

AUBURN

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Chapter 19 - Court

I called myself a coward for the way I kept using the tribe's Chapter leadership as an excuse. It worked. It especially worked with the way the agreement with the Distributor and the major brand had been worded. They guaranteed a volume of sales and the loan they made for the new underground storage tanks could only be paid from the sales.

Finally, everyone signed. Then nothing happened. Finally again, the equipment arrived for breaking up the concrete pad and digging up those old underground tanks.

What a mess. I could smell the stale gasoline when I stood above ground. Those tanks were rust streaked wrecks as they were lifted from the ground and loaded onto flat-bed trucks.

Two days later I could still smell stale gasoline even after several huge dump trucks of dirt had been hauled away. That dirt would be incinerated and returned.

When everyone had gone for the day I borrowed a tall ladder from the high school with a little help from the Chapter Chief. We loaded that ladder on a pick up truck, carried it to the hole, and put it down.

Going down a ladder in a skirt became a different experience. At least there was no one down in that hole to see up my skirt and view my diaper bulge.

The smell became strong down there.

I came back up that ladder in a hurry not knowing how noxious that gasoline odor might be. "Don't throw a cigarette in there."

The Chief held up both of his hands palm outward. "Not me. That bad?"

"I dunno. Smell is strong. You wanna try?"

He peered over the edge, but backed away when the lip of the cracked concrete pad shifted. "Son, come here." He put an arm around my shoulder. "Truth be told, I always thought you were nuts wearing a dress. You've held this project together. You used the Chapter to push that Distributor. I'm not a betting man, but I'll make a bet with you."

I had heard he held a poker game, but didn't know for sure, and kept my mouth shut on poker. "What?"

He said. "That company is going to scream bloody murder when they have to dig under that old station building."

And they did. I also got myself invited to the poker game which I looked up on the Internet before going.

The fuel company threatened to sue.

The Chapter Chief called the Agency Chief who called the tribal lawyers. The response from a tribal lawyer named Dan Clearsky had been summarized to me. "Go ahead and sue."

They did.

I got Mr. Clearsky to tell me how to join in the suit since tearing that building down would destroy my business too. We called Mr. Sheldon, and he joined in with us as representing the Anglo land owner.

One of those lawyers from Phoenix hired by the oil company had the nack for making the tribal lawyer very angry. We hung in there.

The Distributor filed a paper that asked the Court to rule short of a trial. Dan as Mr. Clearsky asked to be called filed a paper. Mr. Sheldon filed another. I became annoyed with all of this. Instead, I wrote out in my own way a response which said I agreed with the tribe's and owner's responses.

The Sorceress used her hand signals on me. I asked her to speak in English instead, but she wagged her head she would not do that. I got it she meant for me to calm my inner-self over all this.

I walked out in a huff, but realized she had been right. When I came back I simply nodded.

The next day those four Acolytes arrived. After a big discussion in Navajo they told me in English that if I went into that Court I had better look the part. Those phrases they used on me flew again. "Nati, stop it. Just let us." And more. They made me come with them to Joe's where they went to websites of clothing. They found and pointed out to me both men's suits and women's suits. "Pants or a skirt, Nati?"

I became steamed, and did myself in with a snap decision. "Skirt."

"OK." They picked out five different women's business skirts and jackets on the internet. "Nati, you wear what you want. If you go with any of these and you will be seen as a woman. Not as yourself who happens to like shirtdresses for your private reasons. If you go into that courtroom, we insist, you have to look the part. You have to look like a reasonable person. Not some derelict who jumped off a railroad freight train in the middle of the night."

I could see Joe nodding he agreed off to one side. I said. "OK, everybody, help me."

Everyone went silent and waited.

I repeated what they all knew of what I really wanted to do. Really wanted. Being

pushed didn't sit well. "The local judge accepted me. He even helped me. What if they attack me in court? What if they say I'm a derelict off the train? What if they say I wear diapers? Hadn't I better go in there being myself?"

That stumped them. But only for a moment. The subtle leader of the Acolytes, Julia, put her hand around my jaw and turned my face directly towards her not more than two feet away. "OK, Nati, I get it. It's hot enough here in Arizona that people go into Court all the time in clothes that might not work in the big cities. We asked the local Judge. Now, let's get serious about how to have you be you and look respectable at the same time. If you want a woman's business suit, then we are going to make you match the image. Lipstick, earrings, painted nails, makeup, hair perm. Is that what you want? Be a transsexual? We don't think so.

I liked the lipstick and earrings idea, but I didn't say that.

She said. "Let us play with this. Have a little fun. You can watch, but let's see what we can invent for you, our favorite have-to-be-yourself two spirit Anglo."

Joe intervened by reminding us of a man's open necked white shirt with a turquoise bolo tie might say 'guy' even with a skirt. With that I could wear a man's jacket. Besides, the local judge may have talked about me with the judge of the next court up anyway.

Half an hour later the Acolytes almost wanted me to go female attire, complete with a bra, a bust, and all that other stuff. But not quite. We settled with above the waist was the white shirt, tie, and navy blue jacket. Below the waist was a pleated skirt of the same blue wool, and sandals on my feet. Not woman's shoes called flats.

We reached a compromise since they seemed hell bent for leather to dress me anyway for these big occasions. I did buy turquoise earrings matching the bolo tie clasp even if I didn't wear them at first. They did find a lipstick that wasn't much more than my natural lip color. They didn't paint my nails. They did take me to a beauty salon that did my hair, and tinted it auburn. We all liked the auburn hair.

The Chapter borrowed two vans the morning of the Court appearance. Joe drove one. The Chapter Chief drove the other. Wheelchair Bob and three mechanics came. All four Acolytes came.

When they called the case and I stood up, Julia smacked me on my padded butt which by now I knew meant 'go, tiger, go.'

There were three lawyers in formal suits at the table on one side. Just Mr. Clearsky, Mr. Sheldon, and me at the table on the other side.

The Judge asked each of us to come to the podium and announce our name, where we came from, and who we represented.

The big city men went first. Then Dan, and Mr. Sheldon. By now I felt ready to throw up, but didn't. My voice went low when I reached the microphone. But, I coughed and spoke again. I almost wet my diaper. "Your honor; I'm the business owner known as Nati, and I'm appearing on my own behalf."

Don't ask me how I know, but I could tell by the subtlest expressions on all the Court personnel that they were for me.

The Judge looked me square in the eye. “Just a minute, Mr. Nati. Are you incorporated?”

I said. “No sir. I mean no, your honor.”

He nodded. “Moving party may proceed.”

I retreated to the table with the two lawyers on my side of the case.

Those three lawyers made a big presentation on the points they wanted to say.

The Judge asked them to check their notes for the cases that supported why the contract had to be unreasonable. That made for a lengthy discussion.

The tribal lawyer said he didn’t have access to all those cases they had recited. He did have a few Arizona ones, and those said an unreasonable result for the tribe wasn’t permitted under the law.

The big lawyers all jumped to their feet.

The Judge glared. “I want to hear from the business owner, first. You may rebut, but Mr. Nati, I want to hear from you.”

When I reached that podium my legs felt like chocolate pudding and would give way, and I would involuntarily wet my diaper. I didn’t fall, and I didn’t lose control.

The Judge brought his attention back to me. “Tell me, as the business owner, what happens to your business if this excavation is abandoned making that building unusable?”

I said. “There is no other place, your honor. Wheelchair Bob is our admin guy, and he can tell you that we have no place to go. Four of the mechanics are here to say there are no other jobs. It’s not just me, sir. I can close my business and walk on down a road just like how I got here. But they would be hurt, sir. Hurt bad. Truth is, your honor, I thought several times I would have to leave. Boys don’t wear dresses. Not here; not anywhere else. But I found a dog, or a dog found me, and I want to stay. I can’t hitchhike with a dog. These people are my friends. They accepted me like no one else ever did. Leaving that building as it is will destroy my business. Your honor.”

The Judge held up a hand. “I’m going to recess until after lunch at 1:30. I want to hear arguments on two cases.” He recited those case names which I didn’t know a thing about.

Lunch seemed somber. The lawyers explained those cases, but I hardly understood a word of what they said even though they spook perfectly good English. When they went to the restroom everyone else told me what I had said had been perfect. Terri interrupted. “Guys don’t take this wrong, but we know what Nati needs to hear. Ready?” They paused. “We love you, Nati, just as you are.” Wheelchair Bob and the mechanics nodded they agreed.

I didn’t tell them I held back from wetting my diaper as best as I could.

Things got hot and emotional in Court. It felt to me like those corporate lawyers had over stepped the bounds.