

AUBURN

© 2019 By Sue Erickson

Chapter 8 - Two Dogs

The sun had barely risen above the horizon when I woke up. A sound shouldn't have been there. One hand went to my knife as I twisted my head around.

A thin mongrel dog came into where I could see with the low sun almost directly behind that dog.

I swore what could it be doing here? Danger flashed through my head. I didn't want to be torn up by this thing so far from any medical help.

So? I told myself.

I released my knife from its sheath. My left hand released me from my backpack. I sat up twisting around, and laid that knife on the ground conveniently under my right hand. I rested my left arm on my knee, and held out my left hand palm down. My glossy diaper bulge had to be plainly visible, but I didn't see anyone. I hadn't been reaching for that dog; just making a peaceful gesture.

It took a few steps, stopped, and lowered its head. It approached a few more steps.

I sat there quietly as I pushed my skirt down between my legs for a little modesty.

It didn't growl; didn't even raise its cheeks arming for a bite.

It came closer and reached forward without bringing its body too close. It gave my hand a little lick. Just a taste. Then another.

A second dog came into my view with greater wariness. The very low sun had been blinding me about the location of where it had come from.

I needed to pee, so I did. Diapers can be very convenient.

The first dog gave my hand more licks.

The second remained maybe two feet away.

The first dog tasted further up my forearm.

A sound interrupted the dogs. The second dog withdrew several feet. The first stopped its licking, but didn't move much.

I heard that sound again. Someone came out of that sun from twenty five feet away. The very low sun had made him or her quite invisible. The hat seemed battered; the right hand gripped a stout walking stick; an old dress covered the body. I didn't make any judgments about who this person could be as I wore a dress too. The sound had been that walking stick hitting the dry hard ground.

I checked my skirt had drooped down between my legs, and hopefully concealing my diaper.

That stranger had moved to about ten feet away when I decided she had to be an old woman. Dried face and probably an Indian.

She didn't say a word, and neither did I.

The nearest dog took another taste.

I brought my other hand into that dog's vision. It came over and licked that hand.

I moved my freshly licked hand bringing it gently to the dog's shoulders which I scratched.

That woman stood there. She seemed vaguely like that older woman at the store the other evening. That hat she wore concealed too much of her head for me to decide.

The other dog wanted attention, too.

The woman tapped the ground with that stick. With her free hand she gestured for me to come. She made a motion for eating, and repeated that motion for following her.

Well, that old Indian man in the pickup truck had been nice, and Joe Nelson had been too. So why not? I stood up, sheathed my knife, rolled up my stuff packing it away, and put on my backpack and hat.

She walked a few feet, motioned again, and I followed with those two dogs taking an occasional taste of my salty calves.

She turned into that town. She watched the ground where she walked instead of taking the nearby road. The less chummy dog ran on ahead. She arrived at the door of a small house that seemed to be the stock design in the area.

Inside had a home. The outer room of about twenty feet by twenty five feet occupied maybe half the entire house. There were a few mattresses, and an old wooden table with chairs. There were both a spiffy clean electric stove, and an old fashioned wood stove with a flue pipe running out a wall. All the doors and windows were open letting in the cool morning air.

When she took off her old hat, I took mine off too. Both went on the table. Without her hat she became that woman from the earlier evening, or a nearly identical one.

She pointed where she wanted me to sit, and she fed sticks and pieces of wood into that old wood stove. Her faucet added water into a tea pot and a stove pot. She also poured some into a glass and handed it to me. I tasted it. It seemed like the water

in Joe's store. I let that sit on my tongue for a few minutes; and had a full sip. Nothing bad happened.

She cut up something I couldn't see through her body which she added to that pot.

There were baskets of things along the walls and hanging all around from the ceiling. She took little bits of things from the overhead baskets. She shredded each in her fingers as she added them to the pot. Baskets on the floor provided her more things which she cut up and threw into that pot.

Half an hour went by without a word.

When she decided, but not before, she took another whiff of the pot before ladling the food into two medium sized bowls. She picked up two smaller bowls from the floor and ladled into them too. The bowls off the floor went back down for the pair of dogs.

She sat at the table, handed me a bowl and an old spoon, and took the second spoon in her own gnarled hand. She bowed her head so I did too. I guessed she had said a silent prayer.

The concoction in that pot had a brown color. Maybe I could identify things in it, and maybe I couldn't. It steamed which meant it had been well cooked.

The first taste seemed delicious.

My face must have changed because she smiled back at me as if I had made a compliment.

But she didn't talk, so I didn't either.

The dogs wanted to lick me again, and I scratched and petted them. The friendlier one let me rub her tummy a little.

The woman used a second pot for washing those two bowls we had eaten from. She turned and faced me after she put the bowls on an upper shelf of that old stove.

I expected her to say something, but she didn't.

Instead she held a finger to her lips for silence and another hand palm out for me to stay where I sat. She went to my backpack, hefted it on the table, deftly opened the flap at the bottom, and removed a fresh diaper.

She pointed at an interior door and handed me my fresh diaper.

How the hell did she know about my diapers?