

Chapter One - You Dog

She was bathing and he liked to watch. She would tell him of her day, the mundane, the insane, what was to come, what she welcomed, what filled her with dread, and always, always what a good boy he was. He would feign innocence, the "good boy, good boy" blank stare reassuring to her nakedness, a compliment to her beauty without implication.

And when Maria finally stood, dripping from her nethers, stretching for the towel, auburn nipples hard from the then-cooled water, Arik would never break character - tilted head, raised eyebrows, his adolescent tumescence still buried deep in his fur. A "very good boy."

They didn't know each others true plans, at first. Arik hopeful for a grand seduction and wondering how to proceed, Maria thinking, "Well, he's no longer a puppy is he? I guess I have to do something about that."

He wanted to lick.

When Maria was splayed, fingers inserted, lost in herself, and strangely Arik's bed-end presence a dismissible distraction, he wanted the taste of her. Thought maybe she would want that too.

But "no, no", and she'd pause for the moment, tugging his collar, then suddenly a door and a hallway where before there had been the inner sanctum of Maria's Eden. The fruit, would have to wait.

So, in the me-meantime - and he was lucky the neighbourhood was young enough and broad enough to permit it - Arik would run when Maria would work, discovering the new and the secret, the allowed and the forbidden.

There were mostly sniffers, but there were also fighters. Though that was mostly bravado - Arik was a shepherd, after all. And of the local gang a small handful were genitals intact, still as nature had willed it should be.

At first, Arik didn't understand the difference between the boys and the girls, but it mattered little in this party. Everyone came, everyone was invited.

Bingo, another boy, was square one. For a little guy with stubby legs, he had a remarkable ending that his short and mottled fur could not disguise. And it was Arik and Bingo - Arik the bigger, on-top guy - humping haphazardly away when the rain suddenly came. Hard, fast and cold beneath a blue sky on a clear summer day.

It was the near-neighbour Brenda, her husband toiling at the factory, she several drinks in and barely afternoon. There was shock and surprise, human cussing as only they can summon, and a long green snake spraying its unending venom. Chastened and humiliated, they ran, shaking the wet away as they raced to safety. But Brendi, Brenda's companion, had been labradoodling in the bushes, had been watching.

That night, Maria saw that Arik was a "dirty, dirty boy". So into the tub he went, down the drain went the mud. But a damp dog cannot remain unseen in a rub-down. "Oh," she said. "Oh." The seed was planted.

There is a little Patty Hearst in every pet. At first, it's, "Where am I? Where's Mom? Where are my bros and sisses?" Then, after a while, OK, there's plenty of food, I sleep where it's warm, and the big monkey really can do wonderful things with its hands. Why not rob a bank?

So Arik was happy. Yes, yet to be fulfilled, but not aware that that was the case. For her part, Brendi was older, and a born natural leader. Brendi knew things, knew many things.

"Let me tell you a story," she would say, and the gathered would listen.

"A long time ago, there was a hunter. And the hunter's best friend was a fox."

"The hunter's name was Baat. The fox didn't have a name, and it never occurred to the hunter or the fox that she needed one. Just encouraging shouts, or a warning whistle when the prey was near."

"Hunting the big game was dangerous. The fox liked it much better when they sought something smaller, when she could do more than smell and find, when it was something she herself could safely chase down."

"The fox had met Baat where the stream that ran through the desert gathered into a pool. It was shaded place beneath a jutting cliff, so there was water to be had even in the driest of seasons. He was refreshing himself after finding no food for days. She was tired and upset and alone. Her mate had finally come back, come back and killed her young."

"Baat had never eaten a fox, but easily could have."

"But the pool, of course, was an attraction. There were many thirsty creatures, and other creatures that had had their drink lying in wait."

"That day, Baat and the fox sealed their bond. The fox was first to spot the giveaway ears, chasing the terrified rabbit right towards the hunter's flexed bow. It was a very easy kill. And the fox was content with the guts that were thrown her way."

"From then on, the hunter and the fox stayed together. One would lead, and the other would follow. Through the good and through the bad."

"One day, many, many months later, Baat and the fox found themselves again at the pool. But this time, there was cat. Not like the cats around here - a big, big cat. And although the fox could smell something, she had never smelled this particular smell before."

"Baat was big man, but not big enough. The cat was hungry, and the hunter became her hunt. It didn't take long."

"The fox waited by Baat's body for three days, and early on the fourth day was trying very hard to not to think of him as food when other men came. The men who had come then went and took Baat with them. As before, the fox followed."

"She didn't know these new men, but they seemed to know her. They threw her scraps of food to keep her interested."

"And when they returned to where the men, their women and their children lived, a place that also had water nearby, the fox was made to feel that she belonged."

"That night, there was a fire. While the fox was eating she felt little hands stroking the length her body. She had let Baat touch her before, bit by bit, always shying away if the going got a little uncomfortable. She thought she could trust him, but instinct dies hard."

"But these little hands were very gentle, so very gentle that the fox would then let them pick her up and carry her away."

"The men, the women and the children walked to the edge of the firelight, to a place where there was a long hole in the rocky ground. It was cold away from the

fire, and the fox remained huddled in the arms of the young boy that had brought her along."

"In the hole, lay the body of Baat."

"A man who had been talking to the many, who had all been listening, took the fox from the boy, snapped her neck and threw her into the hole with Baat, her master. And there, they would rest, companions forever."

Brendi paused.

"The fox had been a man's best friend, but man was clearly not fox's best friend."

There was a hush.

"Why should we care about a fox?" Bingo asked.

"We should care because she was just like us," Brendi said. "It is where we came from, it's why we are all here."

Arik didn't understand what that meant, nor did Bingo. But Brendi understood. Brendi understood many things.

When the others had gone their ways, Brendi and Arik were alone.

"Come with me," Brendi said, and led Arik into the bushes behind the long yellow fence that ran behind the grassy backyards.

"Pretend I'm Maria," Brendi said. Brendi knew many things.

"Do you like when I kiss you there? How about this? No, not in there, in here."

That night, being young and ambitious, Arik was ready for more.

Maria was wearing a tight white t-shirt, strawberry-brown hair up in a bun, naked from the waist down, and watching porn on the living-room tv. There were two men and a woman, and although at first the blonde was getting most of the attention, the men weren't above pleasing each other as well. Arik had noticed that Maria liked that sort of thing.

It was when the bigger guy was fucking the ass of the other guy and the woman was sucking from the front, that Arik made his move.

Maria had pulled her fingers and they were wet. It was curiosity. Why not let Arik have a sniff?

But the video was building to its dramatic conclusion, and the fingers went back in. Arik nuzzled his way closer. As Maria twiddled her button with her thumb, Arik licked beneath, probing with his tongue around Maria's fast and furious hand. He had been awfully quick and final with Brendi in the afternoon, but Maria had real staying power when it was finally all too much. Not once, not twice, but thrice over the full minute it lasted.

Maria smacked Arik's snout. He recoiled in shock, confused as to what he had done wrong. He thought he'd been a good boy, a very good boy.

But in the days and weeks that followed, all became more and more forgiven. Maria discovered that Arik could do things, do many things.

And when the time came and Maria and Arik surrendered themselves to the ultimate full event, it wasn't in doggy-style.

"I want to look at my beautiful puppy," she said, and lay back spread on the tattered quilt she had inherited from her grandmother. "Lick me first," she commanded. Arik obeyed. "Good boy, good boy." And with a raspy gasp, Maria pulled Arik's extended canine prong deep inside her.

Brendi's fables were enabled by television, often left on for hours as Brenda slept off the booze, husband double-shifting. If Brendi couldn't get outside - and thankfully there was an open drain in the basement - watching a screen was the only thing going.

She learned how to click from the channel Brenda had been watching, poking the changer with her curious black nose. There were shows about animals, shows about people, shows about love, shows about death, late night shows about sex, shows about everything and shows about then some.

So Brendi learned, and being as smart as she was golden-white curly, she liked to showcase her tv-inspired education. More importantly, she took all of that knowledge and made it entirely her own.

One day, while tonguing Arik's jizz off of her belly, she began a story she had conceived for Arik and Arik alone.

"I had a dream."

"What's a dream?" Arik asked.

"A dream is when you're sleeping," Brendi said. "And you think for once you are eating from the kitchen table too, and it's the best thing you have ever, ever, ever tasted, and oh boy, oh boy. And then you wake up and it's just more of the same from the same bag in the same old bowl."

"I dreamt I was wearing some of Brenda's underwear, the black shiny stuff, and you were there too, with a studded collar, your leash between my teeth, and all four of your legs roped up and tied to tent poles in the ground. But it wasn't outside, it was inside, like a bedroom, lots of red."

"You weren't happy, but you were erect."

"'You're a bad boy, a very bad boy', I said."

"And even though you looked frightened, I knew that you liked it."

"So I tug the leash and slip it over one of the poles. But it's so tight that it's choking you - really hard - and I can see the whites of your eyes."

"Then I bite you, over and over and over again, till you're pink and raw, but not so much so your bleeding, and your begging me to stop, but I won't, but I won't, and I don't, and I don't, and you cum in my mouth, not like you just did, but like the hydrant that burst down the street."

"This was your dream?" Arik asked, very pink but not bleeding.

"Yes," Brendi lied.