

Going Places

by XXXX

His father has been talking of finding a man for her, but she would have none of it. The last time he brought a traveler home, under guise of allowing him to rest for the night and have some bread, the boy crept to her room at night and attempted deprive her of her honor. She made it known to him that she intended to defend it, regardless of the detriment to his face and dentistry.

He fled in the middle of the night wearing nothing but his underwear, and in the morning she used his clothes to cook breakfast for her father.

Upon spotting them below the skillet, he asked: "What have you done to the young man who was supposed to spend the night here?"

"He left in the middle of the night in panic," she said.

"Really, Diana," he said. "How will you ever have a life beyond this little plot of land if you keep being so nasty to men?"

"He was being nasty to me," she said.

"Thank god he didn't allow how you look to deter him!" said her father. "It speaks of his depth, but you didn't give him a chance, did you?"

One afternoon when her father had gone to the town to sell their harvest, she unhinged her dog, Androx, from the barn, collected her belongings into a bag where they used to put their vegetables, and rode the animal through the village.

The children, particularly adventurous because their parents were away at the market, crowded around her.

"Where are you going, Diana?" asked one, walking in tiptoes so he rose above Androx's back. "The big town with the market is in the other direction!"

"I am going away," she said. "To be the maker of my own fortune."

"Why can't you make your fortune here!" asked another. "If you sell enough vegetables, you can make a fortune larger than you ever thought imaginable!"

"There is more to life than vegetables," she said. "I'm going to the city."

They walked on, walking past empty houses in the heat and dust.

They passed a field of tall corn, and suddenly a boy was pushed from its walls, a tall boy with long hair up to his shoulders. Androx stopped, pushing Diana forward, and she had to grab her bag lest it tip over.

"Diana," said the boy. He inspected the dog and her bag. "Where are you going?"

She lowered her eyes, and instructed Androx forward by tapping his sides with her legs. The dog maneuvered around the thin boy.

"She's going to the city!" a child from the small crowd said. "She hates vegetables!"

The boy began walking with Diana and the children.

"You can't be serious!" he said. "What about your father? Does he know you're leaving?"

"Take care of my father," said Diana. "He is old and foolish."

"Like you," said the boy. "But you're young."

They approached the limits of the village. In front of them was an expanse of plain with a trail that led to the forest.

She turned to the boy and smiled. "Good bye," she said. "Please keep safe. Take care of the children and my father."

She instructed Androx to run, and she was off beyond the reach of the children. She turned back one last time to wave, and the children did the same, apart from the boy who could not look at her as she disappeared into the thicket.

