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Birth of a Litter

Saranyan BV

Dogs stand sniffing around for an hour; take turns before giving up. The familiarity convinces one of the dogs, the litter is going to be his. There is no other female among the pack.

The bitch is finding it difficult to walk, or even stand, she stands with her feet apart, the teats pronounced and all the more ugly; her stomach says its time. She appears not to know what came of her, may be her first litter, that's what I wonder - her eye a bouquet of questions. Canines do not have brows which ask questions, so they ask with eye balls.

I want to educate what pregnancy is all about, I am a counselor from the local maternity hospital, counseling my vocation, then I bite my tongue I can't speak bark language. 'Animals have instincts', says the man yanking a twig from the spur nearby. His face dotted with warts, the largest on the center of the nose-ridge, the kind of image that unsettles. I swallow saliva that had been accumulating. I think of spitting instead.

There are two types of secretions when it comes to slobber, one that oozes upon seeing good food, the other when I am tense. My glands don't produce when heat is extreme. Canines sweat that way.

We were not the only ones around; a row of trees, the lamp posts and the discarded bottle of Vodka with yellow colored liquid collected at the bottom, it's lying under the *Thespesia Populnea*. We call the tree King of flowers. Glazing yellow petals have red spots underneath the ovaries. From experience I know the flowers delight in playing host to the hoard of translucent red ants with strong forearms. Where from the red ants turn up at the nick of the hour its difficult to know, the ants abound whenever the flower litters the ground. God's creations, they are born with the flowers. As children we use to scavenge for these flowers and suck at the base. The nectar tasted good until ants stung and left our tongues thick.

The male dogs seem to understand the man with warts. What the twig means, they growl reluctantly - the brown ones with white spots, the jet blacks with grim eyes and the loan orange roan with long ears. Mongrels are mongrels, in the end they gang up and say fine and vamoose - leaving the dame behind to her labor. She lets them go and turns her neck to look at my face. She squeaks in tiny voice I have never heard before, and then she chooses the quiet corner where the shade is adequate. She turns out a bit of the earth using her front paws so that the floor is cool and no tree roots sticking out. Today is the day, the gardener lady appraises me. Animals make their own bed for labor. The scent of the soil signals new life.

It had always been in the back of my mind, the question regarding the fatherhood of to- be born pups. We being human, the only but unfortunate rationalizers among the living beings, our

preoccupation lies in considering that as of at utmost importance, our society and traditions have wired us that way. No need for guesses here; will soon learn which of her men did her.