

# That Dogs Short Tale

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THAT DOG HAD a bit of a thing about flagstones. He was especially fond of the flagstones on the floor in the kitchen up at the big house. He liked them so much that almost every day he took it upon himself to head there and clean them, one at a time. Upon entry to the kitchen he'd choose a single stone, usually positioned next to one of its three doors or beside the vast kitchen table that sat in the middle of the room, and start to lick it clean. He'd clean it vigorously and thoroughly and once the desired shine had been achieved he lay down flat next to the stone with his top lip resting on the edge of it and undertook the next part of the cleaning process. The guarding. That dog was fully aware that at some point in the general hustle and bustle of the day someone in the kitchen would forget all of his hard work and carelessly step on it. At that point, depending on your point of view, the unobservant individual or victim of the plot would forfeit part of their lower trouser or possibly be relieved of a little blood. One could never be sure which part of the process that dog took more seriously; the cleaning or guarding.

Stones seemed to be a bit of a preoccupation in that dog's life whether it was chewing pebbles or barking at boulders they certainly seemed to gain his attention. There was one stone that held a special place in his heart and it was situated in the shallows of a gently graduating bay of the lake that sat below the Big House. It was a beautiful and peaceful place where much swimming, picnicking and generally

frolicking about took place by those who knew about it. The stone sat off to the left of the bay and would have gone unnoticed by most - too big for children to throw and not in the way of paddling adults. So it stayed, sitting in 3-4 inches of water during summer with only the tip being visible above the water line. It must have been the fact that the lake was only ready to reveal a small and seasonal glimpse of this treasure that irked that dog. It irked him so much that he decided to do something about it.

His strategy was a simple one, as most good strategies are, and it consisted of drinking the lake from around the stone. Evening after summer evening he could be seen ferociously drinking the water that lapped up against his prize. He'd drink until he was so packed full of water that his belly was as tight of a drum, then, barely able to move he'd haul himself out of the lake and deposit the water in the surrounding forest. Once relieved, it was back to the lake again and some more drinking. The fact that the lake is an area of several acres and up 30 feet deep and that that dog owned only the belly of a Jack Russell, the size of the feat never seemed to dull his enthusiasm for the task. But then again size never meant anything to that dog.

One evening that dog was down by the lake sizing up another assault on his long term goal of freeing the stone from the grip of the lake when a couple of his friends appeared, two robustly built golden retrievers. That dog sat and watched as they bounded

about in the shallows cooling down from a hot days retrieving. They had ventured out deeper into the lake and were enjoying a swim when they noticed a bow of a sally tree growing next to the lake gently touched its surface as it swayed in the evenings breeze. Stick within reach, must retrieve. Simple equation for a golden retriever really. The bow reached out far enough into the lake that the dogs were out of their depth when they took hold of the end of it in their mouths. This particular type of retrieval involves the tricky manoeuvre of gripping the branch in their teeth and reverse doggy paddling pulling the branch back with them as they went. With much growling and splashing they managed to pull the branch back 4-5 feet from its original position causing an increasingly strong bow to appear in it, but this was as far as they could go. That dog had been watching all of this intently from the shore line. When it became obvious to him that these two could take the proceedings no further he decided that they were in need of help from a real dog, so he got up and trotted into the water. He headed over to his struggling companions and took his position at the tip of the branch nearest the water and pulled with all his might. His positioning was smart and sure enough he started to make headway increasing the pressure on said branch.

'Now we're getting somewhere', he thought to himself. But it was at this point in the proceedings that the two retrievers decided between themselves, 'Ah bollocks to this' and promptly let



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go together. It has never been established exactly how far that dog was launched through the air but it is rumoured that to this day he still holds the world record for Jack Russell catapulting!

That dog got back to the shore in a somewhat dazed state, his portion of the branch still clenched firmly in his teeth. As he lay there gathering his senses he felt an all consuming fury started to rise from deep within. He lay a little longer letting his blood reach boiling point before spitting the branch out and set about savaging the two nearby and somewhat bewildered protagonists of this outrage. He quickly dispatched the pair of retrievers in a cloud of flying fur and high pitched yelps, but still his fury was not yet sated. So off he headed up to the Big House to set another flagstone trap to make himself feel better.

Being a terrier in a rural setting, that dog's main job, other than dealing with stones, was hunting. One day he was out hunting along with a couple of his usual hunting partners, another Jack Russell and a Red Setter. His owner and some of his friends had decided to join them that day and they all marched together through the land looking for things to hunt. The hunting hadn't been as prolific as the rain that day and the general mood in the hunting party was the colour of the sky, dark grey. It was one of those typically blustery days, wet, dark and dank that you get at the start of June here. The light was dark and the grass high enough for a small dog to disappear amongst, ideal conditions for that dog to have some fun weaving unseen between the legs of the two legged hunters accompanying them. As all good terriers know, hunters with two legs are very easy to trip. When selecting a victim it's best to set the ambush on the hunter leading the party, that way, when he goes down everybody sees him go down and the most laughter could be achieved. Perfect.

The leading hunter that day was a bear of a man, well over six feet tall, barrel chested with a black beard of equal proportions and guaranteed to go over with an almighty crash; an opportunity not to be missed. They trudged through the fields together all on alert, waiting for a rabbit to scurry carelessly from a hedge or pigeons to burst suddenly from a tree top. All except that dog. No, his attention was else where, he was biding his time, just waiting for the grass to be at its highest and the bear's attentions to be away from his feet. And when the opportunity did arise, that dog struck with his usual decisiveness. He darted between the bear's feet, mid-stride, catching the bear completely by surprise,

causing him to trip and stumble and crash to the floor in a heap. The howls of laughter rang out before the bear had even hit the ground and only increased as he thrashed around cursing trying to get back up. That dog stood admiring his handy work, very, very pleased with the overall result. But he admired a little too long. The bear managed to get to his feet then took a couple of giant strides towards the rather pleased dog and placed a well-aimed size 12 on his backside, lifting him several feet into the air.

'That'll teach you, Ya little bastard!'. The bear roared as the dog flew through the air and landed unceremoniously in a thick clump of rushes. That dog, somewhat dazed, lost for words, as it were, stood staring in disbelief as the laughter died down and the line of hunters started off again. He felt a fury started to rise again, but that size 12 was definitely something to be reckoned with, so he kept his distance as he gathered his thoughts. That dog's owner chuckled knowingly.

It wasn't long before the hunting party came to a drain between fields, swelled by a couple of day's rain. It would have been over 3 feet deep and 4 feet wide, the dogs skipped over it and headed off into the grass, sniffing as they went. But once on the other side that dog declined to resume the hunt with his buddies. Instead he stayed in a patch of grass next to the edge of the drain just out of sight on the opposite side and waited. The hunters gathered themselves before attempting the crossing, then leapt one by one over to the other side. The bear, being the largest of them took the longest to gather himself before hurling his ample frame over the obstacle. He took a five step run-up and then launched himself into the air. As he left the ground from one side, that dog

did the same from the opposite side and they met mid leap. The mid-air collision, as you might expect between a large man and a small dog, wasn't exactly spectacularly devastating, but it did cause the bear's balance, momentum and concentration to be disrupted just enough to ensure he didn't quite make the other side. He landed with an almighty splash just short of his intended target and started to topple over as his feet slid on the muddy bottom of the drain. In his efforts to make sure he kept his gun out of the water he fell sideways towards his free arm that was stretched out searching for something solid to steady himself on. Unfortunately for the bear the drain was deeper than his arm was long and he continued his topple until his head momentarily disappeared beneath the surface of the muddy water. His other arm was then left protruding from the water holding the shotgun aloft, in a rather ridiculous 'Excalibur being claimed by the Lady of the Lake' kind of way. When he did resurface his companions were barely able to haul him from his predicament as the tears streamed down their faces and the convulsions of laughter rendered then next to useless. That dog hopped out of the water shook himself off and trotted off to his owners van, his day's hunting was done.

Once the wellies had been emptied and the tears dried, the rest of the hunting party also headed back to van where they decided the best way of insuring the bear didn't catch pneumonia was to go to town and get some hot whiskeys into him. The bear and the dogs were loaded into the back of the van amongst an on going burble of barely suppressed laughter and they headed off to town. The bear couldn't bring himself to look at that dog on

the short run to town and that dog didn't feel he had to look at the bear, smug in the knowledge of a job well done.

The hunters had been in the pub for half an hour or so and the bear had begun to warm up and dry off a bit when the new local garda came in and said to that dog's owner:

'You know you've left guns on the front seat of your van and the keys are in the ignition?'

'I do' answered the owner

'If you are going to leave guns in a car could you at least lock it and have the keys with you!?' the garda said brusquely with a slight salting of sarcasm.

'If you can get the keys out of the car, I'll gladly lock it sir', came the reply from that dog's owner. The garda grunted as he turned back out the door and headed to the van that was parked a pavement's width away from the entrance to the pub. He put his hand on the handle of the door and was about to open it when all hell broke loose from inside the van. The two terriers leapt, as one, from the back to the front of the van in a whirlwind of teeth, froth and venom and collided with the door window only inches away from the garda's face.

'Jesus!'

He exclaimed as he hurled himself back from the van and immediately broke out into one of those prickly sweats. He quickly glanced up and down the street checking for witnesses. Once he was sure that this little insurrection had not been observed he took several deep breaths, straightened himself up and walked back into the pub. Red of cheek and glassy of eye, he announced,

'I think they'll be alright there'.

Then, without making any eye contact, briskly left.

The owner chuckled knowingly.