

A Tale of Two Dogs

By Shirley Young

"But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NKJ).



On a lonely farm, called Dovecote Farm, way out in the countryside, lived a little dog called Ruffles. He was a black and white mongrel with a curly coat and bright, mischievous eyes. He had a kindly, pleasant nature and got on well with everyone - even Molly, the farm cat! In fact, they got on so well together that Molly used to sleep curled up by Ruffles side on some straw in the big barn.

Late one evening, after Molly had returned from one of her mouse hunting trips, she trotted into the barn and flopped down beside Ruffles. "Guess what!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "I know something you don't know!"

Ruffles yawned and waited. He knew that Molly was bound to tell him anyway. She always knew everything that was going on around the farm and could never keep it to herself. He was right.

"You know that old mill down the lane that has recently been converted into a house?" Molly began. Ruffles nodded.

"Well," she continued excitedly, "an important gentleman has bought it and moved in there. Apparently he was a general in the army and he's brought a great, fierce bulldog with him by the name of 'Major'. They say the dog is very unfriendly and everyone's afraid of him."

"Well, you'd better stay away from him then," advised Ruffles, "because I don't expect he will like CATS! But leave it to me - I'll soon make friends with him!" Ruffles was ever the optimist.

"I shall not stay away!" exclaimed Molly indignantly. "I've lived here a lot longer than him and I've always sat up on the Mill Pond wall in the sun. I don't see why I should stop going there because of that bully bulldog. He's not going to frighten me away. I'll scratch his eyes out if he goes for me!" This was fighting talk.

"Now, now Molly!" Ruffles warned. "That's no way to behave. We ought to be friendly and welcome him to the neighbourhood. Then when he gets to know everyone he'll be fine. I expect he's just trying to protect his master's property. I'll go and see him tomorrow."

So early the next morning, Ruffles cheerfully set off down the lane. He bounced along on his springy legs, keeping a sharp eye out for any rabbits as he went. As he turned the corner in the lane and started downhill towards the Mill stream, he immediately saw the fierce dog sitting beside the wrought iron gates at the bottom of the driveway that led up to the Mill House.

Ruffles bounded forward. "Good morning, Major," he called. "It's nice to meet you. My name's Ruffles. I thought. . . ." But before he could finish the sentence the bulldog exploded with anger.

"How dare you address me as 'Major' you little whipper-snapper! I'm **Mr** Major to you. You get away from here. My master doesn't want rough looking farm dogs hanging about!" He then snarled, showing his ugly teeth, and began to chase Ruffles back the way he had come.

Thinking retreat was the best action for the moment, Ruffles turned and bounded back up the lane. The young dog soon left the fat, puffing bulldog far behind.

When Ruffles told Molly the cat what had happened, she laughed and said, "I told you so!" But then she became most indignant. "Why, he's just a newcomer," she exclaimed! "Who does he think he is? He doesn't own the lane. We've got a right to go down there!"

So when Molly woke up the next morning, she stretched and then scampered off across the fields, using her usual short-cut to the wide-topped wall beside the Mill stream. It was summertime and already quite warm when she arrived. So she washed herself diligently, stretched again, and then fell asleep on top of the wall in the sunshine.

As she lay pleasantly dreaming of fat mice, she was suddenly startled awake by loud, angry barking. Her eyes flew open in alarm. Then she saw the great bulldog racing towards her. He hurled himself at the wall and jumped up, trying to reach her.

Molly hissed at him, her fur standing up on end. She couldn't jump off the wall to the other side because of the swiftly flowing Mill stream. So she dashed along the top of the wall until it reached the lane, and then leapt down, racing up the lane as fast as she could go.

As she came to the hole in the wooden fence that separated Dovecote Farm (where she lived) from the lane, Molly shot through it and was soon beyond the dog's reach. But the angry bulldog was so full of indignation at the cat having the audacity to sit on **HIS** wall that he charged without thinking. He tried to pursue Molly through the hole in the fence and got stuck!

His head and neck went through but his fat body couldn't possibly follow. And then a plank in the fence, which was already rotten and had been loosened by the impact of his body, suddenly slewed sideways and caught him sharply on the side of the neck, well and truly trapping him. He couldn't go forwards or backwards! His head and neck were jammed in the fence, facing straight into the field on the other side of the fence, whilst his hind quarters stuck out into the road. Poor Major yelped and whined as

a rusty nail on the wood plank tore into his neck. He felt very sorry for himself.

A little while later, Ruffles decided that he would make another attempt to be friendly with the bulldog and set off down the lane toward the Mill House. He didn't know what had just occurred between Major and the cat, and his eyes nearly popped out of his head when he turned the corner and saw the bulldog's bottom and hind legs sticking out into the road!

Ruffles' immediate reaction was to fall about laughing. He rolled on his back, paws waving in the air, and laughed and laughed until his sides ached. But then he recalled what his mother had told him when he was a young puppy. She had said that you must never laugh at someone else's misfortune and that you were duty bound to go and help anyone in trouble, even if it was someone who hadn't been very nice to you.

So Ruffles felt ashamed and stopped laughing. He quickly got to his feet and ran to the side of the poor bulldog, who was whining in pain.

"It's all right, Mr Major," Ruffles called out. "It's me, Ruffles. I'll soon get you free. Hang on!"

Major went quiet and waited. Ruffles put down his head and pushed against the loose plank with all his strength. Gradually he was able to swing it sideways and open up the hole again.

"Now!" he yelled. "Pull back, Mr Major. Wriggle backwards!"

The bulldog did as he was instructed, and after much huffing and puffing managed to pull himself free, but his neck was cut and bleeding.

"Thank you, Ruffles," Major croaked humbly. He could hardly speak because the blow to the side of his neck had badly affected his throat. "I

should never have insulted you as I did the other day. I'm sorry. You're a very kind little dog."

"Never mind that now," answered Ruffles, slightly embarrassed. "You go straight home to your master so he can take you to the vet and get that nasty wound sorted out."

Major nodded gingerly, because his neck hurt, and ran carefully back home.

Several days later Ruffles again set off down the lane, and as he came to the Mill House he saw the bulldog lying on the driveway. He had an enormous white collar around his neck.

Ruffles approached cautiously, not sure what kind of reception he would get. But when the bulldog saw the little mongrel coming his way, the pained expression left his face and his eyes lit up. "Come up here, Ruffles," he invited. "Come up and sit with me for a while."

Ruffles trotted forward eagerly. "How are you, Mr Major?" he enquired.

"Oh, doing better, thank you," the bulldog answered, "although I have to wear this horrible collar for a while. The vet doesn't trust me not to scratch the wound while it heals. But you know how these humans are - always fussing!" Ruffles nodded understandingly.

"Oh, and by the way," Major continued, "you don't have to keep calling me **Mr** Major - just Major will do. After all, you saved me from that fence when I didn't deserve it after the way I had treated you. So we're close friends now!"

Ruffles felt very pleased to be elevated to the position of 'close friend' to such an important dog as Major, and he flopped down happily beside him in the sun.

"And if there's ever anything I can do for you in return," continued the bulldog, "you only have to say the word and I'll do it."

"Well, there is just one thing," said Ruffles quickly. "It's about Molly the farm cat. You see, she's the oldest animal on the farm and everyone likes and respects her - and she's used to lying up on this wall beside Mill Pond. So will you promise not to frighten and chase her off again?"

"Yes, of course," agreed Major readily. "She's welcome to come any time."

So, as a result of the kind act done by Ruffles - even to someone who had been nasty to him - the three animals became good pals. And on warm sunny days you can often see the bulldog and the mongrel fast asleep side by side, with Molly the cat stretched out on the top of the wall above them - the firmest of friends! Friends forever!

"Repay no one evil for evil... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17,21, NKJ).

The End

