



## My new dog

My name is Freddy and next week it will be my twelfth birthday.

I was quite excited about that.

My father asked me what I would like to get for my birthday.

"I would love to get a dog, Dad", I said.

"Why would you want a dog, my son?", said Dad.

"I think dogs are lovely and friendly animals", I responded. "And they make very good pets.

They are also very loyal and faithful."

"But not all dogs are so friendly", Dad reacted. "Some of them can be quite dangerous and vicious."

"Well, I don't want one of those", I said. "I want a friendly dog, one I can play with. And one I can trust".

"But they also need much care and attention. Are you willing to look after a dog each and every day?", asked Dad.

"They will need washing, brushing and feeding and lots of other things".

After much talking with my Dad and Mum I finally convinced them that I could look after a dog very well.

So they agreed to buy one for my birthday.

Naturally I was most excited.



The next morning we went to the local dog pound.

A dog pound is a place where unwanted dogs are kept. The ranger, who is employed by the local authorities, picks up stray dogs from the street and keeps them in kennels. He looks after them and sells them if possible. Sometimes people move overseas and then, of course, they can't take their dog along. At other times people move into a Retirement Village where they are often not allowed to keep pets. So the dog pound is then the answer.



People usually only need to pay for the cost of keeping the dog in the pound. That is normally far below the real cost of the dog.

The ranger who looked after the dogs greeted us at the gate of the dog pound.

"So you want a dog, do you?", he asked Dad.

"Yes, we are looking for a dog for my son's twelfth birthday.

His birthday is next week and we would like a nice friendly dog", Dad answered.

"Have you thought of what type of dog you want?", the ranger asked us.

"Do you want a big one or a small one?"

I knew what I wanted. "I would like a big dog", I said.



As we were walking through the rows of cages I noticed a dog who tried to stick his nose in between the bars. Obviously he wanted some attention. So I gave him a friendly pat on the nose.

"Well, let us have a look what we've got for you in this place". the ranger replied. "We have a German Shepherd, a good looking dog. He would make a good play mate and guard dog. And over there in the last kennel on the left we have a

Rhodesian Ridgeback. As you would have guessed they come from Africa. They are incredibly loyal and protective of their families. They are beautiful, quiet and loving, independent and intelligent. They are also very playful and energetic. They have a smooth coat so they don't need much brushing".

"That sounds good to me", I said.



"No, wait a minute, I'll show you some more good and well behaved dogs", the ranger continued. I also have a



young St. Bernard. He is only a puppy, though. Here he is", the ranger said.

"You call that a puppy", I exclaimed. "Wow, he is bigger than all the dogs I have seen here. But he has curly hair and that could mean a lot of work for me. No, that one is not for me even though he is a good looking dog". Then the ranger pointed to a dark dog in another kennel. "This one here", he said, "has not been here for very long. He comes from a man who lived all by himself. I suspect this man has not been very kind to him. When the ranger let him out of the kennel he had quite a struggle with him and it was a good thing he had him on the leash.

"Oh boy, that dog has plenty of energy. I sure will have some fun with him", I said.

Even though the ranger had him on a leash he found it hard to control him and the dog suddenly broke loose and dashed off towards the gate. Fortunately the ranger had remembered to close the gate after we had entered the enclosure.

Then this dog, a huge Rottweiler, turned around and raced toward the ranger with bared teeth, looking angry and ferocious. Just before he was going to pounce on the ranger he managed to jump clear. "Quick, get out of the way and run into my office", the ranger yelled at Dad and me.



"This dog has gone mad. I have never seen him like this before. He must have been so cross for having been in this kennel for more than a week. And the fact that the previous owner has not been kind to him makes him more agitated".

When the Rottweiler missed his chance to jump at the ranger he turned around and tried to attack Dad but he had just made it in time to the office and shut the door behind him.

I was too far away from him by then. The ranger tried to catch him with a lasso but did not have much success. Then from the corner of his eye the dog noticed me.

I was trembling with fear as the wild animal crossed the open space in a matter of two seconds. All I could do was quickly go on my haunches and the dog jumped right over the top of me.

But, unfortunately for the Rottweiler, he landed in a very large cactus plant with nasty spikes.



He yelled as he was in great pain. Then he decided to take it out on me and came running towards me again. Dad and the ranger looked on with great fear for my safety.

But suddenly the dog realised that with every step he only increased the pain caused by the cactus spikes. This made him even more furious. But he had the wisdom to suddenly stop in his tracks.

He stood very still, trembling all over with pain and fear.

The ranger still tried to come closer with his loop and Dad called out from the office and told me to come inside away from that wild dog. But I hardly heard my Dad.

All I could see was that dog in great pain. He did not dare to move and looked so frightened. He could not even understand what had happened to him.

I carefully moved closer to the dog approaching from behind, ready to run away at any moment.

But the dog was nailed to the ground.

"Don't go near him", my father yelled. "He will kill you".

The ranger came closer with his loop but the frightened dog bared his teeth and the ranger quickly backed off.



The ranger, too, told me to go inside the office while he would try and get the loop over the dog's head.

But I did not hear either of them. I was full of pity and concern for the dog.

"This dog must be in agony", I thought, "and I must help him".

Carefully and slowly I came closer and closer.

At one stage the dog growled menacingly and I temporarily stopped in my tracks.

After a while I was so close that I could even touch him but I didn't dare. I was so scared myself. But after a while I plucked up enough courage.

Dad kept on calling me back inside the office. But I was focused on my task and I could hardly hear him.

I was sweating from fear and I too trembled just as much as the dog.

Carefully I came a bit closer but one ferocious look and growl from the dog made me freeze and stop in my tracks.

But the dog started to realise after a while that I did not mean any harm but that I wanted to help him instead.

I carefully touched his tail and quickly pulled out one of the spikes. The dog yelped and I jumped back a couple of steps.

But the dog still stood there. So I came closer again and pulled out another two spikes from his tail and then one from his back. The dog still stood very still.

But he was still trembling all over.

After a while the Rottweiler realised this was going well.

I pulled out more and more spikes, small ones and big ones.

The ranger looked on from a distance and Dad kept on calling me from the office.



Just a few more spikes from his back and now I had to turn to his tummy. I did not really like that idea.

But it had to be done.

I quickly pulled out all the spikes from his tummy and from his legs while the two men looked on in amazement as well as fear.

Then I found a few spikes near his ears and pulled all of them out as well as some near his neck.

Now the worst was still to come.

I still had to do the rest of his head.

That really worried me, particularly near his mouth.

"It will be alright, my boy", I said soothingly to the dog.

"Just stand still a bit longer and I will have them all out for you. You are a good dog".

Then, as I was removing the last few spikes I came closer to his lips.

That was a very sensitive spot.

I quickly pulled one from his bottom lip.

The dog yelled in pain.

He growled at me and I jumped back a few paces.

I have never been so scared in my life.

"Just a few more, my boy, and you will be fine".

I pulled out a few more spikes from his lips. The poor animal was in agony. But he did not move.



Then as I removed the last spike I spontaneously slid my arm around his neck. What a stupid thing to do I remember thinking later. But the beautiful creature did not seem to mind and he still stood very still. He still did

not dare to move.

But the good thing was that he allowed me to put my arm around his neck.

I was amazed about it.

Then suddenly the dog realised that all the spikes had been removed. Thankfully he licked my hands and then my face. He was so happy that the agony was over. He got so excited and he started to run back and forth always returning to me and licking my hands and face.

Dad came out of the office still keeping a safe distance from the dog. The ranger also was still very apprehensive. "I suppose you realise", Dad said, "that you are not getting this dog for your birthday".

"Oh, please Dad, can I take this one home?"

"Most definitely not!", his Dad responded. "I've had enough of this ferocious monster. He is not coming with us.

Just imagine what Mum would say, especially after she hears what has happened here at the dog pound.

No, I'm sorry Freddy, he will just have to stay here and we will choose another one. I will not allow a dangerous dog like this around our place".

"But Dad, can't you see that he is no longer dangerous? All he needed is some love, care and compassion. He must have had a bad time with the previous owner. He just needs a friend. He needs a friend like me. He needs me to look after him".

"Please, Dad, can't you see that he is such a friendly dog?" I said. "We are friends now". And as I said that the dog licked my hands as if he understood exactly what I just said.





When Dad saw how much the dog and I loved each other he gave in and said: "OK then, I'll buy this one for your birthday".

While Dad paid the ranger my new friend and I slowly walked to the car. Now and then the dog looked up at me with such loving eyes and thankful expression.

On the way home I found my Dad very quiet. He did not say a word except if I asked him something.

"What are you so quiet for, Dad?", I asked.

Dad felt ashamed for running away from the dog and leaving his young boy all on his own with that ferocious monster.

But he always found it so very difficult to apologise to anybody. And especially apologising to his young son did not come easy. It really bothered him that he had not protected his boy and left him with that dangerous dog all on his own. For it certainly was quite dangerous at one stage.

But Dad also realised that the longer he postponed saying sorry the harder it would be. He knew very well what the Lord would want him to do. So after a while he said to Freddy: "I am sorry, son, I should have stayed with you. That was not very good of me. I was a coward and I should have helped you.

I don't feel very good about myself. In fact I am not very proud of myself. I am truly sorry, son".

"It's OK now, Dad", I responded. "All is well now".

"I was so scared", said Dad "and also scared for your safety".

"But we need not be scared, Dad, if the Lord is with us", I said.

"Yes, you are right, son, I should know better", my Dad responded. "I failed again. I should know that God is our Refuge and our helper, our shade on our right hand".



I was so happy that the Rottweiler could come home with us. He quietly sat beside me on the seat wagging his tail now and then. It reminded me of what the teacher at school had taught us. He told us about the saying that dogs make friends easier than people because dogs wag their tail and people wag their tongue. I was so glad for my new dog. I promised him that I was going to look after him very well. I was going to give him a real home. I was not just bringing a dog home but I was bringing a friend home. My friend!



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