

Beagles, Bugles and Buzzards

A story about faith

Smoke lazily curled, slipping into the sky, weaving a blue and gray patchwork stretching half a mile high.

Brilliant red sparks glittered and flew through the gray, smokey shadows that billowed and grew into wispy, soft shapes looking much like a cloud only not quite so pretty and not quite so proud.

It charted a silken gray, curly-cue course and if you traced the smoke back to its' original source, you'd find it twisting up from the blacksmiths' shop, where Bearly the smithy would heat and then drop, hot glowing streams of liquid iron ore that he forged into tools for the Bog hardware store.

The clank of his hammer chimed out to the street, as metal struck metal that he'd heat and then beat at just the right time and in just the right way, coaxing and shaping the iron to obey.

It took so much energy, time, sweat and care to heat, bend and hammer and one didn't dare loose a second from the fire to the anvil stand as the metal would cool and you'd lose command.

"Strike while the iron is hot!" he'd declare, *"before time and opportunity dissolve in thin air!"*

Bearly Gribble was a brute of a bear, whose muscles bulged roundly beneath shaggy, grayed hair.

A gravelly voice and clothes blackened by soot, made Bearly forbidding from head to foot.

But his size, strength and soot simply couldn't disguise a heart full of love and a soul that was wise.

Bearly and Hartlie had been friends for years, enjoying good times and laughter, sharing trials and tears. Over these years came a custom each day for the two to have breakfast each morning and pray. What a joy it is when we're blessed with a friend, sharing love, trust and loyalty that years never end.

But, this morning... As Bearly poured juice they heard a strange sound, like that of a small, unhappy young hound. They followed the whining round the back of the shop and found a scrawny young puppy about to drop. He was mangy, dirty and his skin hung loose, he limped when he walked, showing signs of abuse. He cowered at the sight of such a huge bear, but was too weak to run and too tired to care.

"Hey little fella, don't be scared, I won't bite," Hartlie whispered softly, saddened by the sight.

Gently scooping him up, they walked back inside, the pup trembling and whining, just plain terrified.

Hartlie cuddled and petted the starving young stray, reassuring him that he was safe and could stay.

"Awww..."

"I can see life's been hard and given you a rough time, but I'll bet there's a fine puppy under that grime."

They bathed, bandaged, then fed him a meal, laying him by the forge fire to heal.

He trembled and twitched, shivered and shook as exhaustion closed in and sleep overtook.

He slept by the fire that whole day and that night, simply exhausted by his pitiful plight.

As the sun came up, Bearly walked in, wearing fresh overalls and a big bearish grin.

He carried some milk and a tray full of food, oatmeal with molasses and some fruit he had stewed.

Hot, whole grain muffins, dripping honey and butter, setting it next to the pup midst the all the forge clutter.

Startled, the pup thought he was back on the street, so he snarled real big and jumped to his feet.

Bearly spoke gently to reassure the poor stray, while blocking his path so he could not run away.

Unsure that Bearly was trying to help, the pup growled, barked then let out a yelp.

"GRRRR, ARFFF, ARFFF!!!"

"Don't come any closer or I'll have to bite, I'm not very big but I know how to fight!"

Get outa my way or you're gonna regret it, I'm one big bad Beagle and don't you forget it!"

Bearly tried hard to cover his grin, all the while inching closer to the ragged urchin.

"I know how scary it must be for you, trying to trust a person you never knew, and you're right not to trust an entire stranger, why it's foolish to place your life in such danger.

It's much wiser being a careful canine but I'm afraid you're about at the end of the line.

Look...

I'll sit way over here, let you eat in peace and if it makes you feel better, I'll even call the police"

The pup hung his head and tears filled his eyes, *"I...I...I'm sorry mister, but this is such a surprise.*

I've gotten so used to being used and misused, beaten, chased, starved and abused.

I...I figured I'd always be on my own, you know, have to fend for myself, til I was grown, but I'm so tired of running and getting nowhere and begging for food from folks who don't care."

Bearly decided to lighten the mood, get his mind off his problems so he'd eat some food.

"Say, my name 's Bearly, what do folks call you?" "Gosh...every name in the book, so I don't have a clue!

Mom and Dad called me 'son' but that's not a name, so I don't know of one to which I can lay claim."

"You don't have a name? Why we'll fix that right quick! How does 'Gumption' sound, will that do the trick?"

"Wow!, my very own name...It's to good to be true! Do names cost much money? Is mine brand new?"

"Nope," Bearly grinned, "names don't cost a dime, and that one means 'courage' and it's yours for all time."

"Gosh, food and a name...it's hard to believe, I...I...wish I could stay here and not have to leave."

With that the pup gobbled up all but the plate, renewed by this sudden up turn in his fate.

"Tell me," said Bearly, plopping onto a chair, "everything...why, how, what, when and where."

The pup limped over and cautiously sat, next to Bearly laying his head in his lap.

Wanting so much to trust but not sure, he'd been hurt so often and still felt insecure.

"Well," he started...

"Mom and Dad were musicians in a traveling show, so we were always moving, always on the go.

They played bugles in a well known Beagle brass band, touring the whole country and in great demand.

For awhile I enjoyed it, thought it was fun, but I soon got real tired of living life on the run.

I felt out of touch, out of place, out of friends, no place to call home, so many loose ends.

So...

Late one evening, I packed my toothbrush and shirt, then giving no thought to those I might hurt, slipped silently past Mom and Dad as they slept and out into the darkest of nights I crept.

For days I hiked, hungry and tired, looking for work but I couldn't get hired.

It was always...

'You're...to young, to small, no experience, no school, to dirty, to tired, so sad, such a fool!'

Well, by now I was desperate, starving and scared, and firmly convinced that nobody cared.

Then...

One night while rummaging through trashcans for food, my faith in folks was nearly renewed.

A Buzzard came by offering all I might need, some work, some food, a bed, I agreed.

His voice sounded thoughtful, so concerned and well bred, but my stomach got queasy feeling something like dread.

He told me to follow him to the outskirts of town, his words sounded fine but his face wore a frown.

A small voice of warning kept tugging my ear, but a meal and a bed pushed me past any fear.

Then...

He grabbed hold my wrist and hustled me past darkened buildings and alleys until at last, we reached some woods where a decrepit old shack leaned dangerously close to an old railroad track.

By now I knew something was awfully wrong but was too scared to run so I just went along.

Hey!...

'This place is abandoned, why are we stopping here?' I said real loud trying to cover my fear.

'Shut up!' he snarled, showing teeth and a sneer, 'D'ya think you'd get ruffles and a gold chandelier?

Just do as your told and we'll get along fine, you won't like what happens if ya get out of line!'

Then...

His boot landed hard right on my backside, and he tied me up tight with twisted rawhide.

'You're gonna need strength,' he sneered, 'I'll be back with some food, don't try any funny stuff, I'm not in the mood.'

The door slammed and as his footsteps drifted away, I wondered if this was my very last day.

'Oh Jesus' I cried as I lay on that floor, 'I'm in a real mess and can't take much more. But I'm trusting that you're gonna help me out by sending somebody when they hear me shout!...amen.

RUFF, RUFF, RUFF, AROOOOOOOOOO,

Help...help...' I barked, howling and yelping, but the ruckus I made didn't seem to be helping.

'Good grief, hold it down...yee're killing me head, there's no sleep'n with that noise, it'll raise the dead!

I don't know yer problem but I've a pretty good hunch as it sounds like you ate sour bagpipes for lunch!!!'

'Who are you?' I asked, 'Did God send you to me? I...I need your help, can you set me free?'

'Gladly!!!' Seethed the old rat, 'I'll set yee back on yer feet, so you can get out of here and I can get back to sleep!

I'd better strike while the iron is hot,' he moaned, 'I'll not see any peace till you're gone!' he groaned.

That grumpy old Scot gnawed through the rawhide, the whole time complaining how his sleep was denied.

'I'm not sure God sent me, but I'm sure sending you, now get out of me house...shoo, shoo, shoo!'

I tore out of that shack like a scorched meteorite, scared that the Buzzard might come back overnight.

I walked the train tracks cuz I was too weak to run, hoping the whole time I could find food and someone.

I walked all that night and all the next day, making sure that Buzzard was left faraway!

My paws hurt worse with each step I took and my legs were so weak that they shivered and shook.

That's when I came up on your blacksmith shop and good thing I did, cuz I was too pooped to pop."

Bearly reached down and picked Gumption up, cradling the gaunt but grateful young pup.

They sat quietly rocking, not saying a word as healing crept in unannounced and unheard.

"Knock, knock...

Good morning," said Hartlie, "how's everyone today?" glad to see that the pup looked like he might stay.

Gumption smiled real big as he licked Hartlies' hand, "Bearly gave me my own name and it's really grand!"

"And what did he name you?" Hartlie gently enquired, "Gumption," he said proudly, "it means the courage required!"

They filled Hartlie in on what had transpired, Hartlie sat there transfixed, amazed and inspired.

"You kept the faith!" he said proudly, "And never gave up!"

"Wow..thanks a whole bunch...but what's faith?" asked the pup.

"Why ...it's belief in God, it's confidence and trust, and it's something God says is a spiritual must!

It's that strong hope which helps us hold on, persevere!

*Remember, God works in our **faith**, not in our fear!"*

"Remind me...

When did I have faith?" Gumption asked mystified, "Why, when you prayed trusting God, He got you untied.

He sent a crotchety rat to gnaw through that rope, then sent you to us to protect and give hope."

Gumption sat quietly, soaking in what was said, then looked over at Bearly tilting his head.

"Would it be all right if I stayed here awhile? I could help in the shop," he said with a smile.

"Stay here just as long as you please," said Bearly lifting Gumption up off his knees.

"Besides...

I could use some good help as I've had a big order, seems a band lost some instruments south of the border.

They'll be here in a month to pick them all up, it'll be lots of work for a bear and a pup.

It's the same band that will play next month at the fair, and I hear they're incredible, that none can compare!

They're a highly trained, precision, marching brass band, composed of the...best...Beagles...in..the..entire..land.."

They sat stunned as the miracle slowly evolved, and that Gumptions' plight was about to be solved.

Elated, the pup started jumping and dancing, leaping, rolling, skipping and prancing.

"My mom, my dad...my own family, I thought them all lost; now they're coming to me!

"Bearly...

If you need extra help, I'll gladly chip in," beamed Hartlie whose face was one great big grin.

"But...we'll have to work fast, give all that we've got, so we'd sure better strike while the iron is hot."

A grateful Gumption then heaved a huge sigh, swallowed real big and trying hard not to cry, whispered, *"I'm so grateful for everything God has done...for sending me friends when I needed someone. He's worked Beagles, bugles and buzzards all out and about this one thing there's surely no doubt, that God is amazing and I'll never forget, that when you have faith, you don't have to fret."*

The end...or could it be...

THE BEGINNING

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Scriptures from the Holy Bible to help our faith.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

2 Corinthians 5:7 for we live by believing, not by seeing.

1 Corinthians 16:13 be on guard. Stand firm in the faith.

James 1:6 But when you ask Him (God) be sure that your faith is in God alone.

Hebrews 11:6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.

John 3:16 For God love the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

This series was written in an effort to help children understand that nothing can overcome them if they are walking close to Jesus, trusting in His love and obeying His Commandments.