

Mattie

It was a very strange day in Harbour Main, Newfoundland. It was a day of firsts. It was, in fact, the very first day in the history of the small town that did not have the eerie shadow of a dull, overcast sky. It was also the very first day that there was no need to go to mass wearing a skidoo suit. Every man, woman and child was wearing as little clothing as possible, and even the priest gave communion wearing nothing but a tacky Hawaiian shirt and khaki green cargo shorts.

Mattie, the Newfoundland dog, had never seen anything like it. There was not a drop of fresh water (that didn't come from a stranger's tap) to be had in the town. The rarely seen sun had been blaring since day break, and Mattie with his thick, black fur coat was roasting in the midday sun.

As usual, the dog mosed around the town all by himself, stopping to smell the aroma of the soggy ground and to lick the encrusted salt from the smooth beach rocks, occasionally meeting the familiar face of a child that would pet his head and give him a piece of jerky from the nearby corner store. He longed to meet one of those kind hearted children at this particular moment, as he had reached the breaking point. He could no longer withhold his urge to drink "Any sort of water at all would do!" he thought.

Then, another thought occurred to him. One that had never occurred to him before. There was an answer to his burning problem right in front of him. It had been there the whole time. He bounded as fast as he could to the seas edge and he plunged his face into the icy

water, gulping as much as he possibly could. After his long generous drink he raised his head from the water. His throat burned like a fireplace on a cold day. He felt as though someone had lit a match in his throat and fed him gasoline. He felt as though he should lay down and die. Then, he staggered towards the road again and regurgitated all the evidence from his recent attempt at quenching his thirst, all over the road and onto the shoes of Ms. Woodford, the postmistress.

Apologizing, he trotted away, his throat burning with thirst now even more. He had to find some water, but where? He continued to mosey around town in search of a watering hole, when he heard a noise that resembled that of a dying fowl. Curiously Mattie clambered over the crumbling church steps and poked his head through the large open door. It was the eighty year old Mrs. Dalton singing, “ Lord, God , heavenly host to you we pray. Amen.”

Whimpering, Mattie slowly began to creep back out of the church when he caught a whiff of something familiar. It smelled musty and old. At first he thought it might have been Mrs Dalton, but no, this was different. Suddenly his head jerked around and there, at the altar was Father O’Neill in his flowered shirt, pouring a bottle of holy water into a small golden bucket. Mattie sprinted as fast as he could towards the water. He heard the gasps and screams of the congregation. He could even swear that Mrs. Dalton was on the floor. But he didn’t care. All he wanted was water!

Father O’Neill stepped out in front of him to stop him but it was a failed attempt as the one hundred and fifty pound Mattie just ploughed him down. Mattie stretched his two front paws onto the altar and

hastily took several large gulps of the holy water stopping in between to take raspy breaths. At last his thirst was quenched.

Satisfied, Mattie let himself down and turned around to walk back out of the church. He saw every eye in the church upon him. Everybody was giving him a look of great dislike, especially Mrs. Dalton, who was fixing her wig and looking like she could have bitten his tail off.

When Mattie stopped running he was at home, under the kitchen table, when out of the corner of his eye he saw something glisten in the ray of light coming from the kitchen window. It was a gleaming dish of water with his name printed on it with bold red letters. Casually, he plopped himself down in front of the bowl and drank until there was not a drop left.