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Subject: Postcard

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## A Traveler's Tale

We stopped at Griffin's Grocery and General Store in Escalante (pop. 802) looking for Fiji water. Fiji water is not only excellent tasting, the 500ml bottles are strong; vacation-strong. As we walked around the store we heard some small-town moron's car alarm honking. Major annoyance. What a jerk, we muttered, not wanting to offend aforementioned jerk if he/she was in the store. But no Fiji water, so I picked up a pack of M&M's and walked toward the register. A kid burst through the front door: "Does someone have a black Grand Cherokee? Alarm's going off!" OK. I be the moron. And I apologized to everyone within earshot.

The guy at the register took my M&M's and said "an extra buck for the noise, heh heh", gave me my change and left the counter. Well, he had in fact kept 2 extra bucks. Instead of \$3.26 in change, he had handed me \$1.26. I explained to Aunt Bea, the poor woman who was now at the register, that she owed me \$2.00 and I was sorry for the alarm but I wanted all my change. She clearly thought she was being scammed. But the other folks in line stood up for me – tourists, not locals – and I got my 2 bucks. And we hustled out of town before Barney Fife could pull us over.

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Now we're in Kanab. We spent part of the morning participating in the North Coyote Buttes Lottery. Ten lucky people (out of about 120 on this day) would get permits to hike into NCB and see *The Wave* and other renowned rock formations. Participants get numbers and a ranger actually spins a bingo-ball cage to pick winners.



We lost again.

But we won the consolation prize of a hike along Wire Pass Trail to Buckskin Gulch.



The hike started down a dusty wash from a trailhead on House Rock Valley Road.



But there were red rocks and white rocks, blazing yellow rabbit brush, and a sky so intensely blue we peeked over our sunglasses to see if it was real. It was.

We regretfully left the bright outside world and entered a narrow, darkened canyon.

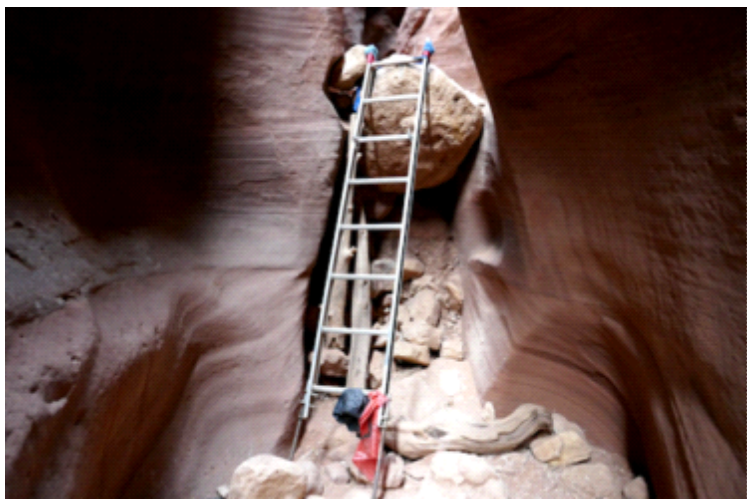


But the slot was a magical world of its own...



...with swirling layers of reds and pinks and tans and whites, and lightness and darkness, and cheerful echoes of people ahead and people behind whom we could not see but were sharing the magic.

And then there was this stinkin' ladder.



Buzz kill. A beat up old aluminum painter's ladder with plastic bags of what might have been dog poop tied to the bottom rung. Don't get me wrong – grateful to have the assist – but how about one of those tapered log things that



the Hopi use to get on the pueblo roof? We can do better with our tax dollars, BLM.





Wire Pass Trail ends at Buckskin Gulch, which can be hiked for another 16 miles if you want. We did not want.

Back to the trailhead and back to our Airbnb.

D&S