

Chapter Three

They made it all the way across Texas and some of Arkansas without any problems. Having spent the last several hours fighting another rain storm they were ready to find a place to bed down for the night. The sign at the city limits said Magnolia, Arkansas. Since they were near the county jail they figured it would have some empty beds. While they were looking the sheriff and his deputy came up in the squad car with a couple of crooks. Well, anyway, Bernie and Carlos both thought they were crooks because of the way they looked; tough, rugged looking guys with about four days growth of beard on their faces. But they soon discovered they were drunks that had been on a three day binge. The two guys looked like they felt rotten and did not want to be muscled about by these local law officials, who were not too kind when they tossed them in the cells. The Sheriff and Deputy walked out strutting as only an officer of the law, wearing that big old pistol can strut, was what Bernie thought.

“Jethro, Jethro, wake up, man, wake up. We got to get out of here, Wake up, Jethro.” Bernie could hear the dude doing all the shouting, talking under his breath, “We got to do something to get out of here. I’m gonna lose my job and my woman. We got to get going for me to make New Jersey by Monday morning. What are we gonna do? JETHRO, JETHRO, WAKE UP, MAN.” There wasn’t anything coming from the other cell except snoring. “Crap,” says the guy.

Carlos flew a few of feet off the ground to where he could see what was going on. Jethro and the guy doing the talking were in separate cells and they could not see one

another. Nor could they see into the third cell. That was where Bernie was hiding and where Carlos had been a few minutes ago. Carlos was now sitting on a small window sill across the hall from both cells. The guy in the cell was a tall skinny fellow weighing about 120 pounds, well over six feet tall. He was looking all around, stretching, trying to see into the next cell where Jethro lay sleeping. He happened to look up and spot Carlos on his perch. "How in the hell did you get in here, Mr. Crow? Are they locking up crows down here in this town? What are you in for, stealing corn?" Breaking into a laugh he continued, "The farmer turned your black butt in, didn't he? I guess you will stay out of his patch now, huh? Ha, ha, ha. That's funny! I made a funny and the old crow ain't laughing."

The prisoner moved to the back of the cell trying to see out the small opening high up in his own cell. Then he starts calling for Jethro again.

Bernie yells to the man in the next cell, "Would you turn it off and let me get some sleep? Jethro can't help you. You need to be yelling for the Sheriff. What you in for anyway?" asked Bernie.

"I was drunk and disorderly, fighting, tearing up a bar and hitting the bartender with a cue stick. Nothing serious, he's gonna live. Seems to me like they would turn me loose as soon as I sobered up some. What do you think?"

"Well, I don't know. I am not from around here. I am from down Del Rio way. They would not turn you loose down there. They would throw you under the jail. But I will be out of here by tomorrow and on my way." says Bernie.

"Where you heading?" asked the fellow.

“Washington, D.C. and I am in a hurry too. I have a friend in trouble with the CIA up there and I need to help him out. I think he is what you call a rouge agent.”

There was a long silence. “CIA, huh? Rouge agent, huh? Your friend may be in trouble, big time. I hear them CIA boys are tough.”

Bernie says, “Aw, they are not so bad. We kind of showed them how the cow ate the cabbage down in Del Rio a while back. Matter of fact, we had a run in with the CIA, FBI, and the Border Patrol. Apparently it is not over yet. My friend has the CIA after him again and they are pretty close to catching him now. They want him pretty bad. When my buddy and I get up there, things will change, you can count on it. We will straighten those boys out.”

“Wow,” was the only thing the guy next door would say.

Carlos who had been quiet all this time decided it was time to open up to the prisoner down below. “Yeah, we have to use all kind of disguises and magic” says Carlos “and if you think my disguise is strange you should see the guy you have been talking to.”

The guy’s mouth drops open and he is speechless. He just sits there staring at Carlos. Finally he comes out with “How, huh, why, I mean, what are you? A talking crow?” His mouth continued to hang down near his chest.

Bernie goes around the cell, standing just outside his cell, says “Sometimes drastic things require drastic measures. What do you want us to change you into? What about your buddy, what do you want him to be? How about we turn him into a rat?”

The guy’s eyes nearly bugged out of his head. His mouth lowered another inch or two as he looked Bernie over good. Hearing that deep, rich voice being emitted from this white mouse was terrifying. He was shocked beyond belief.

As luck would have it, just about that time a brown mouse came through the wall looking at Bernie. The guy sees the brown mouse and says, “Is that Jethro? What have you done to Jethro? You miserable creatures! You monsters! Change him back; I’m begging you to change him back.”

Bernie says, “If we change him back will you help us?”

“I will, I will, I promise I will. Please change him back. Jethro hates mice.”

Bernie starts walking over toward the brown mouse, saying as he is walking and getting louder with his voice with each step, “Ab-bra-co-dab-bra, who-I’m talking-to, Change back to Jethro, before I zap you.” And with the last phrase Bernie leaps at the mouse, scaring the crap out of him and he takes off. This last part cannot be seen by Jethro’s partner.

Carlos was watching it all thinking about what a ham Bernie was and that he could think of more junk and horse manure than anyone he knew... Sometimes it worked out, however, and this may be one of those times.

Bernie walked on into Jethro cell, crawled up on Jethro’s prone fat body; his mouth open wide emitting the God awful snoring. Bernie got up close to Jethro’s ear and screamed in his loudest voice. “There are mice in here.”

Jethro was startled awake. He jumped right out of the bed when he saw Bernie, slapping at Bernie as he is coming off the cot, knocking Bernie all the way across the cell and Bernie luckily landed on the cot on the opposite side of the cell. He rolled up against the wall and he looked up in time to see Jethro coming at him. He scrambled down between the cot and the wall. It is like Jethro was a crazy man. Jethro grabbed the cot and threw it to the other side of the cell looking for the white mouse.

Bernie knew he was in trouble and headed back toward the cell door. Jethro stomped at him twice, barely missing him with both tries. Bernie was running so hard he tumbled all the way to the wall across the corridor. Breathless, he lay there counting his blessings.

Carlos had not moved from his perch high up on the wall. He figured he better let Jethro know that Bernie was not alone. “Hey, cut that out. That’s my good buddy. I’ll fly into your cell and let you have it.”

Jethro looks up at the talking crow and his reaction was not anything like his buddy had been. “Oh yeah, you stupid crow, let me have what? I ain’t scare of no damn crow. Can crows fight, good buddy?”

“Probably not, good buddy, but we can crap. Have you ever seen crow crap up close before? Or been crapped on? Crow crap is the worst of them all. Huh, good buddy. Well, you are about to find out.” Carlos flew from his window perch to the top of the cell rail.

Jethro went running back toward the very back of the cell and was looking for something to put over his head. All he could find was the pillow and he quickly put it over his head with his back to the wall.

The guy in the other cell was shouting, “What is happening? What is going on over there?” He can now see Bernie lying against the wall outside of the cell and asked Bernie, “You’re a mouse, is Jethro still a mouse? What.....? What is going on? Talk to me, man.”

“Hold on Carlos” yells Bernie. “Lets try to get this straighten out. This fellow said he would help us if I changed Jethro back from a mouse. Let’s talk a bit. What do you fellows say, can we talk?”

Jethro speaks up, “What the hell is going on, Tye? What is this bird and mouse doing in here? Am I still drunk? Birds can’t talk, can they? Is that rotten mouse talking also?”

I'm still drunk, ain't I? I have done gone to far now. I'm hal-loose-a, I'm ha, I'm what-cha-call.... seeing things!" Jethro was starting to get worried

"All I know is the one disguised as a mouse said they were on there way to Washington to have it out with some of the CIA people, trying to help a rouge agent. I think this is big, heavy stuff, Jethro. We better hear what they have to say."

Bernie, wanting to hitch a ride to help him and Carlos out, thought these guys may be the answer. Carlos was making good time but it was taking a lot longer that he ever imagined it would. They needed a car or truck so they could get there in a hurry.

"It is big guys....Now here is the deal. Once you have heard it you either have to go with us or you have to promise us you will keep your mouth shut, because talking about it can get the CIA and the FBI after you. You guys understand me." Bernie says all of this using his most authoritarian voice inflections. It works because both Jethro and Tye stop to listen up.

Bernie laid it on heavy. The two of them were impressed. Bernie tells them all about speaking with Peter Jennings, with Tom Brokaw and all the media exposure they received down in Del Rio. He talks about all the advances in science and cloning, mind invasion, and all the other things he could think of. All of this coming from a mouse was totally believable, to those two anyway. Especially since the story was backed up by a talking crow, who works for the U. S. Border Patrol.