

# “The Igneous Rocks of Tameapa”

(an exploration adventure story by Michele Murray)

## *Part VI: A Boy and His Dog*

Doc followed the chunky dog, who seemed to be leading him down the trail in the dark as if on a mission. Though most geologists have significant dog relationships in their lives, Doc never had a dog before and did not know very much about their abilities – what they could or couldn't do. He had heard they can be very intelligent, that some dog owners swear their dogs know what they are saying. They think their dogs can think like people. This one for example, seemed to have a plan in mind and seemed to know what to do when it encountered him. The dog never made a sound and did not let him get near enough to touch (or catch) him by the collar – to which someone had attached a faded red bow-tie. However, for all his shortcomings when it came to dog-human knowledge, Doc had a gut feeling that this medium-sized chunky dog intended him to follow, so he did. There were no other good options: follow the dog on the gently dipping path or climb up the stony mountain like Spiderman.

The sun had set a couple of hours before when Doc first came across the fresh water spring That was a good thing, too, as he had been dry for a number of hours in the Sonora desert. He filled his bottle in the growing dark while the dog watched him. He didn't know if it was a vicious feral animal ridden with Hantavirus fleas and rabies but it wagged its tail gently and glanced away blinking its eyes bashfully. He once saw a cow sporting a car tire around its neck so the bow-tie on the dog did not catch him off guard. The Mexicans have a different sense of humor in the outback. Could be someone thought this was funny, (and it was humorous). Other than the wagging tail and gentle eyes, the black and white dog was a serious looking animal: stout, stubby ears pointing-up, short-haired with scars on its muzzle from previous altercations. Its forearms were also scarred and the tail ended in a crooked stub. Doc wouldn't be surprised if the dog had a tattoo on its forearm. The dog looked Doc directly in the eye and seemed to invite him to touch

him, which Doc tried. Then, the dog deftly moved away but waited just out of reach with an inviting stance again, hesitating and starting away again, looking back at him. When Doc decided to follow, the dog seemed pleased with that choice and trotted away with tail jauntily wagging straight up in the air and tongue lolling out of the side of his smiling mouth.

If someone were to come across them it would look as if an old man was out for a late stroll with his friendly companion rather than a desperate human on the heels of a mysterious animal. The true nature of the situation would seem unbelievable. Sixty-six-year old Doc had been bushwhacking across the Sonora desert after significantly wedging his Mobile Rock Identification Lab (a modified ice cream truck, the MRIL) into an arroyo bow-to-stern-stuck with wheels (minus one hub cap) hung-up mid-air. That wasn't an easy feat. He had built stone ramps under the wheels by hand for hours prior to revving the engine and letting go on the throttle to launch the vehicle nearly over the side of the cliff. With no one looking for him and the electronics gone dead he set out for a dot on a map corresponding to a rancho that once existed at least on an old topo map he bought from El Departamento do Geologia de la Universidad de Sonora, Mexico, some 25 years ago. His only gear in hand was a Nalgene bottle for water, a rock hammer, and one melted chocolate bar long gone. Now, he had a dog with a bow-tie for a midnight guide.

Under the vast super highway of the Milky-Way, Doc followed to dog over hill and dale, through scruffy forests of ocotillo and thorny scrub oak, across dry drainages, around stony bends and under huge wild fig trees. The stars were as dense as cotton bating and illuminated his footsteps adequately until the moon rose and shone down on them like an electric torch. He would have been uncomfortable to follow the dog so diligently into the wilderness if there wasn't a visible path. The dog led the way along a foot path to what eventually became a cattle trail. Always the path led down from the rugged Sierras. Doc had been driving the MRIL eastward to see what was around the next corner. The events of the trek seemed like a week ago, though it was only a matter of 12 hours. With sudden motion, Doc was startled to near death by a loud whooping as massive dark bodies leapt from the shadows overhead. The dog had startled a flock of vultures resting on organ cactus growing out of the sides of a rocky hill. He shivered to remember the dark silhouette of a rider on horseback in the distance as the sun set on the spring. He wondered

now if the dog was part of some sinister bandito operation to capture errant gringos and strip him of his human dignity like in the movie, “Deliverance” – Love Story of the Appalachians. He tested the heft of his rock hammer in his grip and thought to himself,

‘Oh yeah, mano-y-mano I could kill someone in self defense, I could.’

Then, his memory brought to mind the woman core logger in Tameapa: Rene. He remembered her cocky attitude, her leg propped against the giant Indio tree in the core logging yard. He had been down in Sinaloa responding to Phelps Dodge’s request to identify a porphyritic faces of a fine-grained andesite. Pretty Rene had taunted him:

“How about we call this rock, ‘The Great White Porphyry of Tameapa’ and let it go at that? We’ll publish a technical article for ‘Econ. Geology’. You can give it a code of, say, ‘GWP’ and describe it as, yer basic aplitic, phaneritic, leucogranite with phenocrysts averaging about the size of average phenocrysts in a groundmass of groundmass, similar species include other F##@!!\* white rocks.”

He smiled to remember her rather brusque behavior. He appreciated cavalier women. Doc could tell by the descending moon, now, that there were only a couple of hours to go before dawn.

‘I wonder if I will die out here?’ He thought to himself. ‘I imagine I will one day. I wonder how long it will take for anyone to find me --- if anyone finds me?’

With these ominous thoughts on mortality and the inevitable demise of himself in mind, Doc nearly overlooked the remains of a sprawling establishment at hand. A broken fence made a higgledy-piggledy line across the path around which the dog trotted. A very old, completely dark ruin of a farm house was totally ensconced by great trees too obscure to make out the genus in the dark. The dog was no where to be seen. Doc knew this was the end at least of this night’s adventure. No matter what waited inside the door, he needed to rest and this is where his journey ended for the time being. His rickety old knees and hips were simply giving out. No more hike left in this senior body.

With tired apprehension, he put his hand on the heavy wooden door and pushed it in.