

Free As A Bird

by Paul de Denus

Apparently, two's company, three's a crowd when you're involved in a fight but I was chomping at the bit and just had to stick my nose in where it didn't belong. Needless to say, I was dog-tired when they threw me in the doghouse. The joint was busy as a beehive; there were already several other pigs in the poke catching a few ZZZ's. The cell was crowded, barely enough room to swing a cat. I wanted a bed and I wasn't about to let sleeping dogs lie.

"Hey bud, wan'na vacate that cot?" I growled.

The guy in the upper cot — Rafe was his name - wasn't big, lying there quiet as a mouse, playing possum I guessed. Turns out he was mean as a snake and he took his time beating on me, as slow as molasses in January. Lying on the filthy floor like a pig in mud, I thought about what a dog eat dog world it was. I guess I deserved the beating. I had to grin and bear it. Opened a can of worms I shouldn't have, that's all. It was just an itch I had to scratch. Hell, lie down with dogs, you wake up with fleas.

Outside, it was raining cats and dogs. The wind whooshed like a bat out of hell. The floor was colder than a witch's tit in a brass bra.

"Hey pal, I think the floor suits you?" It was Rafe, the guy who had left me rough as a cob.

"When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you," I shot back.

Really, you can't teach an old dog new tricks and he was on me again, fit to be tied.

"How you like that?" Rafe puffed. "What, cat got your tongue?"

Good things come to those who wait. After waiting until I regained consciousness, I thought of a good thing. Demanding the cot was just beating a dead horse. Besides, I needed to fly the coop.

I had other fish to fry. I'd heard through the grapevine, some cock and bull story that was probably a wild goose chase but you know what they say about the grass being greener on the other side. If I were going to make tracks, I would have to take it like a man.

"Hey asshole," I croaked, fanning the flames. "I really want that cot!"

"Look," Rafe said. "I ought to tan your hide but I'll put my foot down instead." He jumped out of the cot and didn't wait for the other shoe to drop.

"Break a leg!" I said and he gladly did so.

It takes two to tango but I didn't oblige. Betting the farm, I let Rafe pull my leg. He didn't spare the rod.

A guard, armed to the teeth and dressed to kill in riot gear, finally showed up and dragged me out. I was happy as a clam though my leg felt stiff as a board.

"Better get you to the doc," the long arm of the law said, dragging me down the hall.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," Rafe smirked.

And with that, I was led down the garden path to the infirmary, finally free as a bird.

