

Mr. Moto's Most Heroic Deed

His shiny yellow cape, like a kite held up by a gust of wind, flew behind Mr. Moto. A gaggle of Canadian geese squawked as they passed him from the opposite direction. The friendly type, Mr. Moto offered a few soft barks in salutation.

His ESP, always on high alert, warned him of imminent danger just outside the elephant preserve in Kenya. Shifting into warp speed he was soon circling the grassy plains dotted with majestic creatures moving so swiftly that their babes could barely keep pace. The trumpeting of the matriarchs told Mr. Moto all he needed to know. Danger lurked nearby and it clearly threatened the herd.

Circling, Mr. Moto headed toward whatever predators had caused this frantic stampede. He saw two rangers behind their green jeep dodging an onslaught of bullets. They were clearly outnumbered and out gunned by five heavily armed poachers. Mr. Moto knew what had to be done.

Dive bombing, he made a missile of his 90 pounds that quickly knocked out the two poachers who stood atop their beat up pick up rapidly firing at the elephants' protectors. As the men fell off their high perch, Mr. Moto grabbed both guns from their gun mounts in his strong jaws before flying toward the cowering agents. Careful to avoid hitting either uniformed man, he carefully dropped the guns between them.

The three poachers on the ground, armed with machetes and handguns, were closing in for the kill on the only two obstacles to their haul of costly tusks. Expecting coverage from the automatic weapons above them, they hadn't bothered to fire a shot. When the rangers secured the high capacity weapons, they rose shouting, "Stop! Lay Down your weapons!" A bit of indecision on the villains' part was soon resolved with the rat-a-tat-tat of bullets hitting the ground near their feet. One ranger grabbed rope from the jeep to secure the lot for arrest.

Mr. Moto, always a fan of a happy ending, landed alongside them, wagged his tail and woofed his congrats to the heroes he'd aided. He kept a watchful eye on the three until they're hands were tied behind their backs.

Back in the air, he spotted the two gunners running through the brush. In no time, he flew past them and began snarling and growling viciously until they backed up. This continued until one of the rangers shouted, "Hands up! You're under arrest!" One of the poachers reached for a knife in his boot but Mr. Moto swooped down and bit his hand. Yelping, the predator dropped the knife and drew his bleeding hand to his mouth.

At this point the second guard was at hand to help restrain the captives. At last, the rangers could thank Mr. Moto. A humble wag of his tail as he departed said that no thanks were needed; he was just doing his job.

Wanting to reassure himself that the elephants were safe, Mr. Moto glided low between two towering trees. The herd had resumed its leisurely pace and the matriarch applauded her hero by raising her trunk in salute.

A warm, relaxed feeling was seeping through Mr. Moto as he glided amidst white, fluffy clouds toward the United States. The euphoria that engulfed him instantly transformed when he sensed

the fear of a young dog being attacked over and over by a vicious pack. His quick yip bid the majestic giants adieu as he warped to the rescue of a bait dog. Her cries and the snarls of the beasts surrounding her allowed Mr. Moto to zone in on her peril.

First he spotted the fighting ring behind a large shed. 100 yards beyond a barbwire fence enclosed a dirt covered yard. Four scarred pit bulls, one missing an eye, another foaming at the mouth, surrounded a tiny caramel colored female who appeared to be a pit/terrier mix. She was bleeding from a gash on her emaciated right shoulder. Multiple scars dotted her back and legs. As saliva dripped from his jaw, the foamer charged at the whimpering pup.

Mr. Moto swooped down grabbing the injured pup by her collar before the latest deadly abuse was inflicted on her. Her attacker leaped up to retrieve his toy but she was safely in the air now. Mr. Moto knew this part of Ohio and was aware of a nearby rescue group. Within minutes he landed on the lush green lawn of All God's Creatures Pet Sanctuary. Lisa was bringing a bowl of food to her latest rescue, a pet hoarder's starving white poodle that was found caged in his own waste. Now clean and well nourished, Snowball offered a gentle wag to his new mom.

Releasing the pit/terrier from his mouth, Mr. Moto barked twice to get Lisa's attention. Seeing the bleeding lump, Lisa rushed over to check her out.

"Mr. Moto! What's happened?" she cried in alarm. Soon she was her normal calm self checking the little dog's injuries. "I'll clean out all these wounds and get her fed. Then we'll know if she'll make it."

Mr. Moto whined in dismay and followed her as she carried the pathetic creature into her clinic. No longer whimpering, the bleeding dog collapsed in her arms.

Mr. Moto jumped on a chair to watch the exam taking place on the shiny silver table. Foaming cleansers disinfected each open wound. Lisa used a sudsy cloth to give the filthy pup a sponge bath. Aside from the slight movement in the pup's eyes as she looked toward the door, she was passive. It was not until Lisa injected a long lasting antibiotic shot into the pup's hip, that the pup yelped and tried to leap from the table. Lisa was prepared and gently restrained her. "You'll be okay, Lucky. Mind if I call you that? You really got lucky today."

Lucky's guardian didn't leave his perch until Lisa placed Lucky on a soft bed in a long empty kennel. He followed as she placed food and fresh water inside the spacious, clean cage.

Finally, she turned to Mr. Moto. "You have to show Kevin where you found her. The dogs that attacked her are victims as well. Animal Rescue has to break up that ring."

Resting next to Lucky's cage, he was surprised when she crawled off her bed and came to him. Placing a tiny paw through one triangle of her cage fencing she gently laid it on Mr. Moto's larger one. Their eyes met and she managed to express her gratitude for his heroic rescue. A bit embarrassed, Mr. Moto simply gave her paw a nice lick. It tasted a bit soapy but he didn't let her know it.

When Kevin and two other animal officers arrived, he was glad to see that they were armed with 38s because he was sure that whoever ran the dog fighting ring would not willingly cooperate with the law.

Once assessed of the extent of the abuse inflicted on Lucky over a period of time, Kevin called the local sheriff to provide back-up for his raid. Kevin's crew hopped into their SUV as Mr. Moto hovered above. They would follow him and radio their location to the deputies joining them.

Twenty minutes later, Kevin parked under the canopy of a huge oak tree waiting for backup. Seeing the black and white approach, Kevin's crew, with Mr. Moto at their sides, went to join them. After a quick conference, they decided to have guns drawn as they split up: the two deputies were going to cover the back of the dilapidated farm house while the animal control officers knocked on the front door.

Kevin knocked and heard steps behind the door. No one answered so he knocked again, louder. Still no answer so he shouted, "This is animal protection Officer Kevin McCrea. Open the door, please."

The door slowly opened and a round, gray haired woman stepped out pulling the door behind her. "What can I do for you, Officer?"

"We have an open abuse case for this property, Ma'am."

"I don't know anything about that," she replied.

"Who else lives here?"

"No one...I live alone."

This might have gone on longer but Mr. Moto, who'd been sitting next to Kevin heard a window creak as it was raised. He ran to the side of the house in time to see a bearded man hopping to the ground. Spotting Mr. Moto just three feet away, he aimed the butt end of his rifle at him. If he'd hoped to dispatch the clever canine without attracting the law, he'd miscalculated. Mr. Moto flew above his head grabbing the rifle just above the trigger. A short struggle ensued as the villain tried to hang on. A shot was fired blowing out the window he'd just passed through.

All six lawmen surrounded him in an instant and he was soon spitting out dirt after being forced to the ground.

His mother, who turned out to be the brains behind the dog fighting operation, was also arrested. As for the dogs, Kevin found two carcasses and the four fighters Lucky had survived.

Deputy Simmons looked at the war torn bunch and shook his head. "I guess they'll all have to be put down."

The one eyed dog looked sadly at Mr. Moto communicating a desire to live a better life. Lifting his head, Mr. Moto yipped and whined while pawing at Kevin's leg.

"What's he want, Kevin?" Simmons asked.

"Another chance. Lisa's right; she always says they're victims too."

"Nobody's gonna adopt these fighters!"

"They won't need to. There's a rescue group in Akron that lets former fight dogs live out their lives on their property. They tell me that some of these dogs become real sweethearts once they get fed and the beatings stop."

Mr. Moto rubbed his head against Kevin's left hand. Everything would be okay. With that, he flew to his favorite meadow hoping to see Princess, the elegant black poodle who lived in the cottage by the babbling brook.

Making a soft landing, he looked around. There she was, head held high and coiffed tail wagging, as she regally stood behind her white picket fence. He began to run to her but his legs didn't seem to carry him even a foot closer to her.

Instead of her sweet welcoming woof, he could hear a conversation totally incongruent with the magical meadow scene before him.

“Timmy is non-verbal. We’ve taken him to speech therapists and he interacts with picture cards and signs to communicate. His doctor says we shouldn’t give up...he’s only six...and he did say one word when he was four,” a distraught woman in her late thirties explained to a uniformed kennel worker.

“What did he say?”

“Doggie,” the woman replied reaching down to hug the toe haired boy who was always at her side. Her hand touched nothing and panic was her first response.

“Timmy?” she whirled around searching for her little shadow.

Timmy stood before a cage staring at a shaggy Norwegian Elkhound mix. He pressed his face against the cyclone fence to get a better look.

His mother was at his side in four swift steps. She noticed the dog’s legs moving in a jerky manner though he otherwise was still with his eyes closed. Leaning back, she caught the caretaker’s eye and signaled urgently for him to join them.

Soon three sets of eyes studied the dog. “What’s wrong with him? Is he having a seizure?” Mrs. Wright asked.

The attendant smiled. “No, just a dream. He probably thinks he’s running.”

Hearing this, Mr. Moto understood why he couldn’t reach his lady love. He stopped trying. Instead he opened his eyes, sat up and noticed the cage he was in and the cold floor he was

laying on. The sight was so depressing, he dejectedly laid his head on his front paws wondering how he got here.

“Doggie,” Timmy whispered.

“You spoke!” Mrs. Wright hugged Timmy close to her. Over his head she told the attendant that the therapist suggested a dog for Timmy. “Where are the puppies?”

Grabbing Timmy’s hand, she began to follow the attendant to another room. Timmy squirmed free and returned to Mr. Moto. Pointing at the depressed dog, he said, “DOGGIE!”

The kennel worker and Mrs. Wright were now standing behind Timmy who could not stop staring at Mr. Moto.

“What can you tell me about that dog?”

“He’s about four years old. A young man found him on the side of the road. He wasn’t moving and he was wearing a tattered yellow cape. The guy called animal control to pick him up. Our officer noticed a large welt on the back of his head and a bit of dried blood. He was breathing so he was taken to the vet who handles our emergencies. He got fluids and antibiotics but he just slept for three days. When he came to, he seemed confused. Doc thought he’d had a concussion. He got to stay at the hospital until he was eating and drinking and then he was released to us for adoption.”

“Does he have any disease or health problems?”

“No, he got a thorough check up, including vaccinations, while he recuperated.”

“How long has he been up for adoption?” Mrs. Wright asked glancing over at Timmy who was looking longingly at Mr. Moto.

“Nine days. Five are usual before animals are euthanized but after all the care the vet gave him, doc petitioned for 10. He wanted this guy to have every opportunity to get adopted.”

“I can’t believe you’d put down healthy animals!” Mrs. Wright exclaimed.

“We just don’t have the room or funding to keep animals longer than a week. Puppies get adopted first. Adult dogs don’t have much of a chance.”

Mrs. Wright studied Timmy’s face which was more animated than she could remember seeing it. He knelt down and reached below the cyclone fencing. “Doggie,” he whispered.

Mr. Moto might have preferred the company of his special lady, but considering the circumstances he found himself in, this kid was a close second. He stood up, walked to Timmy and placed his paw near Timmy’s hand. It was the best handshake he could offer. Timmy took it and grinned. Paw in hand he turned to his mother. His eyes were pleading; her heart melted.

“We’ll take him.”

Timmy clung to Mr. Moto as they shared the back seat. The dog was relieved to leave the place that kills healthy animals. Mrs. Wright’s shock at the notion was nothing compared to his.

The next few weeks Mr. Moto enjoyed Timmy attending to his every need. His water was changed throughout the day, his food was heated in the microwave, romps around the back yard were frequent and often followed by hair brushing. Sleeping with Timmy on his soft mattress each night was divine.

Timmy was changing. In an effort to communicate with his new best friend, he tried to verbalize his thoughts. The words didn’t always come out right, and somehow Mr. Moto was

aware of this discrepancy. He didn't mind though. He was as happy as the little boy with his new life.

Timmy's mom and therapist were thrilled by the progress he was making. Therapy sessions were now twice a week to give Timmy feedback on his pronunciation. For the next six months Timmy shared his progress with Mr. Moto, an excellent listener.

Mrs. Wright knew that his amazing success in verbal communication was due to his new four-legged friend. One day while Timmy was at school, she interrupted Mr. Moto's daily nap on the well-stuffed sofa. Petting him until he raised his head in acknowledgement, her eyes misted up. "You did it, fella. When they found you with a cape on, someone might think you were a hero. Maybe you were then, but not anymore." She hugged him close to her.

Mr. Moto didn't like the way her words and actions didn't match. She was showing love but saying he wasn't a hero anymore couldn't be good. He whined and turned his head to illustrate his confusion.

"You know what I mean, don't you, pal? You're our Super Hero and we love you for all the joy you've brought us." At this pronouncement she bent to kiss his cheek but his sloppy lick of her face beat her to the punch. He'd arrived! Maybe his old adventures as a hero were just dreams but now he'd performed a feat of daring do worthy of a mother's love.

As Timmy graduated from words to sentences, he had a litany of things he wanted to do with or for Mr. Moto. Many of them involved space: the pair needed more space to play with balls or Frisbees or take long walks. Despite Timmy's remarkable progress, Mrs. Wright worried about him stepping out of the safety zone their pleasant block provided in an otherwise crowded, urban city.

She finally worked out a solution to their dilemma and headed to Timmy's room to share her news. She paused in the doorway as she saw Timmy's back to her; one of his arms was around Mr. Moto, the other held a Mighty Mouse comic. He was reading it aloud to the dog. Having heard the woman's approach, Mr. Moto managed to turn his head enough to look at her. He hoped she'd interrupt. Wasn't it time for dinner or homework? As much as loved Timmy, he found these heroes, even canines like Underdog and Lassie, a bit boring. He felt as though he could have done a better job at saving the world. Did he have some hidden powers or just an active imagination.

Timmy finished the book and said, "Good one! I bet that's your favorite."

Mr. Moto sighed as Timmy's mom took this opportunity to let them in on her big plans.

"Timmy, we're moving to the country! I've rented a cottage with lots of space for you and Mr. Moto to play. Would you like that?"

Timmy hopped up and hugged her tightly. "You did it! We love you!" Mr. Moto licked her arm to show his appreciation for interrupting another night of the same insipid comic book characters. As for the moving part, he couldn't see anything wrong with this place."

Moving day followed a flurry of packing and dodging the stacks of boxes that almost hit the ceiling. Mr. Moto hoped things would not change for the worse as he joined Timmy in the back seat of the car.

The drive seemed endless and a few times the dog thought he'd lose his breakfast. He wasn't sure but he might have made some pre-barfing sounds because each time, Mrs. Wright would turn up the air conditioning or lower a window just enough to make the bad feeling go away.

Finally, Timmy's mom gaily announced, "Willow's Ridge! We're here!"

A bit depressed and out of sorts, Mr. Moto continued to let his head hang over the car seat until Timmy gave him a gentle nudge and shouted, “Check it out! It’s great!”

When Mrs. Wright opened the back door, he glanced out tentatively. Then his tail began thumping the seat. The meadow that faced a few small homes looked strangely familiar. He hopped out of the car to explore this beautiful place.

Mrs. Wright and Timmy were carrying boxes to the front porch when a friendly shout made Mr. Moto and his adopted family look toward their neighbor’s fence. A handsome man leaned over the fence to welcome them. “Hi there! Glad to see someone moving in!”

Mrs. Wright and Timmy walked over to introduce themselves. Not really feeling a part of this love fest, Mr. Moto hung back. A sweet woof sent him running to the fence. Mr. O’Brien laughed. “Oh, I forgot to introduce my little Princess.”

At his side was Mr. Moto’s lady love, her well-coiffed ebony fur and regal style were inimitable. She pressed her nose through the picket fence slats and Mr. Moto greeted her with his own version of an Eskimo kiss. His tail wagged fast and furiously as he realized life couldn’t get any better, even for a super hero.