



Unlike most days at Rainbow Bridge, this day dawned cold and gray, damp as a swamp and as dismal as could be imagined. All the recent arrivals were confused and concerned. They had no idea what to think for they had never experienced a day like this before. But the animals who had spent some time waiting for their beloved people knew exactly what was happening and began to gather at the pathway leading to the Bridge to watch. They knew this was something special.

It wasn't too long before an elderly animal came into view, head hung heavy and low with tail dragging along the ground. The other animals on the pathway...the ones who had been at Rainbow Bridge for a while...knew the story of this sad creature immediately. They had seen it happen far too many times.

Although it was obvious the animal's heart was leaden and he was totally overcome with emotional pain and hurt, there was no sign of injury or any illness. Unlike the pets waiting at the Bridge, this dog had not been restored to his prime. He was full of neither health nor vigor. He approached slowly and painfully, watching all the pets who were by now watching him. He knew he was out of place here. This was no resting place for him. He felt instinctively that the sooner he could cross over, the happier he would be. But alas, as he came closer to the Bridge, his way was barred by the appearance of an Angel who spoke softly to the old dog and apologized sorrowfully, telling him that he would not be able to pass. Only those animals who were with their special people could pass over the Rainbow Bridge. And he had no special beloved people...not here at the Bridge nor on Earth below.

With no place else to turn, the poor elderly dog looked toward the fields before the Bridge. There, in a separate area nearby, he spotted a group of other sad-eyed animals like himself...elderly and infirm. Unlike the pets waiting for their special people, these animals weren't playing, but simply lying on the green grass, forlornly and miserably staring out at the pathway leading to the Bridge. The recent arrival knew he had no choice but to join them. And so, he took his place among them, just watching the pathway and waiting.

One of the newest arrivals at the Bridge, who was waiting for his special people, could not understand what he had just witnessed and asked one of the pets who had been there for some time to explain it to him.

"That poor dog was a rescue, sent to the pound when his owner grew tired of him. The way you see him now, with graying fur and sad, cloudy eyes, was exactly the way he was when he was put into the kennels. He never, ever made it out and passed on only with the love and comfort that the kennel workers could give him as he left his miserable and unloved existence on Earth for good. Because he had no family or special person to give his love, he has nobody to escort him across the Bridge."

The first animal thought about this for a minute and then asked, "So what will happen now?"

As he was about to receive his answer, the clouds suddenly parted and the all-invasive gloom lifted. Coming toward the Bridge could be seen a single figure...a person who, on Earth, had seemed quite ordinary...a person who, just like the elderly dog, had just left Earth forever. This figure turned toward a group of the sad animals and extended outstretched palms. The sweetest sounds they had ever heard echoed gently above them and all were bathed in a pure and golden light. Instantly, each was young and healthy again, just as they had been in the prime of life.

From within the gathering of pets waiting for their special people, a group of animals emerged and moved toward the pathway. As they came close to the passing figure, each bowed low and each received a tender pat on the head or a scratch behind the ears. Their eyes grew even brighter as the figure softly murmured each name. Then, the newly-restored pets fell into line behind the figure and quietly followed this person to the Bridge, where they all crossed together.

The recent arrival who had been watching, was amazed. "What happened?"

"That was a rescuer," came the answer.

"That person spent a lifetime trying to help pets of all kinds. The ones you saw bowing in respect were those who found new homes because of such unselfish work. They will cross when their families arrive. Those you saw restored were ones who never found homes. When a rescuer arrives, they are permitted to perform one, final act of rescue. They are allowed to escort those poor pets that couldn't place on Earth across the Rainbow Bridge. You see, all animals are special to them...just as they are special to all animals."

"I think I like rescuers," said the recent arrival.

"So does God," was the reply.

--Author Unknown--