swaying grass. Chance rubbed his eyes, cursing his lack of camera. He piled the jumbled lures into his tackle box.

When friends ask Chance why he carries a pair of crimped pliers, he just smiles. "You'd think I was crazy." But Uncle Jim sends a new pack of spinners every Christmas. No one else knows how he goes through them so fast. 🌀

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Amy Treadwell likes to write what she likes to read: characters that sound like real people. Her work has been published in the 2008 Triangulation anthology and has won several awards, including first and second prize in the 2008 PARSEC contest and Honorable Mention in the Writers of the Future contest. She has taught writing classes for the University of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Writing Project, and Moore High School. In her spare time, she enjoys kayaking, traveling, and reading fantasy. She would love to hear from you at her website, [members.cox.net/amytreadwell](http://members.cox.net/amytreadwell).

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