

enough to know that the hurt he had endured had rendered him, in his eyes, unloveable. He would never let anyone that close to him ever again. She loved him so and though he'd never admit it watched over him. As he pulled up she was unloading a bag of bird seed.

Yes, this was just one of the many things Sarah brought by because you can't have a big ole tough cowboy buying bird seed now can you? Who knew way out here that Old Cowboy put the seed out for all the regulars that stayed here. Not to mention for Crow.

Crow...by now you have figured out that Old Cowboy didn't waste a lot of thought in naming the animals on the place. Crow was, well yes, a crow...one that the old cowboy found knocked from a nest after a storm. Old Cowboy wouldn't want it to get out that he hand fed a bird back to health and Crow just decided to stick around. He could always be found not far from Old Cowboy anywhere he went on the place, usually perched on one of the many trees that dotted the ranch. Crow was also the resident watchdog here. Made Dog real uneasy but Crow had the much better vantage point and for sure made a better distress call. You didn't sneak up on Just as they were finishing breakfast the phone rings. Old Cowboy just sits there... doesn't go to answer it. "You gonna get that?" Sarah asks....naw....lot of sales people calling lately.....it's probably nothing. That bothered Sarah, She'd never seen him do that....After a while the ringing stops.

Sarah washes up the dishes and notices Old Cowboy a little antsy. He keeps going over to the door and looking out. "What's wrong?" Sarah asks. Old Cowboy is bothered. "O coming home I saw a family stranded on the hiway" he says in half confession tone. "And you didn't stop?" Sarah says in surprise. "That's not like you". "O stop it "old Cowboy barks back. "Where is it written that's always my job?" "No wonder Dogs acting like he is" she quirks... "Look Sarah, I'm just giving someone else an opportunity to step up to the plate".... Total silenceDog raises his head and looks at her, then him, then her. "Don't look at me" Sarah says, "I'm not the one that just left them there"....

Like Old Cowboy needs a reason to feel worse. "Come on" as he grabs his hat off the coat rack. Sarah and Dog right behind him. Dog bails into the back barking in excitement. Cat seemingly unmoved by it all. They get in, start up the old truck and away they go, creating a dust storm behind them.

Crow escorts them to the gate along with Horse at full speed. Sarah laughing and shaking her head as always at the navigational technique required to keep the old truck between the bar ditches. Knowing better than to say "We could have taken my truck" That would only seemingly insult the old cowboy and get you a sermon about just how good this old truck really was and how they don't make em like this anymore.

She only wondered shouldn't it have all the gears and brakes you don't pump and she'd like to not sit on a pillow to avoid the spring sticking from the seat. Other than that it was just fine. No its not! She thinks Just to herself though as she just looks over at Old Cowboy and smiles that smile that drives him crazy cause he knows what she's thinking and says so "I know what you're thinking" as he grinds through the gears, finds 4th and here we go....

The telephone rings unanswered back at the ranch house.

"Slow down" She says, as the snow is getting heavy and the old trucks traction is in question. "Your right" Old Cowboy admits and pulls the truck over. Reaches over and grabs a shovel from the back and starts to shovel dirt and snow from the roadside into the back of the old truck. Dog ducking and dodging the wild slinging dirt.

And yes, these days we have traction control, stability control, anti-skid. Well, not out here. Out here you fill the back with dirt and add weight for that. We don't need no stinking button!.. No no, just dirt. Sarah reaches back and grabs Dog and puts him up front. Old Cowboy jumps back in and here we go again. Sarah just shakes her head. "That ought to do it" she smirks, "O yes that's much better" "If we do wreck and are killed they will have dirt to cover us

with" she laughs. Old cowboy trying to be all coy and stoic but her laughter is contagious. She could always do this to him and the more he tried in vain not to, at her encouragement, "come on you can do it she says", the smile comes on and like a kid in church trying not to laugh it happens....He breaks out and they are bust-

ing out laughing going down the old county road.

After a while the cab quiet again, Sarah breaks into a rendition of Jingle Bells...He knows full well she will bug him till he joins in. And it's not like he doesn't sing in the truck any way. If only the boys at the coffee shop could see this. Who cared if he

(Continued on page 24)

