

# ABBY

© 2018 By Sue Erickson

## Chapter 51 - The Fair

I rode our bus with a shift of our workers to their home area. They came from around our Medical Clinic the hospital near us maintained for them in their local region of poverty. Our local hospital had a delivery of medical supplies to the Army Reserve and National Guard near there, and wanted someone, which turned out to be me, to ride along and assure safe delivery.

The highway needed maintenance through an area where the houses needed even more help. Many of those had been little four room homes where more rooms had been added by people who couldn't afford to do it any better. Each house had started on four to ten acres for planting a field and a garden, but most hadn't kept it up. The larger trees bore mute witness where there never had been much planting. There were faded cars and battered pickups up on jack stands in the side yards needing parts or special tools they couldn't afford. At least the auto salvage yards were conveniently across the tracks.

I asked the bus and we crossed those railroad tracks looking for Military Road.

The road was aptly named for the joint training Armory for the National Guard and Army Reserve which had been located down there somewhere. The sign for the County Fairgrounds had seen better days. Just beyond it was the Armory building with a big chain link fence around the humvees, trucks, and tanks.

The locals told me a story about that fence. Every time one of the logging companies had a truck stuck too deep in the mud they waited 'til the dark of the night. They all knew how to open that gate at the armory without using the pad lock. Four hefty guys would simply pick up one end of the broad gate and lift it off the hinges. They brought their own batteries, fired up one of those obsolete diesel army combat tanks, and drove it out. They used it to pull the stuck truck out of the mud. They washed the mud off the tank's tracks at an all night truck stop, refueled it with more than they had used, and returned before dawn. Any state police that saw the tank thought it was army training, but nobody seems to have checked. Oh well, what the heck, at least somebody knew how to drive the big beast even if the National Guard didn't play with it often enough. This had been going on for decades. The backwoods boys laughed feeling better protected knowing they could use a tank to repel the next invasion from Texas.

We pulled into the Armory parking lot. They had acres of open ground. The County fair grounds next door had more. Except for a small area at the Armory, all the grass was so overgrown it had gone to seed and badly needed mowing. Alligators could hide in that tall grass waiting for their next meal.

I put my hand on the handle to the Armory massive steel front door. Those doors

were way too much like the original Mansion House where we had been kidnaped and held. The inside view didn't help. Anxieties washed over my back like acid.

I wandered around and finally found an unhappy over weight guy with Sergeant's stripes on his sleeves behind a battered desk. Other than his remorse and unkept rumpled uniform, he could have substituted for Sergeant Bilko. Or maybe Jackie Gleason. Naw. He couldn't do Gleason.

His eyes went up and down my body several times like he hadn't seen a cute girl since he had dropped out of High School. I would have taken that as a compliment if he had displayed any social skills.

He didn't even put a bored 'yeah' into it when I walked up to his desk. His eyes were doing their best to see my crotch just above the edge of the desk. Well, I looked at Kittie down there too, so I guess I had it coming, but I had Kittie when he didn't.

"Packages from the Hospital." I reached out with the trip ticket glad I had my new girl's voice. He didn't look up to the task of dealing with boys in girl's clothes.

He scrunched up his face as if this required thought as a strange thing to do. He didn't reach for the trip ticket.

He did manage a scowl at me as he picked up one of those old phones with big push buttons and punched a few. "Major. Got some dame down here with delivery packages." He paused for the other person. "Right." He hung up. "Major'll be down."

I backed up a few steps before something creepy crawly came out from under that desk.

The sounds of a woman's shoes with metal tipped heels on the concrete floor came closer. The Army had a highly polished the concrete floor! Why polish? Around the corner came a black woman under a spiffy short hair do. She wore an Army light green blouse and an Army dark green skirt with a black stripe down each side. Her shiny black army shoes had low heels. There wasn't a hair out of place, and not a spare ounce of fat. I rated her as able to take me down either wrestling, barroom brawling, or with bayonets.

She smiled. Her makeup was excellent. "May I help you?"

I smiled right back and handed her the trip ticket.

But she only had eyes for me as she took the papers. "Say. Aren't you that Cindi person who has the jobs?"

"Yes, ma'am." I had no idea what to call women military officers. Didn't even know if this was the Major.

She lapsed into poor folk speech. But only for a moment. "Well, ain't you somp'in'. C'mon upstairs."

Her uniform blouse-jacket hung on her office door making her the Major with a name tag saying 'Williams'. "My people live out beyond the highway. My grandmother sat everyone down in front of the TV, showed them a news report, and read the whole family the riot act. No more dropping out of high school. She told 'em go pick something

to do, welding, truck driving, mechanic, ag tech, somethin', and get your butt over to the tech school. Girls too for nursing, beauticians, restaurants, or secretaries. And they got. She sure does want to meet you. Now let's see what you have here."

To her credit, she gave the trip tickets a reading here, a glance there, and a quick check on the back.

On the return to the parking lot she had that lethargic Sergeant and two more guys follow us. She put her hand on my arm at the bus with those four heavy boxes at the back emergency exit. "We'll carry the boxes." The boxes were picked up. She watched how those men reacted to the weight. "You load those yourself."

"Yes, ma'am. I had help."

"Well I'll be. You are something else. Maybe you can figure something out for me. What are we going to do with all this unmown grass?" She lapsed back from modern speech into country talk. "Ain't nobody got money for nothin'."

When I turned around I moved to stand beside her. She had a presence I could learn from. They had lots of acreage. "You're the Major, right?"

She touched my arm. Actually, she had her hand lightly around my arm. I liked her cologne. "Yes I am." Her voice had the pride of her accomplishments and promotions.

I had a vision out across those acres, but it didn't come into focus quickly. In my head I saw a bunch of burly loggers lifting that gate off of its hinge. "I made a visit last month to a man named Ernie. Owns a gunshop. He was lamenting he didn't have any place to put on a gun show. Did I see a big empty center room in the armory?"

"It's empty, but you'd need a permit from the State police."

"I know a few policemen. Firemen too." I told her about our truck drivers' reputations with the State Police and ambulance drivers. "This area is anti-war. Doesn't like the military. What would you say if I found a way to put on a show as a fair. All the gun people can come and pet the barrel of one of your tanks. Could we park one out front with a HumVee and a military truck? Have a few of your best soldiers standing around?"

"Keep talking."

"We'll get a good newspaper article." I thought of Kim and her contacts. "Could stretch that out to several."

"Come up to the office. I like your way of thinking."

A blinding flash of the obvious streaked across my vision of the Squirrel and Pickle tavern in the shopping center near us having a wine booth on the County fair grounds. "Just a minute, ma'am. What am I supposed to call you, anyway? Major? Ma'am? Sir?"

My disabilities caught up with me from too much time since my last change. I wet my diaper.

"You call me anything you want. Even those raciest words, honey. Heard 'em all from both sides. You just keep thinking and I'll stand right here and listen to everything that might come pouring out of your mouth. Good, bad, crazy doesn't matter. You just keep thinking and let it all hang out."

"Could you get a helicopter in here?"

"No problem."

"What other toys does the next Armory have down the road? Military Ambulance? Field hospital? Any artillery?"

"Your name is Cindi? Right?" There was a pause as she took in her breath. "Oh My God. You're the hospital foundation, aren't you. You saved my aunt's life. You championed the blacks and the browns in having jobs, don't you? That was you, wasn't it? I've got the best Sergeants in the world because of you. Not that worthless fat ass who hangs around with nothing better to do. The others who would like to have better things to do. They don't have anything productive going around here. They could borrow farm equipment and get that hayfield over there mowed for a few hundred dollars in diesel fuel."

My mind was going ninety miles an hour as if my hair was on fire. *We have tanker trucks of diesel fuel.* "Anybody got vintage World War II equipment they could bring? You have a low boy tractor-trailer that could haul it?" *What in the world am I thinking. We have a major trucking company. But I let her think.*

Her smile widened. "Half tracks and scout cars. Maybe an M4 Sherman tank."

"What if we brought a tech school and a university recruiter here and had them set up booths?"

She squeezed my arm gently.

"You're people are hurting for work, aren't they?"

"You're reading my mind. You walk on water?"

"Only when you show me where the rocks are." Our fashion customers came to mind. "What if I told you there are a whole bunch of rich folks who want their lawns mowed, the hedges trimmed, and the sills painted. They bad mouth the Hispanics all the time. They want folks who speak da English. What say your people form a lawn company, we get that field mowed, and we take pictures of that. I know who will spread the word. Can you do that?"

Her mouth popped open. Yes, Major Williams could see doing all that.

Back home Kittie vented real anger when I told her about the idea for a fair. That stumbled over something back there we could work on later. "How in this God's Green Earth could we pull that off?"

She had me there as I didn't know either. "What if we made this so big the distributor to the Squirrel and Pickle would stock the back room?"

"That's a regulated sale." She pouted. "They can't deliver alcohol on trade credit

that way. Against the law."

Kim said. "And they won't. Call 'em tomorrow. What if they have a closed tent behind the booth. The customer's cash paid to the booth is handed back to the distributor's tent for each and every bottle to be restocked in the booth?"

Kittie's anger went through the roof. She hit me and threw things at me.

I grabbed both of her wrists and held on. "Stop it, you. You know perfectly well we can fight anytime you need to. You don't have to go breaking things. Especially not your cherished little treasurers. You were about to throw one of those. Not good."

She really struggled to break my grip. She tried stomping on my foot. All of a sudden she got it. She went limp. "I'm going for a walk. Don't worry, I'll be back, but I have to walk off steam."

She came back in about half of an hour. "Sweetie. I'm OK. Come here. I need to check you."

I didn't need changing. "Can I talk now?"

"Sure. Just don't ask me yet what that was all about. I'll tell you when I can put it into words. OK?"

"What if ..." The church youth ran the entrance with the University ROTC standing there in uniform. The State Police guarded the entrance to the Armory for the gun show. Antique automobiles; trucks; vintage Volkswagens; farm equipment; tractor pull; auto dealers. Portable stage for a rock band, university band, church choir. Local miniature Antiques Road Show. Jewelry; furniture; farmer's market; hand made clothing. The Jaycees needed a public service project.

Kittie put a finger on my lips for silence. "Just let me catch up with you thinking and we'll write an outline. I want to see how this might actually work before you go too far too fast."

The next day we called in our resident lawyer Danielle Pierce. He found the name 'City Fair' was currently available as either a corporation, one of those LLC things, or even as a partnership.

We had a Fair, the next fall just before the main hunting season and just after the new car models were on the dealers' lots.

During the Fair, I was running around like crazy chasing phantoms of mistakes when Tara grabbed me. "You stop. You have good people. Let them come to you if they can't handle it. You've been too successful doing everything yourself. It's time you grow into letting others feel their success too. Let them make the mistakes for their own learning."

I felt so guilty from her words. I had really blown it.

She saw right through me. "Stop. Enjoy the moment." She led me to a refreshment stand and bought me a raspberry lemonade. "Since when did Kittie let you wear trousers? Those are so baggy."

"Found these on the internet for insects in the grass."

"Well stand still while I straighten you out." She fiddled here and there. I became embarrassed with her touching me. "Why, Cindi, I do believe you need changing. Let's go find Kittie."

I blushed even more as Tara towed me away.

Kittie asked Tara to supervise the wine booth and led me in the back where the cramped space became awkward as she changed my soaked diaper.

I closed my eyes as I lifted my butt for her.

One of the people from the gun show signaled to me when I went back out in public. The state police had been thrilled with our security plan. They had set up their own computer for criminal background checks at the gun show. In the last half hour they had arrested three prohibited people from illegally buying guns.

Inside the armory at the Fair the gun collectors association put on safety and hunting classes and did valuations.

The antique automobiles, trucks, aircooled VWs, and farm equipment displays overflowed. The auto dealers were taking orders.

The rock band, university band, swamp pop performers, and church choir, all had a competitor for a time on the stage with the University Drama Department doing Garrison Keller skits.

Even Kittie joined in on the stage when she hopped up during an intermission dragging me along. We had been taking dancing classes and she led our impromptu skits on giving dancing lessons. She called out to a band for any hymns they knew. We did *Nearer My God To Thee* together. I tried *Precious Lord Take My Hand*, and *How Great Thou Art*. The audience wanted more so we had them sing with us *We Shall Overcome*. Then we really did have to go back to running the Fair and the wine booth.

The arts and crafts booths seemed to stretch forever.

There was a ranchers' stock auction out back of genuine mooing cows with the odors to match. The horse fanciers and the cavalry re-enactors had their own pastures and demonstrations.

The Jaycees and Kiwanis shared the food concessions. They had beef roast, fish fry, pig pit, shrimp, and even oysters. I loved the roast beef, but didn't dare touch oysters as they were too rich for me and my stomach. Kittie took quite a liking to them.

The League of Women Voters ran a civic spot for political candidates; civic leaders; the Lieutenant Governor. Judge Wagner gave presentations on Freedom of Speech. The Legal Aide Society did Wills for Veterans for free which grew into anybody else who was poor.

The business fair booths were happy. A little business called "Bait 'n' Bullets" of all things won the prize for the best booth. Their having such a terrific booth was a surprise as they only had a run down little store out in the pine woods near some lakes.

The PBS local affiliate showed Classic Movies.

The Hospital had a health fair and a clinic.

The Fashion Shop had a Fashion Show with Nordstrom, Ann Taylor, and Forever 21 joining in.

The Hospital Foundation made a quarter million dollars off of gate receipts and a small percentage on sales. Wine sales netted hundreds of thousand of dollars. Kittie snatched money for the tax escrow account and called the pub's accountant.

The hospital auditor came to me later with Danielle Pierce's contract in her hand. "Do you know you are owed Fifty Thousand Dollars?"

I had no idea of any such thing, but there it was tucked away in one of those many pages flooded with too many words.

What could Kittie and I do with Fifty Thousand Dollars? We, neither of us, had ever had any money like that before. Nothing. Oh, there were a few little things, but nothing really. Did we want our own apartment?

Kittie threw her arms around me. "Quick. Restrain me."

I grabbed the nearest thing which were the bands she used to restrain me for my erotic fantasies during diaper changes. When she was strapped at the wrists and ankles to the bed frame she said she was furious. I held her the way she had held me. I put a pacifier in her mouth and tied it in place before any screaming might bring in security. Wiffle balls went into her hands for squeezing hard and I tied her fingers around them with bandage tape.

She tried kicking before suddenly she collapsed. I knew what that was all about having done that myself.

I removed her pacifier. "OK, sweetie, you've done this for me. Were you angry? Terrified? Anxious?"

"Really really angry."

"That bad?"

She nodded vigorously as the tears flowed. Girls do that when angry.

"Is money that difficult?"

She managed a nod for 'yes' between sniffles.

"Here, sit in my lap." I released her. "Let me hold you."

She did.

"Still struggling."

She nodded.

"It's just money, sweetie. We both have to grow into it. We both have this issue. It just hit you harder all at once."

She sucked her thumb.

"Would you like an idea? One that might be right for you?"

She took her thumb out of her mouth. She squirmed around, hurting my legs in the process, until she had an arm around my neck. She licked my ear. "Yes," she sniffled putting her thumb back in her mouth. She had never licked my ear before.

That stressed me out making me so horny I thought I would lose control. "What if we put half that money into a scholarship for nursing students? For those so poor they can't even afford to repair their cars to come to work? They get deeply discounted tuition and still can't afford it. We could start such a foundation. How would that feel?"

I thought about Carmen, but kept my mouth shut.

She pulled her arm from around my neck. She buried her face into my blouse soaking it. My breasts had grown and she pushed her head into their soft comfort. She put her thumb in her mouth again as she cried her heart out even managing to soak my bra under my blouse. Yes, she wanted that.

We had the nursing department at the hospital take the scholarship fund idea up to the University office so no one would dare say no.

When she heard of this Pastor Stephanie took us aside and lent us a book on financial planning and church bequests. She invited us to a dinner study group of members our parents' ages and older where we heard about the full meaning of giving. A Pastor from Texas on tour of the UCC churches talked on motivation and money. She had our church host a regional conference session with him. He was terrific and so was a video he showed on why people don't attend church. He showed another on church members and their money. Stephanie took us aside again and said that we had to learn to protect ourselves and our money. That it was critical for us to care for ourselves enough so we could have the capacity to care for others.

My head spun with the conflicting thoughts until all of a sudden I got it, and so did Kattie and our sister-wives. They weren't really my sex partners anymore, but the six of us continued living in our suite. We told Tara, Dr. Christina, and their students of our new developments. Most of the residents continued to think of the six of us as our own family.

We did establish such a foundation, but we didn't impoverish ourselves doing it.

A good name eluded us. It had been Pastor Stephanie who saved us from ourselves. She warmed a little at the ears when we told her we had named it the Stephanie Fund.