

Dear Reader: Thank you so much for being one of my readers and for requesting stories, updates and more from me at WriteOnPurpose.com! I hope you enjoy this tale of a guardian spirit and how she interfered to save the one she was sworn to protect.

Allies

By Ronda Del Boccio

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From our Den far above the earth, I sit in the Place of Watching and gaze through the hazy veil to observe our Two-legged charges, who call themselves the People. There is a special window that allows us to see them. All the Allies have their way of watching. We Wolves have our Den, the Hummingbird Nation has a huge Flower that I would love to see, and the Buffalo Nation watches through a pool of water in the plains where they live. I only know this from hearing the older ones talk about their travels, and I can hardly wait to have those adventures myself.

Supposedly, I am too young to start watching The People, but I don't know how I'm going to learn how to help them if I know nothing about them. That's one of those things the adults never explain to my satisfaction. I'm not a pup anymore, after all. I'm almost adult, too mature to want to play with the whelps and not old enough or experienced enough or not whatever else enough to take on the responsibilities of being one of the Allies of the People. I get bored, and that always leads to me living up to the name they call me.

Life down on earth seems to be going along as usual, and it's not all that interesting either just to watch. I see females tanning hides, drying meat, or mending clothes. Pups...boys...are chasing each other and playing warrior practice games. Bent males smoke a pipe or teach the young pups.

A warning whoop catches my attention as well of those in the village below. Warriors rush back to their pack with news, and now women leave tasks half done and call out for their young to come to their sides. Men take up weapons and the elders call the People to gather. They rush around, making sure all their clan is safe. A woman calls out, "Where is Runs From Snakes?" It must be his Mother, because I have heard that yelp of terror before. I can almost smell their fear from here.

"There you are, Trouble," Mother says. I feel her eyes study me from eartips to tailtip. "You are taking an interest in those we guide and protect." She stands beside me and nuzzles me between the ears. "Especially I see you gaze at one of the young pups, the one who is so swift of foot. I do not see him now."

"Not only him." I was watching when his grandfather named him. "The clan treats Runs From Snakes as a coward but he's not." He was just a whelp when he ran away from what turned out to be a harmless grass snake, but he didn't know. He ran carrying his sister from what he thought was danger. I say he was brave. He still is, and still they treat him as a coward. "

"You curled your lip at his mother. That is no way for an Ally to behave." She uses that disapproving tone that tells me I'm in trouble.

"She can't see me." Mother watches me intensely and I try not to twitch a whisker but I can't sit still. I jump to my feet to face her. "Now he is nearly grown and he is always trying to prove himself worthy." My hackles are up and I try to force them down. Now I am in BIG trouble. I wish I could keep lips and hackles down and mouth closed sometimes.

Mother, predictably, snaps at the air. "It is not for you to decide how others should act, especially since you so often live up to your name."

"I'm young and I know nothing." I have been trying to live down the name Trouble for as long as it takes a Two-legged pup to grow from whelp to grey-hair. "I do not understand many things about the Two-leggeds, but when you're young, nobody respects you there or here." I flop down with nose on paws to watch the People.

Mother lies down beside me. "You are as restless as I was at your age." She sighs. "Mother always said she hoped I would bear a she-wolf just like me."

"You used to be restless?" Something must have changed, because she has to be one of the most boring Wolves the Great Mystery ever created.

She moves her body alongside mine, snuggling. "I can tell this is hard for you to believe." Now she yips laughter.

"Help me understand the People."

"I am glad you show some interest, since it is our place in the Great Wheel of Life to guide them."

When I take a mate, I will NEVER treat the pups I bear the way she treats me. Never! I wait before saying anything else so I don't get in even more trouble today. Lips are down, hackles are down. Good. I am keeping my anger more to myself...at the moment, at least. "They start as pups, just as we do and they grow as we do, then they become bent and frail and their spirit goes...somewhere...wherever spirits of Two-leggeds go."

"You see that our brethren the Elk and Hawks have different ways than we Wolves."

"Yes."

"It is the same for those we guide. But since they are creatures of the Earth, their place in the world differs as well."

"Is that why they are so..." I never can figure out how to say the way they seem to me. "So thick?"

"They do seem thick. We are pure spirit, they have bodies of earth."

"Is that why when Father goes to speak to their Spirit-Chief, I can see the trees through him?"

"Exactly. "

Down on Earth, the People are together in the big lodge. Pack leader warns his people about pale faced men who would take their land. "They come to take our home away from us. We must be like smoke. We must disappear into the mountains until they pass."

"That is the coward's way," someone shouts."

Chief stamps his foot. "Is it cowardly to defend our children and our freedom?"

"We fight!" one of the warriors jumps to his feet, hot-blooded, and all the young men join him, whooping, making strong gestures. "We fight to defend our land!"

The Spirit-Chief stands beside the Clan Chief. He has that look like Father gets when he's mad and it has the same affect. "We must pray in earnest and ask our Allies to come to our aid. We must ask to know whether we should defend our land or scatter to come together after the storm."

Prayers come to us Allies like whispers. When they smoke the pipe or sweat in the turtle den...the "sweat lodge"...the prayers are louder. The young Wolves carry the prayers in their mouths to Great Mystery. I have done this for a long time. Some Allies speak to the Two-leggeds' when their eyes are closed. Some appear in waking.

"Can one of us have a solid body like them?"

Mother pulls back into herself. She is panting now and I don't know why. "Yes, it can be done but only by one who knows the ways of the earthworld."

I watch Father when he goes to aid his One. But he isn't thick like the People. He never touches the Two-leggeds, never stays long, and never looks solid like a wolf of the earth would look.

"Mother, have you ever gone down to help the People?"

I feel her muscles stiffen. "I do not go to their world, but I do guide them."

She never talks about how she guides her One from the Den between the worlds. I am supposedly not old enough to learn, and nobody tells me anything. The passage is well guarded because they all try to hide from us young ones, but I know where it is. I have even snuck into the Den a few times. I don't think my parents know about that.

I don't know how we each get our One or how to make the connection once we do. That's another one of those things I'm too young and inexperienced to learn. I am not sure what happens or how, because to me it only looks like a bunch of Wolves sitting, ears straight, tails out, eyes soft, with all attention down on Earth. "How do you guide your Person?"

"Mostly through their dreams."

"What are dreams?"

"Dreams are teaching messages that come to The People when they sleep, although mostly they do not remember."

"Why not?" I remember teachings even though I do not always obey them.

"Living in the earth world can make it seem as if the People are separate from the Great Mystery."

What happens to them during sleep is strange to me. We lay down to rest as the creatures of earth do, but we are still aware. No part of us leaves to go somewhere else. That is what happens for the People. "I wonder what it's like to sleep."

"It's...I am not certain."

Mother HAS been there and she knows exactly what it's like, but she is not telling me. By her decisive yip, I know I had better not ask her about it anymore right now.

One thing that puzzles me more than dreaming is praying, but now maybe I understand. "The earth people do not realize they are one with Creator? That must be why they pray."

"Yes, praying helps them experience their link with Great Mystery."

What must it be like to feel alone like that? I cannot imagine what it would be like if I did not feel that I am one with Great Mystery. It must be very difficult for them.

Below, Runs from Snake's mother is running among the People, panicked. "Have you seen him? Where is he?"

Spirit Chief takes her by the shoulders, stopping her. He looks into her eyes. "Be at peace. Trust Great Spirit to guard him."

"He is so young."

"He is nearly a man. He left this morning in secret to seek his Vision this morning." She goes weak in the knees and he steadies her. "You must know he is trying to earn a man's name." She stomps off, sobbing. She and other women of the People heat water for the stones. The turtle den keepers gather the stones and make their preparations for the sacred ceremony. Upset though she is, she does the work that needs to be done. Women console her. "I know what is to fear for a son," one of them tells her.

Mother's ears prick. "I am called." All of us feel it when the People reach out for help, and we carry their prayers, but when your One calls, it is different. Ears prick. Breath quickens. Whatever you are doing must stop. You must go to the Den between the Worlds and respond. It seems like everyone else but me has a person. Father has the Spirit Chief. My older brothers guide the warriors. My sisters are pups still. "Trouble, why don't you go run your restless energy off with the whelps?" She leaves for the Den between the Worlds.

My hackles are way up, lip to my nose, and I can't help it. Fortunately, she is gone and doesn't see me. "I don't want to go play with the pups. I know exactly how Runs From Snakes feels. I wonder if I will ever have one of the People to guide. Or will I always be "Trouble"?"

Nobody tells me anything even though I ask to learn. I am tired of watching and doing nothing except what even the younger pups do for the People. I find myself pacing in circles. That isn't helpful, fun or interesting, so I trot off to find something else to do. The Pack are connecting with the one Two-legged they alone guide.

With all the People praying, the air is full of sound. It reminds me of a flock of geese when they're standing on the shore, talking all at once.

Then I hear one voice coming to me loud and clear above the clamor. Great Spirit, humbly I ask you to show me my Spirit Guide. I live to serve the People. Show me the way." I listen as he continues to pray and seek his Ally.

Could I be his Ally? I run around in circles, flustered, not knowing what to do or where to start. The Den between the worlds! I run as fast as I can along the passage and scramble to a halt at the feet of the guardian.

"What are you doing here, Trouble?"

"I am called."

He snaps at me in warning. "Not possible. Run off and"

I stand as tall as I can, snarling, hackles up. "Do NOT tell me to go off and play. I am called."

"You are showing aggression to a warrior, young whelp."

I am NOT a whelp! But I had better not say that. "I know, but I am called. Every Ally who is called must answer. I will NOT leave my Two-legged alone. He has asked for help." I know when this is all over I'm in the worst trouble ever, but I hold my ground. My big concession is to uncurl my lip and flatten my hackles. I look him straight in the eye, which is probably worse than raising hackles and snarling.

Young Runs From Snakes is deep in prayer, patient, expectant, waiting for his Ally. He asks humbly, without knowing who will come to him or when they will come, if at all.

The guard sits down and howls his laughter. "You pass the test. I see that you truly are called and not just trying to sneak through, as I know you have done before."

Wasting no time, I woof a quick thanks as I jump over him and tear down the passage to the Den between the Worlds. I don't know exactly what to do when I get there, but I will work that out. I wish my parents or the Elders would have taught me what to do when I asked.

Will he see me or only know I'm there? Will I appear like mist or solid? Am I worthy of being an ally? Can I truly help him?

Before reaching the Den I slow to a walk. It's important for me to make a calm entrance, not bolt into the middle of everything. How nervous I am! All the Wolves are sitting quietly, uniting with their Two-legged on Earth. I find a place to sit. I am not sure what to do, but I open my heart to Runs From Snakes. After a bit, my uncertainty subsides in the midst of this deep communion.

He is praying, listening. He hears a drumbeat. "The People are in council. I feel his anxiety as he wonders if there is trouble. "It is a test. I must not break the circle."

He has made a sacred hoop around him in which he stays as he seeks his guiding Vision. I know from stories others in the Pack have told me that the Two-leggeds sometimes see or hear things that are not there when they seek their vision. They believe it is a test to make sure they stay in the sacred circle, in prayer, seeking their vision, asking for their special Ally to reveal itself to them.

At this moment, I could use a little guidance myself, so I quiet my thoughts and wait. He must know that his Ally is with him. I imagine myself standing before him and so I am. He has grown stronger both in body and spirit since I last saw him from above. While I see him and the rocky mountainside behind,

What kind of person is he? What task is he alone gifted to do for his people? I gaze into his eyes to look into his spirit. He has compassion, the wisdom of an elder, gentle strength. I also see that he is stubborn and sometimes, unsure of himself, rash. He will be at the heart of trouble between The People and their enemies. "You are destined to save your people," I tell him.

His eyes grow wider. "You are speaking to me? I am...deeply honored. I live to serve my people."

There are so many things I would like to say to him: how similar we are, how much I understand him, He deserves an Ally with more experience than I, because I can see his road will be difficult. He is uncertain of himself. I feel this from him. He does not know his true nature, perhaps because people so often overlook and underestimate him. He deserves a true name. He deserves to be treated with respect. He will be Spirit Chief of the People. I want to say all this to him but it is more important that I make certain he is safe.

At first, I do not know what is all around him since I have been so focused on him. Perhaps if I put more of myself in his world, I can move and look around. How do I do that? Perhaps by intent and thought, as all things are done in my world. Imagine being more connected with his world. More solid.

My ears twitch as I hear horses walking and men talking. Is he safe? I must know. "What sounds do you hear?"

"Before you came to me, I heard the drum calling a warning."

"Your enemies approach. Do you hear the horses coming this way?"

"I only hear something faint in the distance."

What is so clear to me is distant to him. I must ask Father about this.

Needing to see more, I focus on his world. He is on a rocky ledge with one tree near, just a little outside his circle. I need to look around him. Directly below, a trail winds along. I jump down to the trail, look up. Anyone passing by will be able to see him from here. I listen. Three horses and three men. A scouting party. If they do not look up, he may be safe. If he climbs into the tree, he may make noise and cause them to look up and see him.

Have the People decided to fight or scatter? I think of the Spirit Chief and am there with him. And with Father. Spirit Chief prays for his people to be unseen.

Back to Runs From Snakes. "Three pale men on horses come. They may see you. Do you climb quietly?"

I will not leave the circle."

"This place is exposed."

"You are testing me. I have made my circle. If I am destined to save my people, then I will be safe within it." He crosses his arms over his chest, resolute.

I consider nipping his heel just a little but I don't know how to be fully present in his world. Probably a good thing. He always seemed so quiet whenever I observed him. That sounds exactly like something I would say, and now I have a little empathy for Mother and Father. And I admire his strength of faith. "Sit in your circle and imagine you are part of the rock. There is no you, only rock"

"I will."

I sit in front of him and in my mind, he is not there. He is one with the rock. No sacred circle, only rock. No Two-legged. Nothing to see but the mountainside. Nothing.

Rustling below. Someone moves quietly by Two-legged standards. I go to the sound. It is his mother, not hiding herself but looking for her son. It may be that she does not hear the men. I try telling her to hide but she does not hear me. Wolf is not her guardian. She thinks only of her pup. It will be bad if the scouts find any of the people.

Back with Runs From Snakes, I take my place in front of him as before. Causing him worry will make it more likely that he is visible, so I say nothing of his mother.

"I hear them now."

"Be Still. You are one with the mountain."

His mother must hear them by now too. She takes a hiding place that is too near the trail. I must think what to do if the riders see Runs From Snakes or his mother.

The riders approach, talking among themselves and scanning the area in all directions, including up. The leader gestures, apparently indicating silence, because conversation ceases. They stop directly below us. Have they seen Runs From Snakes?

No, they have seen his mother. One of them points toward her hiding place. She crouches behind a boulder with trees beside it, but a piece of the covering she wears is visible. I jump down to the pale men in matching coverings. "It is only a chipmunk," I tell him. Will they hear me? Will they believe me or discover that one of the People hides there.

One of the riders speaks softly to the others. "I'm going to have a look. I can't tell if that's just an old piece of hide or if there's someone there."

Think fast!...Horses are easily spooked...There are animals of the land all around and I think they will hear me and maybe help. I sing out, "Make the horses run!"

Another song calls out in answer. It is not a wolf and the message is "make running water." It is Runs From Snakes who is calling with me. He did well for one who does not speak Wolf.

Squirrels and chipmunks dart from their hiding places and rush around. The horses flick their ears and stamp nervously. It is not enough to make them run. I sing out again and my One repeats the call.

The chips and squirrels make a line on either side of the horses and chitter. Runs From Snakes' mother has moved so that no part of her is visible.

The baffled riders look all around and raise what must be weapons that look dark and deadly. If they see Runs From Snakes, he will not live to fulfill his destiny and he will not have time to get to safety. One of them looks right at where he sits in his circle. He points his weapon, making an arc in the area where my One sits. "Where's that wolf?"

"Be Still and know they do not see you," I say into the mind of my One.

I sing out again, "Spook the horses!" Lead rider swings his leg over his horse. A wolf of the earth, running from behind sings out a reply, "I come. I come!" Runs From Snakes sings out again. Squirrels and chips scatter in all directions. Earth wolf runs at the heels of the third horse. All three horses rear. Lead rider thuds to the ground. One of the other horses comes down on his chest with both front feet. He yells. Blood flies in all directions. The horses nay in alarm. Another rider dangles from the rope that goes through the horse's mouth. The third points his weapon upward, toward Runs with Snakes

The two riders point their weapons wildly in all directions. All three horses buck and bolt. The second rider is trampled and the other makes a loud noise with his weapon then crashes head first into the mountainside. His head splits open. I see a black mark and a spray of ash on the rocks below Runs From Snakes. He has lost his stillness, which I easily understand. His eyes wide, mouth open.

"All is well," I assure him.

His mother runs from her hiding place. "My son!" She looks as if she is trying to decide how to crawl straight up the mountainside to him.

He stands inside his sacred circle. "Wait there." He appears uncertain. To me he asks, "Is it right for me to finish?"

"You have completed your Vision Quest," I tell him. It is right, now, to give thanks and unmake your sacred circle." Again, there is much I want to say to him. "They did not see you. For them, you were not there. I am proud of you."

"The animals came to help us. I have never seen something like this happen."

Earth wolf lies on the ground, eyes closed, unmoving

Runs From Snakes does not come down until he has sung his prayers and completed his sacred duty. It is good. He honors the ways of his People, the sacred path, even though he has been through his first test of courage. His sobbing mother wraps herself around him. He squirms in her arms. "You are smothering me," he protests. "I must give thanks to the wolf."

He kneels near the earth wolf and sings a song of gratitude.

The earth wolf's spirit is still with his body. There is a mark on his chest from where a hoof must have hit him, but there is no lifeblood spilling out. I lick his wound, wash his face. "Thank you, little brother," I say to him. The wolf opens his eyes, gets to his feet with some difficulty and looks my One straight in his eyes. Then he trots off.

I am pulled back to my own world so suddenly I feel as if I need a moment to catch up with myself. I sit alone in the middle of a circle of Wolves. This is either very good or very bad. "My One called to me."

Mother tackles me. "You are too young and untrained."

I scramble out from under her. "I was called. And I have asked to know how to serve. Nobody would train me." No hackles, no lip, but I am upset and angry. She shames me in front of the elders for doing my sacred duty?

Pack Mother snaps at her, and she lowers herself in submission. "You cannot protect her from your past. She must fulfill her role, as we all must." My mother slinks back to her place in the circle.

Pack Mother comes to me. I sit before her, eyes low, waiting. "You have had a big adventure today."

"Yes." I still don't know if I'm in the biggest trouble of my life or what will happen next.

"You may have interfered too much."

For once I manage to keep myself from saying what I want to say at the worst possible moment. I want to say that I have done no more than the Eagles and White Buffalo. "It is possible. I never can do anything right. But I came to my One and helped him stay safe."

"Is that what you should have done? Perhaps you should have appeared to him and left."

My heart is on the ground. She is showing neither anger nor aggression toward me, but I still don't know if I'm in trouble. "When I asked inside myself for guidance, I felt I should help him. It is what seemed right."

"It is good. "

"I did not know what to do next, but I kept asking inside, remembering what I had heard in stories, and doing what my inner guidance told me to do."

"You followed your inner knowing. That is all any of us can do, whether Ally or Two-legged." She nuzzles me affectionately. "You have long since outgrown your whelp's name."

My mouth drops. I look into her face but not her eyes. My heart comes up from the ground.

"Hear me, all of you. From now forward, this one who is so brave and inventive shall be called by the name she has earned. Welcome Asks Within as an Ally of the People."

It is all I can do to sit still. The circle of Wolves all around me howls a joy song, and I sing in gratitude with them. I feel Great Mystery with me stronger than ever and I give thanks. My desire is to serve the People well.

Nobody, neither Wolf nor any other Nation, calls me Trouble anymore. They call me by my true name, Asks Within. Some of the Pack Elders and even Allies of other Nations ask me to tell the story of how I met and saved my One.

The story behind the story

I thought how fun it would be to write a story from the perspective of the guardian rather than from the one they help. This tale came to my mind because of a dream I had. While the story bears no resemblance to the dream, it inspired me. My original dream was from the perspective of Asks Within’s mother, but since Glory is a teenager, I decided to tell a story from the perspective of the “teenage” (in Wolf equivalent) daughter.

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