

This Dog's Life *"My Big Adventure"*

By the time the autumn season hit full stride me and my new family went on a camping trip, which I had never done before, but I'm all Bull Terrier when it comes to outdoor stuff. They packed the Jeep for an hour, while I had been ready from the git go.

We headed in to what they call the Piney Woods of East Texas to Lake O' the Pines and it was some beautiful. They set me down in the woods, unhooked the leash so I could chase deer, and there was this big water and beach where I could run up and down and have fun.



Here I am kind of just getting the layout of the land and water. Cold as it was I didn't mind getting wet, but never once did I go all the way in.

We camped and cooked out by the fire. There was this deer chili and it was some good. But later that night there come a storm that was as bad as any I had seen back at the D-Bar Ranch. It stormed and rained so much the whole place flooded.

That was the first test of these new people, Brian and Rachael, where I saw that they weren't gonna' let anything bad happen to me. They kept me dry and safe and we went back home the next day after a fun trip out into the woods.

Well, more time passed and we began making long trips to way down Louisiana. Way down on the bayou and those were lots of fun. On one particular trip I had to share the back of the Jeep with a load of firewood. I was happy about that because I liked snoozing by the burning wood in the fireplace, when it was too cold and wet to be outside. But on that day, when we got back to Texas, I was out in the back yard and the wood was being loaded on to the rack out back, the gate stayed open and while no one was around, I slipped off into the front yard. And when no one came out to see me out there, I wandered into the neighbor's yard. And when no one came out there to see what I was doing, I went further down the street and by then I was feeling pretty good. I was well rested and fed, ready for a long walk. arn tootin' I was aimin to have me one very, very long walk ...

So there I was, after living in that neighborhood for more than three months, for the first time, loose off the leash and free to go where I wanted. Not a care in the world, I was off on what is now called Cooter Brown's Big Adventure.

For the first day or two, I recall, I just wandered at full speed, stopping to visit with some dogs I had met on my walks, but mostly just getting to know the places the leash had always prevented. And it was some fun, let me tell you.

I forgot all about food, and it's a good thing because there wasn't much to be had, but water was easy enough to get. I ran when I wanted to get somewhere fast, I stopped and rested when I was tired. And I'd be lying if I didn't say the idea crossed my mind to find a new home, but I didn't see anything out there that tempted me really to settle down with anyone else. And the fact was a Bull Terrier running loose apparently brings out the mean in some people. I got rocks thrown at me for no reason. Mean kids on bikes tried to run me off the sidewalk. Mean people in cars blew loud horns in my ears. All that and worse, to the point where I began to avoid people. All people I avoided.

I criss-crossed and circled a pretty big area around the neighborhood for a couple of days and then I decided to set out west and went for a long way, more days and nights, until ah was plumb tuckered out. I had been wearing out my paws for more than a week and I was beginning to think a few regular meals and a dry place to sleep was not a bad trade for some relative confinement. But by the time I came to my senses I was flat out lost. I didn't know where I was, how I got there, or which way to go next. Standing on the corner of a busy intersection on the border of Dallas and Tarrant Counties, my Life was literally at a crossroads.

Right about then God showed up, in the form of a man who pulled me into his truck and took me home to live with his family. It didn't seem right, but I was in no shape to debate ethics. I was lost. I was tired and hungry. Under those circumstances I suppose I should have been wondering what evil was about to befall me.

It wasn't so bad, though. These people fed me good, home made tortillas, and they didn't fuss with me too much. Other dogs in the neighborhood looked a little like me, but had shmushed faces mostly, mostly brown and mostly very mean. There was talk of finding me a breeding mate from some of these dogs, but on that very day, things took a different turn.

You see, apparently, the Brian and Rachael people of my Life's story had been busy putting up pictures of me all around town. Hundreds of these photos stapled to telephone poles and who knows what else. Lo and behold, someone in the family I was with had seen one and they decided it was time I go back to the place where had come from.

The next thing I knew I was going for a ride in the back of a truck. And when we pulled up at the gas station there was Brian and Rachael, whom I hadn't seen for eight days, running up to hug me.

I learned later that those two were worried sick about me, and that in addition to plastering the city with my picture, they hired a telemarketing company to call everyone in the neighborhoods they thought I was visiting.

When we got home it was a special day otherwise, Valentine's Day, and Rachael said that's all she wanted, for me to come back home. She cried when she first saw me, but I wasn't sad. She cried some more the next few days and Brian told me she had been crying about me all that time I was lost. I still wasn't sad about that. I was happy, come to think of it. I had a great, big adventure and was back home, safe and sound, no worse for the wear.

So here we all are the day I got back, after a bath, playing the back yard, taking some photos with one of the signs they had up around town. Yep, as you might imagine, I'm a famous dog around the city now. Thousands of people saw my picture and lots of 'em say hello when they see me out walking and around town with Brian or Rachael. I'm probably the most famous Bull Terrier in these here parts, but that ain't sayin' much because I'm probably the only Bull Terrier.



No matter, all is well that ends well, or so I'm told.

What I didn't need to be told after this was that this Big Adventure gave me a new sense of home that I never had before. When I got resettled with Brian and Rachael I decided to lay claim to my back yard and everything else there. I decided to defend the place and be the dog I know Daddy Najera wants me to be. Now and then I get the urge to sneak off down the street, but in my heart I think I've learned my lesson. I got a pretty good Life where I'm at, no matter what else might be out there in the world, for a dog like me.

LOST DOG



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