

Years 3 & 4

1st Place: Laura Carpenter

Year 4, Home School

Dumped

A sorry, black bundle of fur tumbled onto the hard gravel and lay still while the retreating rumble of the engine signalled his owner's departure. Mutt scrambled to his feet and limped after the car, ending in a hard graze on his right ear as he fell to the ground. Laying there, he thought to himself,

"They are long gone, I'll never catch up. Even if I did, they would just do it again."

He limped up the embankment to find himself nose-to-nose with a great stallion. Mutt stepped back in fright.

"What are you doing in my field, little one?!" demanded the mighty stallion.

"I have been dumped by my previous owners. They had no time for me. They said I was too noisy, too fast and too much work," said Mutt.

"Go on . . ."

"I am looking for a place to call home and someone to love. You look well cared for, is there a home for me here?" he pleaded.

"Can you pull a load, little one? Everyone here has a purpose, so if you can't pull a load you mustn't live here." Mutt's shoulders drooped with his heart as he gave a sigh.

"I'll keep looking then" he babbled, as he turned his tail and stumbled away.

Before too long, he came across a flock of goats munching on juicy green grass.

Mutt walked up to the closest goat to introduce himself.

"Hello, I am Mutt. I was too fast, too noisy, and too much work for my previous owners. Do you think I could serve a purpose and belong here?"

The goat chewed and stared blankly at Mutt. After a while the goat said,

"Hello Mutt. Can you keep the grass neat and short?"

Mutt gave the grass a little nibble but quickly spat it out again.

"Bleugh! That tastes disgusting. No, I can't help to keep the grass short with you. I'll find another place to belong."

Mutt's leg was feeling sufficiently better now, so he attempted a trot as he made his way towards a promising-looking building.

On his way he found a little shack surrounded by chickens. As Mutt approached, the chickens quickly scampered away, squawking, "Fox!"

Mutt tried to tell the flock of chickens that his name was not "Fox", but they would not listen. He went inside the shack and spied a solitary hen in a nesting box. She warned Mutt,

"Don't come any closer, Fox!" but she didn't run away.

Mutt stayed put, and said, "My name is not Fox, it is Mutt. I just want to speak to you, but I am fine with talking to you from here if you prefer."

The hen stopped squawking at him and tilted her head questioningly.

He repeated, "I have been dumped because I was too fast, too noisy and too much work. Do you think I could serve a purpose and belong here?"

The hen speculated, "Can you lay eggs for the farmer's breakfast?"

"Sorry, I cannot," replied Mutt.

“Well then . . . I suppose you will have to find another place, Fox. I mean, it’s the only purpose you can serve.”

“I guess,” said Mutt gloomily and walked slowly out of the chicken coop towards the building.

As he got to a fence around the building, which he could now see was a house, he spied a cat perched on a fencepost.

“What are you doing here, you pathetic creature?” hissed the cat menacingly.

Mutt had heard about cats before, but all he had heard was that they were scary with their sharp fangs and treacherous claws.

“I am here to find a home!” he replied bravely.

“Well where do you suppose you will find one around here?” sneered the cat.

“Maybe in that house over there?”

“Well you can’t live there, that’s my home. I mean, do you serve any purpose at all Pathetic One? I am the most famous mouse-hunter in the world. I rule over mouse-hunting in this entire farm. If you knew anything, you would certainly have heard of me.”

“I could try to hunt mice. I’ve never done it before, but I am quite fast. I can bark loudly to scare them away perhaps?” Mutt suggested.

“You have to catch mice, not just scare them or else they just come back. Once you have eaten them, they don’t bother anyone again. But that’s beside the point, there’s no positions available for mouse-hunters, and you are so pathetic you won’t be able to serve any purpose at all,” spat the cat.

Mutt’s ears drooped and he muttered,

“Well, I had better look inside the house, at least. I’ve come this far.”

Then he slowly squeezed through the fence and trudged up to the front door.

Nobody stopped him. He half expected the cat to stop him, but she had just dropped off to sleep in the sun, curled up on her fence post, purring gently. He stared hard at the door and summoned his courage, then pranced bravely into the house, tail wagging confidently. He wanted to make a good impression now that he had found a human habitat. Mutt tried his hardest not to be too noisy or too fast as he trotted inside.

There he found the farmer at last. Mutt noticed the farmer seemed sad, as he sighed and stared into his cup of tea at the kitchen table. Mutt forgot about his quest, and immediately went to the farmer’s side, nestled his head under the farmer’s rough hand and moved his head up and down so the farmer’s hand would pet him. He looked up at the farmer lovingly and wagged his tail. The farmer was very surprised to feel the fur beneath his fingers, he immediately looked down to see what it was. There he saw Mutt looking up at him. His gloom immediately forgotten, the farmer exclaimed,

“A puppy!”

Then, in a softer, kinder voice, he spoke to Mutt,

“What are you doing here, Mate? You must have come a long way. I mean, I haven’t seen you on the farm anywhere. Never had a dog, myself. No collar, hey?”

He lifted Mutt’s chin, picked him up onto his lap then patted him all over. He soon found the scrapes and grazes from Mutt’s tumble out of the car.

“You couldn’t have been dumped, could ya, mate?”

The farmer frowned. Mutt whined in return, confirming the farmer’s guess. The farmer gave Mutt a wash and dried him with a towel. Mutt hadn’t ever been given a

bath before, but he enjoyed it very much. Especially shaking off all the water in the sunshine afterwards. That made the farmer laugh. His laugh was a deep, mellow laugh that made Mutt's heart so happy that his tail wagged all on its own. The farmer served Mutt a big dish of meat and bowl of fresh water. Mutt slurped it up ravenously and didn't leave a single drop. He barked a loud thank you to the farmer, forgetting that he had intended to keep quiet. The farmer said, "My, you've got a loud bark, Mate! That would be handy for keeping the foxes away from the chook pen at night. I wonder how fast you can run, Mate?" Mutt ran as fast as he could around the farmer, so fast he was just a blur. The farmer laughed once more and said, "With a bit of training you could be a master goat-herder with that speed". Then the farmer sat down on the grass and said, "But what I really need around here, is a mate to keep me company, do you think you'd like the job?" Mutt jumped on the farmer's lap and affectionately licked his face. "Well, if you agree, how about we call you Mate then, Mate?" Mate barked his agreement and happily went back to licking his farmer's face. He had found his home at last.