

## Chapter Two

Dr. Huff left the harness for Carlos outside in the tree. She had placed it between two twigs to hold it in place until morning. All Carlos had to do was to walk between the twigs and stick his head through the harness. It was connected tight enough to the twigs that Carlos had to pull hard to get the harness loose but in doing so the harness took a good firm fit to his body.

Bernie was there waiting for Carlos when he showed up. He was ready to get started. If they did not hurry and the CIA got to Ralph before Carlos and Bernie, they would probably never find him. Bernie had not been one to do a lot of worrying but his stomach was presently tied in knots. Hopefully getting started on this trip would settle him down.

Dawn was just breaking when Carlos and Bernie lifted off. Fall was in the air and it was cool enough that Bernie tried to bury himself in whatever protection the harness offered.

Carlos just seemed to keep climbing higher and higher. Ralph never flew this high. The size of the cars on the highway reminded Bernie of match box

cars that he had seen some human children playing with, but you could tell the cars were still traveling very fast.

Carlos turned and spoke to Bernie, "There is a rain shower up ahead. It does not appear from here to be too bad. Do you want to go around this or go through it? You can see from here how wide it is, on the south stretching out toward the Gulf of Mexico and as far as we can see to the north."

Bernie did not hesitate, "Straight through it, Carlos, straight through. Ralph is depending on us. We have to take some chances."

Bernie made that statement with an innocent ignorance, having never flown through a thunderstorm before. Ralph always went around them. So when Carlos entered the clouds and the wind really hit them, they started going up, then down, then sideways, then up, then down, Thunder and lighting all around them giving Bernie something else to worry about. Bernie knew this was a lot worse than he had ever imagined. Carlos was flying hard and the ground was hardly moving at all, when they could see it. Matter of fact, at times he was going backwards. Rain was coming in sheets and the drops hurt when they hit Bernie.

Bernie shouts to Carlos, "I made a mistake. This is too rough. Let's put down along that river." The rain was coming down hard, adding to the depth

of the stream every second and pushing it out of its banks. This was the West Nueces River, up near its head waters, usually with very little water. It was a raging stream today. Limbs, logs and other debris were being swept along in the strong current. Carlos and Bernie stopped in a tree back from the stream a ways among a thick portion of branches. Bernie dug out some of the lunch Dr. Huff had prepared them. Carlos was ready for a good rest from the hard work of flying. Bernie was ready for some rest from the tension of just hanging on to the harness.

In a lull of the wind blowing and the rain not lashing out quite so bad, Bernie asked Carlos how far they had come. Carlos estimated maybe fifteen miles. He figured he could fly at 25 miles per hour but he had been fighting a strong head wind. Bernie figured as much but certainly had hoped for more.

There was a blue bird perched on the same limb as Carlos and Bernie. The blue bird looked them over for a few seconds, and then flew over to another branch. Carlos said, "I don't think he liked us. I think we may look a little on the trashy side to some of the other birds. Some of them do not like me coming around and they dive and chase me, oft times for miles. It gets to be very annoying."

Bernie says, "If they do that this time, I'll take my sword to them. Then they will wonder if crows have hired tail gunners." That brought a chuckle from both of them. "I think it is ok to go on now, do you, Carlos?"

"No," responded Carlos, "the storm is moving east. The only way we can continue is to fly north until we hit fair weather, then turn east. What do you want to do?"

"I tell you what lets do. We can go back to the highway and you can land on one of the trucks that is traveling east. We can ride with them until they stop or the weather gets better. What do you think about that?" asked Bernie.

"Sounds like a good plan to me. I cannot make very good time at all against a head wind. Let's do it!" And with that, Carlos made about three or four good strokes with his wings and turned with the wind heading back the way they came.

A few miles back was the highway that went north out of Del Rio. As they approached that road, a flatbed truck was heading at them at a pretty good speed. Carlos went into a steep dive so he could pick up enough speed to stay up with the truck. He probably would have never been able to catch it except for some slow moving traffic. The flat bed contained several rows of

material that was being transported on pallets. Carlos set down along side the pallets and he immediately moved over between the pallets. It was not the best of conditions, but they were certainly making better time than flying against the wind. Both of them got close to the pallets to break the wind. It worked well enough that they both were soon napping.

The sun was shining when Carlos woke up from his nap. Bernie was still sleeping so Carlos yelled at him, "Bernie, the truck is slowing down for a town up ahead. The weather has cleared, so I think it is time for us to try flying again. What do you think?"

Bernie looked for a sign telling which highway they were traveling. Another sign said, San Angelo 43 miles. They had a pretty good little nap and had traveled a lot more north than they really intended. Bernie climbed up on the nearest pallet and step over onto the back of Carlos and secured himself in the harness. They moved to the traffic edge of the truck and cars driving along side the truck were slowing down looking at the strange sight of a crow with a mouse strapped on his back using the flat bed truck like it was an aircraft carrier deck.

When the truck had slowed enough that the wind would not blow them away, Carlos spread his wings and the speed of the truck lifted him off,

Bernie waved to the cars and with just a few flaps of the wings Carlos was at a nice altitude, as Bernie watched the truck get smaller and smaller and several vehicles almost wrecked watching the take off.

Immediately, Carlos turned toward the east and since he was not fighting the wind he was making good speed. Matter of fact, he now had a brisk tail wind now, which helped.

It was getting close to dark and Bernie was concerned while he was looking at the map. It was going to take them a long time to get to Washington, D.C. at the rate they were going. With darkness coming they would have to land to rest again.

Bernie had an idea. "Carlos, let's pick out a good vehicle going the same direction we are and hitch a ride. That way if they drive all night long, we can sleep and still make time. What do you think about that?"

"Well," says Carlos, "do you see that U-haul truck up ahead pulling that trailer? If we can get up under that tarp we will be well protected and can get some quality rest. Let try that."

"Ok with me," replies Bernie.

The U-haul stoped for a red light in the next small town. Carlos sets down on the trailer landing right next to a small opening in the tarp. Before the

light had turned to green both of them had slipped under the tarp and found some soft material furniture and quickly made a temporary nest. The truck was headed in the general direction they wanted to go so that had to be good enough.

They awoke several times during the night with the truck starting and stopping. Some very brief, like at the red lights, other longer stops while they were refueling or eating or whatever it is that humans do.

About daylight, they stopped among a bunch of other trucks and the man and woman got out of the truck, walk all around the truck and trailer, kicking tires and pulling on the tarp and retying some of the ropes, Once they lifted the trap right over them but they did not look inside the trailer.

As soon as they walked away, Bernie got into the harness and with about two steps Carlos was out from under the trap. Then with a good sized hop and a flap of the wings, they were airborne again. Within minutes they came upon a dairy farm and the workers had just fed the cattle. Carlos and Bernie pigged out on cow food at the cow factory feed troughs. The cows did not seem to mind. After a few minutes of non-stop eating, the journey was restarted. Carlos sailed down close to a green sign near the highway which read, Greenville City Limits. They were pretty sure they were still in Texas.

