

Now just after day break the worried dog lay hidden in the wet heavy snow. She watched as New People She Did Not Know came out of the Rock People House. These people talked together in quiet, calm tones as they walked into the yard.

Red Dog was apprehensive and very confused. She shook with uncontrolled quivers as she crouched in the tall, brittle pasture grass to peer at these unknown people. There was a woman and two big men walking with a New Dog. They could not see Red Dog where she lay hidden out in the big snow covered pasture field.

She did not know what she should do. She worried that Her People would come back and be mad at her because The New People were in the Rock People House. Red Dog wondered if she should run at These New People and snarl and bark and drive them away. She worried that These New People might yell, and kick and throw sticks at her.

The troubled animal heard the deep rumble of the men's voices, and the lighter softer tone of the woman as she joined their conversation. The terrified animal crouched closer to the

ground. She was apprehensive, but did feel a little more confident here in the big open pasture. A fence separated her from the New Dog and The People.

Red Dog's gaze never left the trio as she concentrated on what they were doing. She could not see the rope holding the New Dog, but she knew it must be there. New Dog did not try to run away. She walked along with the people and did not even look out into the big pasture field. Red Dog crouched even lower into the snow grass. She whined a quiet dismal whimper. It was a melancholy, plaintive sound.

Her heart was pounding as she lay watching The New People. They went into her little yard and peered into her little house. The New Dog sniffed the empty water dish. Red Dog watched as The New People took the other unfortunate dog into the Rock People House.

She waited for the sounds of blows and cries of pained howls of anguish. For a long time the timorous hound continued to lay in the tall snow covered grass. She continued staring at the lighted building where The New Dog was trapped. It was very quiet.

A quiet rustling out in the dry grass signaled the impending arrival of The Cat and her playful yellow kitten. A quiet purr sounded as Cat came closer. Cat gently touched Red Dog's big black nose with her own small nose. The three silent animals sat huddled together in the tall parchment grass and cold wet snow. Each watched the Rock People House with dedicated intent.

Out in front of the big open metal barn where they spent their nights and a good part of each day four fat clucking chickens scratched for food in the thick snow covering the hard ground. The little flock had been left behind as well on that miserable day when People took everything from the Rock House and went away.

The gabby chickens were plump and content. The glossy birds had no problem finding seeds and bits of vegetation and even an insect or two to eat out in the big pasture field. Red Dog was starving. However, she would never eat the chickens. The rotund chickens were not Red Dog's chickens; they were People Chickens.

Cat nuzzled her baby. Lucky Cat had managed to hide three of her tiny plump kittens under

the small room at the end of the chicken's house before People found them. She had not seen her other kittens being killed when People came to the place where they had been born. Red Dog did. She watched as People killed the four mewling kittens Cat had not yet been able to carry to hidden safety. Days later a swooping hawk had carried away two of the three remaining kittens. Red Dog licked the Yellow Kitten on his head.

Cat was a very good mother and she was an excellent hunter. Earlier while it was still dark, she had found a fat brown field rat for the two of them to eat. Neither Cat nor her purring marmalade kitten felt the awful gnawing hunger which had become a large part of Red Dog's life. Cat's well fed baby made short work of the little beats his conscientious little mother brought for him. He drank his mother's rich warm milk. Marmalade Kitten was growing into a plump, sleek young Tom.

A nearly overwhelming hunger gnawed at Red Dog's stomach, it filled the young hound's sad eyes. Her ribs stood out against her lackluster skin. Starvation was fast becoming a real possibility for the near ravenous creature. Red Dog had been neglected long before People

went away. From the day People left Red Dog's only food had been the frozen carcasses of animals she had found laying dead out on the roadway. Red Dog watched with hunger filled eyes and licked her lips whenever Cat brought provisions for her greedy kitten.

Red Dog was a gentle girl; despite her increasing appetite she never growled or tried to steal the rats from Marmalade. Now and again Cat did manage to catch an extra rat for Red Dog. The small critters were never enough to ease the hound's almost overwhelming hunger. However, she gulped each of the small rodents with happy gusto.

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